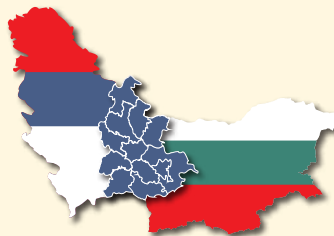
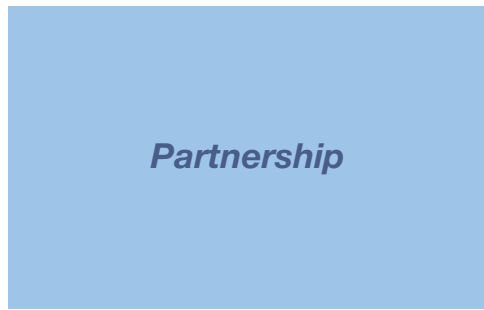




Sustainability



THE SUCCESS STORY

Bulgaria-Serbia IPA Cross-border Programme 2007-2013

PREFACE

The goal of this brochure is to illustrate in a clear and concise manner the purpose of the Programme and the most important steps in its implementation during the period 2007 - 2013. Instead of wearying the reader with dry statistical data, description of formal regulations and operational processes, this brochure will highlight the key Programme achievements, all of which are illustrated with numerous photos. Our goal is not simply to list our accomplishments but to show the real benefits of the Programme contributing to the sustainable regional development and better quality of life. Our story is a story of cooperation; a story of a great success made possible by the European funding, the active role of the institutions involved and most importantly the great efforts and partnership between people from both sides of the border.

We are the Bulgaria-Serbia IPA Cross-border team, and this is our story.



Bulgaria-Serbia IPA Cross-border Programme team

PROGRAMME IDENTIFICATION:

Overall objective: To strengthen territorial cohesion of the Bulgarian-Serbian cross-border region, its competitiveness and sustainability of its development through co-operation in the economic, social and environmental area over the administrative borders.

WHAT KIND OF PROJECTS ARE FUNDED?

1. Investment projects (small-scale infrastructure):



Rehabilitated „Health house“ in Bela Palanka (left) and newly constructed Amphitheatre in Bobov Dol (right)

2. „Soft-measure“ projects and „people-to-people“ actions:



Social services thematic forum in Vidin (left) and a music concert in Nis (right)

WHERE ARE THE PROJECTS IMPLEMENTED?

The cross-border region includes six regions in Bulgaria (Vidin, Montana, Sofia region, Sofia city, Pernik and Kyustendil) and six regions in Serbia (Bor, Zaječar, Nisava, Pirot, Jablanica and Pcinja).

CROSS-BORDER EFFECT

The most specific and probably the most valuable aspect of the Programme is that each and every project has a strong cross-border effect. Each project needs to be able to tackle the needs and the opportunities in the region and should also: focus on the joint vision; allow for stable growth and sustainable development on both sides of the border; take into account the needs of the local resident population, the environmental issues and equality; help building cross-border institutions and capacities for regional development and cultural exchange on a long-term basis.



Map of the Bulgaria-Serbia cross-border region

AVAILABLE BUDGET:

The available budget for period 2007-2013 is 34 089 013 Euro. The major part of the funds, 85%, comes from the European Union through the IPA (Instrument for pre-accession assistance), while the other 15% come from the Bulgarian state budget (for Bulgarian project partners) and own contribution of the beneficiaries (for Serbian project partners).

WHO MANAGES THE PROGRAMME?

The Programme is implemented through shared management between the Ministry of Regional Development of Bulgaria (Managing Authority) and the Serbian European Integration Office (National Authority). Other key Programme structures include Joint Monitoring Committee, Certifying Authority, Audit Authority and the Joint Technical Secretariat.

WHO IMPLEMENTS THE PROJECTS?

The most common beneficiaries are local authorities (municipalities), educational and cultural institutions (universities, schools, community centers), NGOs and other non-profit organizations.

Each project is implemented by at least two partners, one from each side of the border. One of the partners assumes the administrative role of Lead Partner, responsible for the overall implementation of the project.



PROJECT DURATION

Depending on the type of project, its duration can be between one and two years.

HOW ARE THE PROJECTS SELECTED?

The projects are selected and co-funded under the specific Calls for project proposals. Once a Call for proposals is launched, the organizations have approximately three months to prepare a project proposal and apply. When the submission deadline passes, all the project proposals are evaluated in three consequent stages: Administrative, Eligibility and Technical quality.

Each project proposal is given a technical score depending on its quality assessed under four key selection criteria: management capacity, consistency, methodology and budget. The projects are ranked based on the technical score and the best ranking projects (within the frames of the available funding) are granted the opportunity to sign a subsidy contract.



Contract awarding ceremonies in Sofia (top row) and Nis (bottom row)

Two Calls for project proposals have been launched under the Programme. The entire budget available to the Programme has been used up for the two calls, allowing for realization of numerous projects.

FIRST CALL FOR PROPOSALS - facts and figures:

REFERENCE NO.

2007CB16IPO006-2009-1

LAUNCHED ON

31st of August 2009,
open for three months

AVAILABLE BUDGET

12 230 771 €

NUMBER OF PROPOSALS

110 project proposals within the deadline

CONTRACTING

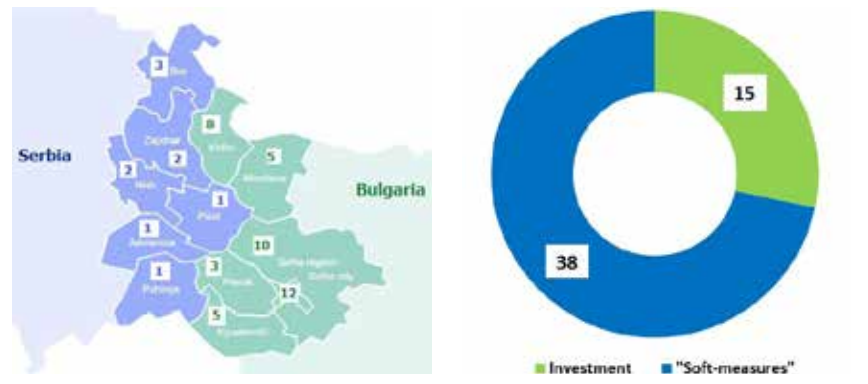
July 2011 - December 2011

NUMBER OF PROJECTS FINANCED

53 projects

SUCCESSFULLY COMPLETED

53 projects



Number of subsidy contracts: Distribution by Lead partners (left) and Distribution by priority axes (right)

All projects financed under the First Call for proposals have been successfully completed as of September 2013. A complete list of all projects funded and summaries of the project results can be found in section „Successful projects“ on the Programme web site: www.ipacbc-bgrs.eu.

FIRST CALL FOR PROPOSALS - examples of investment projects:



Infrastructure projects under the First Call for proposals have been very diverse in nature and have helped improve the regional infrastructure in various aspects: from reconstructing local roads to construction of eco lodges, biking trails, parks, playgrounds, and even equipping the police forensic laboratories.

FIRST CALL FOR PROPOSALS - examples of „soft-measures“ projects:



„Soft-measures“ projects under the First Call for proposals engaged not only a variety of beneficiaries but also a number of students, activists, professionals in various spheres and public in general. The project activities included organization of festivals, concerts, exhibitions, round-table talks, conferences, professional exchange seminars, public awareness campaigns, creation of online promotional platforms, etc.

SECOND CALL FOR PROPOSALS - facts and figures:

REFERENCE NO.

2007CB16IPO007-2011-2

LAUNCHED ON

22nd of November 2011,
open for three months

AVAILABLE BUDGET

20 397 606 €

NUMBER OF PROPOSALS

257 project proposals within the deadline

CONTRACTING

January 2013 – August 2014

NUMBER OF PROJECTS FINANCED

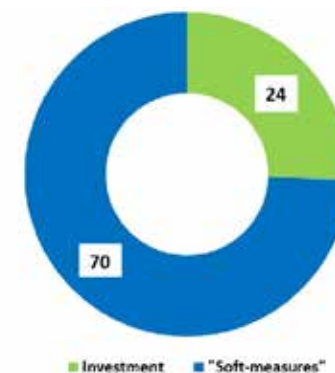
94 projects

SUCCESSFULLY COMPLETED

51 projects

CURRENTLY IMPLEMENTING

43 projects



Number of subsidy contracts: Distribution by Lead Partners (left) and Distribution by priority axis (right)

Out of the 94 contracted projects under the Second Call for proposals, 51 have been successfully completed so far. The other 43 projects are currently in the process of implementation. Due to a significant number of high quality project proposals the process of contracting was extended in order to allow for more projects to receive funding and in order to secure better absorption of EU funds.

SECOND CALL FOR PROPOSALS - examples of investment projects:



Many of the 24 investment projects under the Second Call are still in implementation, but some are already showing outstanding results. Many of the partnerships established during the First Call for proposals proved sustainable and continued in the Second Call as well, building upon the previously achieved results. The investment projects under the Second Call continue to tackle some of the most serious problems in the region, such as: the underdeveloped road infrastructure, lack of modern communication infrastructure in the rural areas, neglected water supply systems, environmental issues - lack of recycling, lack of good-quality sports playgrounds, and many others. Once completed, the investment projects will leave a lasting positive effect on the quality of life in the entire region.

SECOND CALL FOR PROPOSALS - examples of „soft-measures“ projects:



On their own, the „soft-measures“ projects are relatively small and some reach only a limited number of people in a specific field. However, the combined creative and financial force of 70 joint projects acts like an engine of positive change in the cross-border region. The project activities include: organization of concerts, exhibitions, conferences, networking events, initiatives for preservation of nature and historical heritage, cultural exchange, healthy lifestyle, etc.

PROGRAMME ACHIEVEMENTS - in numbers

Detailed statistics about all the Programme activities and results can be found in an elaborate form in the Programme Annual Reports, available on the Programme web site. Short summary of this statistics is presented below:

TOTAL NUMBER OF PROJECT PROPOSALS SUBMITTED

367

TOTAL NUMBER OF PROJECTS FINANCED

147

TOTAL NUMBER OF INVESTMENT PROJECTS

39

TOTAL AMOUNT FOR THE INVESTMENT PROJECTS

21 426 057, 87 €

TOTAL NUMBER OF „SOFT-MEASURES“ PROJECTS

108

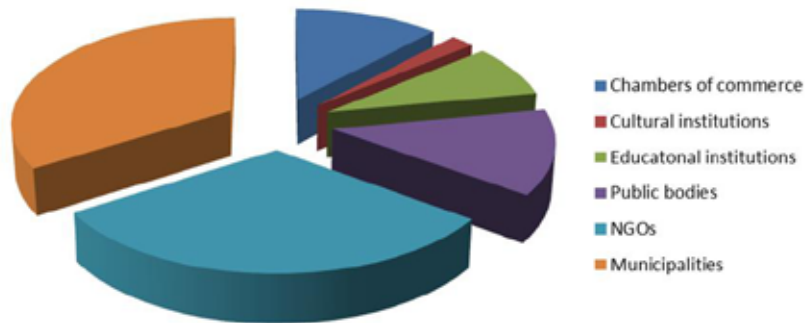
TOTAL AMOUNT FOR „SOFT-MEASURES“ PROJECTS

13 439 372, 84 €

TOTAL AMOUNT OF FUNDS CONTRACTED

34 865 430, 71 €

Types of beneficiaries



PROGRAMME ACHIEVEMENTS - in photos



Second Call Information days attracted hundreds of potential beneficiaries, ultimately resulting in a 130% increase in the number of project proposals.



Some of the biggest Programme achievements are: improvement of its public image, increased transparency of its work and efficiency in terms of attracting new beneficiaries, contracting new projects and ensuring their implementation.

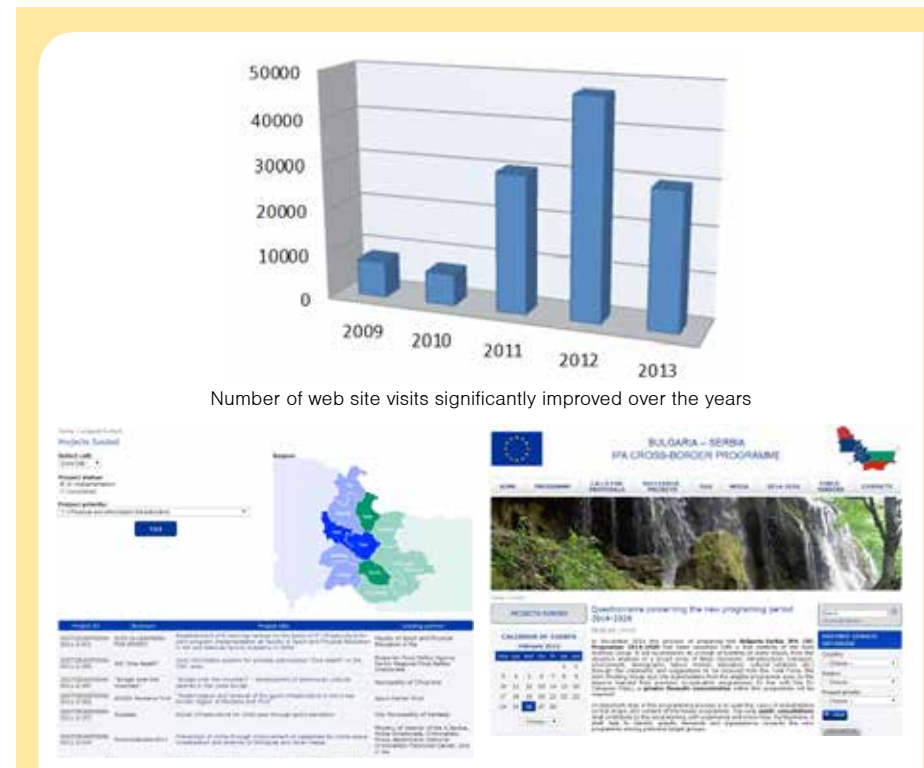
PROGRAMME IN THE MEDIA



Great variety of projects managed to attract the attention of both the local and the national media in the two countries. The most common and effective media tool used for promotion of the projects was internet. Social media platforms, project web sites, and individual news reports and press releases on numerous informational web sites reached thousands of users in the region and beyond.

PROGRAMME WEB SITE: www.ipacbc-bgrs.eu

Programme web site includes comprehensive information on the Programme and its Priority axes, accompanied by all documents concerning Programme implementation. The web site is regularly updated with relevant information on the Programme (events, news, documentation etc.) in all three languages: English, Bulgarian and Serbian. The web site also includes a tool for partners search with project partner database, interactive map with a set of filters for searching funded projects, separate section for all major tender procedure, e-newsletter, and a section dedicated entirely to the information about the new Programming period, 2014 - 2020.



COMPLEMENTARITY with other Programmes and initiatives

The Programme is of complementary character to national programmes and it contributes to the achievement of the national priorities in variety of socio-economic sectors, encouraging the sustainable regional development of the border areas with emphasis on the bilateral cross-border cooperation. Here are just a few of many examples of how the projects contribute and complement a variety of other Programmes on National and European Union levels:



Before (left) and after (right) photos from the project „Cleaning of villages and tributaries of the Danube from waste”, complementary with the „EU Strategy for the Danube Region” and the Operational Programme „Environment”.



Before (left) and after (right) photos from the project „Reconstruction of the local road in accordance with sustainable development”, complementary with Operational Programme (OP) „Regional Development” and OP „Transport”.

COMPLEMENTARITY with other Programmes and initiatives



Projects „Exchange of good practices for quality management of municipal administrations” (left) and „Establishment of cross-border network among the Municipal councils in the cross-border region ” (right) are complementary with the Operational Programme „Administrative Capacity”



Projects „Building cross-border competitiveness through partnership and networking” (left) and „Sustainable development and competitiveness through increase of the energy efficiency by use of solar energy and smart systems” (right) are complementary with the OP „Development of Competitiveness of Bulgarian Economy”



Projects „Cross-border education development action” (left) and „Youth Career Development, Employment, Entrepreneurship Networking and Transfer” are complementary with the OP „Human Resources Development”

INFORMATION, PUBLICITY and active training



The Joint Technical Secretariat, in cooperation with the Managing Authority and the National Authority, had organized numerous information and training seminars, in local languages, on both sides of the border. Training seminars covered all the essential project implementation topics such as public procurement, financial reporting and project visibility, to name just a few.

„EUROPEAN COOPERATION DAY“ and „Europe for us“ initiatives



In order to ensure greater Programme visibility among the general public, the Programme has actively participated in two major initiatives for popularization of cross-border and other EU funded Programmes. „European Cooperation Day“ is celebrated annually all across Europe on the 21st of September, since 2011. „Europe for us“ fairs are organized on the national level in Bulgaria for popularization of all EU funded Programmes.

CONCLUSION

As a consequence, the results achieved by the Programme to date, *provide evidence of the cross-border added value for the eligible region in terms of strengthening of the institutional and cooperation capacity of the public authorities responsible for the joint management and implementation of the Programme.* During this programming period, the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance, which replaced the pre-accession programmes as PHARE and CARDS brought new challenges to the management structures and to the project beneficiaries, who had to changeover the well-known implementing conditions with the new criteria for shared management and joint actions applied for this programme period. As a result of the implementation of the current programme, it could be summarised the all major obstacles for its proper implementation were overcome and the management and control systems are put in place by both countries. Furthermore, the Joint Technical Secretariat, as administrative structure established for the purpose of the current programme, is fully operational with the required experience for implementing the joint Programme under IPA assistance.

At project level there is evidence that: the Bulgaria – Serbia IPA Cross-border Programme *is selected by beneficiaries even when alternative sources of financing are available*; long term partnerships are created and maintained, projects have a joint character and there is a visible degree of institutionalization of project activities, in terms of creation of networks and of sustainable activities beyond the completion of IPA assistance. *The Programme has an authentic cross-border impact, evident from the multitude of issues addressed and perspectives of sustainable cooperation, identified and explored by over 350 project partners all over the region.*



Programme co-funded by the
EUROPEAN UNION

Bulgaria-Serbia
IPA Cross-Border Programme

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