



ANNUAL IMPLEMENTATION REPORT 2015

Bulgaria – the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia
IPA Cross-Border Programme
CCI Number 2007CB16IPO007





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GLOSSARY OF ACRONYMS

AIR	Annual Implementation Report
AA	Audit Authority
AEUFEA	Audit of European Union Funds Executive Agency
CA	Certifying Authority
CBC	Cross-border Cooperation
EU	European Union
FLC	First-Level Control
IPA	Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance
IPA II	Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance 2014-2020
JMC	Joint Monitoring Committee
JTS	Joint Technical Secretariat
JWG	Joint Working Group for preparation of the IPA II CBC Programme
MA	Managing Authority
MIS	Management Information System
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
NA	National Authority
OI	Output Indicator
PA	Priority Axis
PPR	Project Progress Report
RI	Result Indicator
RfFLC	Request for First-level Control
RfP	Request for Payment
RMG	Risk Management Group
TA	Technical Assistance





1. IDENTIFICATION

The Annual Implementation Report (AIR) is drawn up in accordance with the provisions under Article 112 of Commission Regulation № 718/2007.

The current report is the seventh AIR for Bulgaria – the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia IPA Cross-Border Programme, CCI Number 2007CB16IPO007 (hereinafter referred to as the Programme) and spans over the period of 1 January 2015 – 31 December 2015.

The Managing Authority (MA) for the Programme is the Ministry of Regional Development and Public Works (MRDPW) of the Republic of Bulgaria having as counterpart the National Authority within the Ministry of Local Self-Government of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, acting as the programme's National Authority (NA).

Objective concerned:	IPA Cross-border Cooperation	
Programming period:	2007 – 2013	
Programme:	Bulgaria – the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia IPA Cross-Border Programme	CCI No. 2007CB16IPO007
Eligible area concerned:	Bulgaria (NUTS III regions): Blagoevgrad District (14 municipalities) and Kyustendil District (9 municipalities)	The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (NUTS III regions): Northeastern Statistical Region (6 municipalities), Eastern Statistical Region (11 municipalities) and Southeastern Statistical Region (10 municipalities)
Reporting year:	2015	

Date of approval of Head of MA:	31 March 2016
Date of approval of the annual report by the Joint Monitoring Committee:	14 April 2016





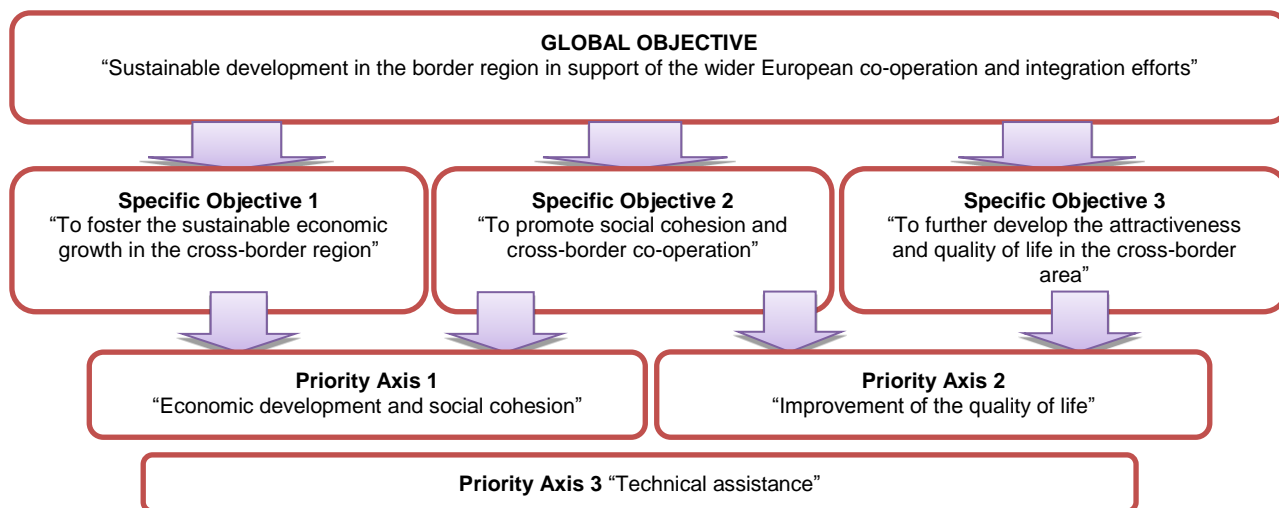
2. OVERVIEW OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PROGRAMME

The Bulgaria – the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia IPA Cross-border Programme was approved by the European Commission with Decision C(2007) 6298 on 14 December 2007, amended with Decision C(2010) 3880 on 21 June 2010, Decision C(2012) 4936 on 17 July 2012 and Decision C(2012) 8373 on 14 November 2012 and Decision C(2014) 1536 on 12 March 2014. The description of management and control systems was approved by the European Commission with letter ref. No DG REGIO E1 D(2010), Ares 978794/21 December 2010.

Within the period of 1 January 2007 – 31 December 2015 three open Calls for Proposals were launched under the Programme which attracted a total number of 320 applications. These figures are positive sign for the dynamics of the bilateral co-operation between the two neighbouring countries and show intensity of cooperation at the stage of project preparation. At the same time, the large number of common project proposals shows good will and increased interest in implementing joint cross-border initiatives contributing to the sustainable development and the improvement of the quality of life in the region. The financed projects cover variety of thematic issues including improving small-scale public infrastructure, protecting the environment, investing in education and knowledge sharing, strengthening research and innovation, enhancing cultural exchange, promoting local and regional governance, etc. Projects under the Programme are usually relatively small in budget but create valuable cross-border partnership, influence territorial cohesion, contribute for sharing European values and facilitating integration.

Cross-cutting issues are addressed in the Programme through implementation of specific actions (within the financed projects) contributing to the promotion of equality between men and women; environmental protection as well as particular actions to promote equal opportunities and prevent any form and expression of discrimination.

The objectives and priority axes of the Programme are presented in the figure below:





2.1. ACHIEVEMENT AND ANALYSIS OF THE PROGRESS

2.1.1 Information on the physical progress of the Programme:

- Status of the projects**

The number of joint projects supported under the Programme as of 31 December 2015 is 100 respectively 32 projects under the first Call for Proposals, 32 under the second Call for Proposals and 36 under the third Call for Proposals.

The three Calls for Proposals were open for all areas of intervention under PA1 and PA2 of the Programme.

The Programme budget was entirely covered by these Calls. Additionally, the accumulated savings from projects already completed were used for financing the qualitative worthwhile projects from the reserve list.

As of 31 December 2015, there were 95 projects completed and 5 projects under the third Call for Proposals remain on the implementation schedule for 2016.

Summary of the milestones of the calls for proposals under the Programme

1st Call for Proposals		No. 2007CB16IPO007-2009-1
	Launched on 14 September 2009	Budget: EUR 6 980 436 (allocations 2007-2009)
	93 project proposals received within the deadline	
	Assessment and Contracting	July 2010 – August 2011
	32 subsidy contracts	Total amount EUR 6 256 423
	all projects were successfully finalised in 2014	
2nd Call for Proposals		No. 2007CB16IPO007-2011-2
	Launched on 14 June 2011	Budget: EUR 5 869 638 (allocations for 2010 – 2012)
	122 project proposals received within the deadline	
	Assessment and Contracting	October 2011 – July 2012
	32 subsidy contracts	Total amount EUR 7 943 418
	28 projects were successfully finalised in 2014 and 4 projects at the total amount of EUR 94 499.79 were finalised in 2015	
3rd Call for Proposals		No. 2007CB16IPO007-2012-3
	Launched on 3rd December 2012	Budget: EUR 3 083 616 (allocations for 2013)
	95 project proposals received within the deadline	
	Assessment and Contracting	March – December 2013
	Overcontracting	Second half of 2014
	36 subsidy contracts	Total amount EUR 6 022 629
	31 projects completed until December 2015 and 5 projects are still under implementation	

- Modifications of the subsidy contracts**





During the project life-cycle and due to the certain reasons, the following types of modifications to the subsidy contracts have proved to be necessary for the smooth projects implementation: partnership amendments, project contents changes, budget amendment, extension of implementation period and administrative changes. Depending on the type of the changes and their effect on the project outcomes and results, all contracts' modifications have been proceeded with notification and / or written approval or addendum on the part of the relevant administrative structure as JTS, MA or JMC.

Substantial modifications of the subsidy contracts such as partnership amendments, changes in the projects' outputs and results (and relevant indicators), and extension of the projects' implementation period have been exceptions rather than a common practice and in any case need prior approval on the part of JMC and signing addenda.

Since the first Call for Proposals brought a significant number of requests for contracts' modifications, the respective procedures were improved in line with the principles of the sound management to ensure administrative burden reduction. Currently the modification procedures are the day's routine and they do not affect to the proper programme's implementation.

2.1.2. Indicators

The Programme result indicators are vital to the efficient and effective implementation of the Programme, and they serve to monitor and evaluate the extent to which the Programme has achieved its objectives.

The table below presents data in a cumulative manner and based on the finalised projects. The achievements were measured in compliance with the elaborated Methodology of Programme output and result indicators assessment in order to ensure their reliable and plausible interpretation. In addition, a forecast on the expected indicators values for 2016 is provided. The data for the achievement in 2016 is based on the projects approved but not finalised yet under the Third Call for Proposals.

These figures show that the Programme is on good track for the achievement of its objectives and most of the result indicators will reached their target values by the end of 2016.

No	Programme Result Indicators		2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	Total
1	Joint information services established	Achievement	0	0	0	0	0	7	5	7	2	1	22
		Target 2016	2										
		Baseline*	8										
2	Increased cross-border movement of people and	Achievement	0	0	0	0	0	17	16	18	1	1	53
		Target 2016	1.5%										
		Baseline*	46										





	exchange of goods and services in the region												
3	New Social Economic enterprises created	Achievement	0	0	0	0	0	10	0	10	1	0	21
		Target 2016	2										
		Baseline*	20										
4	Improved environment for development of relationships across the border	Achievement	0	0	0	0	0	3	3	8	5	1	20
		Target 2016	3%										
		Baseline*	18										
5	Projects actually applied	Achievement	0	0	0	0	0	3	0	1	3	0	7
		Target 2016	3										
		Baseline*	1										
6	Decreased pollution in the region	Achievement	0	0	0	0	0	1	2	4	1	1	9
		Target 2016	2%										
		Baseline*	1										
7	Awareness –raising on environmental protection	Achievement	0	0	0	0	0	5	8	11	6	2	32
		Target 2016	2.5%										
		Baseline*	32										
8	Increased attractiveness of the region based on preservation of natural resources and cultural heritage	Achievement	0	0	0	0	0	9	5	3	4	1	22
		Target 2016	2%										
		Baseline*	8										
9	Increased common cultural capital	Achievement	0	0	0	0	0	6	6	2	5	1	22
		Target 2016	2%										
		Baseline*	37										

2.1.3. Financial information

The total value of the Programme budget is EUR 19 944 697 out of which EUR 16 952 994 are European funding and EUR 2 991 703 national co-financing from state budgets by both partnering countries. The division of financial support between priorities 2007-2013 is shown in the table below:

Financial allocation to each priority axis by source of funding (EUR)

Priority axis	Union	National public	Total funding	Co-financing
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	<i>support</i>	<i>funding</i>		<i>rate (%)</i>
	(a)	(b)	c=a+b	a/c*100:b/c*100
Priority Axis 1 “Economic development and social cohesion”	6 781 198	1 196 682	7 977 880	85:15
Priority Axis 2 “Improvement of the quality of life”	8 476 497	1 495 851	9 972 348	85:15
Priority Axis 3 “Technical assistance”	1 695 299	299 170	1 994 469	85:15
TOTAL	16 952 994	2 991 703	19 944 697	85:15

The table above represents data for the programming period 2007-2013 according to the approved by the JMC on 12 October 2011 amendment related to new financial allocations covering the period 2012 and 2013 of the Programme which follows the adoption by the EC of the Multi-annual Indicative Financial Framework 2012-2013 and approved Programme amendment related to the de-commitment procedure for 2011 (Decision C (2012) 8373 on 14 November 2012).

- Achievement of Programme payment targets (n+3 rule)**

All the measures taken by the MA for speeding up the verification process such as possibility for additional verifications of expenditures, training for beneficiaries, individual consultations, etc. resulted in a higher level of absorption of the funds by the project partners during 2015 over the target. The spending targets of the Programme were met: while the amount that had to be certified during 2015 was EUR 2 855 200 (IPA financing), the total amount of the IPA funds certified to 31 December 2015 was EUR 3 499 652.

The accomplishment status of n+3 rule as of 31 December 2015 is shown in the table below:

Programme payment targets*					EC advance payments 2007-2009	EC reimbursements 2007-2014**	Total advance payments + reimbursements	Amounts to be included in application for payment in order to avoid risk of de- commitment
2011	2012	2013	2014	2015				2016
605 798	2 690 518	2 744 330	2 799 216	2 855 200	3 296 316	12 809 028	16 105 344	2 912 304

* Accumulated amounts 2007-2015, for the years 2009 and 2010 the value is 0.

The goal for 2015 is overachieved by more than MEUR 2.4 (IPA funding) and the loss of funds is prevented. This was result of the combined efforts of the MA, NA and JTS (both main and branch offices) that played a





proactive role in the smooth projects' implementation by providing individual consultations, publishing additional guidance and templates of the most frequently used project documents, tender dossiers and day-to-day communication in support to the project partners.

Data from quality check performed by the Certifying Authority

During 2015 the "National Fund" Directorate at the Ministry of Finance of the Republic of Bulgaria, acting as Certifying Authority (CA) for the Programme has conducted a regular on-the-spot check before certification. As a result of the common efforts of the joint management structures – MA, NA and JTS three certification report were submitted to CA in 2015 amounting at EUR 3 509 225 (IPA funding). Based on the results from on-the spot checks, desk-based checks of the submitted MA's reports on certification, as well as on assessment of other available information by the Certifying Authority, expenditures on the total amount of EUR 9 537 were excluded from the proposal for certification to the EC.

2.1.4. Information about the breakdown of use of the funds

During 2015 the project beneficiaries submitted to the MA requests for interim and final payments amounting to EUR 4 389 119 for the implementation of projects under priority axes 1 and 2. Payment claims related to Priority Axis 3 „Technical Assistance“ amount to EUR 391 110.

Financial flows during 2015 per Programme's priority axes (EUR)

	<i>Expenditures paid out by the beneficiaries included in payment claims sent to the MA</i>	<i>Corresponding Community and Public contribution (IPA and national co-financing)</i>	<i>Private expenditures</i>	<i>Expenditures paid by the body responsible for making payments to the beneficiaries (IPA and national co-financing)</i>	<i>Total amount certified by CA</i>
Priority Axis 1	2 093 367	1 992 361	101 006	1 810 550	2 301 838
Priority Axis 2	2 295 752	2 295 752	0	1 671 561	1 815 316
Priority Axis 3	391 110	391 110	0	404 350	42 835
TOTAL	4 780 229	4 679 223	101 006	3 886 461	4 159 989

The total number of contracted projects under the first, second and third Calls for Proposals is 100 at the amount of EUR 20 222 470, as shown in the table below.

Financial implementation of projects under priority axes 1 and 2 as of 31 December 2015



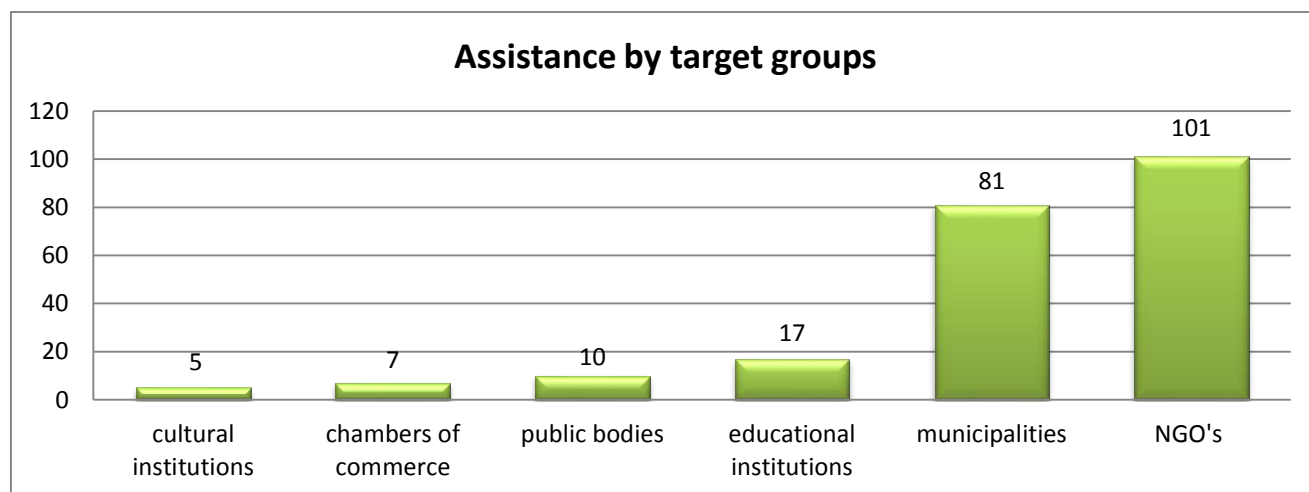


Calls for proposals	Contracts	Total contracting amount	Advance payments	Interim and final payments	Total payments	Financial implementation
	number	EUR				%
First call	32	6 256 423	1 234 561	4 029 025	5 263 586	84
Second call	32	7 943 418	1 606 928	5 668 539	7 275 467	92
Third call	36	6 022 629	1 138 222	3 301 440	4 439 662	74
TOTAL	100	20 222 470	3 979 711	12 999 004	16 978 715	84

2.1.5. Assistance by target groups

Wide range of target groups are involved in implementation of subsidy contracts funded within the Programme. Varieties of regional entities (municipalities, district administrations, NGO's, cultural and educational institutions, associations and business support organizations, etc.), being project partners benefited from Programme implementation. Indirectly, the residents in the cross-border area profited from the results of the operations financed by the Programme through awareness raising initiatives and another public events.

The graphic below is presenting the distribution of entities implementing projects under the Programme, classified by target groups (state of play as of 2015).



2.1.6. Assistance repaid or re-used

Not applicable.

2.1.7. Qualitative analysis





In 2015 the Programme has entered in its final stage of implementation when the efforts of the Programme bodies were concentrated mainly on ensuring successful completion of all on-going projects. In total 100 cooperation projects between the institutions and organizations of the two countries were contracted under the three Calls for proposals on the amount of EUR 20 222 470 which could be estimated at approximately 113% of the available Programme budget.

During the reporting period no significant problems have been encountered for programme implementation and no risks to programme performance have been identified. The total certified amount to subsidy contracts of the IPA funds exceeded the Programme's payment targets, thus till the end of 2015, the overall amount certified under the three PA's was EUR 15 634 343 or 78.39% of total budget. The increased rate of certified expenditures contributed to smooth programme implementation including timely payments. No funds were de-committed in accordance with the "n+3" rule.

System audit findings show the management and control system has been operating properly in both countries.

The indicators of the Programme display a good degree of achievement of the target values and the main results achieved until the end of December 2015 include numerous successful projects that contributed to:

- Increased cross-border interaction and mobility through establishment of new partnerships and relations between neighbours across the border;
- Better preserved natural resources and biodiversity as well as decreased level of pollution in the region as a result of the established permanent networks for environment protection and reasonable and sustainable utilisation of resources;
- Enhanced and sustainable economic development of the border region and increased competitiveness of small and medium-sized enterprises (SME's) by both establishing joint information services and encouraging business contacts across the border, etc.;
- Strengthened potential for development of tourism through sustainable use of natural resources and cultural assets of the border region.
- Increased governance capacity and improved policies through joint initiatives, development of joint strategic documents and exchange of best practices and know-how.

The achieved results clearly show that the dynamics of the bilateral collaboration lead to intensity of cooperation among the local stakeholders and to increased interest in implementing common cross-border initiatives for sustainable development of the regions.

The cross-cutting and horizontal issues such as gender equality and non-discrimination principles were also taken into consideration under the financed projects although they were not directly targeting through the Programme priorities.





The Programme had an added value for the residents in the cross-border region through the direct Programme investments in sectors such as business, local economic development, culture, tourism, environment and education, etc. In addition, the Programme (through IPA) supported the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia in capacity building for adopting and implementing institutional, administrative, social and economic policies and practices in order to comply with the European Union values in view of its forthcoming EU membership.

2.2. INFORMATION ABOUT COMPLIANCE WITH COMMUNITY LAW

The amendments brought to the legislation in 2015 did not influence the Programme implementation.

2.3 SIGNIFICANT PROBLEMS ENCOUNTERED AND MEASURES TAKEN TO OVERCOME THEM

No significant problems for programme implementation were encountered during 2015.

2.4 CHANGES IN THE CONTEXT OF THE PROGRAMME IMPLEMENTATION (IF RELEVANT)

Not applicable.

2.5 COMPLEMENTARITY WITH OTHER INSTRUMENTS

A clear demarcation and complementarity of Bulgaria – the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia IPA Cross-border Programme 2007-2013 is ensured with: 1) other European territorial co-operation / IPA strands – in particular, the relevant cross-border and transnational co-operation programmes; 2) other EU co-financed programmes or funds implemented at national level such as Environment, Regional Development, Development of the Competitiveness of Bulgarian Economy, Human Resources Development operational programmes and Rural Development Programme for Bulgaria, as well as IPA component III, IV and V programmes in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia; 3) other programmes / projects with national / regional and other funding of each of the partnering countries.

Complementarity and co-ordination with the other financial instruments is maintained during each stage of Programme Cycle Management through the existing national/regional co-ordination structures and mechanisms in both participating countries.





2.6 MONITORING ARRANGEMENTS

Monitoring of the Programme is focused on ensuring quality of implementation and compliance with applicable rules and procedures.

- **Monitoring measures and risk assessment procedure**

Programme level

During 2015, the Managing Authority, National Authority and the Joint Monitoring Committee (JMC) carried out monitoring at programme level and reviewed the overall performance in terms of effectiveness, quality and coherence of the implementation of all actions towards meeting the objectives set out in the programmes.

An attendance JMC meeting was carried out on 11 June 2015 in the Town of Bansko, Bulgaria. The main decisions included the approved 2014 Annual Implementation Report of the Programme, information and publicity measures and the overall progress of programme implementation. During the JMC session the JMC members visited the successfully finalised investment project called "Sustainable Tourism and promotion of ecology under the partnership" implemented by the Municipality of Razlog with project partner Municipality of Gevgelija.

Additionally, several JMC written procedures were conducted for consideration and approval of subsidy contracts modifications, extension of project implementation periods, TA budget for the year 2016, etc.

A number of technical meetings between MA, NA and JTS were carried out within 2015 for discussion of issues related to the finalisation of the Programme.

Project level

The overall monitoring at projects level was carried out by the JTS verifying the proper implementation of the projects in conformity with the provisions of the subsidy contract. During 2015, 41 final monitoring visits to beneficiaries of finalised projects were carried out and it could be estimated that all planned project activities were successfully implemented in accordance with the provisions of the subsidy contracts.

During the project lifecycle the risk assessment is regularly performed by the JS in order to predict the risk events jeopardise the successful project implementation. In compliance with the Risk assessment analysis and the Risk response plan, the JTS carried out technical meetingd for the projects in risk and based on the mitigation measures all risk events were avoided.

- **Implementation manuals and Management Information System**





In 2015, the Programme implementation procedures were performed in compliance with the provisions set in Programme implementation manual for the three IPA CBC Programmes managed by Bulgaria (Bulgaria – Serbia, Bulgaria – the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Bulgaria – Turkey). During the reporting period an annual review was carried out in January 2015 and the financial procedures were modified in accordance with the instructions provided by the Certifying Authority.

As regards to the Project Implementation manual it remains unchanged. The MIS is fully operational and it collects Programme related data (priority structure, budget, indicators etc.); projects data on the application and assessment phase, contracting and implementation (Subsidy contract and modifications concerns, progress implementation reports and FLC request, etc.); and financial data for ensuring sound management of Community funds. The system is regularly upgraded and accessible via Internet at mis-007.mrrb.government.bg (the entries are controlled through users' permissions).

• **First-level Control System**

Bulgarian authorities have set up a decentralised control system in which the first level control is carried out by external independent controllers selected by the "Territorial Cooperation Management" DG within the Ministry of Regional Development and Public Works in accordance with respective national rules.

The same approach has been adopted in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. The Macedonian FLC system is decentralised. The Controllers are employed as freelance contractors with a framework contract, selected through regular calls and included in a list of Controllers for this Programme. The experts are recruited through a procedure carried out in line with the national legislation. The National Authority designates a controller from the pool of selected experts for the functions of controllers.

During the year 2015, the FLC system was duly implemented for the purposes of verification of expenditures for project under the Second and the Third Call for Proposals.

• **Audits under the Programme**

System audit

In 2015, the AA has started performing the fifth system audit under the Programme. Its main objective was to obtain reasonable assurance on the effective functioning of the management and control system under the Programme in accordance with the requirements of Regulation (EC) 718/2007 and Regulation (EC) 1828/2006. The audit was carried out by Audit of European Union Funds Executive Agency (AEUFEA), a second level spending centre to the Minister of Finance of the Republic of Bulgaria and Audit Body – Audit Authority of Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance of the Republic of Macedonia. The audit mission is still on-going and the final conclusions will be available in 2016.

Operations Audit





Throughout 2015, the AEUFEA conducted audit of operations for assurance that the certified expenditures were correct and the underlying transactions were legal and regular. During the audit mission expenditures certified in the period of 1 January 2014 to 31 December 2014 were checked. The AA has underlined four findings with financial impact, amounting to EUR 11 974,59, for which the relevant corrective measures have already been evoked by MA.

- **Evaluations under the Programme**

Multi-annual Evaluation Plan for Programme was elaborated and approved by JMC in 2011. The Programme was subject to three evaluations aiming to improve the quality, effectiveness and consistency of the assistance and the strategy and implementation of the Programme.

The evaluation of the Communication Plan was performed in 2011 and aimed at examination of the level of achievement of the objectives set out for the period of 2007 – 2010. Detailed information on the findings and recommendation from the internal analysis was presented in the Annual Implementation Report 2012.

An internal examination of the Programme output and results indicators were performed after the first Call for Proposals. Detailed information on the findings and recommendation from the internal analysis has been presented in the Annual Implementation Report 2012.

The on-going evaluation of the Programme was carried out by external consultants in year 2013 with aim to assess the Programme' performance (interim results) and the level of achievements of the output and results indicators; to measure the effectiveness of the FLC system and to provide independent conclusions and recommendations for management and control system's improvements in way to ensure successful completion of the Programme and to ensure bases for the programming of the new interventions for programming period 2014-2020. The main findings and recommendations were presented in the Annual Implementation Report 2013.

The executive summaries and the final reports on the on-going evaluation of Bulgaria – the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia IPA Cross-Border Programme was uploaded to the programme website and to the web-portal of the Interact Programme in the appropriate "Good Expertise Gained" Section.

2.7 NATIONAL PERFORMANCE RESERVE (WHERE APPLICABLE AND ONLY FOR THE ANNUAL IMPLEMENTATION REPORT SUBMITTED FOR 2010)

Not applicable.





3. IMPLEMENTATION BY PRIORITY AXES

3.1 PRIORITY AXIS 1 “ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND SOCIAL COHESION”

Objective	To increase the overall competitiveness of the cross-border economy and to improve social development and social cohesion
	Sphere of Intervention 1.1 “Economic Development”
	Sphere of Intervention 1.2 “Social Cohesion”
	Sphere of Intervention 1.3 “Project Preparation”

3.1.1. Achievement of targets and analysis of the progress

- Information on the physical and financial progress of the Priority Axis 1**

According to the revised financial plan for the period 2007-2013 funds available for Priority Axis 1 amounts to MEUR 7.9, out of which MEUR 6.7 IPA funding and MEUR 1.1 national co-financing.

The total number of projects contracted under Priority Axis 1 is 53, of which 17 are under the first call, 14 – under the second call and 22 – under the third call for proposals. All first and second call projects, and 16 third call projects have successfully finalised their activities by the end of 2015.

The financial implementation of the Priority Axis 1 projects until 31 December 2015 is 84% of the total contracting amounts or 97% of the Programme budget available for Priority Axis 1.

Number of subsidy contracts under Priority Axis 1 as of 31 December 2015

Sphere of intervention	First call	Second call	Third call	Total
1.1 „Economic development“	9	5	8	22
1.2 „Social cohesion“	7	9	10	26
1.3 „Project preparation“	1	0	4	5
TOTAL	17	14	22	53

In 2015 the amount of advance payments under the Third Call for Proposals of PA 1 has increased by EUR 26 759 or 5.6%. The sums of interim and final payments under the Second and the Third calls for proposals have been increased by EUR 479 602 or 24.1% and EUR 1 209 017 or 230.7% respectively.





Financial implementation of projects under Priority Axis 1 as of 31 December 2015 (EUR)

Call for Proposals	Number of contracts	Total contracting amount	Advance payments	Interim and final payments	Total payments
First call	17	2 824 291	549 981	1 807 132	2 357 113
Second call	14	3 524 075	703 060	2 467 663	3 170 723
Third call	22	2 866 875	507 071	1 733 126	2 240 197
TOTAL	53	9 215 241	1 760 112	6 007 921	7 768 033

➤ Sphere of intervention 1.1 “Economic development”

The objective of this sphere of intervention is to use and mobilise all opportunities in the field of economy, to enlarge the field of actions, to increase market possibilities and to create new steady partnerships. This sphere has a key role for enhancement of the innovative development, through development of research and technology, cooperation and marketing. Creation of networks and clusters as flexible instruments for cooperation among research, development, qualification and other institutions will contribute for economic growth of the region.

The output indicators which are used to measure the progress under this sphere of intervention are shown in the table below. The information in the table is provided on the ground of successfully finalised projects. The data are based on finalised projects and the indicators' values are presented as total number.. The expected indicators' values for 2016 are provided based on ongoing projects.

In compliance with the recommendations of DG REGIO, EC (Letter ARES (2015) 424874), the values of the output indicators for the years 2011 – 2014 were recalculated on the based data from the finalised projects.

No	Programme Output Indicator		2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	Total
1	Business and educational linkages created	Achievement	0	0	0	0	50	136	11	7	2	6	212
		Target 2016	15										
		Baseline	9										
2	Communities & institutions participating in knowledge economy	Achievement	0	0	0	0	1	5	2	35	10	2	55
		Target 2016	7										
		Baseline	0										
3	Awareness campaigns of the benefits of ICT and new media	Achievement	0	0	0	0	2	12	1	9	5	1	30
		Target 2016	20										
		Baseline	9										





4	ICT training	Achievement	0	0	0	0	0	10	2	7	6	0	25
		Target 2016	10										
		Baseline	9										
5	Access to and usage of new technology	Achievement	0	0	0	0	1	32	4	46	1	1	84
		Target 2016	10										
		Baseline	0										
6	SMEs involved/ addressed in CBC projects	Achievement	0	0	0	0	130	618	404	361	92	140	1745
		Target 2016	7										
		Baseline	50										
7	Institutions/ bodies benefiting of programme activities	Achievement	0	0	0	0	11	136	66	60	0	38	311
		Target 2016	50										
		Baseline	194										
8	New jobs created	Achievement	0	0	0	0	0	52	4	48	4	0	108
		Target 2016	50										
		Baseline	30										

➤ Sphere of intervention 1.2 “Social cohesion”

Objective of this sphere of intervention is to overcome the separating effect of the border and to promote correlation between the two sides. The activities in this sphere are aiming to contribute to the increase of social co-operation growth through strengthening connections and co-operation between different actors serving as a backbone to various cross-border initiatives.

The output indicators (OI) which are used to measure the progress under this sphere of intervention are shown in the table below. The information in the table is provided on the ground of successfully finalised projects. The data are based on finalised projects and the indicators' values are presented as total number.. The expected indicators' values for 2016 are provided based on ongoing projects.

No	Programme Output Indicators		2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	Total
1	Joint cooperation projects on development of skills and knowledge	Achievement	0	0	0	0	7	6	2	6	17	0	38
		Target 2016	10										
		Baseline	15										
2	Training places created	Achievement	0	0	0	0	2	5	6	16	4	10	43
		Target 2016	3										
		Baseline	7										
3	Management and job-related training courses	Achievement	0	0	0	0	1	19	9	14	21	0	64
		Target 2016	5										
		Baseline	51										





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4	People participating in training	Achievement	0	0	0	0	26	679	268	657	57	200	1887
		Target 2016	350										
		Baseline	1460										
5	People with enhanced skills	Achievement	0	0	0	0	0	326	139	648	284	260	1657
		Target 2016	200										
		Baseline	1460										
6	Business to education linkages	Achievement	0	0	0	0	2	13	1	3	13	0	32
		Target 2016	10										
		Baseline	3										
7	People from vulnerable groups trained	Achievement	0	0	0	0	0	105	43	258	88	0	494
		Target 2016	20										
		Baseline	26										
8	Scientific exchange and transfer of know-how	Achievement	0	0	0	0	1	5	2	8	16	0	32
		Target 2016	10										
		Baseline	4										
9	Networking structures created/ developed	Achievement	0	0	0	0	8	16	2	12	5	1	44
		Target 2016	3										
		Baseline	11										
10	Joint plans for cooperation in sphere of human management	Achievement	0	0	0	0	1	6	1	5	4	0	17
		Target 2016	3										
		Baseline	13										

➤ Sphere of intervention 1.3 “Project preparation”

The objective of this sphere of intervention is to prepare mature projects to apply under other EU and national financial sources.

The output indicators which are used to measure the progress under this sphere of intervention are shown in the table below.

No	Programme Output Indicators		2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	Total
1	Feasibility studies	Achievement	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	2	1	0	5
		Target 2016	5										
		Baseline	0										
2	Preliminary and detailed design works	Achievement	0	0	0	0	0	3	0	1	16	0	20
		Target 2016	7										
		Baseline	1										
3	Project environmental assessments	Achievement	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	16	0	18
		Target 2016	2										
		Baseline	0										





- **Qualitative analysis**

Until 31 December 2015 all first and second call projects, and 8 third call projects finalised their activities and the planned outputs were delivered. Envisaged activities were realised with the active involvement of the respective target groups. Majority of the projects were based on balanced and adequate partnerships and demonstrated clear correlation between activities and results.

Programme targets of outputs related to the objective for the development of business co-operation, clustering and networking were already achieved by the first call's projects and delivered economic surveys, joint strategies and technical and business infrastructure rehabilitated.

Only few projects under the first and second calls targeted the objective for boosting innovation and knowledge economy in the border region, and Programme's targets on indicators related to innovation were underachieved. For that reason, the list of eligible activities under the third Call for Proposals was designed to target knowledge economy and ICT. Overall, the supported projects created joint information services and business and educational linkages, having some contribution to innovation and knowledge economy.

From the data relating to output indicators of Sphere of Intervention 1.1 it is apparent that all targets for 2016 have already been overachieved with exception of the indicator "Awareness campaigns of the benefits of ICT and new media" which is expected to be fully achieved after the second and third calls' projects are finalised.

The Programme's targets on indicators related to human resources development are overachieved by the first call's projects only, though indicators are numerous. The majority of targets for 2016 output indicators of Sphere of Intervention 1.2 have been already overachieved, especially the indicators "People from vulnerable groups trained", "Training places created" and "Networking structures created / developed". The objectives for integration of vulnerable groups were overachieved.

The beneficiaries under Sphere of Intervention 1.3 have found more suitable to use the Programme support for project environmental assessment, rather than for preparation of feasibility studies or preliminary and detailed works designs. Apparently the Programme is on good track for the achievement of its objectives for Priority Axis 1.

3.1.2. Significant problems encountered and measures taken to overcome them

No significant problems were encountered in 2015.





1.2 PRIORITY AXIS 2 IMPROVEMENT THE QUALITY OF LIFE

Objective

To stipulate cooperation for protection of nature and specific fields of environment, protection of historical and cultural heritage as well as provision of assistance in emergency cases.

Sphere of Intervention 2.1 "Utilisation of eco resources"

Sphere of Intervention 2.2 "Utilisation of cultural resources"

3.2.1. Achievement of targets and analysis of the progress

- Information on the physical and financial progress of the Priority Axis 2**

The funds available for Priority Axis 2 amounted to EUR 9 972 348 (incl. EUR 8 476 497 Community funding and EUR 1 495 85 national funding).

The total number of projects contracted under Priority Axis 2 is 47, of which 15 are under the first call, 18 – under the second call and 14 – under the third call for proposals. All first and all second call projects, and 6 third call projects have successfully finalised their activities until the end of 2015.

The financial implementation of the Priority Axis 2 projects till 31 December 2015 is 84% of total contracting amounts or 92% of the Programme budget available for Priority Axis 2.

Number of subsidy contracts under Priority Axis 2 as of 31 December 2015

Sphere of intervention	First call	Second call	Third call	Total
2.1 „Utilisation of eco resources“	3	13	9	25
2.2 „Utilisation of cultural resources“	12	5	5	22
TOTAL	15	18	14	47

Financial implementation of projects under Priority Axis 2 as of 31 December 2014 (EUR)

Call for Proposals	Number of contracts	Total contracting amount	Advance payments	Interim and final payments	Total payments
First call	15	3 432 132	684 580	2 221 893	2 906 473
Second call	18	4 419 343	903 868	3 200 876	4 104 744
Third call	14	3 155 754	631 151	1 568 314	2 199 465
TOTAL	47	11 007 229	2 219 599	6 991 083	9 210 682





In 2015 the amount of advance payments under the Third Call for Proposals of PA 2 has increased by EUR 67 863 or 12.0%. The sums of interim and final payments under the Second and the Third calls for proposals have been increased by EUR 420 658 or 15.1% and EUR 1 095 417 or 231.6% respectively.

➤ Sphere of intervention 2.1 “Utilisation of eco resources”

The objective of this sphere of intervention is to contribute to the preservation of natural resources biodiversity by applying environmental friendly approaches in all fields and increasing awareness to secure the sustainable use of resources. On the other hand there is cooperation potential in the field of eco-resources use for the development of the region (eco-, green-, rural tourism, etc.).

The output indicators which are used to measure the progress under this sphere of intervention are shown in the table below. The values of the output indicators for the years 2011, 2012, 2013 and 2014 are based on finalised projects. The values of the output indicators for 2013 are calculated on the basis of finalised first and second calls' projects, while those for 2014 and 2015, on the basis of finalised second and third calls' projects. Data for the expected achievement in 2016 is based on the implemented and not finalised contracts under the second and third Calls for Proposals. To assess the achievement, the sum of indicator's values for 2011 – 2015 was compared to 2016 target value.

No	Programme Output Indicators		2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	Total
1	Number of joint environmental friendly projects	Achievement	0	0	0	0	3	10	14	11	6	1	45
		Target 2016	20										
		Baseline	6										
2	Joint Eco-itineraries created/ developed	Achievement	0	0	0	0	1	3	12	3	2	2	23
		Target 2016	10										
		Baseline	8										
3	Joint tourist services created/ developed	Achievement	0	0	0	0	0	1	8	3	1	0	13
		Target 2016	10										
		Baseline	7										
4	Partnerships for cases of natural disasters established	Achievement	0	0	0	0	0	2	11	1	3	1	18
		Target 2016	2										
		Baseline	1										
5	Joint environmental management plans	Achievement	0	0	0	0	0	3	3	2	2	0	10
		Target 2016	2										
		Baseline	15										
6	Permanent networks for environmental protection and reasonable utilization of resources	Achievement	0	0	0	0	0	3	3	6	6	0	18
		Target 2016	5										
		Baseline	1										



No	Programme Output Indicators		2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	Total
7	Environmental awareness campaigns	Achievement	0	0	0	0	0	7	16	23	9	1	56
		Target 2016	15										
		Baseline	18										

From the data in the table it is apparent that the targets for 2016 have been already overachieved. As a whole, the Programme is on good track for the achievement of its objectives.

➤ Sphere of Intervention 2.2 “Utilisation of cultural resources”

The objective of this sphere of intervention is to foster the cross-border co-operation in the field of cultural affairs and thus contribute to the improvement of quality of life in the region. The development of cultural tourism potential will also lead to a reasonable and sustainable use of the opportunities of the region.

The output indicators which are used to measure the progress under this sphere of intervention are shown in the table below. The information in the table is provided on the ground of successfully finalised projects. The values of the output indicators for the years 2011 – 2015 are based on finalised projects. The values of the output indicators for 2013 are calculated on the basis of finalised first and second calls' projects, while those for 2014 and 2015, on the basis of finalised second and third call projects. Data on the forecasted achievement in 2016 is based on the contracted and not finalised contracts under the second and third Calls for Proposals.

No	Programme Output Indicators		2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	Total
1	Number of projects concerning common cultural heritage	Achievement	0	0	0	0	12	16	6	2	16	1	53
		Target 2016	20										
		Baseline	37										
2	Tourist destinations created/ developed	Achievement	0	0	0	0	0	43	21	2	3	5	74
		Target 2016	10										
		Baseline	33										
3	Tourist services created/ developed	Achievement	0	0	0	0	0	24	18	2	7	10	61
		Target 2016	10										
		Baseline	37										
4	Surrounding area of cultural spots improved	Achievement	0	0	0	0	0	41	7	0	7	7	62
		Target 2016	7										
		Baseline	26										
5	Joint cultural events carried out	Achievement	0	0	0	0	6	48	28	8	19	5	114
		Target 2016	15										
		Baseline	20										
6	Events popularizing intangible	Achievement	0	0	0	0	0	38	27	3	13	5	86





	cultural heritage and traditions	Target 2016	15										
		Baseline	21										
7	Awareness campaigns	Achievement	0	0	0	0	5	38	22	7	6	5	78
		Target 2016	15										
		Baseline	55										

To assess the achievement, the sum of indicator's values for 2011 – 2015 was compared to 2016 target value. From the data in the table it is apparent that the targets for 2016 have been already achieved.

• Qualitative analysis

All projects under Priority Axis 2 have a clear correlation between activities and results. They address mainly the investment needs of the Programme area. The projects have not had serious implementation problems threatening the achievement of project results.

The objective for eco, rural and cultural tourism development was addressed by several projects (mainly investment projects) which contributed to improvement of tourism attractiveness of the region by reconstruction of museums, construction of centres for interpretation of cultural heritage, improvement of surrounding of the cultural sites and their accessibility. These projects contributed as well to the development of tourism services and joint cultural and awareness events. By the end of 2015, all programme output indicators related to tourism development have been achieved by the implementation of the projects under the three calls for proposals.

The objective for cultural co-operation strengthening was targeted by several projects, both investment referring to cultural infrastructure improvements and soft ones. Apart from the investment components, a significant number of joint cultural events were conducted (concerts, planners, festivals, music and theatre performances, exhibition, etc.). All projects implemented under Priority Axis 2 have managed to deliver their planned outputs. The projects have clear contribution to improving the access of people in the cross-border region to cultural services.

From the data relating to output indicators of Sphere of Intervention 2.1 it is apparent that the majority of the targets for 2016 have been already overachieved, especially those relating with the response to natural disasters, environmental protection and reasonable utilisation of resources. As a whole, the PA2 is on good track for the achievement of its objectives, despite some targets have been too ambitious in spheres like joint nature / environment management and joint tourism products development.

3.2.2. Significant problems encountered and measures taken to overcome them

No significant problems were encountered in 2015.





4. MAJOR PROJECTS (IF APPLICABLE)

Not applicable – no major projects have been financed under the Programme.

5. TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

For the period 2007-2013 the amount of EUR 1 695 299 Community funding is available for Priority Axis 3 “Technical assistance”.

In order to implement the activities under the technical assistance, an Annual Technical Assistance Plan is prepared by the MA in coordination with the NA and together with the other structures involved in the Programme implementation. Total budget forecast for 2015 was amounted to EUR 868 650 of which EUR 570 020 allocated for MA and EUR 298 630 for NA. The detailed indicative breakdown of budget for 2015 was approved by JMC on 13 January 2015.

The 2015 TA budget encompasses administrative expenditures, travel and accommodation expenditures, expenditures for meetings, training sessions, promotional events, information and publicity, external expertise, supply, maintenance of equipment, etc. in the following sphere of interventions:

➤ **Sphere of Intervention 3.1 “Overall administration and evaluation of the programme”**

The objective is to provide support to the MA and NA for their tasks related to programme management. It also cover the administrative costs for JTS activities for programme implementation including JTS staff remuneration (main and branch offices).

The issue concerning the delays in the payments to the staff of the JTS branch office in Strumica have not been tackled in year 2015 which led to serious difficulties in the daily work of the experts and in particular in the process of monitoring of the projects. Although the problem has been taken into consideration by the responsible authorities no tangible results are achieved so far.

- **Programme staff trainings**

During 2015, MA, NA and JTS staff attended training events organised by INTERACT Programme in order to acquire practical knowledge and information, to share their experience with colleagues from other European territorial cooperation programmes in the field of management techniques, financial issues, European regulations, communication, strategic orientation, policy development, etc.

- **External expertise**

Part of the technical assistance budget was used for remuneration of controllers appointed to perform checks of expenditures made by the beneficiaries. Additional external expertise was used for information and publicity activities under the Programme and for organisation of public events, in particular and for





elaborating methodological guidelines for defining baseline and target values of quality result indicators under the new bilateral programme.

In year 2015, tender procedures for supply of IT equipment needed for JTS main office and MA was carried out. Contract was signed with the successful tenderer, and the respective equipment was delivered and put into operation.

➤ **Sphere of Intervention 3.2 “Publicity and communication”**

The public events, conferences, seminars, workshops carried out under this sphere of interventions in 2015 were as follows:

- ✓ Information seminar "New period - new opportunities for the development of cross-border cooperation between Republic of Bulgaria and Republic of Macedonia", 25 February, 2015 – Sandanski, Bulgaria;
- ✓ Joint Happening for celebrating the European Co-operation Day, 12 September, 2015 – Kyustendil, Bulgaria;
- ✓ International Conference “European Territorial Cooperation in the Republic of Bulgaria – Achievements bringing new perspectives”, 13 October 2015, Sofia, Bulgaria

6. INFORMATION AND PUBLICITY

The focus of the Information and Publicity Strategy and adopted Communication Plan is to increase the awareness on the Programme and to promote the results from its implementation.

In 2015, a number of media events, regional forums, and social events were organised and performed in order to disseminate programme deliverables to a wider audience. Various tools for information and publicity were used to reach the audience, such as:

- Website of the Programme;
- Facebook page;
- Twitter profile;
- Distribution of promotional materials;
- Public events, conferences, seminars, workshops;
- Media campaign.

• **Programme Website**

In 2015 the official website of the Programme <http://07-13.ipa-cbc-007.eu/index.php> was one of the main publicity tools used for programme promotion and relevant information dissemination. Any appropriate data concerning the programme implementation such as general information, Programme related documents, call





for proposals, successfully finalised projects, “frequently asked questions” section, etc., were presented in a user-friendly version which allowed the users to find the necessary information in an easier and more logical way. The established Project Database for funded projects is easy accessible through the interactive map of the programme area at the website (<http://07-13.ipa-cbc-007.eu/en/page.php?c=43>). This searching tool provides information on the completed and on-going projects and ensures transparency about the funded operations.

The “News” section has been regularly updated with information on all relevant events, training sessions, information days and news in general. In order to ensure as broad publicity as possible, information on the Programme has been also disseminated through regional and national websites as well as on the websites at the European-wide level:

- ▶ mrrb.government.bg, the Ministry of Regional Development and Public Works, Bulgaria, MA;
- ▶ eufunds.bg, EU Structural Funds website,
- ▶ mls.gov.mk, the Ministry of Local Self-Government, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, NA.

The website partners search tool is also very useful tool for potential beneficiaries in facilitating generating partnerships and projects ideas and encouraging joint activities.

• Programme Facebook page and Twitter profile

Following the new trends in e-communications, the social media as Facebook and Twitter were also introduced as a communication tool for Programme awareness raising on which any relevant information related to current Programme activities have constantly been published.

By the end of 2015 the Facebook page (facebook.com/ipacbcbgmk) of the Programme had more than 2180 members which had the opportunities to become familiar with the latest news and events under the Programme.

In 2015 the Twitter profile of the Programme has also been created (twitter.com/IPA_CBC_BG_MK) and thus all the available and up-to-date communications channels have successfully been exploited.

• Public events, conferences, seminars, workshops

- ✓ *Information seminar "New period - new opportunities for the development of cross-border cooperation between Republic of Bulgaria and Republic of Macedonia" – 25 February, 2015 – Sandanski*

On 25 February 2015 in Sandanski in the presence of over 200 representatives of potential beneficiaries of the whole border region: regional administrations, regional structures of central government, mayors, municipal governments, cultural and educational institutions, NGO's, chambers of commerce and





associations from both countries held info seminar "New period – new opportunities for the development of cross-border cooperation between the Republic of Bulgaria and the Republic of Macedonia".

Potential beneficiaries and stakeholders from cross-border region through presentations of experts were informed with the program objectives, measures, the budget and the mechanism for the collection and evaluation of project proposals on the period 2014 – 2020 were also explained the conditions for application-related eligibility of applicants, their legal status and registration, the need for partnerships between organizations from both sides of the border and cross-border effects of projects. In separate presentations were presented examples of successful projects, good cooperation and results achieved during the period 2007-2013, new visualisation of Programme for the period 2014-2020 and the calendar of events for 2015.

✓ *European Co-operation Day*

The European Co-operation Day was celebrated jointly under Bulgaria – the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia IPA Cross-Border Programme and Bulgaria – Serbia IPA Cross-border Programme on 12 September 2015. The event took place in Kyustendil (Bulgaria), a town located in the border region with Serbia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. The event was well attended by stakeholders by the participating countries and representatives from the MA, NA, local and regional authorities and other official guest at political and diplomatic level.

The joint initiative included an art programme with performances of traditional folk dances from Macedonia and Bulgaria as well as a workshop for young painters from the Republic of Bulgaria, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, and the Republic of Serbia. The second part of the celebration was a live fashion show. Photos from the event were uploaded to the programmes' websites.

✓ *Conference "European Territorial Cooperation in the Republic of Bulgaria – Achievements bringing new perspectives" – 13 October 2015, Sofia, Bulgaria*

The Conference "European Territorial Cooperation in the Republic of Bulgaria – Achievements bringing new perspectives" gathered all European Territorial Cooperation programmes in which Bulgaria participates. The overall objective of the conference was to present the results achieved during the programming period 2007-2013, and to present plans for the following programming period 2014-2020. The conference consisted of several presentations / lectures, awarding ceremony for the best project practices, as well as an exhibition of photographs displaying some of the most impressive results in the sphere of European Territorial Cooperation.

Programme' representatives actively participated in the preparation of the conference, design of graphic logo of the conference and other materials as well as in production of video materials for the presentation of the awarding projects from all programs.





• Media campaign and promotional materials

In addition to the promotional events, both the Programme and the projects funded received good media coverage through various materials as press-releases, leaflets, brochures were disseminated among the participants and public. The Programme's visual identity and graphics standards have been maintained and widely disseminated to all stakeholders

Media campaigns as radio advertisement spots, video and television clips, publications in both local and national newspapers were also applied contributing to the successful promotion of the Programme. More details can be found in the Annex attached to this report.

Indicators for communication and publicity measures

	Activity	Indicator	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	Total
Programme website	General Information	Number of web-site visits	0	0	8 190	8 731	29 009	29 350	24 367	20 489	34 162		154 298
		Target 2016	2 000 per year										
		Baseline	0										
	Partners' search facility	Number of web-site visits	0	0	8 190	8 731	29 009	29 350	24 367	20 489	34 162		154 298
		Target 2016	2 000 per year										
		Baseline	0										
		Number of new potential PPs in the database	0	0	0	0	20	111	114	114	153		512
		Target 2016	20 per call										
		Baseline	0										
	Contact details	Number of web-site visits	0	0	8 190	8 731	29 009	29 350	24 367	20 489	34 162		154 298
		Target 2016	2 000 per year										
		Baseline	0										
	Information for mass media	Number of press releases	0	0	0	0	6	6	4	5	6		27
		Target 2016	2 per year										
		Baseline	0										
Promotional materials	Leaflets	Number of leaflets produced	0	0	0	0	0	1 000	0	0	0		1 000
		Target 2016	500 per call										
		Baseline	0										
		Fraction of leaflets disseminated	0	0	0	0	0	90%	10%	0	0		
		Target 2016	80% of leaflets produced										
		Baseline	0										



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Brochures	Number of brochures produced	0	1 000	0	0	0	500	0	600	0		2 100
		500 per year										
		0										
		0	25%	55%	20%	0%	89%	10%	50%	40%		
		80% of brochures produced										
		0										
	Number of official events	0	2	0	0	2	3	3	12	6		28
		Min. 2										
	Number of materials prepared for promotion of the programme	0	1 050	0	0	300	300	0	6 063	500		8 213
		200 per call										
		0										
		0	60%	0	0	33%	95%	100%	50%	100%		
		80% of materials produced										
		0										
Information seminars	Information days	0	0	227	0	110	0	117	120	0		574
		40 per call										
		0										
		0	0	76	80	199	0	270	300	0		925
		Min. 60 per call										
		0										
		0	0	0	0	29.7%	0	29.8%*	11%	0		
		Min. 3% compared to previous call										
		0										
	Thematic seminars/ workshops	0	0	76	80	74	73	76	70	0		449
		20 per event										
		0										
Publicity campaign	Print media campaign	0	1	2	2	2	2	4	4	0		17
		4 per year										





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		Baseline	0									
	Press conferences	Number of press conferences held	0	1	2	0	1	1	1	8	3	17
		Target 2016	2 for the duration of the Programme									
		Baseline	0									
	Press releases	Number of press releases	0	1	5	4	6	6	4	5	6	37
		Target 2016	1 per call									
		Baseline	0									
	Press Advertisements	Number of press advertisements published	0	0	16	0	2	2	2	2	3	27
		Target 2016	2 per call									
		Baseline	0									
	Internet media advertisement	Number of advertisements / eBanners	0	0	0	0	2	2	1	8	6	19
		Target 2016	2									
		Baseline	0									
	eNewsletter	Number of eNewsletters	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
		Target 2016	2									
		Baseline	0									
	Publication in regional initiatives and media	Number of events	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	6	9
		Target 2016	1									
		Baseline	0									
	TV campaigns	Number of TV advertisements aired	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
		Target 2016	1 for the duration of the Programme									
		Baseline	0									
	Radio campaigns	Number of radio advertisements aired	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	2	4	8
		Target 2016	1 per country for each call									
		Baseline	0									
Active training	Training for beneficiaries	Number of participants	0	0	0	0	105	52	110	70	0	337
		Target 2016	20									
		Baseline	0									
		Number of training sessions	0	0	0	0	1	2	2	4	0	9
		Target 2016	Min. 1									





	Training of the MA/NA/JTS	Baseline	0										
		Number of participants	0	0	0	0	2	4	3	3	3		15
		Target 2016	Min. 50% of the total staff										
	Controllers performing FLC training sessions	Baseline	0										
		Number of participants	0	0	0	0	55	94	27	0	0		176
		Target 2016	Min. 30										
		Baseline	0										
		Number of training sessions	0	0	0	0	3	3	1	0	0		7
		Target 2016	Min. 1										
		Baseline	0										
	External assessors training sessions	Number of participants	0	0	0	0	0	10	0	0	0		10
		Target 2016	Min. 10										
		Baseline	0										
		Number of training sessions	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0		1
		Target 2016	Min. 1										
		Baseline	0										

Based on the figures above it could be concluded that the Programme proved to be a *par excellence* example of one more than good reception on the part of the stakeholders and the general public. Majority of publicity indicators achieved their targets or they are likely to be reached at the final stage of Programme implementation.

The wider information and publicity measures under the programme facilitate the transmission to the new INTERREG-IPA cross-border cooperation programme and it could be considered as a solid base for increasing interest by potential applicants and the general public for the new programme activities. The communications officer will continue to coordinate the information and publicity measures in the new programme and to ensure popularization of the programme opportunities in the border area.

The cross-border programme is apparently a very successful EU integration tool and the experience gathered, not only in terms of project implementation but also the field of information, publicity and visualisation will be applied in programming period 2014-2020.

Annex: Comprehensive list of Communication and information activities





ANNEX Comprehensive list of Communication and information activities

Programme website

The official Programme website was effectively launched in August 2009. The address of the web site is **ipa-cbc-007.eu**



The dedicated website has been providing general information on the Programme, the financing opportunities, format and contents of the applications, evaluation and selection criteria, procedures to follow, etc., useful contacts, partner search facility. It has been presenting a list of beneficiaries, the names of the operations and the amount of public funding allocated, information on the activity of the JMC, successful project per calls as well as other relevant committees: decisions, reports, etc., as soon as they become available to the general public.

The website also includes information for mass media such as press releases, announcements, news, events, awareness campaigns, photo-gallery, and a contact person.

The web site includes comprehensive information on the Programme and its Priority Axes, accompanied by all documents concerning implementation. The website has been regularly updated with relevant information such as events, news and documentation. It also includes a tool for partners search with project partner database, thus facilitating the integration among actors and promoting joint activities and ideas.





During 2015 the web site was one of the main publicity tools used to promote the Programme and disseminate relevant information. The “News” section is particularly useful to both the general public and the beneficiaries since it is continuously updated with information on all the relevant events, training sessions, information days, and news in general.

The launch of the Programme’s Facebook page and Twitter profile continuously publishing any new information from the website of the social networks has accomplished faster and wider awareness.

In order to ensure broad publicity, information on the Programme has been also disseminated through regional and national websites as well as on the websites at the European level:

- ▶ mrrb.government.bg, Ministry of Regional Development, the Republic of Bulgaria, Managing Authority.
- ▶ eufunds.bg, EU Structural Funds website
- ▶ mls.gov.mk, Ministry of Local Self-government, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, National Authority.

Number of updated postings to the Programme website in 2015 (by months):

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
1	4	4	6	1	2	3	5	6	4	9	1

Total: 46

Number of visits to the Programme website (by months):

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun
1 447	1 811	2 066	2 011	1 608	1 685

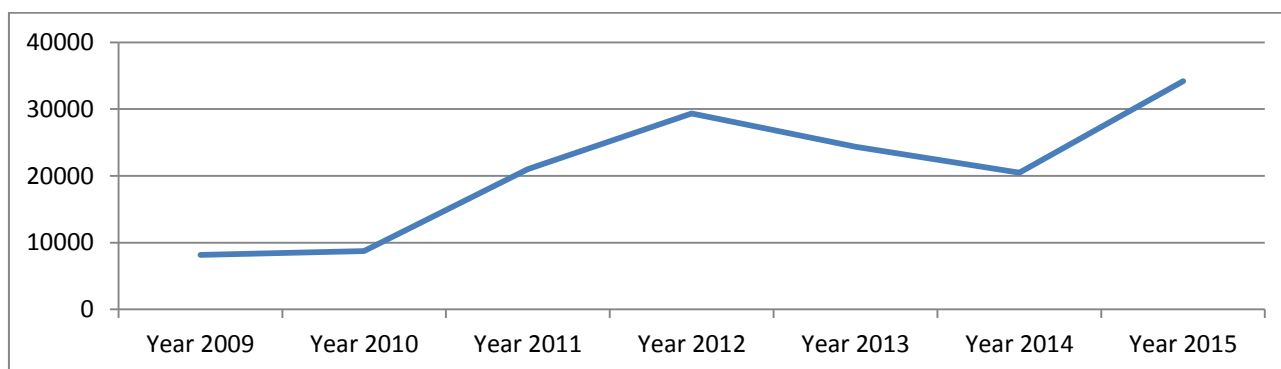
Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
1 631	3 431	3 650	4 964	5 686	4 172

Total 34 162

Number of visits to the Programme website for the period of 2009 – 2015:

Year 2009	Year 2010	Year 2011	Year 2012	Year 2013	Year 2014	Year 2015
8 190	8 731	21 006	29 350	24 367	20 489	34 162





Programme Facebook site

In order to better and faster disseminate information to participants, was based a page of the Programme at the social network Facebook on 31 March 2014. The address is [facebook.com/ipacbcgmk/](https://www.facebook.com/ipacbcgmk/)



By the end of 2015 the Programme Facebook page's group has attracted more than 2 190 members. The Facebook page posts links to information from the official website, ones of the beneficiaries, projects' website, information published by the media on the Programme or individual projects, and photos of events, projects and the cross-border region itself.





Programme twitter profile (twitter.com/IPA_CBC_BG_MK)



Information seminar "New period – new opportunities for the development of cross-border cooperation between Republic of Bulgaria and Republic of Macedonia", 25 February 2015, Sandanski

On 25 February 2015 in the crowded conference hall of "Sandanski" Interhotel in the Town of Sandanski, over 200 representatives of potential beneficiaries of the whole border region attended the information seminar "New period - new opportunities for the development of cross-border cooperation between Republic of Bulgaria and Republic of Macedonia", including: regional administrations, regional structures of the Government, mayors, municipal governments, cultural and educational institutions, NGO's, chambers of commerce and associations from both countries. .

Potential beneficiaries and stakeholders from cross-border region through presentations of experts were informed on programme objectives, measures, the budget and the mechanism for the submission and evaluation of project proposals in the programming period of 2014-2020. The conditions for application-related eligibility of applicants, their legal status and registration, the need for partnerships between organisations from both sides of the border and cross-border effects of projects were also explained. Examples of successful projects, good cooperation and results achieved during the period 2007-2013, new visualisation of Programme for the period 2014-2020 and the calendar of events for 2015 were presented in separate presentations.





JMC and technical meetings during 2015

The Joint Monitoring Committee of the Programme held session on 11 June 2015 in the town of Bansko.

As main topics of the session were approved the 2014 Annual Implementation Report of the IPA Cross-Border Programme CCI 2007CB16IPO007, information and publicity measures and overall implementation progress.

The Bulgarian co-chairman of the Joint Monitoring Committee was Ms. Denitsa Nikolova, Deputy Minister of Regional Development and Public Works, and on Macedonian side, Ms. Mjellma Mehmeti-Petersen, State Councilor for European Integration at the Ministry of Local Self-Government, IPA CBC Coordinator.

As a representative of the European Commission attended Ms. Fausta Corda from Directorate-General for Regional and Urban Policy.





✚ Visiting the project "Sustainable Tourism and Promotion of Ecology under the Partnership" on the part of the members of the Joint Monitoring Committee, 10 June 2015, Municipality of Razlog

During the session, the Joint Technical Secretariat of the Programme organised a visit for JMC members to the implemented project "Sustainable Tourism and Promotion of Ecology under the Partnership" in the Municipality of Razlog".







European Cooperation Day 2015



On 12 September 2015 in joint organisation of our IPA Cross-border Programme and Bulgaria – Serbia IPA Cross-border Programme a celebration of the European Cooperation Day 2015 was held. The celebration took place in front of the Dramatic Theatre in Kyustendil, Republic of Bulgaria. The official guests at the event were: Denitsa Nikolova, Deputy Minister of Regional Development and Public Works; Ambassador of the Republic of Macedonia in Republic of Bulgaria H.E. Blagoj Handziski; Ambassador of the Republic of Bulgaria in Republic of Macedonia H.E. Ivan Petkov; Ambassador of the Republic of Serbia in Bulgaria H.E. Vladimir Curgus; Radoslava Chekanska, Deputy District Governor of Kyustendil Regional Administration and Petar Paunov, Mayor of Kyustendil.



The joint celebration under the two Programmes included an artistic programme with performance of traditional folk dances from Macedonia and Bulgaria, as well as a workshop for young painters from Bulgaria, Macedonia and Serbia. The second part of the celebration was a live fashion show.





Traditional folk dances





Workshop for young painters



Live fashion show





✚ Conference “European Territorial Cooperation in the Republic of Bulgaria – Achievements Bringing New Perspectives”, 13 October 2015, Sofia, Bulgaria

The Conference “European Territorial Cooperation in the Republic of Bulgaria – Achievements Bringing New Perspectives” gathered all European Territorial Cooperation programmes in which Bulgaria participates. The overall objective of the conference was to present the results achieved during the programming period 2007-2013, and to present plans for the following programming period 2014-2020. The conference consisted of several presentations / lectures, awarding ceremony for the best project practices, as well as an exhibition of photographs displaying some of the most impressive results in the sphere of European Territorial Cooperation.



Logo of Conference “European Territorial Cooperation in the Republic of Bulgaria – Achievements Bringing New Perspectives”

Our programme participated in the preparation of the conference, graphic design logo and other materials as well as production of video materials for the presentation of the awarding projects from all programmes.



Minister of Regional Development and Public Works Ms. Lilyana Pavlova





Director-General of "Territorial Cooperation Management" Directorate General
Ms. Maria Duzova



Award ceremony for the best project practices



Best project practices award to project "Contribution to the Cross-Border Fire Protection" Ref.№ 2007CB16IPO007-2009-1-001



Best project practices award to project "Hand in Hand: Little Bulgarians and Macedonians", Ref.№ 2007CB16IPO007-2012-2-104



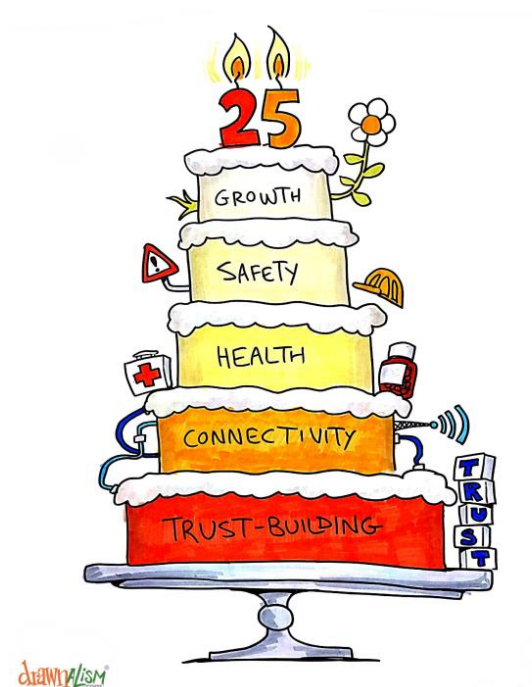


Best project practices award to project
"Rock'n Pop the Borders", Ref.№ 2007CB16IPO007–2012–3-005



Group photos with representatives of all awarded projects

✚ Interreg 25 year anniversary celebrations in the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg

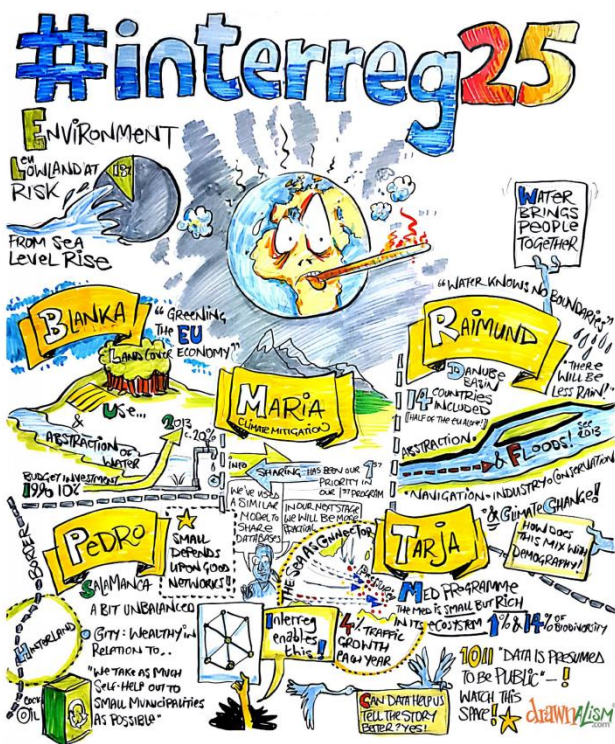


Over the course of the year 2015, the EU's programmes for territorial cooperation were celebrating the 25th anniversary of Interreg, headlined at a number of events to discover the current achievements and find inspiration for future work.

The celebration initiative was headed by an international conference organised within the Luxembourg presidency on 15-16 September 2015 with the support of the European Commission and INTERACT. The conference was held under the patronage of Ms Corina Crețu, the European Commissioner for Regional and Urban Policy and Mr. François Bausch, Minister for Sustainable Development and Infrastructure of the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg.

The event offered an opportunity to look back on the history of Interreg, explore some of the themes where Interreg made a difference, take a global view on territorial cooperation, and discuss visions for European regions as well as the role of Interreg itself.





The Role of Interreg in Environment – panel discussion

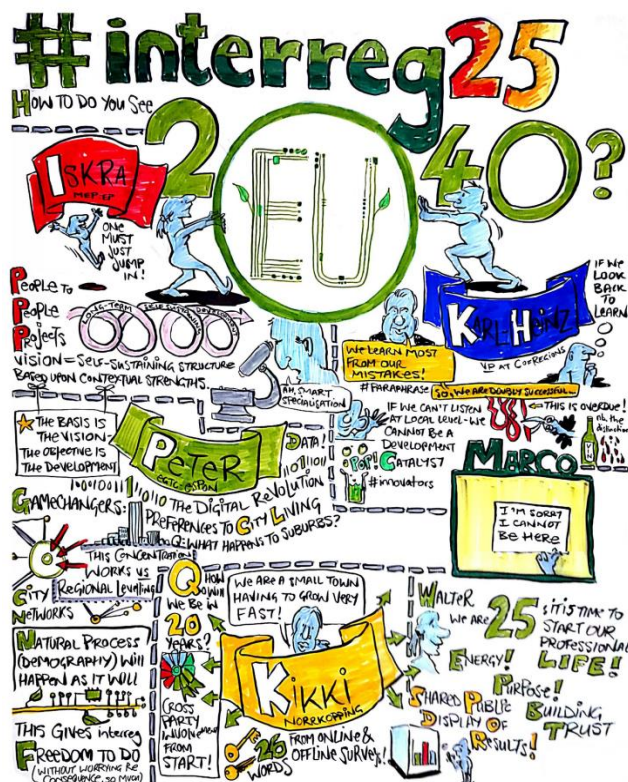
The Head of the Managing Authority joined the discussions as a speaker within the Panel Session “The Role of Interreg – Environment”, providing the audience with an overview about the role which IPA CBC Programmes managed by Bulgaria has played in the field of environment protection and reducing climate change risks in the cross-border areas.

The main outcomes of this session together with the other one concerning Labour market and demographic changes have been taken into account in shaping the discussions during the final session “Building on 25 years” contributing to the development of common vision and common ground for European territories beyond 2020.

“Building on 25 years” – panel discussion

Ms. Iskra Mihaylova, Bulgarian member of the European Parliament and Head of Regi Committee, took part within the final session and put a special emphasis on the role of the IPA cross-border programmes in the context of the EU vision for the regions in the perspective and the challenges beyond 2040.

A clear message was outlined to the crucial role of Interreg as an EU integration tool and platform for information and solutions exchange. It was concluded that the territorial cooperation programmes should keep their focus on strengthening partnerships in the cross-border regions thus encouraging EU cohesion policy. Harmonisation of the programme rules and procedures was considered as an essential instrument for better cooperation within the interreg framework.





The Programme, together with the other two IPA CBC Programmes managed by Bulgaria, participated in an exhibition of posters with its own designed one. A Programme presentation was included in the European Project Slam initiative along with 13 applications from all over the Interreg world.



Poster of the Programme part of Interreg 25 years event in Luxembourg

During the conference, the celebration of the European Cooperation Day 2015 was officially launched through awarding ceremony of the slogan contest for Interreg.

The winner was selected among a huge number of contestants – a representative of a Bulgarian non-governmental organisation with a long standing experience in cross-border projects development and implementation.



Awarding the winner of the slogan contest for Interreg

