

MAY 2017

**ANNUAL  
IMPLEMENTATION  
REPORT**

**2016**

**Interreg - IPA CBC**  
  **CCI 2014TC16I5CB006**



**CCI No 2014TC16I5CB006**

**PART A**

DATA REQUIRED EVERY YEAR ('LIGHT REPORTS') (ARTICLE 50(2) OF REGULATION (EU) NO 1303/2013)

**1. IDENTIFICATION OF THE ANNUAL/FINAL IMPLEMENTATION REPORT**

CCI	2014TC16I5CB006
Title	INTERREG-IPA Cross-border Cooperation Programme Bulgaria – the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia
Version	3.0
Reporting year	2016
Date of approval of the report by the joint monitoring committee	

**2. OVERVIEW OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE COOPERATION PROGRAMME** (Article 50(2) of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013 and Article 14(3)(a) of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013)

During year 2016 all the activities concerning the 1<sup>st</sup> Call for proposals (launched in 2015) under the INTERREG-IPA Cross-border Cooperation Programme Bulgaria – the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (the Programme) were successfully completed. The Call was open to all specific objectives under Priority axis 1, Priority axis 2 and Priority Axis 3 at the total budget of EUR 7 240 469 (covering the Programme budget allocation for the years 2015, 2016 and 2017). The deadline for submission of project applications was 25 January 2016. Within the set deadline 213 projects were received out of which 165 projects were found administratively compliant. As a result of the technical assessment 134 projects were assessed as high quality (obtaining average technical score above 65 points).

The Joint Monitoring Committee (JMC) decision for allocation of additional EUR 3 357 419 (the Programme financial allocation for 2018) to the already approved budget for the 1<sup>st</sup> Call increased the financial resources available to EUR 10 597 888 which allowed 45 subsidy contracts at the amount of EUR 9 645 323 to be signed in October 2016. The contracted amount represents 51% of the total Programme budget distributed per PAs as follows:

- 14 projects at a total contracting amount of EUR 3 864 831 or 57% of the total allocation for Priority axis 1;
- 14 projects at a total contracting amount of EUR 4 017 478 or 52% of the allocation for Priority axis 2;
- 17 projects at a total contracting amount of EUR 1 763 014 or 60% of the allocation for Priority axis 3.

Until 31 December 2016 the the total amount of the advance payments transferred to the lead partners (in accordance with the provisions of the subsidy contract) is EUR 1 130 956 (EUR 406 677 – under

PA1, EUR 417 053 – under PA2, and EUR 307 226 – under PA3).

Having in mind the thematic concentration and result oriented approach in the programming period 2014-2020, a special attention to the Programme indicators' system has been made during the programme preparation and programme implementation stages. A strong link between project development and selection and the Programme Specific Objectives (SO) was established where every project could contribute to only one SO by selecting programme Output indicators (OI) within the specified SO. In that respect, in 2016 the Managing authority prepared an analysis of the expected level of achievement of the Programme OIs, based on the information provided in the approved application forms.

Due to the fact that the subsidy contracts were signed in October 2016, there are no fully implemented operations to be reported by the end of 2016 and the value of all OIs is 0. The figures for the years 2017 and 2018 presented in Table 2 below are established based on the information provided by the partners in their application forms and taking into account projects duration and foreseen contribution to the Programme OIs.

On the basis of the performed analysis by the Managing Authority it could be expected that OIs targets (2023) achievement is as follows: 15 out of 27 OIs targets are expected to be achieved or overachieved as a result of the implementation of the projects under the 1<sup>st</sup> Call; 3 OIs targets are expected to be achieved at more than 50%; 6 OIs targets – at less than 50% and 3 OIs values remain 0 – none of the contracted 1st call projects is contributing to OI 1.1.2, OI 1.2.7 and OI 2.3.3.

In addition, the data presented in the performed analysis gives assurance that all milestones for 2018 (included in the Performance framework) will be met.

During the reporting period there were expenditures covered under Priority Axis 4 "Technical Assistance" for actions and services related to Programme management and implementation, such as: remuneration of the Joint Secretariat and First Level Control unit, travel costs, daily allowances, accommodations, organization of events, JMC meetings, training seminars and elaboration of promotional materials. The indicative budget for Priority axis „Technical assistance“ for 2016 amounted to EUR 320 735 or nearly 17% of the allocation and it was divided into two main "operations" – expenditures of the MA and expenditures of the NA.

In 2016 the already established Management Information System (MIS) was further developed and constantly maintained ensuring that the programme data on each operation (including data on individual participants) is recorded and stored in computerised form for the purposes of project generation, monitoring, evaluation, financial management, verification and audit. The full functionality of MIS (including all modules and submodules) was upgraded and tested in the first half of 2016.

The established Beneficiaries Portal is functional and provides one-stop electronic exchange of information between beneficiaries and the Programme authorities. The portal gives the possibility every lead partner to access the project folders on-line, creating, modifying, and uploading relevant documentation in it.

Although electronic data exchange has been put in place, a parallel paper flow of documents concerning official correspondence between beneficiaries and programme bodies remains due to the restrictions

and requirements of the respective national legislation and rules.

In addition, during year 2016 an amendment of the INTERREG-IPA CBC Programme Bulgaria - the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia was performed concerning the establishment of baseline and target values of qualitative programme result indicators that does not influence the already approved Programme priorities and objectives. The amendment was initiated by the MA in order to fulfil the requirements set in Article 8 of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013 where it is stated that for the programme-specific result indicators, baselines shall be established using the latest available data and targets shall be set for 2023.

### 3. IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PRIORITY AXIS (Article 50(2) of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013)

#### 3.1. Overview of the implementation

ID	Priority axis	Key information on the implementation of the priority axis with reference to key developments, significant problems and steps taken to address these problems
1	<i>Environment</i>	<p>Out of 76 applications received under PA 1 "Environment" 14 projects are contracted at a total amount of EUR 3 864 831. Out of the 11 projects under SO 1.1 "Environmental protection and sustainable use of the common natural resources of the CBC area", 5 are soft type of projects with duration of between 12 and 15 months, and 6 are investment type of projects with duration 18 - 24 months.</p> <p>The first outputs are provisionally expected in 2018. As indicated in Table 2, 4 out of 5 OIs under SO 1.1 are expected to meet their targets after the successfully completion of the projects. There are no projects addressing OI 1.1.2, therefore such projects will be encouraged to participate in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Call for proposals.</p> <p>Under SO 1.2 "Prevention and mitigation the consequences of natural and man-caused disasters of cross-border dimension and impact" 3 investment type of projects are financed - one with duration of 18 months and 2 - 24 months. The 2023 target of OI 1.2.1 will be met after their successful implementation and the first outputs will be available in 2018. The other 6 OIs that measure the achievement of SO 1.2 will need additional projects will have to be contracted to achieve the respective OIs targets, such as projects that envisage investments for adaptation and mitigation of climate change consequences and measures for forest fire and flood protection, etc.</p> <p>No significant problems were detected in year 2016.</p>
2.	<i>Tourism</i>	<p>Out of 93 applications received under PA 2 "Tourism" 14 projects are contracted at a total amount of EUR 4 017 478.</p> <p>All 7 projects financed under SO 2.1 "Enhancing the tourism potential of the region through cooperation initiatives in better preservation and sustainable of natural and cultural heritage" are investment type of projects with duration 15-24 months, therefore the first outputs are expected in 2018.</p> <p>The analysis of the level of achievement of OIs under SO 2.1 shows that successful implementation of 1st call projects will ensure meeting of the target values for newly built or reconstructed or upgraded tourist related facilities and attractions (OI 2.1.3), while additional projects will be needed to meet the targets of OI 2.1.1, OI 2.1.2 and OI 2.1.4.</p> <p>All 5 contracted projects under SO 2.2 "Raising the competitiveness of the CBC region's tourist offer" are soft type of projects with duration up to 15 months. Their successful implementation will guarantee the achievement of all OIs' targets for 2023.</p> <p>The two soft projects under SO 2.3 "Promoting cooperation among regional actors in the area of sustainable tourism" cannot ensure the full achievement of the respective OIs, therefore additional projects for establishment of cross-border networks, promotion of the region cultural identity and youth initiatives will have to be contracted to achieve the targets.</p> <p>No significant problems were detected in 2016.</p>

3.	<i>Competitiveness</i>	<p>Out of 44 project proposals submitted under PA 3 "Competitiveness, 17 soft type projects are contracted at the amount of EUR 1 763 014. The projects are with duration up to 15 months. All PA 3 OIs targets are expected to be met by the end of 2018.</p> <p>No significant problems were detected in 2016.</p>
4.	<i>Technical Assistance</i>	<p>During the reporting period the main activities performed under the Technical assistance PA related to ensuring the necessary support related to the 1<sup>st</sup> Call for proposals, including: assessment of project proposals, negotiation and pre-contracting visits, contracting of projects, conducting info-days, training seminars etc.</p> <p>The Programme management activities in 2016 included organizing and conducting of technical and JMC meetings (on 14 April 2016 in Kumanovo and on 23 June 2016 in Kyustendil) as well as administrative and operational activities concerning MA, NA, JS and FLC unit (staff remuneration, participation in various events and traing seminars, maintenance of office premises etc.).</p> <p>Programme Information and communication activities covered:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Organizing events/infodays for promoting the first call for proposals;</li> <li>- European Cooperation Day 2016 – on 10 September 2016 in Bansko;</li> <li>- Contract awarding ceremony for the 1st call projects - on 19 October 2016 in Sofia;</li> <li>- Supply of promotional materials for popularization of the Programme;</li> <li>- Ongoing upgrading and maintainance of Programme official website and MIS.</li> </ul> <p>The indicative budget of Priority axis „Technical assistance“ for year 2016 amounted to EUR 320 735 or nearly 17% of the total Programme budget allocation to this priority axis.</p> <p>No significant problems were detected in 2016.</p>

**3.2. Common and programme specific indicators** (Article 50(2) of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013)

Data for common and programme-specific indicators by investment priority transmitted using the tables 1 and 2 below.



Table 1

Result indicators<sup>1</sup> (by priority axis and specific objective)

ID	Indicator	Measurement Unit	Baseline Value	Baseline Year	Target Value (2023)	ANNUAL VALUE										Observations (if necessary)	
						2014	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23		
1.1.1	Increased level of capacity in environment protection and sustainable use of common natural resources	Scale	2.56	2014	3.00	0	0	0									Frequency of reporting: 2018 2023
1.2.1	Increased joint interventions in the field of risk prevention and management	Percentage	6	2013	80%	0	0	0									Frequency of reporting: 2018 2023
1.2.2	Increased joint initiatives related to risk prevention and management	Percentage	30	2014	20%	0	0	0									Frequency of reporting: 2018 2023
2.1.1	Increased nights spent in the cross-border region	Percentage	1 618 655	2013	1%	0	0	0									Frequency of reporting: 2018 2023
2.2.1	Increased level of joint and integrated approaches to sustainable tourism development in the border area	Scale	2.44	2014	3.00	0	0	0									Frequency of reporting: 2018 2023
2.3.1	Increased public awareness regarding sustainable use of natural and cultural heritage and resources	Scale	2.49	2014	3.00	0	0	0									Frequency of reporting: 2018 2023

<sup>1</sup> The baseline and target values of qualitative result indicators (RI 1.1.1, 2.2.1, 2.3.1 and 3.1.2) are set in accordance with the Baseline and Target Values Study elaborated by MA on the base of survey carried out in year 2015 and included in the cooperation programme – version 3.0 of February 2016 (approved by the EC).

						ANNUAL VALUE										
ID	Indicator	Measurement Unit	Baseline Value	Baseline Year	Target Value (2023)	2014	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	Observations (if necessary)
3.1.1	Increased cross-border business networks created or extended	%	29	2014	10%	0	0	0								Frequency of reporting: 2018 2023
3.1.2	Increased level of awareness on the business opportunities offered by the region	Scale	2.34	2014	3.00	0	0	0								Frequency of reporting: 2018 2023

Table 2

**Common and programme specific output indicators (by priority axis); applies also to technical assistance priority axis**

	ID	Indicator (name of indicator)	Measurement unit	Target value <sup>(2)</sup> (2023)	CUMULATIVE VALUE									Observations (if necessary)		
					2014	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22		23	
Selected operations [forecast provided by beneficiaries]	OI 1.1.1	Number of supported investments for improving the environmental conditions in the programme region	Number	15	0	0	0	0	0	22						
Fully implemented operations [actual achievement]					0	0	0									
Selected operations [forecast provided by beneficiaries]	OI 1.1.2	Number of nature protected areas addressed by supported interventions	Number	5	0	0	0	0	0							
Fully implemented operations [actual achievement]					0	0	0									
Selected operations [forecast provided by beneficiaries]	OI 1.1.3	Number of supported joint mechanisms for environmental protection, promotion of biodiversity and sustainable use of natural resources	Number	5	0	0	0	0	6	8						
Fully implemented operations					0	0	0									

<sup>2</sup> Targets are optional for technical assistance priority axes.



[actual achievement]																		
Selected operations [forecast provided by beneficiaries]	OI 1.1.4	Number of institutions/organizations involved in environmental related activities	Number	20	0	0	0	0	118	130								
Fully implemented operations [actual achievement]					0	0	0											
Selected operations [forecast provided by beneficiaries]	OI 1.1.5	Number of participants in environmental related trainings and campaigns	Number	300	0	0	0	0	734	954								
Fully implemented operations [actual achievement]					0	0	0											
Selected operations [forecast provided by beneficiaries]	OI 1.2.1	Supported investments for improving disaster management and risk prevention	Number	5	0	0	0	0	0	6								
Fully implemented operations [actual achievement]					0	0	0											
Selected operations [forecast provided by beneficiaries]	OI 1.2.2	Supported investments for adaptation and mitigation of climate change consequences	Number	5	0	0	0	0	0	1								
Fully implemented operations [actual achievement]					0	0	0											
Selected operations [forecast provided by beneficiaries]	OI 1.2.3	Supported joint mechanisms for disaster management and risk prevention and for promotion of climate change awareness	Number	3	0	0	0	0	0	1								
Fully implemented operations [actual achievement]					0	0	0											
Selected operations [forecast provided by beneficiaries]	OI 1.2.4	Number of institutions/organizations involved in initiatives related to risk prevention and management	Number	10	0	0	0	0	0	6								
Fully implemented operations [actual achievement]					0	0	0											
Selected operations [forecast provided by beneficiaries]	OI 1.2.5	Number of participants in trainings and campaigns in the field of risk prevention, (including marginalized communities and other vulnerable groups)	Number	300	0	0	0	0	0	60								
Fully implemented operations [actual achievement]					0	0	0											
Selected operations [forecast provided by beneficiaries]	OI 1.2.6	Population benefiting from flood protection measures	Number	350 000	0	0	0	0	20067	75840								

Fully implemented operations [actual achievement]					0	0	0									
Selected operations [forecast provided by beneficiaries]	OI 1.2.7	Population benefiting from forest fire protection measures	Number	400 000	0	0	0	0	0							
Fully implemented operations [actual achievement]					0	0	0									
Selected operations [forecast provided by beneficiaries]	OI 2.1.1	Number of cultural and historical touristic sites reconstructed / restored / covered by conservation and protection actions	Number	25	0	0	0	0	3	5						
Fully implemented operations [actual achievement]					0	0	0									
Selected operations [forecast provided by beneficiaries]	OI 2.1.2	Length of new or reconstructed or upgraded access roads to natural, cultural and historic tourism sites, cycling routes and walking paths	Km	5	0	0	0	0	4.21							
Fully implemented operations [actual achievement]					0	0	0									
Selected operations [forecast provided by beneficiaries]	OI 2.1.3	Number of newly built or reconstructed or upgraded tourist related facilities and attractions	Number	10	0	0	0	0	3	12						
Fully implemented operations [actual achievement]					0	0	0									
Selected operations [forecast provided by beneficiaries]	OI 2.1.4	Number of created/reconstructed facilities for disabled people for access to or in the supported touristic sites	Number	5	0	0	0	0	0	3						
Fully implemented operations [actual achievement]					0	0	0									
Selected operations [forecast provided by beneficiaries]	OI 2.2.1	Number of joint touristic products, services, brands, thematic routes	Number	10	0	0	0	0	8	17						
Fully implemented operations [actual achievement]					0	0	0									
Selected operations [forecast provided by beneficiaries]	OI 2.2.2	Number of actions, tools and initiatives developed and/or implemented for promotion of sustainable tourism potential of the eligible border area	Number	10	0	0	0	0	14							
Fully implemented operations [actual achievement]					0	0	0									
Selected operations	OI 2.2.3	Number of participants in joint	Number	50	0	0	0	0	210							

[forecast provided by beneficiaries]		training and qualification initiatives in the field of sustainable tourism																
Fully implemented operations [actual achievement]					0	0	0											
Selected operations [forecast provided by beneficiaries]	OI 2.3.1	Number of cross-border networks established or strengthened in the field of sustainable tourism	Number	5	0	0	0	0	3									
Fully implemented operations [actual achievement]					0	0	0											
Selected operations [forecast provided by beneficiaries]	OI 2.3.2	Number of cultural events held for promoting the region's cultural identity	Number	15	0	0	0	0	7									
Fully implemented operations [actual achievement]					0	0	0											
Selected operations [forecast provided by beneficiaries]	OI 2.3.3	Number of participants in youth initiatives	Number	150	0	0	0	0	0									
Fully implemented operations [actual achievement]					0	0	0											
Selected operations [forecast provided by beneficiaries]	OI 3.1.1	Supported joint start-up and self-employment initiatives	Number	2	0	0	0	0	11									
Fully implemented operations [actual achievement]					0	0	0											
Selected operations [forecast provided by beneficiaries]	OI 3.1.2	Number of participants (split into men and women) in supported training and qualification initiatives	Number	150 (balanced participation of men and women)	0	0	0	0	938									
Fully implemented operations [actual achievement]					0	0	0											
Selected operations [forecast provided by beneficiaries]	OI 3.1.3	Number of enterprises receiving non-financial support	Number	10	0	0	0	0	145									
Fully implemented operations [actual achievement]					0	0	0											
Selected operations [forecast provided by beneficiaries]	OI 3.1.4	Supported initiatives for economic development and investment promotion	Number	10	0	0	0	0	8	15								
Fully implemented					0	0	0											

operations [actual achievement]																	
Selected operations [forecast provided by beneficiaries]	OI 3.1.5	Number of cooperation networks	Number	7	0	0	0	0	18								
Fully implemented operations [actual achievement]					0	0	0										
	OI 4.1.1	Number of performed evaluations of the programme	Number	N/A	0	0	0										
	OI 4.1.2	Updated MIS system	Number	N/A	0	0	1										
	OI 4.1.3	No of Monitoring Committee meetings	Number	N/A	0	1	3										
	OI 4.1.4	No of publicity events for beneficiaries	Number	N/A	0	6	8										
	OI 4.1.5	Number of employees (full time) whose salaries are co-financed by technical assistance	Number	N/A	0	5	7*										

\*Share of 33,3% of the salaries of the Bulgarian First level Controllers are covered by the Technical assistance PA.

**3.3 Milestones and targets defined in the performance framework** (Article 50(2) of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013) — submitted in annual implementation reports from 2017 onwards

Priority Axis	Indicator or Key implementation step	Measurement unit, where appropriate	Milestone for 2018	Final target (2023)
PA 1 "Environment"	OI 1.1.1 Number of supported investments for improving the environmental conditions in the programme region	Number	0	15
	KIS 1.1.1 Number of contracted projects related to investments for improving the environmental conditions in the programme region	Number	6	6
	OI 1.2.1 Supported investments for improving disaster management and risk prevention	Number	0	5
	KIS 1.2.1 Number of contracted projects related to investments for improving disaster management and risk prevention	Number	3	3
	FI 1 Eligible certified expenditure of the priority axis 1 "Environment"	EUR	419 323	5 789 852
PA 2 "Tourism"	OI 2.1.3 Number of newly built or reconstructed or upgraded tourist related facilities and attractions	Number	3	10
	KIS 2.1.3 Number of contracted projects related to newly built or reconstructed or upgraded tourist related facilities and attractions	Number	5	5
	OI 2.2.1 Number of joint touristic products, services, brands, thematic routes	Number	8	10
	FI 2 Eligible certified expenditure of the priority axis 2 "Tourism"	EUR	479 226	6 616 974
PA 3 "Competitiveness"	OI 3.1.4 Supported initiatives for economic development and investment promotion	Number	8	10
	FI 3 Eligible certified expenditure of the priority axis 3 "Competitiveness"	EUR	179 710	2 481 365

**3.4. Financial data** (Article 50(2) of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013)

Table 4

**Financial information at priority axis and programme level** (as set out in Table 1 of Annex II to Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) No 1011/2014 and table 16 of the Programme)

The financial allocation of the priority axis						Cumulative data on the financial progress					
Priority axis	Fund	Category of region	Basis for the calculation of Union support  (Total eligible cost or public eligible cost)	Total funding (EUR)	Co-financing rate (%)	Total eligible cost of operations selected for support (EUR)	Proportion of the total allocation covered with selected operations (%)  [column 7/column 5 × 100]	Public eligible cost of operations selected for support (EUR)	Total eligible expenditure declared by beneficiaries to the managing authority	Proportion of the total allocation covered by eligible expenditure declared by beneficiaries (%)  [column 10/column 5 × 100]	Number of operations selected
1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	8.	9.	10.	11.	12.
Priority axis 1	IPA	less developed	Public	6 811 592	84.99 %	3 864 830,87	56,68 %	3 864 830,87	0.00	0	14
Priority axis 2	IPA	less developed	Public	7 784 676	84.99%	4 017 478,13	51,61 %	4 017 478,13	0.00	0	14
Priority axis 3	IPA	less developed	Public	2 919 253	84.99%	1 763 013,86	60,39 %	1 763 013,86	0.00	0	17
Priority axis 4 TA	IPA	n/a	Public	1 946 169	84.99%	320 735,00	16,46 %	320 735,00	0.00	0	2
<i>Total</i>				<b>19 461 690</b>	<b>84.99%</b>	<b>9 966 057.86</b>	<b>51.21 %</b>	<b>9 966 057.86</b>	0.00	0	47

The contracted amount represents 51% of the total programme budget distributed per PAs (1-3) as follows:

- 14 projects at a total contracting amount of EUR 3 864 831 or 57% of the total allocation for Priority axis 1;

- 14 projects at a total contracting amount of EUR 4 017 478 or 52% of the allocation for Priority axis 2;
- 17 projects at a total contracting amount of EUR 1 763 014 or 60% of the allocation for Priority axis 3.

The Annual Technical Assistance Plan for 2016 was approved by the JMC on 4 April 2016 together with a detailed budget breakdown and rules on Eligibility of Technical Assistance Expenditures. The indicative budget of Priority axis „Technical assistance“ for year 2016 amounted to EUR 320 735 or about 16.46% of the total Programme budget allocation to this priority axis.

The number of operations selected under Priority axis „Technical assistance“ (2 in total) in column 12 indicates the number of TA projects (operations) which include eligible activities to be performed by the managing and national authorities.

In compliance with Article 9 (1) of the Subsidy contract the lead partner may request advance payment.

Until 31 December 2016 the the total amount of the advance payments transfereed to the lead partners is EUR 1 130 956 (EUR 406 677 – under PA1, EUR 417 053 – under PA2, and EUR 307 226 – under PA3).

**Table 5**

**Breakdown of the cumulative financial data by category of intervention for the transmission made by 31 January** (as set out in Table 2 of Annex II to Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) No 1011/2014 and tables 6-9 of the Programme)

Priority axis	Characteristics of expenditure		Categorisation dimensions								Financial data			
	Fund	Category of region	1 Intervention field	2 Form of finance	3 Territorial dimension	4 Territorial delivery mechanism	5 Thematic objective dimension ERDF/Cohe sion Fund	6 ESF secondar y theme	7 Economic dimension	8 Location dimension	Total eligible cost of operations selected for support (EUR)	Public eligible cost of operations selected for support (EUR)	The total eligible expenditure declared by beneficiarie s to the MA	Number of operatio ns selected
PA 1	IPA	less developed	085 & 087	01	01/02/03	n/a	(b)	n/a	n/a	BG413, BG415, MK North-East, South-East & East regions	3 864 830,86	3 864 830,86	-	14
PA 1	IPA	less developed	085	01	01/02/03	n/a	(b)	n/a	n/a	BG413, BG415, MK North-East, South-East & East regions	2 712 475,32	2 712 475,32	-	11
PA 1	IPA	less developed	085	01	01	n/a	(b)	n/a	n/a	BG413, MK South-East & East regions	1 407 868,16	1 407 868,16	-	5
PA 1	IPA	less developed	085	01	02	n/a	(b)	n/a	n/a	BG413, MK South-East & East regions	615 069,96	615 069,96	-	3
PA 1	IPA	less developed	085	01	03	n/a	(b)	n/a	n/a	BG413, BG415, MK North-East region	689 537,20	689 537,20	-	3
PA 1	IPA	less developed	087	01	02/03	n/a	(b)	n/a	n/a	MK North- East, South- East & East regions	1 152 355,54	1 152 355,54	-	3



Priority axis	Characteristics of expenditure		Categorisation dimensions								Financial data			
	Fund	Category of region	1 Intervention field	2 Form of finance	3 Territorial dimension	4 Territorial delivery mechanism	5 Thematic objective dimension ERDF/Cohe sion Fund	6 ESF secondar y theme	7 Economic dimension	8 Location dimension	Total eligible cost of operations selected for support (EUR)	Public eligible cost of operations selected for support (EUR)	The total eligible expenditure declared by beneficiarie s to the MA	Number of operatio ns selected
PA 1	IPA	less developed	087	01	02	n/a	(b)	n/a	n/a	MK South-East region	382 459,61	382 459,61	-	1
PA 1	IPA	less developed	087	01	03	n/a	(b)	n/a	n/a	MK North-East & East regions	769 895,93	769 895,93	-	2
<b>PA 2</b>	IPA	less developed	075, 092, 094, 095, 103	<b>01</b>	01/02/03	n/a	<b>(d)</b>	n/a	n/a	BG413, BG415, MK North-East, South-East & East regions	<b>4 017 478,14</b>	<b>4 017 478,14</b>	-	<b>14</b>
PA 2	IPA	less developed	<b>075</b>	01	01/02	n/a	(d)	n/a	n/a	MK East region	<b>599 328,40</b>	<b>599 328,40</b>	-	<b>2</b>
PA 2	IPA	less developed	075	01	01	n/a	(d)	n/a	n/a	MK East region	101 275,86	101 275,86	-	1
PA 2	IPA	less developed	075	01	02	n/a	(d)	n/a	n/a	MK East region	498 052,54	498 052,54	-	1
PA 2	IPA	less developed	<b>092</b>	01	01/02	n/a	(d)	n/a	n/a	BG415, MK North-East & South-East regions	<b>1 637 620,08</b>	<b>1 637 620,08</b>	-	<b>5</b>
PA 2	IPA	less developed	092	01	01	n/a	(d)	n/a	n/a	MK South-East region	116 312,00	116 312,00	-	1
PA 2	IPA	less developed	092	01	02	n/a	(d)	n/a	n/a	BG415, MK North-East region	1 521 308,08	1 521 308,08	-	4
PA 2	IPA	less developed	<b>094</b>	01	01/02	n/a	(d)	n/a	n/a	BG413, MK South-East region	<b>586 425,89</b>	<b>586 425,89</b>	-	<b>3</b>
PA 2	IPA	less	094	01	01	n/a	(d)	n/a	n/a	MK South-	116 373,30	116 373,30	-	1

Priority axis	Characteristics of expenditure		Categorisation dimensions								Financial data			
	Fund	Category of region	1 Intervention field	2 Form of finance	3 Territorial dimension	4 Territorial delivery mechanism	5 Thematic objective dimension ERDF/Cohe sion Fund	6 ESF secondar y theme	7 Economic dimension	8 Location dimension	Total eligible cost of operations selected for support (EUR)	Public eligible cost of operations selected for support (EUR)	The total eligible expenditure declared by beneficiaries to the MA	Number of operations selected
		developed								East region				
PA 2	IPA	less developed	094	01	02	n/a	(d)	n/a	n/a	BG413, MK South-East region	470 052,59	470 052,59	-	2
PA 2	IPA	less developed	<b>095</b>	01	02/03	n/a	(d)	n/a	n/a	BG413, MK North-East & East regions	<b>1 074 573,46</b>	<b>1 074 573,46</b>	-	<b>3</b>
PA 2	IPA	less developed	095	01	02	n/a	(d)	n/a	n/a	MK East region	457 459,54	457 459,54	-	1
PA 2	IPA	less developed	095	01	03	n/a	(d)	n/a	n/a	BG413, MK North-East region	617 113,92	617 113,92	-	2
PA 2	IPA	less developed	<b>103</b>	01	02	n/a	(d)	n/a	n/a	BG415	<b>119 530,31</b>	<b>119 530,31</b>	-	<b>1</b>
PA 2	IPA	less developed	103	01	02	n/a	(d)	n/a	n/a	BG415	119 530,31	119 530,31	-	1
<b>PA 3</b>	IPA	Less developed	063, 064, 066, 067, 073, 103, 104 & 109	01	01/02	n/a	<b>(g)</b>	n/a	n/a	BG411, BG413, BG415, MK North-East, East, South-East regions & Skopje	<b>1 763 013,78</b>	<b>1 763 013,78</b>	-	17
PA 3	IPA	less developed	<b>063</b>	01	01	n/a	(g)	n/a	n/a	BG411, BG413	<b>224 563,11</b>	<b>224 563,11</b>	-	2
PA 3	IPA	less developed	063	01	01	n/a	(g)	n/a	n/a	BG411, BG413	224 563,11	224 563,11	-	<b>2</b>
PA 3	IPA	less developed	<b>064</b>	01	02	n/a	(g)	n/a	n/a	BG413	<b>113 827,22</b>	<b>113 827,22</b>	-	1
PA 3	IPA	less	064	01	02	n/a	(g)	n/a	n/a	BG413	113 827,22	113 827,22	-	<b>1</b>

Priority axis	Characteristics of expenditure		Categorisation dimensions								Financial data			
	Fund	Category of region	1 Intervention field	2 Form of finance	3 Territorial dimension	4 Territorial delivery mechanism	5 Thematic objective dimension ERDF/Cohe sion Fund	6 ESF secondar y theme	7 Economic dimension	8 Location dimension	Total eligible cost of operations selected for support (EUR)	Public eligible cost of operations selected for support (EUR)	The total eligible expenditure declared by beneficiaries to the MA	Number of operations selected
		developed												
PA 3	IPA	less developed	<b>066</b>	01	01	n/a	(g)	n/a	n/a	MK East region & Skopje	<b>206 525,67</b>	<b>206 525,67</b>	-	2
PA 3	IPA	less developed	066	01	01	n/a	(g)	n/a	n/a	MK East region & Skopje	206 525,67	206 525,67	-	2
PA 3	IPA	less developed	<b>067</b>	01	01/02	n/a	(g)	n/a	n/a	BG413, MK South-East region	<b>312 281,23</b>	<b>312 281,23</b>	-	3
PA 3	IPA	less developed	067	01	01	n/a	(g)	n/a	n/a	MK South-East region	119 680,92	119 680,92	-	1
PA 3	IPA	less developed	067	01	02	n/a	(g)	n/a	n/a	BG413	192 600,31	192 600,31	-	2
PA 3	IPA	less developed	<b>073</b>	01	01	n/a	(g)	n/a	n/a	MK North-East region	<b>110 217,34</b>	<b>110 217,34</b>	-	1
PA 3	IPA	less developed	073	01	01	n/a	(g)	n/a	n/a	MK North-East region	110 217,34	110 217,34	-	1
PA 3	IPA	less developed	<b>103</b>	01	01	n/a	(g)	n/a	n/a	BG413, MK North-East region	<b>214 523,74</b>	<b>214 523,74</b>	-	2
PA 3	IPA	less developed	103	01	01	n/a	(g)	n/a	n/a	BG413, MK North-East region	214 523,74	214 523,74	-	2
PA 3	IPA	less developed	<b>104</b>	01	01/02	n/a	(g)	n/a	n/a	BG413, MK North-East & South-East region	<b>390 331,64</b>	<b>390 331,64</b>	-	4
PA 3	IPA	less developed	104	01	01	n/a	(g)	n/a	n/a	MK South-East &	205 635,10	205 635,10	-	2

Priority axis	Characteristics of expenditure		Categorisation dimensions								Financial data			
	Fund	Category of region	1 Intervention field	2 Form of finance	3 Territorial dimension	4 Territorial delivery mechanism	5 Thematic objective dimension ERDF/Cohe sion Fund	6 ESF secondar y theme	7 Economic dimension	8 Location dimension	Total eligible cost of operations selected for support (EUR)	Public eligible cost of operations selected for support (EUR)	The total eligible expenditure declared by beneficiarie s to the MA	Number of operatio ns selected
										North-East region				
PA 3	IPA	less developed	104	01	02	n/a	(g)	n/a	n/a	BG413, MK North-East region	184 696,54	184 696,54	-	2
PA 3	IPA	less developed	109	01	01/02	n/a	(g)	n/a	n/a	BG415, MK East region	190 743,83	190 743,83	-	2
PA 3	IPA	less developed	109	01	01	n/a	(g)	n/a	n/a	MK East region	77 826,23	77 826,23	-	1
PA 3	IPA	less developed	109	01	02	n/a	(g)	n/a	n/a	BG415	112 917,60	112 917,60	-	1
PA 4	IPA	n/a	121	01	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	274 835,00	274 835,00	-	2
PA 4	IPA	n/a	122	01	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	0	0	0	0
PA 4	IPA	n/a	123	01	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	45 900,00	45 900,00	-	2

Table 6

**Cumulative cost of all or part of an operation implemented outside the Union part of the programme area**

	The amount of IPA support <sup>(3)</sup> envisaged to be used for all or part of an operation implemented outside the Union part of the programme area based on selected operations (EUR)	Share of the total financial allocation to all or part of an operation located outside the Union part of the programme area (%) <i>(column 2/total amount allocated to the support from the IPA at programme level *100)</i>	Eligible expenditure of IPA support incurred in all or part of an operation implemented outside the Union part of the programme area declared by the beneficiary to the managing authority (EUR)	Share of the total financial allocation to all or part of an operation located outside the Union part of the programme area (%) <i>(column 4/total amount allocated to the support from the IPA at programme level *100)</i>
1	2	3	4	5
All or part of an operation outside the Union part of the programme area <sup>(4)</sup>	57 211.80	0.35 %	0.00	0 %

<sup>3</sup> ERDF support is fixed in the Commission decision on the respective cooperation programme.

<sup>4</sup> In accordance with and subject to ceilings set out Article 20 of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013.

**4. SYNTHESIS OF THE EVALUATIONS** (Article 50(2) of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013)

According to the Programme Evaluation Plan (approved on 14 April 2016 by the JMC) the first Programme evaluation - mid-term evaluation of the implementation is envisaged to start in the last quarter of 2018, therefore no evaluation results are available during the previous financial year. It will analyse the effectiveness and efficiency of the programme management system as well as the level of achievement of the set Programme objectives.

**5. ISSUES AFFECTING THE PERFORMANCE OF THE PROGRAMME AND MEASURES TAKEN**

(article 50(2) of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013)

The Programme performance has not been affected by any issues during the reporting period.

**6. CITIZEN'S SUMMARY** (Article 50(9) of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013)

A citizen's summary of the contents of the annual and the final implementation reports shall be made public and uploaded as a separate file in the form of annex to the annual and the final implementation report

**7. REPORT ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF FINANCIAL INSTRUMENTS** (Article 46 of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013)

Not applicable

**8. WHERE APPROPRIATE, PROGRESS IN PREPARATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF MAJOR PROJECTS AND JOINT ACTION PLANS** (Article 101(h) and Article 111(3) of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013 and Article 14(3)(b) of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013)

**8.1. Major projects**

Not applicable

**8.2. Joint action plans Progress in the implementation of different stages of joint action plans**

Not applicable



## **PART B**

*REPORTING SUBMITTED IN YEARS 2017, 2019 AND FINAL IMPLEMENTATION REPORT (Article 50(4) of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013 and Article 14(4) of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013)*

**9. ASSESSMENT OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE COOPERATION PROGRAMME** (Article 50(4) of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013 and Article 14(4) of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013)

**9.1 Information in Part A and achieving the objectives of the programme** (Article 50(4) of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013)

As prerequisites for the sound financial management and proper implementation of the Programme, are the setting up a Description of the management and control system and conclusion of Memorandum of Implementaion (Mol) between both partnering countires.

In that respect, the Managing Authority has set up an adequate and fully operational institutional system, which in 2016 received an unqualified opinion by the Audit Authority for compliance with the designation criteria related to internal control arrangements, risk management, management and control activities and monitoring as set out in Annex XIII to Regulation (EC) No 1303/2013.

During the reporting period, the Memorandum on Implementation of the Programme was co-signed on 20 January 2016 – on behalf of the government of the Republic of Bulgaria and on 1 March 2016 - on behalf of the government of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. The Mol was ratified by the National Assembly of the Republic of Bulgaria on 10 June 2016.

Taking the necessary steps towards achievement of the Programme’s objectives, the Managing authority launched the 1<sup>st</sup> Call for proposals on 23 September 2015. The call was open for all three priority axes at the total amount of EUR 7 240 469, representing the Programme’s financial allocation for years 2015, 2016 and 2017.

An extensive information campaign, which included 2 info-day events in Bulgaria, 3 info-day events in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and 1 partner search forum in Bulgaria, together with an in-depth “Questions & Answers“ section on the Programme’s web site, led to generating a substantial interest among potential beneficiaries to explore the possibilities for funding, and thus 213 project proposals were received within the specified deadline of 25 January 2016. The distribution among all three priority axes is as follows: 76 proposals were submitted under PA 1, „Environment“, 93 under PA 2 “Tourism“ and 44 under PA 3 ”Competitiveness“.

Out of the 213 submitted proposals, 165 passed the administrative compliance and eligibility check and were subject to technical and quality assessment. Of those, 134 projects received average technical scores above 65 points (out of maximum 100), which was the threshold for technical admissibility. Due to the overall high quality of the remaining projects the JMC decided to increase the financial resources available under the 1<sup>st</sup> Call with the Programme’s financial allocation for year 2018 as well, thus reaching a total available budget of EUR 10 597 888.

Based on the JMC decision a pre-contracting procedure with the selected projects was started, including check for double financing, check for compliance with State Aid rules (for Bulgarian projects partners only), on-the-spot site visits of the investment proposals and budget negotiations with all project partners. Upon completion of the procedures, some of the project proposals were declined for



signature of subsidy contracts, due to inconsistencies between the presented information/documentation and the actual physical situation, which in turn allowed for additional negotiations with projects from the reserves list under each priority axis.

As a result 14 projects were contracted under PA 1 "Environment ", with 6 Lead partners from Bulgaria and 8 from the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, with partnering organizations being municipalities, district administrations, associations and NGOs. The majority of the projects are investment type (9) while the rest (5) are "soft" type, submitted mainly under SO 1.1. "Environmental protection and sustainable use of the common natural resources in CBC area" (11 projects).

A total of 14 projects were contracted under PA 2 "Tourism ", with 8 Lead partners from Bulgaria and 7 from the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, with partnering organizations being municipalities, district administrations, cultural institutes, associations and civil society structures. The number of investment and soft type of project proposals is equal (7 to 7).

A total of 17 projects were contracted under PA 3 "Competitiveness ", with 10 Lead partners from Bulgaria and 7 from the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, with partnering organizations being associations, universities, utility companies, public enterprises and NGOs. All 17 projects under the specific objective 3.1. "Improvement the competitiveness of regional businesses" are "soft" type.

All 45 subsidy contracts were signed in October 2016. The total contracted amount under Priority axis 1 "Environment" is EUR 4017478, Priority axis 2 "Tourism" - EUR 4 500 943 and Priority axis 3 "Competitiveness" - EUR 1 763 014.

Data related to programme output indicators (OIs) in this report is based on the information provided by the beneficiaries in their application forms that are an integral part of the subsidy contracts of the 1st Call projects. Due to the fact that the subsidy contracts were concluded in October 2016, there are no fully implemented operations to be reported by the end of 2016 and value of all OIs is 0.

On the basis of the performed analysis a forecast can be made that OIs targets (2023) achievement is as follows: 15 out of 27 OIs targets are expected to be achieved or overachieved as a result of the implementation of the first call projects; 3 OIs targets are expected to be achieved at more than 50%; 6 OIs targets – at less than 50% and 3 OIs values remain 0 – none of the contracted 1st call projects is contributing to OI 1.1.2, OI 1.2.7 and OI 2.3.3. In that respect additional projects addressing nature protected areas, forest fire protection and promotion of the region cultural identity and youth initiatives will have to be contracted in order the respective OIs targets to be met.

In addition the data presented in the performed analysis gives assurance that all milestones for 2018 (included in the Performance framework) will be met through the implementation of the first call projects.

In general, Priority Axis 4 Technical Assistance (TA) supports actions for preparation, management, monitoring, evaluation, information and communication. Technical assistance is invested in the overall management and promotion of the programme, awareness raising and pro-active project generation. The funds are used also for financing of activities aiming at further improving of the administrative capacity of programme management structures and reducing the administrative burden on beneficiaries. Mainly actions for implementation, monitoring and inspection, as well as information and

communication activities were implemented under PA 4 during year 2016.

**9.2. Specific actions taken to promote equality between men and women and to promote non-discrimination, in particular accessibility for persons with disabilities, and the arrangements implemented to ensure the integration of the gender perspective in the cooperation programme and operations** (Article 50(4) of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013 and Article 14(4), subparagraph 2, (d) of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013)

The principles set out in Article 7 of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013 on promotion of equality between men and women and non-discrimination were taken into account during programming process and were included in the Guidelines for Applicants under the 1st Call for proposals, as the project applicants were invited on application stage to explain how their projects would comply with and possibly even strengthen gender equality. A separate criterion was included in the technical and quality assessment grid for evaluation of the project proposals, aiming to stimulate applicants to link their project activities with more than one of the programme horizontal principles. During the project proposals assessment, maximum points in this section were given to projects being coherent with all the 3 elements (gender equality, sustainable development, equal opportunities and non-discrimination).

Some output indicators, such as OI 3.1.2 „Number of participants (split into men and women) in supported training and qualification initiatives“, OI 2.2.3 „Number of participants in joint training and qualification initiatives in the field of sustainable tourism“ allow reporting the horizontal issues that have been addressed during the project implementation. From the contracted under SO 2.1 seven projects, two envisage creation or reconstruction of facilities for disabled people in the supported touristic sites.

In addition, every Lead project partner shall present in the Final Project Progress Report information on how the project activities and outputs contribute to the horizontal principles.

**9.3. Sustainable development** (Article 50(4) of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013 and Article 14(4), subparagraph 2, (e) of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013)

The principles set out in Article 8 of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013 on sustainable development were taken into consideration during the programming process and during the preparation of Guidelines for Applicants under the 1st Call for proposals. At the application stage, sustainable development was included in project selection criteria as quality criterion to be assessed in project proposals.

During project implementation, programme OI 2.2.3 „Number of participants in joint training and qualification initiatives in the field of sustainable tourism“, 2.3.1 „Number of cross-border networks established or strengthened in the field of sustainable tourism“ allow reporting the horizontal issues that have been addressed during the project implementation. In addition, project lead partners will present information on how the project activities and outputs have actually contributed to horizontal issues in their final project progress reports.

**9.4. Reporting on support used for climate change objectives** (Article 50(4) of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013)

Eleven 1<sup>st</sup> Call projects that have chosen to implement activities contributing to intervention field code 085 “Protection and enhancement of biodiversity, nature protection and green infrastructure” will ensure 40% support to climate change objectives (in accordance with *Annex 1 “Nomenclature for the categories of intervention of the Funds under the Investment for growth and jobs goal and of the Youth Employment Initiative”* of Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) No 215/2014). Some projects aim to improve waste management and pollution prevention, as well as to increase public awareness about environmental and natural resources protection. Another group of projects introduce energy efficiency solutions by investing in energy-efficient public buildings and lighting, raise awareness on RES potential and benefits. Third group of projects foresee investments in green infrastructure and awareness raising initiatives for environment protection pollution reduction and waste management.

Three projects have linked their activities for awareness raising, civil protection and disaster management systems and infrastructures with intervention field code 087 “Adaptation to climate change measures and prevention and management of climate related risks (e.g. erosion, fires, flooding, storms and drought),” that provides 100% support to climate change objectives. These three projects are focused on achieving an integrated monitoring, evaluation and prevention of flooding in the cross-border region through introducing a joint system for flood-risk management.

Following the requirements of DIRECTIVE 2001/42/EC on the assessment of the effects of certain plans and programmes on the environment and the respective Bulgarian national legislation, the Managing Authority prepared Annual monitoring report (SEA compatibility report) on the compatibility of the environmental effects of the "INTERREG-IPA CBC Bulgaria - the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia" for the year 2016. The SEA compatibility report was coordinated and approved on 18<sup>th</sup> April 2017 by responsible environmental body – Ministry of Environment and Water of Republic of Bulgaria and was published on the website of the Ministry of Regional Development and Public Works and on the official page of the INTERREG-IPA Cross-border Cooperation Programme Bulgaria – the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.

**9.5 Role of partners in the implementation of the cooperation programme** (Article 50(4) of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013 and Article 14(4), subparagraph 1, (c) of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013)

The most important role of partners is demonstrated in their participation in the Programme Joint Monitoring Committee (JMC) which makes the strategic decisions concerning the overall implementation of the Programme. The JMC is a permanently acting bilateral partnership structure without legal personality, composed of representatives of Bulgaria and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (national delegations) appointed by respecting the principles of partnership and representation. The national delegations are formed of members with voting rights and members in an advisory capacity, nominated by local, regional and national authorities / organisations, economic and social partners, other relevant bodies representing civil society and stakeholders from the cross-border region.

According to the JMC Rules of procedures any decision is taken by consensus between the national delegations of the partnering countries by respecting the opinion and suggestions of every JMC member during the constructive discussions.

Some of the most important decisions taken by the JMC in 2016 were as follows:

- approval of the results from the Administrative compliance and eligibility check of the 1<sup>st</sup> Call project proposals as well as approval of Complaint procedure report concerning that stage;
- approval of allocation of Programme funds for 2018 to the available budget for the 1<sup>st</sup> Call for proposals;
- approval of the results from the Technical and quality assessment stage as well as approval of Complaint procedure report concerning that stage;
- approval of the Programme document modification concerning establishment of baseline and target values of the qualitative Programme result indicators;
- approval of the Annual Implementation Report for 2014-2015 including report on implementation of e-Cohesion regulatory requirements and the Evaluation plan of the Programme;
- approval of documents concerning Priority Axis 4 Technical assistance (Multi-annual indicative budget forecast, Annual technical assistance plan, Annual technical assistance budget, Eligibility of technical assistance expenditures;

Ensuring the transparency at each stage of the Programme development and implementation is crucial for the proper addressing the needs and challenges of the cross-border regions. Representatives of partners with relevant background to the Programme priorities and objectives, including non-government organisations, local, regional and national authorities as well as educational, cultural and tourism institutions took part in the coordination and development of Programme related documents such as the Guidelines for applicants for the 1<sup>st</sup> Call for proposals. The partners were also involved in Programme publicity activities, e.g. information days, partnership forum and joint events etc.

**10. INFORMATION AND ASSESSMENT** (Article 14(4), Subparagraph 1 (A) And (B), of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013)

## **10.1 Progress in implementation of the evaluation plan and the follow-up given to the findings of evaluations**

According to the approved Programme Evaluation Plan, the first evaluation is envisaged to be launched in the last quarter of 2018. It will cover mid-term analysis of the effectiveness and efficiency of the programme management system, the level of achievement of the set Programme's targets, including the relevance, consistency and complementarity of the Programme objectives as well as the effectiveness and efficiency of the Communication strategy.

## **10.2 The results of the information and publicity measures of the Funds carried out under the communication strategy**

During year 2016 the programme implementing structures carried out series of activities and used variety of information and publicity tools to achieve the objectives of the Programme Communication Strategy and to reach all its target groups.

### **Publication tools**

#### *Website*

The Programme website [www.ipa-cbc-007](http://www.ipa-cbc-007) was one of the main publicity tools used to promote the Programme and to disseminate relevant information. The whole range of information concerning the Programme (general information, programme and project related documents, including manuals and guidelines, questions and answers section, etc.) was presented in a user-friendly interface (accessible to people with disabilities as well). During the 2016 the Programme website was visited 31 820 times of which 60.2% are new and 39.8% are old visitors.

In order to ensure transparency of the decision making process, all JMC decisions were made public on the website of the programme, as well as the list of projects approved for financing (in accordance with the provisions of Article 115 (2) and Annex XII of EU Regulation no 1303/2013). The list is available on the Programme website and regularly updated. In addition, the list of all JMC members was published on the Programme website in accordance with Article 48 (2) CPR which ensure avoiding conflicts of interest.

In November 2016 a "Handbook of Best Practices" and recommendations for a better steering future projects preparation was published on the website. The study was elaborated within the performed Impact Evaluation of the IPA Cross-border Programmes 2007-2013.

#### *Social media - Facebook & Twitter*

Programme related information was posted on the Facebook and Twitter Programme profiles. By the end of 2016 Facebook page reached more than 2800 members. The postings on the Programme Facebook page have got over 120 000 views as a whole.

### **Promotional Events**

*European Cooperation Day 2016* On 10 September 2016 the Programme celebrated the EC Day 2016 through conduction a joint concert in Bansko of the legendary rock band “Leb i Sol” and the Orchestra Chamber Opera – Blagoevgrad. The concert attracted large audience from the CBC region which had the opportunity to enjoy an unique musical performance. Advertisements about the joint event were published on regional web news portals as well as broadcasted on regional radio stations. In addition, 10 boost articles in both languages (video clip, poster and photos from the event) were uploaded on the Facebook page.

The joint concert was highly estimated by INTERACT as a good example for promotion of the cross-border cooperation.

#### *Media event concerning Impact evaluation*

On 9 December 2016 a media event was organized in Sofia, on which the findings from the impact evaluation of the IPA CBC programmes 2007-2013, including the “Handbook of Best Practices” were presented and widely discussed with the key programmes’ stakeholders.

#### **Promotional materials**

Promotional materials have been elaborated and partially disseminated in 2016: USBs, laptop bags, conference and shopping bags, table flag sets, promotional sweatshirts, calendars, large wall maps and folded maps of the CB region, organizers, raincoat ponchos, umbrellas, mugs and some small promotional materials as well (pens, notepads, agenda organizers, binders, cardboard folders, sets of colour markers, PVC stickers, etc.).

All communication activities in 2016 aimed at promoting the Programme, its priorities and financing opportunities, through creating communication tools to assist the potential beneficiaries in project generation and implementation, as well as popularizing the Programme results. In addition, all communication activities observed the EC requirements as set in the Communication and Visibility Manual for European Union External Actions.

## **11. ADDITIONAL INFORMATION** (Article 14(4), subparagraph 2 (a), (b), (c) and (f), of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013)

### **11.1 Progress in implementation of the integrated approach to territorial development, including sustainable urban development, and community-led local development under the cooperation programme**

Not applicable

### **11.2 Progress in implementation of actions to reinforce the capacity of authorities and beneficiaries to administer and to use the EU funds** (where appropriate)

Actions to reinforce the capacity of authorities and beneficiaries to administer and to use the EU funds during 2016 include

#### **Training seminars for beneficiaries**

Training seminars for the project partners in the approved 1<sup>st</sup> Call projects were held on 21 October 2016 in Kyustendil – for the Bulgarian beneficiaries, and on 3 November 2016 in Strumica - for the Macedonian beneficiaries. The training seminars were focused on the technical and financial project implementation, monitoring, contracting procedures, expenditure verification, and MIS.

### **Training seminars for programme bodies**

MA, NA and JS staff members participated in various seminars and workshops organised by INTERACT programme or other training organisations (for example: Bulgarian Institute of Public Administration), as follows:

- Project Development Seminar for Interreg Programmes (18 - 19 February, 2016 - Stockholm, Sweden);
- Annual Communication Seminar for Interreg Programmes (12 - 13 April, 2016 - Gdansk, Poland) - communication seminar includes evaluation and communication, the next steps in Interreg branding as well as a training on photography;
- Successful management of Interreg-IPA CBC – seminar organized by Interact programme targeted to new staff working in Interreg-IPA CBC Programmes (9 - 10 June 2016 in Tirana, Albania).
- Training for NA representatives and First Level Controllers about working with Management Information System was held on 15 November 2016 and included training about the new functional characteristics of the MIS 2014 - 2020 and electronic platform “Beneficiary portal”.

### **Programme staff needs assessment**

An external assessment of the administrative capacity and workload in the Managing Authority, First Level of Control Unit and Joint Secretariats under INTERREG-IPA CBC Programmes 2014-2020 managed by Republic of Bulgaria (including Bulgaria – Turkey programme) and identifying training needs was performed in 2016. The specific recommendations given by the external consultant are going to be taken into consideration in regard to future capacity building activities of the programme bodies.

### **Development of written guidelines:**

Guidelines for applicants, Project Implementation Manual for Programme beneficiaries, FLC Guidelines, Questions & Answers, etc. were elaborated and regularly updated in 2016. All guidelines are available on the Programme website.

### **11.3 Contribution to macro-regional and sea basin strategies** (where appropriate)

Not applicable

### **11.4 Progress in the implementation of actions in the field of social innovation** (where appropriate)

Not applicable.

**12. FINANCIAL INFORMATION AT PRIORITY AXIS AND PROGRAMME LEVEL** (Articles 21(2) and 22(7) of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013)

The financial allocation of the priority axis						Cumulative data on the financial progress					
Priority axis	Fund	Category of region	Basis for the calculation of Union support* (Total eligible cost or public eligible cost)	Total funding (EUR)	Co-financing rate (%)	Total eligible cost of operations selected for support (EUR)	Proportion of the total allocation covered with selected operations (%) [column 7/column 5 × 100]	Public eligible cost of operations selected for support (EUR)	Total eligible expenditure declared by beneficiaries to the managing authority	Proportion of the total allocation covered by eligible expenditure declared by beneficiaries (%) [column 10/column 5 × 100]	Number of operations selected
1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	8.	9.	10.	11.	12.
Priority axis 1	IPA	Less developed	Public	6 811 592	84.99 %	3 864 830,87	56,68 %	3 864 830,87	0.00	0,00 %	14
Priority axis 2	IPA	Less developed	Public	7 784 676	84.99%	4 017 478,13	51,61 %	4 017 478,13	0.00	0,00 %	14
Priority axis 3	IPA	Less developed	Public	2 919 253	84.99%	1 763 013,86	60,39 %	1 763 013,86	0.00	0,00 %	17
Priority axis 4 TA	IPA	n/a	Public	1 946 169	84.99%	320 735,00	47,13 %	320 735,00	0.00	0,00 %	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>IPA</b>		<b>Public</b>	<b>19 461 690</b>	<b>84.99%</b>	<b>9 966 057.86</b>	<b>51.21 %</b>	<b>9 966 057.86</b>	<b>0.00</b>	<b>0,00 %</b>	<b>47</b>