



## Minutes

### 1st Joint Working Group for preparation of – IPA Cross-border Cooperation Programme 2014 – 2020

<b>Date:</b>	<b>14 November 2013</b>
<b>Venue:</b>	<b>1202 Sofia, Bulgaria 17-19 Sv. sv. Kiril i Metodiy Str. Ministry of Regional Development, Press Centre Hall</b>
<b>Participants:</b>	<b>According to the registration list (JWG members and guests)</b>
<b>Part A</b>	
<b>Introduction and agenda</b>	
<p>Dimana Sadonkova, Deputy Director General of DG Territorial Cooperation Management, MRD of the Republic of Bulgaria and chairperson of the JWG opened the meeting and welcomed the participants. Mrs Sadonkova provided a short overview of the 9-months negotiation process between Bulgaria and the three partnering countries on the one hand and the EC – on the other hand, on the future IPA CBC programmes. She stated that the first meeting of the JWG was held just a few days after receiving the official position of the European Commission (letter dated 15 October 2013) on the future geographic coverage of the IPA CBC Programmes, managed by Republic of Bulgaria for the next programming period. Mrs Sadonkova summarised the negotiation process with the Commission after EC`s proposal of December 2012 the three current IPA CBC Programmes to be transformed into one quadrilateral programme Bulgaria Gateway for the programming period 2014-2020. The common position of the MA and the NA on the proposed changes in the geographical scope of the future IPA CBC programmes, was that such merging would deprive the bilateral character of the currently existing programmes and will threaten their smooth implementation for the 2014-2020 period.</p> <p>The chairperson also pointed out, that the new IPA cross-border programme 2014 – 2020 between the two partnering countries is not a single responsibility of the Managing Authority or the National Authority and it has to be elaborated with the active participation of all Joint</p>	



Working Group members.

Mrs Mjellma Mehmeti Petersen, State Councilor for European Integration in the Ministry of Local Self Government (National Authority) and co-chairperson of the meeting greeted the participants and expressed her satisfaction of the successful implementation of the current programme, which is a prerequisite for the successful programme preparation. She pointed out that previous programmes always help in the preparation of the new ones and the new programmes always start in parallel with the closure of the existing ones. She wished a successful and fruitful JWG meeting and tangible results of the new IPA CBC programme.

After the presentation of the objectives of the meeting and since there weren't any proposals for adjustment of the Agenda, the Agenda of the meeting was approved.

## **Part A**

### **Setting up of the Joint Working Group**

The floor was given to Mr Milen Obretenov, Head of Monitoring, Evaluation and Programming Department, DG TCM and deputy co-chairman of the JWG who presented the composition and tasks of the Joint Working Group for the preparation of the future IPA cross-border programme 2014 – 2020.

A new paragraph 10 (2) to the draft JWG Rules of Procedure, proposed by the representative of the Ecoforum for Sustainable Development Association was introduced and approved by the JWG.

There was a question about the decision making procedure and it was explained that JWG decisions would be made by consensus where each partnering country would have one vote that would be formed by voting through simple majority within each national delegation. Articles about decision making were clarified and accepted.

The participants were asked to put forward other proposals to the RoP. Mr Manfred Kojan, Team Leader of the experts' team of Project Planning and Management Consortium suggested in the text of Article 5 (1) of the JWG RoP "*A quorum is achieved when at least 50% of the members with a right to vote are present at the meeting.*" Instead of "present" to put the word "represented" in order to make easier reaching quorum and facilitate decision making. The proposal was accepted by the JWG. Thus the RoP were approved.

## **Part B**

### **Presentation of the concept for the future IPA CBC programme**



Mr Milen Obretenov presented IPA II legal framework, the MA programming approach, the programme content according to Article 7 of the draft ETC Regulation, the principles of implementation and management structures of the new IPA CBC programme. The main elements that would need to be included in the Pre-agreement on financial and management arrangements were also presented.

The main topics of discussion were the Programme eligible territory and the eligibility of operations according to location. Mrs Sadonkova presented the flexibility opportunity which was provided in Article 45 (2) of the draft IPA II Rules of Application (“Eligibility depending on location”) according to which:

*“The managing authority may accept that all or part of an operation is implemented outside the programme area, provided that all the following conditions are satisfied:*

- a) the operation is for the benefit of the programme area;*
- b) the total amount allocated under the cooperation programme to operations located outside the programme area does not exceed [X%] of the support from the ERDF at programme level;*
- c) the obligations of the managing and audit authorities in relation to management, control and audit concerning the operation are fulfilled by the cooperation programme authorities or they enter into agreements with authorities in the Member State or third country in which the operation is implemented.”*

After a discussion held the JWG decided only NUTS level 3 or equivalent regions) along land border between the two countries to be included in the programme eligible area and only legal entities from the above mentioned programme area to be eligible applicants. The JWG accepted to apply flexibility rule for 20% of EU co-financing at programme level for activities implemented outside the programme area by the legal entities/stakeholders from the eligible programme area.

## **Part C**

### **Programme preparation**

Mr Manfred Kojan, Team leader of Project Planning and Management Consortium team and representative of OeAR Regionalberatung GmbH presented the project for preparation of the future IPA Cross-border programme for the programming period 2014 – 2020: project purpose, project team, organizational structure of the project and specific programming elements. He made overview of the planned activities and the main work phases.

Prof. Rumen Nikolov added that currently in the EU there was a process of intelligent specialization. As the new IPA CBC programme will have a very limited budget, Mr Nikolov



recommended a smart approach in programming: the documents from the platform in Seville to be used during the programming process, eligible regions to become members of the platform in Seville. He also explained that smart specialization was based on regional innovation strategies and there was a Guide on Research and Innovation Strategies for Smart Specialisation (RIS3 Guide) targeted at Structural Funds Managing Authorities, policy-makers and regional development professionals. The Ministry of Economy and Energy of Bulgaria has elaborated such strategy as well and it would be a good exercise for a pre-accession country to elaborate similar strategies. Mr Nikolov shared his view that it would be appropriate to identify areas that give potential for smart economic growth. He also explained that a process of sharing good practices was ongoing.

## **Part C**

### **Key findings and figures from the current programming period**

Ms Margarita Velcheva, state expert in the CBC – External Borders Department, DG TCM (representative of the Managing Authority) made a presentation of the achievements of the current CBC programme.

Ms Galina Karamocheva from the ECORYS-FED Consortium made a brief overview of the external consultant's findings of the mid-term evaluation of the current IPA Cross-border programme 2007 – 2013 and their recommendations for the preparation of the new cooperation programme.

## **Part D**

### **Road map and milestones of the programming process**

Mr Milen Obretenov made a review of the planned activities for programme preparation until the end of 2013 and beginning of 2014: signature of the service contract with Project Planning and Management Consortium, elaboration of territorial analysis, review of the strategic documents, by the end of 2013 - launch of the procurement procedure for Ex-ante evaluation and SEA, and in parallel – preparation and coordination of pre-agreement on financial and management arrangements. He pointed out that the actual schedule would depend on adoption of the legal framework, but the indicative deadline for having first draft of the programme is March 2014.

Mrs Mjellma Mehmeti Petersen suggested to host a next Joint Working Group



meeting when programme strategy would be presented and discussed.

Ms Dimana Sadonkova thanked for the proposal and announced that regional consultations with local stakeholders have been planned during the programme preparation stage, as the consultations will be held in the eligible area on both sides of the border. The chairperson thanked to all JWG members for their active participation in the first meeting and expressed once again the common willingness for continuation of the established good cooperation between both partnering countries towards the new programming period.

**Annexes: 1. List of participants**

**2. Rules of Procedure**

**3. Presentations and other documents**