

IPA Cross-border Cooperation Programme Bulgaria – the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia 2014-2020



2nd Regional Consultative Forum 4th June 2014

REPORT

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Background

In the context of programming the IPA Cross-border Cooperation Programme 2014-2020 between Bulgaria and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia after the first round of public consultations with relevant stakeholders held in the programme region in February and March 2014 (5 Regional Consultative Forums in each of the Programme eligible regions/districts with total 182 participants), second joint cross-border Regional Consultative Forum have been held on 4th June 2014 in Strumica .

The aim of this round of consultations was:

- to inform regional stakeholders in all 5 eligible program regions/districts (NUTS III Regions) about the status of the ongoing programming process for the IPA II cross-border Programme; results from the first round of the Regional Consultative Forums; overview on ranking of the 8 TP according the current programm projects, 1st round of RCFs, online survey, SWOT and situation analyses and CBC added values; experts proposed options for selection of the TP; and decision on selected Thematic Priority by the Joint Task Force;
- to present the expert proposal on the Intervention Logic for the Programme with its three selected and confirmed by the Joint Task Force Thematic Priorities = priority axes: (1) Protecting the environment, promoting climate change adaptation and mitigation, risk prevention and management, (2) Encouraging tourism and cultural and natural heritage and (3) Enhancing competitiveness, business environment and the development of small and medium-sized enterprises, trade and investment;
- to present and discuss, for each of the confirmed TP, the proposed Specific Objective, Results, Examples of activities as well as Indicators (Result Indicators and Output Indicators), target groups and type of beneficiaries; and
- to present and discuss type of actions and cross cutting issues.

This Regional Consultative Forums was designed as 3 hours interactive information / workshop events for about 60 participants. The target groups were representatives from municipalities, regional and national administration / public institutions, regional NGOs, Universities and other relevant institutions in the cross border region. On the 2nd Regional Consultative Forum present were 52 (19 female-36%) participants from which 14 from BG (27%) and 38 from MK (73%).

Main conclusions

- ❑ The programming experts in cooperation with representatives of Managing / National Authorities and JTS had properly informed the participants about the proposed Intervention Logic for the Programme with its three selected TPs. The participants discussed and widely supported the proposals of the programming team.
- ❑ The participants discussed the main arguments for proposed examples for activities for TP environment and competitiveness particularly, as well as the type of beneficiaries and type of actions (see notes below). IL for TP Tourism was completely supported by the participants and it fit with theirs expectations.



Main issues discussed

Conclusions on the discussions of the IL for 3 Thematic Priorities

TP 2 - Protecting the ENVIRONMENT and promoting CLIMATE CHANGE adaptation and RISK PREVENTION

Mainly discussion on this TP was on the examples of actions for the proposed result R1- Better preserved environment and biodiversity in the cross border region. Particularly commented and discussed was for action A12. Joint approaches for improving management of Natura 2000 sites. As in MK Natura 2000 sites are even still not identified, this action should cover protected areas and even more as in MK East Planning Region these sites do not exist this action should cover sites with natural resources. This adjustment should also be transferred in the proposed Result indicators R1a. Proposed Result Indicator R1b also should be reconsidered as if Natura 2000 sites are not identified, EU conform management plans are not a subject. For BG side this plans are interesting, but question is if project time life will fit with the time needed for preparation of such plans which is usually long (some times and more than 2 years) and also budget for preparation of such management plans is comprehensive.

Next discussion was on action A16. Joint approaches to protect and manage common water bodies. Question was raised on the meaning of term “common water bodies”. The programming team explained that cross-border water bodies, in case MK-BG only one, river Strumica was considered. Response of participants was that on such way other water bodies will be discriminated, and that the Programme should reconsider this action in terms to cover all water bodies, not only cross-border.

Regarding proposed output indicators, participants mentioned that as the Programme budget is very small, as well interventions which will be accordingly implemented, there is a question how much those interventions will have effect on the environmental protection, particularly for air proposed output indicator OI6 Estimated annual decrease of GHG (CO₂) (in tones of CO₂ eq.) maybe need to be reconsidered or deleted.

TP 4 - Encouraging TOURISM and CULTURAL HERITAGE

There were no comments and discussion on proposed activities/results on this TP. General opinion was that the proposal completely corresponds to their expectations for the new programme and it responds to the programme area needs.

Regarding the proposal to define and implement a strategic project for development of a cross-border tourism development strategy prior to any CfP (to assure proper thematic focusing and coordinated & coherent approach), the representative from MA explained that according to the conclusions and recommendations made on the workshop organized on 7-8 May on Implementation of CBC Programmes with IPA countries, the Strategic projects should not be identified in the Programme. The Programme shall leave space for this kind of projects, where in the stage of Programme implementation, the JMC will decide on definition and implementation of strategic project, if such is found necessary.



TP 7 - Enhancing COMPETITIVENESS, business and SME development, trade and investment

For this TP, one participant raised the question on the meaning of the proposed activity A11. Support to start-up and self-employment initiatives (especially for young people). As in MK, in the last years through the Employment Agency, projects for supporting start-up and self-employment are financed by the state budget with allocating certain amount of funds for them; the question was more clarified if here the programme was envisaging to use the same principle. It was responded that direct funds for start-up and self-employment will not be provided, the funds will support projects with soft measures which will support start-up and self-employment initiatives.

The second comment was on the type of actions, that only soft measures were proposed for this TP and why investment projects could not also be supported. Specific activities which would support construction of communal infrastructures in the municipality industrial zones were proposed. The response was that the concern of such activity is its lack of cross border impact as well as problems of measuring impacts from such activity.

Annexes:

Presentations/hand-out materials

List of Participants

