



Performance of Impact Evaluation of the
IPA Cross-border Programmes 2007-2013,
managed by the Republic of Bulgaria

HANDBOOK of best practices

November 2016



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Foreword

The Ministry of Regional Development and Public Works of the Republic of Bulgaria, acting as a managing authority for IPA CBC programmes between Bulgaria and respectively Serbia, Turkey and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, highly estimates the impact of those programmes on the development of the border regions. Undoubtedly, the most important achievement is the already established mutual trust between programme bodies and beneficiaries, so that they recognise each other as reliable and responsible partners.

The projects supported under the above programmes, jointly prepared and implemented, have succeeded in providing adequate solutions to common challenges and contributed to strengthening the good bilateral relations and cooperation on both sides of the border.

The established partnerships in the period 2007-2013 have the possibility to further expand their potential in the current programming period as well and will enable long-lasting contacts among local and regional stakeholders. Joint cross-border activities will facilitate the economic development, support small-scale infrastructure, protect the environment and promote the rich cultural, natural and historic heritage of the regions.

Last but not least these programmes embody in a unique way the idea of the European Union for the existence of a united Europe without territorial boundaries.

Executive Summary

Over the past twenty years, territorial cooperation, and in particular cross-border cooperation, has evolved from a community initiative to one of the most important objectives of the Cohesion policy. Partnership and joint activities are a key instrument for growth and increased competitiveness of the regions involving local and regional stakeholders, geographically close. EU candidate countries can also benefit from cross-border cooperation programmes with their neighbouring EU member states being supported in their accession process thus fostering the great potentials that those peripheral regions can offer to the European Union.

In this context, the three **IPA CBC Programmes (2007-2013)**, managed by the Republic of Bulgaria, aimed at both development and integration of the border areas between **Bulgaria - Serbia, Bulgaria - Turkey and Bulgaria - the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia**. With the absorption of about MEUR 87.9 and 393 funded cross-border cooperation projects, the above programmes with their result-oriented approach have managed to achieve a real effect for recreating proximity, connecting people, organisations and businesses in the bordering locations for addressing common needs and tackling common challenges.

Major Achievements

The funded projects delivered plenty of evidence of immediate and potential future positive impact on the respective programme area. More than half of them were related to „quality of life“ themes such as tourism, culture, environment, employment and education. The main programmes' impact can be outlined in the following aspects:

- ***Increased cross-border interaction and mobility through establishment of new partnerships and relations between neighbours across the border*** through implementation of joint cooperation projects in different thematic fields.
- ***Increased governance capacity and improved policies*** through development of joint strategic documents and exchange of best practices and know-how.
- ***Improved physical and information infrastructure*** addressing the social and economic development in the regions through the implemented projects for rehabilitation / construction of information / social infrastructure and business / innovation facilities.

- **Better preserved natural resources and biodiversity** as a result of established permanent environment protection networks and reasonable utilisation of natural resources.
- **Strengthened potential for tourism development** through sustainable utilisation of regional resources (natural and cultural assets) as well as exchange and transfer of know-how.
- **Improved/developed early warning and risk management systems** as a result of partnerships for cases of natural and man-made disasters.
- **Enhanced environment for sustainable economic development** of the border area through establishment of links and networking on institutional, business and educational level, and through exchange of experience and know-how for research and development and in the field of entrepreneurship.
- **Enhanced sustainable economic development of the border region and increased competitiveness of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs)** by establishing joint information services and encouraging contacts across the border.

Beyond the above described results the Programmes have added value in supporting EU candidate countries in capacity building for adopting and implementing institutional and administrative policies and practices in order to comply with the European Union values in view of EU membership.

Lessons learned

Cooperation projects are often quite complex by nature in comparison with those financed under the mainstream programmes. They often involve a large number of partners having different cultural and language background who are meant to work close together throughout the entire project duration, and even beyond it, in order to reach common goals.

Below are summarised some of the **key factors for project success**, but also some bottlenecks that projects encountered during IPA CBC Programmes (2007-2013) implementation:

- **Project preparation.** Smooth project implementation requires thorough preparation. Required changes to the project due to lack of sufficient preparation often causes difficulties in the timely project implementation and the achievement of its targets. It is therefore considered that good preparation was often referred to as a 'success' factor for project implementation.
- **Needs analysis.** One of the frequently mentioned decisive factors for successful project implementation was the question if the delivered products and services responded to the real needs. Projects that failed to identify the specific needs of the target groups often reported difficulties in the sustainability of their products and services, regardless of how good the project idea was.

- **Target group and stakeholder involvement.** Developing products and services that meet the needs of the final beneficiaries requires their active participation in the project. The importance of stakeholders' involvement in the planning as well as in the implementation phase is considered as a key to success. Depending on the type of project and its objectives, final beneficiaries were not only the local population and businesses, but also important stakeholders such as decision and policy makers.
- **Project partnership.** Cross-border partnerships have a special dynamics: borders and frontiers are one of the obstacles to cooperation, together with the existing legal, political, economic and cultural differences between the neighbouring regions. Maintenance of good partnerships and involving the 'right' partners in a definite project is therefore crucial since lack of commitment can seriously jeopardise a project's success.
- **Project management.** Coordinating a CBC project is a complex process including: management of partnership that consists of different organisations from different countries, supervision of the project budget, following the respective requirements and rules. Besides the preparation of a well-designed project plan, a good project leadership and skilled project coordination is required in order to ensure a sound project implementation and the fulfilment of the project targets.

Good Practices

The great interest among potential beneficiaries to participate cross-border initiatives has resulted in numerous successful projects and best practices identified within the three IPA CBC Programmes (2007-2013).

Some of them are illustrated in the present publication as an evidence of the benefits that the cross-border cooperation has brought local communities. The case studies demonstrate the tangible and intangible project outcomes. They also demonstrate the sustainability of the projects' products and services after project completion as well as identify lessons learned and good practices to be followed.

Establishment and development of social infrastructure

1.

Employment
and Social Inclusion

Bulgaria - Serbia IPA Cross-Border Programme (2007-2013)

2007CB16IP0006-2009-1-105 - EDOS



CCI Number 2007CB16IP0006

Target Group / Final Beneficiaries:

- Elderly people in both municipalities
- Wider public (population)

Project partners:

1. Municipality of Slivnitsa (Republic of Bulgaria) - Lead Partner
2. Municipality of Babushnitsa (Republic of Serbia)

Project budget:

EUR 526 955,79

Project start date / end date:

October 2011 - August 2013

PROJECT SYNOPSIS

EDOS project demonstrates how the combined efforts of two border municipalities from neighbouring countries lead to establishment of a common approach to providing modern social care services in the region. The project extends its direct cross-border effect as it does put forward a joint solution to a general setback which the municipal administrations are nowadays facing - the lack of adequate social infrastructure for the needs of the elderly citizens. The existing gap between the demand for social services and the actual spending propensity in both municipalities is behind the very rationale of the current project.

EDOS multiplies the effects of local social welfare programmes by striving to improve the well-being of elderly people in the border area. The Elderly Care Centres established prevent social exclusion and promote the integration of individuals and families that need social support or assistance due to economic or personal difficulties, disability or other reasons. Additionally, the research and the thematic events included in the project were meant to hammer out solutions allowing economically disadvantaged families with members having disabilities to obtain easier access to social services.

SUCCESS FACTORS AND CHALLENGES

As the population ages, local actors are facing a rapidly rising number of dependent individuals, while at the same time the number of individuals able to support them is falling. The care for dependents is usually organised and provided for at local level by public authorities, non-profit organisations, volunteer groups or profit-making institutions. Elderly people, being a specific vulnerable group of end-users of long-term care services, require adequate measures to be put in place as to ensure the quality of services and fight against elder unfavourable circumstances in all care settings: institutional, community or home care, both formal and informal.

Given the above, the project partners joined efforts and elaborated feasible solutions to ensure equal opportunities to everyone, including elderly people in their communities. In order for them to respond effectively, exchange of expertise and transfer of knowledge was mobilised, thus leading to elaborating the present CBC cross-border project, and as a result of which, existing (but desolate) buildings have been transformed into an elderly care institutions.

The Elderly Care Centre in Slivnitsa provides 24/7 social care services to at least 20 senior citizens who are unable to take care of themselves, while the Babushnitsa Elderly by Care Centre provides daily health and social services to senior citizen (with an „emergency“ department by night). The reconstruction of existing municipal facilities provided for an increased autonomy of both health care providers and care receivers from the cross-border region. Additionally, the creation of both



centres have provided for extra employment opportunities as regards qualified nurses and physicians. The personnel hired was ensured versatile training in all aspects of gerontology and geriatrics.

In addition, a specialized study „*Social and Health-Care Policy for the Elderly in EU*“ was elaborated, while demonstrating the good practices and modern trends among EU social service providers and health-care systems. Ensuring that everyone has access to high-quality social and health care is an essential element of the European social model. People who need medical or social care should be able to get it regardless of their income or wealth, and the cost of such care should not cause poverty to the care recipients or their relatives.

MAJOR ACHIEVEMENTS, TANGIBLE / INTANGIBLE IMPACTS AND SPIN-OFFS



The project results contribute to urban improvement of the central areas of the two cities. Before realization, both buildings were non-functional and provided shelter for homeless. By establishing the two Elderly Care Centres, the municipal administrations have both managed to find an appropriate solution to existing materials assets, but also to create suitable conditions for provision of social services to elderly people in line with best EU practices.

At present, both municipalities are contemplating on the possible upgrade of project’s outcomes with the implementation of various day-care activities within the centres, some of which will further include volunteering services of young people.

New knowledge or analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Benchmarking and exchange of know-how on the best EU practices in provision of social care for elderly people
New ways of working	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New methods were put in practice, as regards the provision of day-care social services close to family environment, as well as emergency services at nights
Changes to policy or public behaviour	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhanced municipal social care policy
Investments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reconstruction and furnishing of buildings - former maternity hospital in Slivnitsa and former medical centre in Babusnitsa • Supply of specialized vehicles for transportation

STRATEGIC CONTRIBUTION: LESSONS LEARNED

The project is just one of the ideas identified between the two municipalities.

Years ago, within the framework of **Nishava Euro-region** (Dragoman, Kostinbrod, Svoje, Godech, Slivnitsa, Boszuriste, Babushnitsa, Bela Palanka, Pirot and Dimitrovgrad) were discussed various concepts for cooperation and implementation of projects. Unfortunately, common work on a unified strategy for the development of the Euro-region is not continued. If there was a common vision for development, supported by common activities, then new joint initiatives and projects would be implemented much easier following the path mapped out.



„To-do“ Recommendations	„Not-to-do“ Recommendations
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• For long-term partnerships between municipalities it is good to have a written document outlining the strategic vision for cooperation and common development. Thus, project initiatives will be developed in a sustainable environment with further options for multiplication.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Do not lose the relationship with partners, even if there are no project initiatives running.

Enhancing the Respect for Gender Equality in Bulgaria-Turkey cross-border area

1.

Employment and Social Inclusion

Bulgaria - Turkey IPA Cross-Border Programme (2007-2013)

2007CB16IP0008-2011-2-023 - EQUITY



CCI Number 2007CB16IP0008

Target Group / Final Beneficiaries:

- Women entrepreneurs and managers in public and private sector; Women's NGOs
- Unemployed women
- Local public administrations and bodies

Project partners:

1. Chamber of Commerce and Industry - Bourgas (Republic of Bulgaria) - Lead Partner
2. Kirklareli Chamber of Commerce and Industry (Republic of Turkey)

Project budget:

EUR 68 348,16

Project start date / end date:

July 2013 - July 2014

Website:

www.genderequality-cbc.eu

PROJECT SYNOPSIS

Gender equality is a basic principle in the EU social policy. Over the years, significant EU legislation development has been examined and new approaches are being introduced in the field of gender equality.

EQUITY project not only presents natural continuation of previous mutual initiatives, but it also strengthens and builds upon the close relations and cooperation of the two business support organizations in the border region. Three EU funded projects have been successfully implemented by the partners over the years, aimed at providing support for development of the

economic potential of region. Now they were targeted at women, while aiming to enhance understanding of the gender equality principles. It also contributed to reinforcing the women's role at the labour market, as well as boosting women's entrepreneurship in the region.

The project idea came from the Bulgarian partner, and have been further jointly developed and implemented by the both partners. The needs of the target groups in terms of gender equality were deeply explored and were reflected in formulation of project's specific objectives, namely: (1) Increased awareness regarding EU policy in the field of gender equality and anti-discrimination as well as dissemination of information on „good practices“; (2) Defined instruments for successful start-up of small „women“ businesses in both Bulgaria and Turkey; (3) Encouraged women's participation at the regional labour market.

Bringing together representatives of the target groups from both countries has facilitated social development and cohesion. The increased awareness and respect towards equal opportunities principle put a ground for creation of quality jobs and for guaranteeing equal access to labour market in the border region. Last but not least, special Committees for ladies' entrepreneurship within both Chambers' of commerce structures have been established, thus demonstrating mutual benefits of the project.

SUCCESS FACTORS AND CHALLENGES

According to Mrs. Vidka Valcheva, Vice-President of the Chamber of Commerce and Industry - Bourgas, there are three main factors of success of this project. The **first one** is the great interest of the target group to participate in the project's activities. About 80 women from Bourgas and Kırklareli attended the seminars, open discussions and exchanged study visits carried out. Due to their participation in the project, they have improved their knowledge and skills in communication, time management, delegation of tasks, entrepreneurship, leadership and entrepreneurial skills, intellectual assets and innovation as a basis for entrepreneurship, and others.

“For me the participation in EQUITY project was the right decision. It gave me opportunity to get aware about attitudes, needs and demands of women in the border region and thus find new horizon for my private business.”

Gergana Ivanova,
entrepreneur, owner of a family company for natural
cosmetics products, Bourgas, Bulgaria

The **second success factor** was the provided support to regional and local authorities in terms of better acquaintance with EU regulation and best practices. Moreover, women working in the above public institutions were some of the most active participants in the project's initiatives.

The **third success factor** of the project was the excellent communication with the management institutions of Bulgaria-Turkey IPA Cross-Border Programme (2007-2013).

MAJOR ACHIEVEMENTS, TANGIBLE / INTANGIBLE IMPACTS AND SPIN-OFFS

Important topics have been presented during seminars and discussions: i.e. instruments for start-up of small business, women in the modern science (challenges and perspectives), creation and development of social enterprises, promotion of women's rights in economic and social life, etc. As a result of new friendships established, new business opportunities have been opened with potential for employment of unemployed women. In addition, as to link theory with practice, companies that have been established and are managed by women (both in Bourgas and Kirkclareli) have been visited.

During the project implementation some important studies have been elaborated and published, namely: 1) Research on EU policy in the field of gender equality and anti-discrimination (with „good practices“ shown in); 2) Analysis of the women's role in economic life, entrepreneurship and instruments for start-up of small business in both Bulgaria and Turkey.



New knowledge analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased knowledge and analysis on gender equality issues (research and analytical or papers elaborated and published)
Changes to policy or public behaviour	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Active co-operation with local and regional authorities as well as regional diplomatic representatives of the partnering countries • Improved knowledge and skills of women for entrepreneurship as well as increased employability

STRATEGIC CONTRIBUTION: LESSONS LEARNED



The project has a substantial contribution to the gender equality topics in the border region. The activities carried out have allowed effective exchange of experiences and best practices, and built foundations for establishing homogeneous approaches in the field of gender equality. In addition, the implementation of the project has strengthened the local capacities for development of regional partnerships and made possible to develop larger initiatives that are not constrained by physical borders of states, but based on commonly identified topics that reflect regional specifics.

Within the project implementation, partners have identified and successfully eliminated various project management bottlenecks; have succeeded to build stable communication channels with stakeholders and have identified topics/issues of interest for successive initiatives. It could be, hence, concluded that, the multiplication potential of the project is in two main directions: the possibility to use the methodology on a larger scale (to involve more regions/areas and stakeholders) and to apply similar methodology in relation to other issues.



„To-do“ Recommendations	„Not-to-do“ Recommendations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keep the interest of the target group to the project by being innovative. • More studies and researches are to be done within „soft“ projects; they give ground for potential new initiatives. • Topics such as gender equality and antidiscrimination are valid for both genders. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do not underestimate the power of women. • Do not be afraid of experiments and new topics. • Do not ignore the men’s contribution to women’s projects.

Social Cohesion through Investment in Human Resources

1.

Employment
and Social Inclusion

**Bulgaria - the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia
IPA Cross-Border Programme (2007-2013)**

2007CB16IP007-2011-2-012 - HR Investment



CCI Number 2007CB16IP0007

Target Group / Final Beneficiaries:

- Vulnerable and discouraged unemployed people, incl. young people with low education, long-term unemployed, people with disabilities and reduced working capacity
- SMEs from the manufacturing sector
- Labour office directorates, labour mediators
- Educational institutions

Project partners:

1. Alliance for regional and civil initiatives (ARCI) - Blagoevgrad Branch (Republic of Bulgaria) - Lead Partner
2. Foundation for small and medium enterprises development - Kumanovo (the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia)

Project budget:

EUR 72 130,99

Project start date / end date:

July 2012 - July 2013

PROJECT SYNOPSIS

This project was aimed to improve the adaptability and mobility of unemployed people in the cross-border region. It focused at inactive and discouraged young people with low education, people with disabilities, with reduced working capacity, single parents - basically all vulnerable groups that are at risk to enter the labour market due to lack of experience, suitable skills or work habits.

Project partners worked together on each step of project implementation. Their previous experience and competences complemented perfectly and produced a real synergy and unexpected side effects from the cooperation. With the very active direct involvement of a great number of institutional stakeholders, the project marked a major step ahead in local communities through intensive networking and policy making thus creating a permanent environment for continuing integration of unemployed in the local labour market.

SUCCESS FACTORS AND CHALLENGES

The project was a response to a major gap that was identified by the project partners while they were working together on a previous initiative for training and capacity building of SME managers and professionals within the same cross-border territory. During this project delivery they have noted that there is a lack of qualified staff for the manufacturing sector on one hand and an existence of high level of regional unemployment, on the other.

Further research has showed that in both target communities across the border there was a large group of permanently unemployed, in working age but inactive people, largely demotivated, low educated or with professional skills that are no more required at the labour market. A typical feature is their lack of motivation, lack of work habits and social exclusion which is a prerequisite for long term unemployment, combined with additional complications such as emotional distress and public apathy; negative attitude towards the possibilities for employment through vocational training and re-training; poverty and frustration.

"I stumbled into the project after a meeting with my social worker who called me and urged me to get involved. I have not worked ever since I gave birth to my second child - he is now a student at the University, so count out since when I've been not working!"

I was really sceptical at the beginning. But then something inside of me have changed. I remember the games, the attitude of the people around me.... My whole life changed after these trainings. I was motivated to go and search for a job. And I found one - as a gardener. I like it a lot. The project gave me so much joy, I will never forget."

Maya Hvarkovachka,
50 years old, long term unemployed

In order to cope with the above challenges the project partners initiated an action that managed to involve a great number of stakeholders - the unemployed, training and education providers, social workers, local labour offices, the business community, the media. Understanding that success of the project would require targeted 'step by step' approach for tackling all needs, they have undertaken an integrative approach for solving the identified problems.

Firstly, it was a challenging task to identify who and where those people are and how to attract them to participate in the project, and secondly, to include the selected individuals into a motivational training. This training actually has covered a combination of interactive games, team building exercises and interpersonal communication methods, and within only

10 days a substantial change happened to the people who managed to overcome their fears and isolation, and were more and more eager to learn and communicate.

To build on the good results achieved, the next step was to retrain the people to acquire a profession that is demanded on the labour market so that they become more competitive and enlarge the chances to find a job. To this view, a needs analysis of the manufacturing sector was held in order to identify which are the sectors where qualified workforce is needed. Following this analysis vocational training courses were organised in bread baking, sewing and shoe-making where the already motivated participants had the chance to acquire new knowledge and practical skills. The Job Fair, being the final project event, gave them an immediate opportunity not only to meet with potential employers, but to check in practice how far they have gone.

MAJOR ACHIEVEMENTS, TANGIBLE / INTANGIBLE IMPACTS AND SPIN-OFFS

Methodologies for identification of discouraged and inactive people were jointly developed for both Blagoevgrad and Kumanovo regions. Upon them partners identified and selected some 40 discouraged and inactive people, who were included in the motivational trainings. Additionally, a thorough HR analysis among some 60 enterprises from the manufacturing sector has been performed thus defining the qualification level of the employees needed (i.e. the most demanding sectors were the apparel industry, bread and bread products, as well as the footwear production). Both the methodology and the needs analysis have been distributed among stakeholders and are available for further reference on the following website: <http://arci-ngo.org/category/proekti/izpalneni-proekti/>

Two 10-days motivational trainings were then conducted on both side of the border to foster people's confidence and active behaviour on the labour market, career planning, developing and increasing motivation for employment. Upon training completion, seminars were held in both Blagoevgrad and Kumanovo to discuss the needs and problems of the unemployed people, to present the findings of the needs analysis and the best practices elaborated, to share the experience and results achieved. The seminars were attended by representatives of vulnerable groups, local authorities, SMEs, educational and social organisations, NGOs, the media.

“The project had very strong impact on our beneficiaries. Definitely the number of the inactive people in our region have been decreased, while project have also succeeded in motivating the long-term unemployed by changing their self-confidence”

Cvetelina Neshkova – project manager

Subsequently, three vocational trainings were conducted at each side of the border covering the already identified sectors in need for qualified workers. As a result a total of 36 people were retrained in a new profession. The Bulgarian participants were also awarded certificates for vocational qualification issued by NAVET (a registered vocational training centre).

Towards the end of the project, a three-day cross-border forum and a Job Fair were held in Blagoevgrad which attracted some 60 participants from both cross-border regions.

Companies from the two countries were also present at the event where they had the chance to promote their activities and meet counterparts. During the Job Fair the unemployed people were able to exchange information and contacts with labour brokers and potential employers.

New knowledge or analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Methodology for identification of inactive and discouraged people • Needs analysis in the manufacturing sector and good practices in HR management
New ways of working	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An integrated approach to job creation - a combination of motivation trainings, training in professional qualification and job match-making
Changes to policy or public behaviour	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Changing unemployed people's attitude and self-confidence
Product or services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A set of training courses (motivation and vocational qualification ones) available for further multiplication
Community integration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A network for labour market initiatives created (i.e. cross-border forum and job fair)



STRATEGIC CONTRIBUTION: LESSONS LEARNED

The project made a strong contribution for changing attitudes and behaviour at larger scale - both among potential employers and social workers, but mostly of those that drop out the labour market at the longer run - i.e. even if they lose jobs, with the approach introduced they will not *be discouraged* and will continue to be active in searching new job opportunities.



„To-do“ Recommendations

- Involve as many institutional stakeholders as possible and motivate them to actively participate in your project. They can be extremely helpful to identify the right beneficiaries for your project thus reaching the pre-set goals and have tangible results.

„Not-to-do“ Recommendations

- Do not be afraid of working with vulnerable GROUPS of people - 'social' projects are designed for that - just find the right approach and commitment towards solving their real problems and meeting their needs.

2.

Environment, Climate
Change and Risk
Prevention



CCI Number 2007CB16IP0008

Preserving the natural heritage - a challenge beyond borders

Bulgaria - Turkey IPA Cross-Border Programme (2007-2013)

2007CB16IP0008-2011-2-127 - Beyond borders

Target Group / Final Beneficiaries:

- Local end regional institutions in the field of environment and forestry; Ecological NGOs
- Local authorities
- Population of the targeted municipalities, including young people

Project partners:

- 1.** Arbitra Foundation - Harmanli (Republic of Bulgaria) - Lead Partner
- 2.** Babaeski municipality (Republic of Turkey)
- 3.** Reconstruction and Development Union - Haskovo (Republic of Bulgaria)

Project budget:

EUR 88 921,55

Project start date / end date:

December 2012 - December 2013

Website:

www.eudirect-haskovo.eu

PROJECT SYNOPSIS

It is well known that the birds and mammals population are not separated by state borders. Hence, the project **BEYOND BORDERS**, being a continuation of a past EU Phare-funded initiative, represents a step further towards joint conservation efforts on both the Bulgarian and Turkish sides of the border.

The actions at the Bulgarian side were concentrated on preservation and management of protected areas, while additionally strengthening the cross-border cooperation between Bulgarian and Turkish institutions and NGO's for conservation of bio-

logical diversity. It also built capacity for identification and management of protected areas and ecological networks, thus contributing for exchange of knowledge and practice, and sharing common standards. The establishment of an ecological network in Turkey has further strengthened the professional links across the border.

The project has also further promoted the implementation of Natura 2000 network rules in Bulgaria and increased the knowledge and awareness about it in Turkey, so that a common approach between neighbours can be applied.



SUCCESS FACTORS AND CHALLENGES

The key success factor is the well balanced partnership and mutual trust between partners. This led to achieving sustainable results in development and protection of natural heritage through identifying key areas for biodiversity and delineating ecological networks in the bordering region. The used approaches also contributed to European integrity and co-operation in the relevant field.

The project engaged highly specialised experts and institutions, that gave a further impetus to sustaining the results obtained, namely: an ecological network at local level was established while connecting eco-corridors, protected core areas, buffer zones, and sustainable use areas; cross-border cooperation for the conservation of priority species and habitats was further enhanced (since the Turkish part of the cross-border region was lacking sufficient information about the distribution of endangered species, the Bulgarian partners gave their best as to contribute in this sphere as well); a capacity for conservation and management of the protected areas was built, incl. Natura 2000 sites and conservation of the biological diversity. Last but not least, wide awareness was raised as regards protected areas management, Natura 2000 sites preservation and sustainable nature utilisation, as well as the biological diversity conservation.

The most substantial challenge for the project team were some specific permissions and procedures to be followed. Although, these activities were carefully planned in advanced, it took more time than expected and partially put the project in risk. Due to high expertise of project partners and their management capacity the risky situations have been mitigated and project's outcomes sustained.



MAJOR ACHIEVEMENTS, TANGIBLE / INTANGIBLE IMPACTS AND SPIN-OFFS

Overall, the project has contributed to protecting the natural resources and ensured sustainable development through building capacity and awareness among local stakeholders for conservation and management of biological

diversity, protected areas and ecological network. The key activities that led to this were: 1) Research and evaluation of the existing areas with conservations value, habitats, and species in the area of Babaeski Municipality; identifying of key elements of the ecological network in Haskovo and Harmanli municipality; 2) Pilot development of a management plan of „Defileto“ protected site and related consultations with responsible authorities; 3) Organization of training seminars in contemporary methods and approaches in protected areas and biodiversity conservation; 4) Establishment of a functional Eco-centre in Babaeski municipality; 5) Implemented cross-border campaign for promotion of protected areas ecological network; 6) An Youth Nature Conservation Club established in Babaeski municipality.

Knowledge and analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A manual on biodiversity conservation („Research and evaluation of existing areas with conservational value, habitats, species in the area of Babaeski municipality“) • Mapping of key sites outside existing protected areas in Bulgaria and biodiversity inventory including mapping localities of key species in Babaesky municipality in Turkey • A management plan of „Defileto“ protected site (Bulgaria)
Changes to policy or public behaviour	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased capacity among municipalities, foresters and environmentalists for the conservation of the natural heritage in the border region
Community integration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased awareness of local communities on the preservation and conservation of natural heritage

STRATEGIC CONTRIBUTION: LESSONS LEARNED

For the implementation of ecological projects wide expertise within the partnership is mostly needed. This will help to save time for other activities that are subject of specific permissions/approvals that are within the responsibility of external institutions/authorities.



„To-do“ Recommendations	„Not-to-do“ Recommendations
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Be brave to implement innovative actions, but carefully plan them. In case of an ecological project, plan carefully the seasonally linked activities. Be ready for unexpected developments.• Try to involve as much as possible young people in ecological projects - this way you are investing in future sustainable development of your region.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Do not underestimate the required procedures/ approval/permissions eventually needed as to complete certain project activities.• Do not underestimate the time and the weather as two of the most risky factors in implementation of ecological projects.

2.

Environment, Climate Change and Risk Prevention



CCI Number 2007CB16IP0007

Joint Applicable Research for Natural Resources Preservation and Environmental Protection in the Cross-border Region within the municipalities of Pehchevo and Simitli

**Bulgaria - the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia
IPA Cross-Border Programme (2007-2013)**

2007CB16IP007-2011-2-106 - JARNARPEPCREMOPS

Target Group / Final Beneficiaries:

- Local authorities
- Eco and rural organizations
- National Forestry Entities
- Private forest proprietors
- Agricultural organizations

Project partners:

1. Municipality Pehcevo
(the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia) - Lead Partner
2. Municipality Simitli
(Republic of Bulgaria)

Project budget:

EUR 82 029, 76

Project start date / end date:

July 2012 - October 2013

Website:

www.pehcevo.gov.mk/gis/

PROJECT SYNOPSIS

JARNARPEPCREMOPS represents an innovative way for environment protection and monitoring of areas with impaired ecological balance. The project aims at conservation of natural resources in the cross-border region by use of geographic information systems, GPS and satellite imagery.

Within the project the two partners, with the support of a team of experts, elaborated a detailed mapping of the landscape, water, forests, and climate resources of the territory of Pehcevo and Simitli municipalities and developed joint GEO data base

with full inventory of all natural assets. Areas with unique natural characteristics were identified as being possible protected areas.

Based on the technological equipment and software acquired, the evaluation of the resources carried out and the training delivered to designated staff of both municipalities, a system for joint cooperation, information and experience exchange was established aimed at natural resource protection and risk monitoring in the area of forest fires, flooding and erosion. Thus the project outcomes further build the capacities and strengthen the institutional cooperation and coordination among local authorities, as well as the timely reaction in case of natural disasters in the border area.

SUCCESS FACTORS AND CHALLENGES

Elaboration and implementation of a project in the field of environment was not an easy process, especially when the expected outcomes depended on the use of technological equipment quite new for small municipalities like Pehcevo and Simitli where there was a very limited expertise in using high-tech tools and no experience at all in operating GIS and GPS technologies. It was inspired by the natural beauties of the region and the current needs to protect and preserve them but no early warning systems and facilities were available. Early warning is especially important in the case of fires because normally they become visible at a very late stage after they have already covered a large territory and it becomes much more difficult to fight them.

With project completion and after demonstrating the real options the GIS platform created, the project outputs found their real application in the everyday lives of local population in terms of better security and prevention of natural and man-made disasters. This was further supported by intensive capacity building and training actions thus demonstrating the importance of nature conservation, but also the benefits of modern technologies utilisation in that process.

MAJOR ACHIEVEMENTS, TANGIBLE / INTANGIBLE IMPACTS AND SPIN-OFFS

The major project achievement is the deep inventory of natural resources performed for target territory of Municipalities of Pehcevo and Simitli, following intensive terrestrial observations and field checks, which was further systematised into a GEO database with complete evaluation of geo-landscape resources, climate, water, and forest and soil resources. The data collected provided a ground for creating a profound GIS system for monitoring of natural risks and potential hazards in the area, forest fires, floods, severe erosion and landslides. Risk assessments reports and recommendations for natural disasters prevention were elaborated. Numerous GIS models, scenarios and databases created represent supportive instruments also for the strategic and urban planning process in both municipalities.

A web-based virtual information GEO-database centre was created for cross-border information exchange for monitoring the occurrence of risk processes, phenomena and natural disasters currently operated and maintained by trained experts

in both municipalities. Relevant bodies were identified in both regions and a joint institutional network for near-real time monitoring of sustainable development and natural resources was established.

Additionally, a wide informational and educational campaign has been organised within the project, popularising the utilization of geographic information systems for the needs of natural disasters prevention and increasing public awareness on the benefits from environment preservation and natural resources conservation.

The project laid the basis for future initiatives which built on the results already achieved. In Simitli a subsequent investment project was realised where video equipment was acquired and small cameras installed within the forests in the region which enables 24 h close monitoring of the territories for fires or similar disasters.

New knowledge or analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • GIS inventory of the natural resources within both municipalities; detailed evaluation on geo and landscape resources, climate resources, water resources and forests within both municipalities; evaluation of natural resources with identification of cross-border areas with significant or unique natural characteristics • Joint GEO Database • Risk assessment analysis using GIS risk models on local natural resources and infrastructure • Training and capacity building of the staff of both municipalities for using GIS and GPS technologies
New ways of working	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Institutional network for near-real time monitoring established
Investment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete GIS equipment (hardware and licensed software)
Product or services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Joint GEO Database
Community integration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased public awareness on the benefits from environment preservation and natural resources conservation.

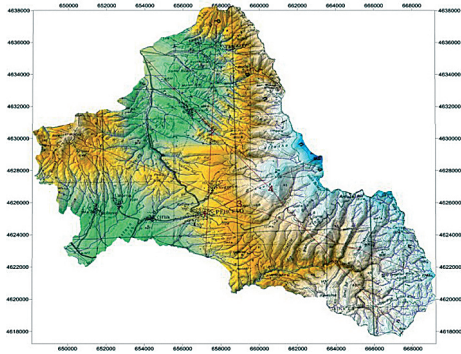
STRATEGIC CONTRIBUTION: LESSONS LEARNED

The use of modern technological tools and innovative approaches in combating local environmental problems is challenging in itself. However, the successful im-



plementation of **JARNARPEPCREMOPS** project, and moreover by partners representing local governance structures demonstrate it is not impossible.

The well-structured project's concept, supported by consecutive but upgrading actions, and last but not least - the engagement of proper external expertise, are the major prerequisites for the outcomes achieved.



„To-do“ Recommendations

- For implementing sensitive environmental projects, the involvement of a wide range of stakeholders is needed.
- The effective environment protection and fight with natural and man-made disasters needs innovative approaches and use of modern technologies.

„Not-to-do“ Recommendations

- When dealing with subjects of highly specialised nature, do not do it alone. Find the right external expertise and make joint efforts as to deliver the planned outcomes.

2.

Environment, Climate Change and Risk Prevention



CCI Number 2007CB16IP0006

Prevention and Extinguishing of Forest Fires

Bulgaria - Serbia IPA Cross-Border Programme (2007-2013)

2007CB16IP0006-2011-2-217- Forest Fires

Target Group / Final Beneficiaries:

- „Serbian Forests“ Company in Serbia and „Executive Forest Agency“ in Bulgaria (more precisely „Regional Forest Directorate Berkovitca“)
- People in municipalities of Knjazevac, Pirot, Dimitrovgrad, Belogradchik, Chiprovtsi, Cuprene, Georgi Damianovo, Godec and Berkovitsa

Project partners:

1. Municipality of Knjazevac (Republic of Serbia) - Lead Partner
2. Municipality of Belogradchik (Republic of Bulgaria)

Project budget:

EUR 117 180,14

Project start date / end date:

November 2013 -
November 2014

Website:

www.prevencijasumskihpozara.org

PROJECT SYNOPSIS

Prevention and Extinguishing of Forest Fires is a showcase project dealing with the prevention and extinguishing of forest fires in the municipalities of Belogradchik and Knjazevac through GIS technology application, and also by facilitating the exchange of knowledge between local governments across the border jointly focused on the sustainable use of natural ecosystems.

In the last fifteen years the areas affected by forest fires have increased ten times within the cross-border region. Climate changes caused by increasing air temperatures and reducing rainfall are expected to additionally increase both the number of fires and their intensity, and furthermore also during periods that are generally considered as no-fire seasons (i.e. during October and November). Additionally, excessive exploitation of natural resources in the area, poor spatial and temporal distribution of rainfall due to climate change, loss of sensitive natural habitats, increase of tourist visits to the area without adequate control of movement and depopulation in rural areas are all weaknesses that influence the targeted territory and resp. target groups.

Hence, the project strategy has been focused on the establishment of an information system based on GIS as to integrate various data into a single electronic database in order to provide better forest fire prevention. Socio-demographic characteristics, location and extent of traditional resource management and local vegetation (stubble burning, hedges, use of fire to restore meadows and pastures, and more) were analysed together with addressing the bio, geo and landscape diversity. From the perspective of ecosystems benefits, the outbreak and spread of fire were defined, and a land use map and a priority function areas were drafted. A database of settlements, buildings and road networks was created, along with the potential causes of fires mapped (close to the villages, sights of stationary, sightseeing and transit tourism, farms, hunting and fishing locations, etc.).

During the course of project implementation, the project team has also managed to harmonize national classifications of land. With the help of equipment procured, a digital terrain model was developed and orthographic characteristics have been analysed in order to define the speed and direction of spreading of the potential forest fires.

SUCCESS FACTORS AND CHALLENGES

The project idea was promoted by the Lead Partner (Municipality of Knjazevac), based on previous consultation with a number of local and regional stakeholders. However the commitment of institutions at the municipal level in Knjaževac and Belogradchik to the environmental protection and the strong political will to implement measures to protect natural ecosystems was not enough in itself. There was a clear need identified to develop particular tools that will help the implementation of this will, which brought to the necessity of development GIS applications on the prevention of forest fires and for other municipal purposes as well (i.e. town planning, area plans - general and detailed, and the like).

In order to create a GIS information system, various possibilities of collecting general and thematic background maps were explored and adjusted. It was further agreed that the map data will include: analogue maps, scanned maps in raster format, digital vector maps and possibly existing aerial and satellite imagery from earlier periods or new acquisitions. Identification, classification, control and systematization of existing data was done. This basic information was supplemented with available relevant documents, such as raster images, descriptive non-spatial tabular data (tables of a relational database, spreadsheet data), and other digital data.

During the GIS development, a database of settlements and road network has also been created.

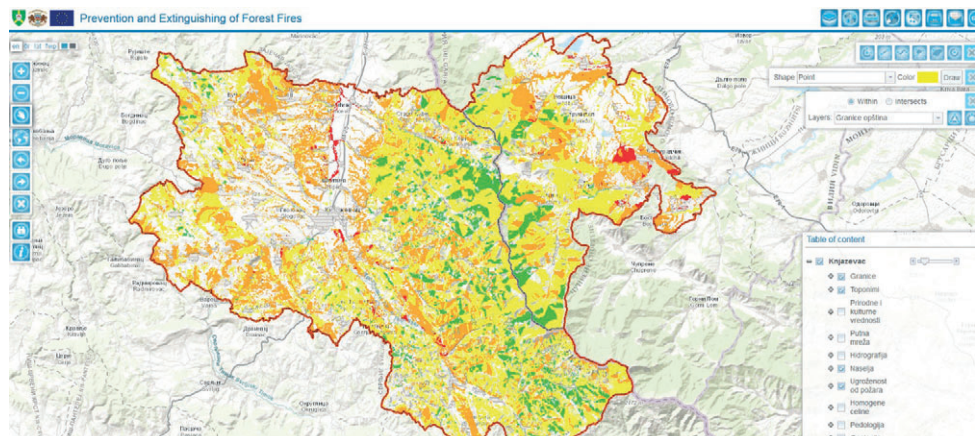
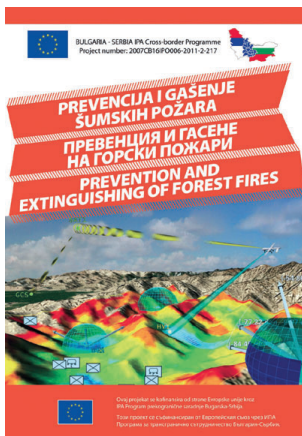
The Web-based GIS application developed could be accessed on <http://web.knjazevac.rs:8085/knjazevac/>.

MAJOR ACHIEVEMENTS, TANGIBLE / INTANGIBLE IMPACTS AND SPIN-OFFS

The project outputs in the area of **newly-acquired knowledge** were achieved through digital terrain model (DTM) development along with the analysis of orographic characteristics important for the speed and direction of fire spreading. The DTM allows the determination of geographical features that are important for managing the risk of fire. Each cell has data on elevation, slope, position on slope exposure, the degree of heat and thermal coordinates. Additional benefits are the determination of status, regime and monitoring of rare and endangered plant and animal species of national and international importance, as well as the creation of a registry of architectural heritage in this area and mapping of specific Natura 2000 habitat on the Serbian and Bulgarian side.

New ways of working together have been established by the project partners: i.e. Serbian and Bulgarian side worked together to harmonize the differences that exist in the national geological and pedological classifications. Bedrock was classified as well as soil type determined, on the basis of available soil mapping. It was conducted in accordance with the World classification of land as well as the vulnerability of certain types of fires. This project achievement presents a significant improvement in working methods, skills, practices and procedures, and will continue to function after the project funding period.

Additional „intangible“ achievements relate to **changes in policy or public behaviour**, as the development of GIS and joint management plans has influenced municipal decision-making and legislation development processes (town planning, area plans - general and detailed, and the like). The 6 workshops organized in primary schools, 10 workshops with rural population and 2 workshops organized with hunting, fishing and tourism stakeholders have further impetus on changes in public behaviour.



The **wide awareness campaigns** in small villages led to building trust between local people and representatives of local fire departments, as well as such with the local government administrations. People become more responsible for their bad practices that cause fires. All project activities were covered by the media - 3 press conferences and press releases given, several articles presented in local newspapers and on the WEB-site of the project. Promotional materials were also disseminated.

<p>New knowledge or analysis</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Study „Prevention and extinguishing of forest fires“ • Study „Analysis of the data and methodology for the development of threat classification system of forest habitat from fire in the municipalities Knjaževac and Belogradchik for the purpose of creating a web GIS applications“ • Web-based Digital terrain model (DTM) http://web.knjazevac.rs:8085/knjazevac
<p>New ways of working</p> <p>Changes to policy or public behaviour</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Harmonization of differences in the national geological and pedological classifications • GIS and joint management plans have influenced municipal decision-making and legislation development (town planning, area plans - general and detailed) • People become more responsible and aware about prevention and extinguishing of forest fires
<p>Product or services</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Three-lingual interactive WEB-portal www.prevencijasumskihpozara.org • GIS operating system
<p>Community integration</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 6 workshops organized in primary schools; 10 workshops with rural population; 2 workshops organized with hunting, fishing and tourism stakeholders



STRATEGIC CONTRIBUTION: LESSONS LEARNED

„To-do“ Recommendations	„Not-to-do“ Recommendations
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Projects of this nature should include wider target audience as to attain the impacts searched (i.e. hunting, fishing, tourism stakeholders), since this further improves project sustainability.• Children, as an important target group, are to be communicated through adequate communication channels (classroom, cartoon and comic formats).	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Municipalities should not be part of pre-written and supply-driven project applications, where local needs and problems have not been taken into account.• Do not rush with implementing activities: an hour of planning is much worthy than ten hours of implementation.

Increasing the regional accessibility in the cross border region by rehabilitation of two local roads, passing through vineyards in the Municipality of Lom and City Municipality of Pantelej

3.

Transport and Public Infrastructures



CCI Number 2007CB16IP0006

Bulgaria - Serbia IPA Cross-Border Programme (2007-2013)

**2007CB16IP0006-2011-2-105 -
Modern and Safe Transport Infrastructure**

Target Group / Final Beneficiaries:

- Citizens, tourists and visitors
- Small and medium enterprises engaged in wine production

Project partners:

1. Municipality of Lom (Republic of Bulgaria) - Lead Partner
2. City Municipality of Pantelej (Republic of Serbia)

Project budget:

EUR 808 485,48

Project start date / end date:

April 2013 - February 2015

PROJECT SYNOPSIS

The project **Modern and Safe Transport Infrastructure** is a product of a long-lasting partnership between the municipalities of Lom and Pantelej. The realized activities contribute to infrastructure modernization in municipality of Lom (6 km) and Pantelej (2.5 km), and in long term period is a basis for sustainable development of cultural tourism by enabling full usage of resources that had not been utilised due to lack of infrastructure facilities.

The reconstruction and rehabilitation of both roads improved the regional accessibility in many aspects, while also created suitable environment for safe traffic in the cross-border region. The road in Lom is connected to two very important high-

ways, i.e. the transport corridors for the Southeast Europe - Pan European corridors 4 and 7 (River Danube). This is a strategic place where traffic links from Western Europe to South Europe meet, with possibilities for cross-border cooperation with Romania and Serbia. From the other side, the area near the road is known as a wine-producing region and the improved infrastructure has enhanced the conditions for doing business, while also providing access to wineries, thus creating conditions for development of wine tourism.

SUCCESS FACTORS AND CHALLENGES

The main success factor of the project is the long-standing partnership between the two municipalities. As a result of it, important cross-border project ideas and infrastructure objects are set out in municipal strategic documents (i.e. the Municipal Development Plans). In fact, the infrastructure realized within the project „Modern and Safe Transport Infrastructure“ is a result of the participatory planned and adopted development plans of both municipalities, which has led to enhanced support from local communities as well.

Due to its investment nature, the project faced various implementation problems (mostly operational difficulties related with external factors), but all of them were successfully settled by the project partners using a pro-active management approach, while also being strongly supported by the Programme’s Managing Authority and the Joint Technical Secretariat.

MAJOR ACHIEVEMENTS, TANGIBLE / INTANGIBLE IMPACTS AND SPIN-OFFS

Generally, the project idea started with the rehabilitation of an access road leading to vine plantations where is the traditional place for the annual festival held in Bulgaria on the feast Trifon’s Day (14th February). Two days wine fair „Wine road“ has been organized within the project in the town of Lom on the 13th and 14th February (Trifon Zarezan). Wine producers from Lom and Nish took part in it. All sorts of wine from different regions, both from Bulgaria and Serbia have been presented. On Serbian side, a reconstruction of an access road has also been executed - but here its major purpose was to create preconditions for enabling research and explorations of one of the biggest caves on the Balkans - the Cerje cave, which needs to be further explored. The access ensured enables scientists and international speleologists to take part in the anticipated exploration activities and inform the wider public of this natural treasure. Additionally, the further development of the cave affects the local cultural and adventure tourism.

Considering the fact that both Lom and Pantelej are municipalities with little financial resources, every step towards the improvement of local infrastructure was welcomed and considered an achievement by the local community.

Besides the „tangible“ impacts, the project has realised a number of „intangible“ (not less important) effects as well: e.g. institutional capacity building, new contacts established, improved social cohesion and changed attitude towards neighbours across the border. The organized seminar for new wine technologies brought together small wine producers from the region, who had the opportunity to not only exchange knowledge, but discuss new ideas for business

development, experiencing new business networking and finding new friends. Due to project activities, the winery of „Malcha“ (situated only 10 km away from Nish) has become a famous tourist destination for the Bulgarians living in Montana district, which further enhanced cross-border cooperation and paved the road for further development of wine tourism in the area.

During the regular team meetings, new tourist destinations on both sides of the border have been discussed and developed. Hence, a number of new ideas for future cooperation and projects were outlined.

New ways of working	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New methodology for wine producing presented to local wine producers through organized seminar in the City municipality of Pantelej
Changes to policy or public behaviour	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developed joint Programme for promotion of wine production and business in the border region • Enhanced image and attractiveness of the border region for wine and cultural tourism
Investments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rehabilitation of an access road (6 km) in Municipality of Lom • Reconstructed access road (2.5 km) in Municipality of Pantelej
Community integration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annual exhibition of wine production and competition among local producers • Contacts among wine producer from Bulgaria and Serbia • New destinations for wine tourism

STRATEGIC CONTRIBUTION: LESSONS LEARNED

The most important lesson learned by the project management team is the need of having a good and realistic planning of project activities. For this to happen, the intensive preliminary work between project partners is a must - e.g. for developing this particular project idea experts from both municipalities had number of meetings as to discuss all project elements and finally to elaborate a project with well-structured activity framework, feasible both in terms of time and money.

Another important issue, especially as regards projects developed and implemented by local government structures, is the inevitable political challenges. The development, approval and implementation of a cross-border project takes time, while various administrative and/or personal changes might happen meanwhile. Therefore, as to overcome any such challenges a long-lasting partnership and trustful relations between project partners are needed. In this particular project, the years of common experience, cooperation and good communication among municipal experts were the pre-requisites for timely realisation of all project activities planned.



„To-do“ Recommendations

- Long-term partnership is the basis for successful project implementation.
- Municipal administration should be part of the project management team as to ensure successful project implementation and crisis management.
- Project should come out as a result of Municipal Development Plans and consultations with local stakeholders.

„Not-to-do“ Recommendations

- The team members are preferably not to be outsourced.
- If the outsourcing of project management team is inevitable, then a very precise employment contract - defining roles, tasks, communication channels, guarantees and payments linked to project milestones - is to be applied.

Digital Culture for Regional Cohesion: An innovative data base for raising the awareness in the cross-border area on the regional and European dimension of culture and its better joint utilisation

4.

Tourism, Cultural
and Natural Heritage



CCI Number 2007CB16IP0007

**Bulgaria - the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia
IPA Cross-Border Programme (2007-2013)**

**2007CB16IP0007-2011-2-006 -
Digital Culture for Regional Cohesion**

Target Group / Final Beneficiaries:

- Young people between 15 and 35 years of age
- Local, regional and national government authorities
- Cultural institutions
- Local artist communities
- Tourist agencies, SMEs in the tourist sector
- Citizens, tourists and visitors

Project partners:

1. No Frontiers 21 Century Association (Republic of Bulgaria) - Lead Partner
2. Assembly of Associations for Technical Culture - National Technique of Strumica (the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia)

Project budget:

EUR 92 196,96

Project start date / end date:

April 2013 - April 2014

Website:

www.digital-culture.eu

PROJECT SYNOPSIS

Digital Culture for Regional Cohesion is a pilot and demonstrational project that provides a model for digitising cultural content and promotes the existing cultural assets of the entire cross-border region between Bulgaria and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. It well contributes to the efforts of global establishment of „Brand Europe“ and „Brand EU“.

The model can be used by municipalities, cultural centres, NGOs, tour operators to display the cultural heritage of their communities in an attractive way, but also to fascinate the visitors' interest towards the region. It can be employed by museums to exhibit their collections, by performers to demonstrate their art, by teachers in schools and lecturers in universities to illustrate their lessons in regional geography, history, archaeology, fine arts, etc. The multilingual web platform created under the project is a gateway to the vast cultural assets of the region providing easy access to information and resources to citizens, tourists and visitors.

SUCCESS FACTORS AND CHALLENGES

The project idea was promoted by the Lead Partner „No Frontiers 21 Century Association“ which has long lasting experience in topics related to tourism and cultural heritage. The preliminary analysis that has been carried out by them shows that a major strength of the cross-border region is the abundance and similarity of cultural assets. Yet, culture-wise it is an „unknown land“ to international travellers. Communities across the border do not know each other's cultural resources. Starting from the understanding that „*culture is a human right that should be enjoyed by each person and nation*“, and underlying the EU motto „*United in diversity*“, the partners have reached an agreement to find a modern approach in tackling this common challenge.

Furthermore, the survey performed has shown that the digital competence in the region is low, especially regarding the European and regional dimension. Presentation of cultural heritage on the WEB was scarce, difficult to find and unattractively presented. While at the same time modern technologies could further facilitate access to cultural content and education, hence open people's minds and shape traveller's vacation plans. Thus, the project has addressed a problem that goes beyond national boundaries.

The vast amount of the existing cultural assets was the first major challenge the project faced; and each of the cultural sites had to be described, photographed or illustrated, and visualised. Partners have mobilised all possible stakeholders to help collect the common cultural content, especially students from local schools who were most actively involved in visualising and filming the content. Then came the second challenge - how to attractively present the information gathered and make it directly available to the target audience.

Given the above, the key success of the project was the application of a single, systematic, and integrative approach to identifying cultural assets, organising them in categories that facilitated data exploration, and making them visible in Internet via the web-based platform, while also boosting the youths' digital culture competence by directly involving them in project implementation.

MAJOR ACHIEVEMENTS, TANGIBLE / INTANGIBLE IMPACTS AND SPIN-OFFS

The project provides digital content on 400 cultural assets (200 on each side of the border) divided into the following categories: material assets, performing arts and events, traditions and customs, crafts, contemporary youth culture and

digital library. Further, the following forms of digitisation of cultural content have been used: digital descriptions, virtual tours, videos, 360-degree panoramic photos, regular digital photos, 3D images, GPS coordinates of cultural sites. The digital content is uploaded on a user-friendly three-lingual interactive web-portal, which increases the outreach of the project messages and information. This is the main output of the project. It also uses digital maps and supports an excellent film-making tutorial for amateur photographers and an e-learning platform on digital culture.

The e-learning platform has proved to be an important instrument in raising the awareness of people in the cross-border area, and particularly of young people, of the regional and European dimension of culture. It uses clear and short statements to convey knowledge on the following topics: Culture, Digitisation, Digitising culture; the European dimension of culture: European Union view on culture, Digital libraries in Europe (with links for additional information and demonstration), Virtual museums in Europe (with links), Europeana (with links); Regional dimension of culture: Cultural heritage in the cross-border region, Digitising cultural content in the region, Digital culture in education, Digital culture in tourism.

The documentary film-making video tutorial provides knowledge about basic techniques for amateur film-making, such as shooting and editing (<http://digital-culture.eu/en/learning/documentary-film-making-video-tutorial>). It was used in the training of 20 high-school students (10 on each side of the border), who subsequently acted as Digital Culture Advocates, participated in the collection and digitisation of the cultural content, made their own video films on cultural and youth topics and presented them in the youth section of the Film Fest held in Strumica. Close friendly relations were also established among the students from the partnering countries, teachers, interviewers and members of the project implementation team.

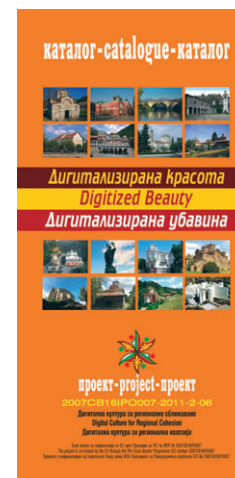
The project, its products and results were widely promoted in the media, as well as through advertising materials (a 3-lingual promotional catalogue of digitised cultural assets „Digitised Beauty“; mini promo cards of digitized cultural assets, disseminated at 4 info points - at the local and central offices of the partners, and 20 public/tourist locations; promotional badges; promotional leaflets with the BG/EN and MK/EN language combinations); and live demonstrations of the web-portal.

“The active involvement of pupils and students in the project activities, as well as the organisation of joint festivals across the border was positively recognised by all local stakeholders. More frequent initiatives of this nature are needed so as to increase awareness of the digital culture, exchange knowledge and practical skills on how to make a creative film, and how to explore the cultural beauty of the two neighbouring countries. Especially the application of a 3D content of project web-site, was unforgettable first-time experience for most of the students involved. Additionally, the museums, libraries and other institutions were grateful that the project had helped them raise awareness of both countries legacy in Internet by using modern and interesting approaches (3D pictures, panoramas, stories, and legends)”

Igor Panchevski, B.El.Eng.
Project Coordinator on behalf of Assembly
of Associations for Technical Culture -
National Technique of Strumica

New knowledge or analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identified 400 cultural assets (200 on each side of the border)
New ways of working	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> E-learning platform on digital culture Documentary film-making video tutorial providing knowledge about basic techniques for amateur film-making Boosting the young people's digital culture competence by directly involving them in the project implementation
Changes to policy or public behaviour	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enhanced image and attractiveness of the border region presenting it to international travellers and markets as a single cultural tourism destination
Product or services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Three-lingual interactive web-portal 3-lingual promotional catalogue of digitised cultural assets „Digitalised Beauty“ Mini promotional cards of digitalised cultural assets
Community integration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Film Fest and Round Table in Strumica Balkan Digital Culture and Performing Arts Festival in Kjustendil Joint tours of cultural routes including the digitalised cultural sites

STRATEGIC CONTRIBUTION: LESSONS LEARNED



From the vicinity of its experience in realising the project, the partners would recommend to carefully plan the volume of work to be carried out - it should be as realistic as possible, and also in line with budget and timeframe. It should be achievable with reasonable efforts over the project implementation period. In this specific project case project partners have planned the elaboration of a

data base of 400 assets which in reality required enormous efforts. Furthermore, the 3D photos planned seem not to be the most practical approach given the low budget of the project, since they require quite sophisticated technology to be shot but also specialised software to be utilised by the users so as to view them.

„To-do“ Recommendations	„Not-to-do“ Recommendations
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• High quality always pays off. For proper promotion of a cultural tourism destination use quality images and short sentences in excellent English. Tell an emotional story: a legend, a historical episode, share personal experience or even something interesting you have heard or read about, if you can relate it to the destination.• If you want to teach many people a practical skill, use a WEB-based tutorial.• For a project to be successful and have substantial impact, it needs thorough preparation much in advance, and to be truly built on the real needs of the region and target group addressed.• Early involvement of the major project stakeholders is a must, thus any possible issues that arise are solved in a timely manner and with wider consensus.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Do not be afraid of modern technologies. They are meant to help you. Learn to operate them. With the right software and skills a computer and a smart phone can be valuable tools in project implementation.• Do not „do it yourself“, if a professional can do it much better than you. Just hire the professional at a reasonable price.

4.

Tourism, Cultural and Natural Heritage



CCI Number 2007CB16IP0008

Interlaced Culture without Borders between Friends and Neighbours

Bulgaria - Turkey IPA Cross-Border Programme (2007-2013)

2007CB16IP0008-2011-2-132 - BEGIN

Target Group / Final Beneficiaries:

- Local Authorities
- Cultural and community centres, organisations and associations
- Local amateur art-performers, craftsmen and people working in the field of culture
- Potential tourists and visitors to the cross-border region

Project partners:

1. National Community Center „Prosveta-1870“ - Svilengrad (Republic of Bulgaria) - Lead Partner
2. Kırklareli Municipality (Republic of Turkey)

Project budget:

EUR 580 904,58

Project start date / end date:

April 2013 - April 2015

Website:

www.nchprosveta1870.org

PROJECT SYNOPSIS

The project **BEGIN** aimed to develop a model for sustainable cross-border partnership in the field of culture and art between Kırklareli municipality and Svilengrad municipality through different forms of art and culture activities. The project has presented, advertised and supported the preservation of dance, theatre, vocal, instrumental, literature and folklore heritage of the cross-border region. The project has been designed to enhance the intercultural dialogue between Bulgaria and Turkey, especially in the border area, thus contributing to European co-operation and integrity.

The project gave ground for improving the quality of life in both Svilengrad and Kirkclareli through building up good cultural cooperation between the municipalities and the enhanced cooperation between the local culture and community centres; more people were motivated to take proactive role in preservation and popularisation of the native folklore heritage; furthermore, the promotion of the distinctive diversity and multi-layer folklore heritage was proved to act as an effective and sustainable „cultural bridge“ between the different regions in Bulgaria and Turkey. Finally, the project BEGIN attained one of its basic objectives, i.e. to encourage intercultural dialogue and promotion of new forms of cultural expression and cooperation through participation in different festivals and culture events.

SUCCESS FACTORS AND CHALLENGES

Both municipalities have long lasting traditions in cooperation under various projects and cross-border initiatives over the years. The current project is a logical continuation of the well-established partnership. Although the Municipal Administration of Svilengrad was not a formal partner in this project in particular, it was enough active and supportive as for the project to succeed enriching the value and importance of the cultural traditions in the bordering region.

The two annual folklore festivals - „Dances and Songs without Borders“ in Svilengrad, and „Harvest and Fruitfulness“ in Kirkclareli - have obtained a new meaning. Due to the improved opportunities for cultural activities and stimulated creative amateur work in both municipalities, more art groups have participated in these traditional events. Moreover, two other very important events have been organised - „Turkish Cultural Days in Svilengrad“ and „Bulgarian Cultural Days in Kirkclareli“. This way more people have been motivated to preserve and popularise the cultural heritage of the cross-border region.

“This was our first own project. If we have to describe it in one word – it should be “challenge” but due to the strong partnership between project partners as well as our two border municipalities, we overcame all risks and successfully finalised the project.”

Vanya Stefanova, Secretary of “Prosveta-1870”
National Community Centre – Svilengrad

For both partners the key success factor of the project is the mutual trust, because they know each other very well. Moreover, the key elements of any successful cross-project - *joint development, joint implementation, joint staffing, and joint financing*, have been completely covered by this project.

In any case, the excellent communication and full support by the Programme’s management structures (JTS, MA and NA) was an important factor for the overall project success.

MAJOR ACHIEVEMENTS, TANGIBLE / INTANGIBLE IMPACTS AND SPIN-OFFS

As a result of project implementation, the cultural infrastructure of both municipalities has been seriously improved. One of the key activities in this direction was the gasification of the building of „Prosveta-1870“ National Community Centre in

Svilengrad. In terms of small-scale reconstruction and repair works inside the building more activities have been implemented, for example - re-arranging of a room into a small art-centre for handicrafts, full refurbishment of a dance hall, improvements of the stage of the theatre and others. In terms of supply of equipment, lots of costumes and other applications have been bought for several folklore groups, art performers, Brass Band and others. The music recording studio has been completely renovated and equipped. Currently, „Prosveta-1870“ National Community Centre in Svilengrad is all-year occupied with lots of new cultural initiatives, such as theatre and opera performances, guest starring from Bourgas Opera, theatres from Sofia and Haskovo, private theatre formations, concerts of popular singers, and many others.

As regards the municipality of Kirkclareli, the key activities were related to construction works in an existent building that has been transformed into a modern cultural centre, being the first such a centre established in the town. Before the project when needed, the municipality has been depending on the availability of local University Halls. Currently many new cultural initiatives have been implemented after the project - art events, performances, weddings.

Investment infrastructure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved municipal cultural infrastructure
Community integration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved intercultural dialogue and promotion of new forms of cultural expression and cooperation, through participation in variety of joint cultural events

STRATEGIC CONTRIBUTION: LESSONS LEARNED

The example is evidencing that when a project is planned carefully by the organisations that will implement it, even in a case of unexpected risks, the partners will know how to mitigate and overcome the challenges. The **365/24/7 manner of communication** between partners is extremely important when a long term project, with many connected activities, is implemented.

Additionally, the active involvement of the target group in implementing activities further increased their interest in the project, and thus helped project partners exceed the number of cultural and educational services provided.





„To-do“ Recommendations

- The best projects are developed and implemented between partners that fully trust each other.
- In case of infrastructural project implementation, you need to plan the project carefully so as to avoid potential risks during the implementation.

„Not-to-do“ Recommendations

- Do not plan unrealistic time schedules.

4.

Tourism, Cultural and Natural Heritage



CCI Number 2007CB16IP0006

MOUNT A BIKE - development of mountain bicycle routes in Western Balkans

Bulgaria - Serbia IPA Cross-Border Programme (2007-2013)

2007CB16IP0006-2009-1-019- MOUNT A BIKE

Target Group / Final Beneficiaries:

- Mountain bicycle associations and informal unions in Bulgaria and Serbia
- People fond of nature, active in sport, mountain bikers, hikers
- Local tourism companies (hotels, restaurants, tourism service providers, etc.)

Project partners:

1. Agency for regional development and business centre - Vidin (Republic of Bulgaria) - Lead Partner
2. Regional Centre for Sustainable Development and Entrepreneurship Timok - Zajecar (Republic of Serbia)
3. Regional Development Agency and Business Centre 2000 - Montana (Republic of Bulgaria)

Project budget:

EUR 387 983,04

Project start date / end date:

July 2011 - January 2013

Website:

www.mountabike.eu

PROJECT SYNOPSIS

The **MOUNT A BIKE** project focuses on development of a new tourist product - mountain biking routes, along with the provision of new integrated cross-border services such as bike rental and bike repair, as well as promotion of the border region as a new adventure tourism destination.

In general, mountain biking is steadily becoming a popular activity as well as tourist attraction across Europe. People are reconnecting with nature while exercising open-air sports activities and trying out healthy lifestyle. Project partners well matched this tendency with the demand for improving the tourism offering in the border area. The amazing natural heritage of the region is unique and attracting more and more visitors each year. The hospitality of the local people and their traditions are preserved, while tourist infrastructure is constantly improving with new hotels, roads, restaurants, etc. Additionally, the area where the tourist product is initially introduced is at proximity to both the capitals of Bulgaria (at about 150 km) and Serbia (at about 250 km), which makes the product open to wider audience (incl. international tourists).

The mountain biking routes were further linked to the existing routes for hikers, hunting grounds, fishing, so the outcomes of the project become a part of a wider integrated tourist offer in the cross-border region.

SUCCESS FACTORS AND CHALLENGES

The mountain biking routes are located in the northern part of Western Balkans, incorporating wide cross-border area in both Bulgaria and Serbia. They were developed by a group of experts from both partnering countries, who also defined the tracks to be cleaned, the GPS coordinates of the signs to be posted, the coordinates of the picnic areas, the information needed to be placed on the signposts (regarding the difficulty of routes), proximity to any other touristic infrastructure, routes and flora/fauna worth seeing etc. A field study for database collection has been elaborated thus enhancing the route promotion.

The main success driving factor of the project is that the project idea was initiated by a passionate cyclist person - i.e. any idea that evolves personal passion, creates an important ingredient for success and achievement of the intended results. After completion of the main project activities, the purchased equipment - bicycles, helmets, GPS and repair-kits have been transferred to local tourist societies as to continue developing cycling tourism along the established bike routes (i.e. the Club Skala from Belogradchik, „Interekoturs“ and „Turlatsite“ clubs from Chiprovci, and „Domos“ club from Chuprene). All these clubs undertook the provision of bicycles to tourists staying in local guest houses, thus diversifying the tourist offers' attractions.

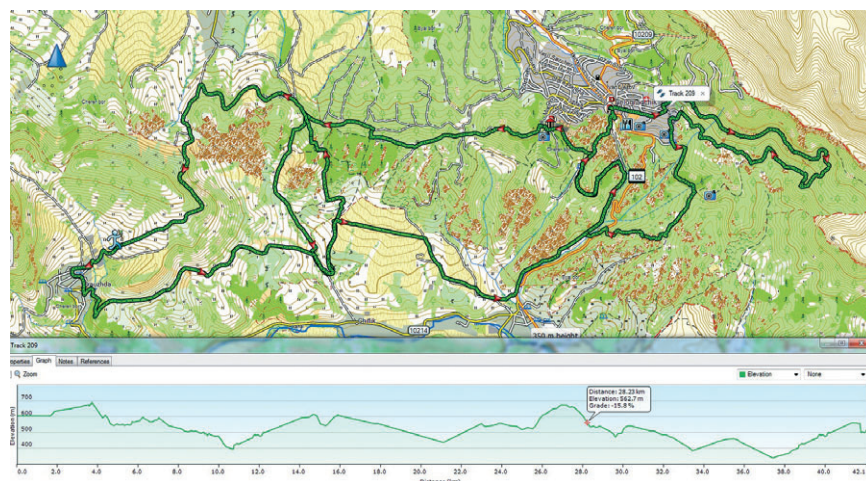
MAJOR ACHIEVEMENTS, TANGIBLE / INTANGIBLE IMPACTS AND SPIN-OFFS

The total length of mountain biking routes created is 375 km (275 km in Bulgaria and 100 km in Serbia). All were well signposted and some 140 km of existent mountain routes have been additionally cleaned from bushes and fallen trees. Some 24 picnic areas were set up. A bike rental service was organised (and continues to operate after project closure), with possibility for taking a bike at one side of the border and leaving it at the other side of the border.

The wide awareness campaign carried out promoting mountain biking (in general) and the created tourist routes (in particular) were essential for project's success. The dedicated WEB-site provides lot of useful information, which covers not only details about hiking routes, but also such for the region and the tourist opportunities it provides. During the project, three

seminars in Belogradchik, Chiprovtsi and Zajecar were held, where local stakeholders met and synchronised efforts for mountain biking tourism development. Organisations and persons with great contribution for tourism development and mountain biking knowledge were selected in order to start the „rent-a-bike cross-border service“. Further, a five-day training on mountain biking and repairing of bicycles was organised for people who will continue to take care about the development and maintenance of both the routes and facilities created.

New knowledge or analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Touristic database of local tourist attractions and accommodation facilities • GPS tracks database
New ways of working	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Distribution of bought equipment for mountain bike tourism to local organization that are closer to tourist in small town and villages, and who continue operating the tourist product successfully
Changes to policy or public behaviour	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Diversification of tourism attractions in the region and initiation of new local development ideas • Raised awareness about the new mountain biking offer at tourism fairs
Investments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Purchased mountain bicycles and related supplies
Product or services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Special mountain biking cross-border tourist product created • Organised mountain bike rental and repair service
Community integration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mountain biking routes network established



STRATEGIC CONTRIBUTION: LESSONS LEARNED

The main success of the project was the creation of a unique bike route, with appropriate equipment and integrated tourism services along the entire path, which became fully sustainable and usable after completion of the project. The WEB-site (www.mountabike.eu) and Facebook group (www.facebook.com/Mount-a-Bike-315802148477294/?fref=ts) created are still functional and continuously updated with news and events on regional cycling tourism.

The project inspired new ideas for development of biking tourism: a strategy for development of cycling tourism has been elaborated; an extension route (Godech-Svoje-Sofia) is under preparation; a biking route along the Danube River is also under implementation (currently funded under the Cross-border Programme between Bulgaria and Romania).



„To-do“ Recommendations

- When you put in realisation an idea that is your passion, there is no way not to get good results;
- If your idea is good, local community helps.

„Not-to-do“ Recommendations

- Be careful when developing project budget, and if the activities are mirrored - the budget should be mirrored too;

5.

Youth, Education and Skills



CCI Number 2007CB16IP0007

E-services knowledge for social cohesion

**Bulgaria - the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia
IPA Cross-Border Programme (2007-2013)**

2007CB16IP007-2012-3-049 - ESKSC

Target Group / Final Beneficiaries:

- High school students and teachers in secondary schools
- Business entities

Project partners:

1. Vocational School of Economics and Management „Yordan Zahariev“ (Republic of Bulgaria) - Lead Partner
2. Secondary School „Gjorce Petrov“ (the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia)
3. Association „Farmers and Entrepreneurs for Europe“ (Republic of Bulgaria)

Project budget:

EUR 76 133,50

Project start date / end date:

July 2014 - July 2015

Website:

www.e-learning-bgmk.eu

PROJECT SYNOPSIS

The **ESKSC project** aimed to create a long-term partnership in the cross-border region through development and promotion of joint initiatives for students, teachers and businesses in the area of ICT, web development and e-services. The partners chose this topic as they believe new technologies can add specific value to the development of the region, especially if they are underpinned through training and education of young people.

All project activities were delivered in cooperation, with specific IT knowledge transfer between the two partners as the Secondary School „Gjorce Petrov“ did not have IT subjects in their educational curricula. Steady links have been created among the educational institutions and local businesses which continue far beyond the project lifespan.

SUCCESS FACTORS AND CHALLENGES

The idea evolved as an upgrade of the experience gained by the School of Economics in Kyustendil, while working on a partnership project supported by the Bulgaria - Serbia IPA Cross-Border Programme (2007-2013). At that time, the Bulgarian school had already a very good cooperation with Secondary School „Gjorce Petrov“ in Kriva Palanka - i.e. they celebrated important occasions together, initiated experience exchanges between teachers and sports games between the students. Meanwhile, it has been evident that there is quite some gap between the skills of young people leaving schools and the expectation of the businesses, as well as a specific lack of sustainable links and cooperation between the educational institutions and the business community.

The two schools have ideally matched as to cover the educational gaps identified - i.e. the Bulgarian school already had IT courses in their curricular as well as prepared experts in order to lead this initiative, while the school in Kriva Palanka found this as a great opportunity for know-how transfer. So far so good, but the connection with the business side was still missing and here they whipped up the third partner - the association „Farmers and Entrepreneurs for Europe“ in Kyustendil with whom the local school had already have close relations. This way, the triple partnership has covered all areas of project's actions targeting the identified challenges in the region.

MAJOR ACHIEVEMENTS, TANGIBLE / INTANGIBLE IMPACTS AND SPIN-OFFS

At the start of the project a curriculum and handbook for teachers on „Web development and Internet education methods“ was produced and this was done by a joint team of teachers in ICT with the purpose to be used by teachers in other subjects (not IT specialists). On the base of the developed curriculum and handbook two pilot training workshops for teachers were conducted - one in Kriva Palanka and one in Kyustendil. Interactive methods and practical exercises were used during the workshops; a total of 10 teachers from each country were trained. Apart from the new knowledge and competences gained, they had the opportunity to exchange ideas and experience with their colleagues from the other side of the border, which added value to their future professional careers. As a next step, a collaborative meeting was held between the IT teachers from both countries for educational exchange and transfer of innovative teaching methods, while also clearing the path for elaboration of a handbook for students' training in e-services and web development. Both, the handbooks for teachers and students, can be reached at: www.e-learning-bgmk.eu/index_en.php

In order to ensure a continuous and effective education and to widely promote the opportunities for using IT teaching methods in secondary education, a web-based platform for online training was further developed. Through this platform a model for cross-border education (in line with the EU priorities for promoting digital competences) was sustained. The platform (www.e-learning-bgmk.eu) is available in three languages - in English and in the languages of the two partners and contains models for online classes, forum for discussions, timetables for on-line trainings, etc. IT teachers also prepared guidelines how to work with the Internet platform. The guidelines have been printed, as well as electronic versions were made available for free download via the platform.

To support technically the project and ensure sustainability, IT equipment was procured for the needs of the two schools-partners - e.g. computer terminals, necessary software (incl. for web development and e-service) and servers to host the on-line platform. Pilot training in e-services and web development for students were then held through a combination of joint workshops in Kriva Palanka and Kyustendil and on-line training via the web-platform. 30 students from both schools have been selected to participate and had the opportunity to work in groups on a practical assignment.

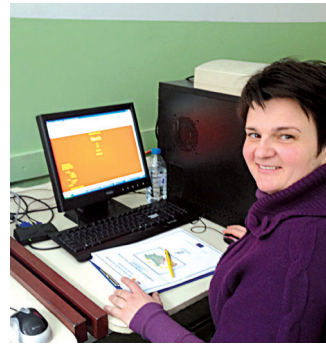
In the final phase of the project, two joint conferences were held on the topic „E-services knowledge for social cohesion“, where numerous companies were invited with interests in development of e-services, e-commerce and other forms of web-based business. During the event, opportunities for cooperation between the business and the education in the area of ICT and web development were discussed. The web-projects completed by each group of students were presented at the conferences and provoked the interest of the business. Project results were widely disseminated and presented at press-conferences in both countries.

Currently both schools use the elaborated materials in their educational curricula. The on-line platform is also used by teachers and students. The project was the start of a very good tradition for holding joint meetings between the representatives of the schools and the businesses - every year (even after the project end) such events are initiated and the results from the discussions are later incorporated in the schools educational curricula.

New knowledge or analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knowledge and skills in using IT-based methods in secondary education acquired by teachers • Competence in e-service and web-development acquired by students
New ways of working	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Model for cross-border education in line with the EU priorities for promoting digital competences • Guidelines for students' online education in e-services web-development
Changes to policy or public behaviour	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developed links between business and education
Investment or infrastructure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fully equipped ICT classrooms in both schools
Product or services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Curricula and handbook „Web development and internet education methods“ for non-IT teachers. • Curricular and handbook in e-services and web-development for students
Community integration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Joint conferences „E-services knowledge for social cohesion“

STRATEGIC CONTRIBUTION: LESSONS LEARNED

The collaboration, the educational exchange, the joint teamwork, the meeting with the businesses enriched enormously the partners and the participating direct beneficiaries. All project initiatives were completed with enthusiasm and devotion; teachers and students from both countries collaborated perfectly; the educational exchange grew into cultural such due to the travel missions for the joint workshops. The only challenges within the project were related to organisational and administrative issues, but these were also successfully overcome.



The project built sustainable bridges between the communities from both sides of the border, which will inevitably lead to multiplication and synergy effects in many other areas of society.

„To-do“ Recommendations

- Utilise as much as possible the existing resources of your own organisations. Efforts will return a hundredfold.
- Plan more often partnership meetings in the course of cross-border project's implementation - they are needed for smooth realisation of activities planned.

„Not-to-do“ Recommendations

- Do not over rely on your sub-contractors. A formal contract and strict terms of reference are not enough to get a qualitative result; therefore, strict control on behalf of the project management team is further needed.

5.

Youth, Education and Skills



CCI Number 2007CB16IP0007

Balkan Workshop for Theatre

**Bulgaria - the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia
IPA Cross-Border Programme (2007-2013)**

2007CB16IP007-2009-1-039 - BWFT

Target Group / Final Beneficiaries:

- Young people between 7 and 14 years of age
- Artists, workers and students in the field of culture
- Cultural institutions
- Local communities

Project partners:

1. Dramatic Theatre - Kyustendil (Bulgaria) - Lead Partner
2. Municipality of Stip (the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia)

Project budget:

EUR 58 035,93

Project start date / end date:

May 2011 - April 2012

PROJECT SYNOPSIS

Balkan Workshop for Theatre brought together youth from both sides of the border to collaborate on the production of a joint puppet theatre performance based on stories about „Clever Peter“ - a hero in many fairy tales throughout the Balkans. The project recalled the importance of appreciating common roots and encouraged youngsters to take interest in their historical and cultural heritage.

Youth are often not inspired to reflect on the past, because they see it as outdated and not fashionable. However, the possibility to participate in collecting stories, making puppets, being actors in the joint theatre academy and having the chance to live in the other country, motivated the young people to find out how much the countries in the Balkan region have

in common. Their creativeness and enthusiasm is having a long lasting impact on the local communities, who will long remember the collaborative spirit of the bilateral exhibitions and performances.

SUCCESS FACTORS AND CHALLENGES

It is a fact that friendships between the people in the neighbourhood are still very common and many families have relatives living on the other side of the border. However, the state borders create an artificial divide between the countries being often an obstacle for smooth communication and exchange of visits especially amongst young people. There is a real need to improve the knowledge of younger generations about the shared culture, history, customs and traditions of both countries and take pride in their shared cultural history. But how to make the youngsters interested and keep their attention in the era of technological boom and this highly dynamic everyday life? Through the **miracles of art**. And through **participation**.

Based on these methods and following its professional background and expertise, the team of the Dramatic Theatre in Kyustendil shaped the project idea which was extremely well accepted by their counterpart - the Municipality of Stip, with whom they connected with the help of the Municipality of Kyustendil. Municipality of Stip was partner in this project but the one closely involved in the project realisation was the House of culture-National Theatre of Stip.

Surprisingly, even for themselves, the partners had no difficulties to attract young people to get involved in project activities - i.e. about 80 school students took part in the research for selecting the „Clever Peter“ stories. Most of the kids did not know by then that this is a common character and that even the stories are similar. Based on the selected stories, a script for a joint theatre performance was developed and here came the first challenge - the selection of the young artists. Only 30 kids (15 from each side of the border - on the age from 7 to 12) had to be selected out of about 100 volunteers. During the selection, a priority was given to disadvantaged youth, but leading for the decision was the artistic talent.

Another challenging part of the project were the joint rehearsals. Children and theatrical team worked together for four weeks in a row (2 weeks in Kyustendil and 2 weeks in Stip) to prepare for the performance. A great majority of them did not have any previous contacts across the border and did not know each other. Instead of putting the kids in strict academic environment in order to „melt the ice“ the partners decided to start with a welcome party in the open, with animators, music and interactive games. After almost an hour of playing together one of the Bulgarian kids asked: „*Sir, when will our guests come?*“ Apparently, they accepted each other so warmly and made friends so quickly that the language barrier was not even existent in the course of the games. Translation and interpretation, though made available for the theoretical lessons at the beginning, was abandoned yet in the second week of the mission. The major role in all this process (selecting stories, actors and preparation of performance) had the two very enthusiastic persons, the Art Directors of this performance: one from the Dramatic Theatre in Kyustendil and the second one from the National Theatre of Stip.

Kids were put in a professional atmosphere close to that of real actors and worked hard like adults. The partners were worried if they will manage, but nobody gave up. They all collaborated successfully and their efforts, expressed through 6

wonderful joint performances, strengthened the ties between the neighbouring communities and had a wide response in the local media. Nobody wanted the project to end which came to prove that this was the right idea to solve the problem, the right partners and the best participants.

MAJOR ACHIEVEMENTS, TANGIBLE / INTANGIBLE IMPACTS AND SPIN-OFFS

An independent research was done by local students from Kyustendil and Stip, within which they collected and compiled nearly 100 fairy tales for „Clever Peter“. Based on the collected stories each side selected 5 tales to illustrate through pictures and bring to life through puppets. These were then exhibited in the Dramatic Theatre in Kyustendil and in the premises of the Home of culture „Aco Shopov“, Stip. The exhibitions were open in two consecutive days and were displayed for one month.

A script for a joint multi-genre theatre performance was created on the basis of two selected fairy tales (one from each partnering country). Puppets made by the children were used. A composer created and recorded music that accompanied the performance as well a bi-lingual song jointly performed by the children actors.

Kids worked collaboratively on every phase of production - from designing and building, to scripting, rehearsing and performing. They were stimulated to undertake the study of their local cultural heritage, learned how to express their thoughts and desires through art and had the chance to get to know each other and make friends thus overcoming all boundaries. Two debut performances were held then - one on each side of the border, where about 1500 visitors in total saw it. The joint story was performed in both languages simultaneously - each actor spoke its mother language. The show was so well accepted by the local communities that planning, organisation and presentation of 4 additional performances took place after the debut (2 in Bulgaria and 2 in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia).



All project activities had a wide awareness raising response on a regional level. A documentary film lasting 56 minutes was created to capture the essence of the project, its outputs and results. After the end of the project an amateur acting school was established in Stip in the Home of culture „Aco Shopov“ where most of young project actors continued to play. The „Clever Peter“ performance remained part of the Kyustendil Dramatic Theatre repertoire. But above all - the collaborative spirit of the project and the good relations created life far beyond the project end date. As of today, the kids continue to communicate actively using the social media where they created a **Balkan Workshop for Theatre Facebook group**.

New knowledge or analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some 100 stories of „Clever Peter“ investigated on both sides of the border
New ways of working	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understanding traditions and culture through organising a cross-border theatre „academy“ • Boosting the young people’s competence in the art of puppet theatre
Product or services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A multi-genre joint theatre performance • A documentary film of the project serving as best practice reference material for possible future project multiplication
Community integration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Joint exhibition and cultural exchange weekend • Balkan Workshop for Theatre joint performances



STRATEGIC CONTRIBUTION: LESSONS LEARNED

This is a friendship project, a successful experiment of how young people can cross barriers and learn through the culture and art.

„To-do“ Recommendations	„Not-to-do“ Recommendations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Common elements in the two neighbouring countries culture are an invaluable source of ideas for cross-border projects. Involving young people in these projects provide an additional dimension which is not only introduction of culture to the young people, but it is also scope for expanding the knowledge and qualities of youth, mutual friendship, understanding and development. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do not be afraid to work with soft projects and young people. It is a hard work but the end result is fascinating. Happiness, smiles, full heart and friendships of youngsters, is something which will be more remembered than anything else.

5.

Youth, Education and Skills

Cross-border collaboration in development of CAD/CAM vocational training system



CCI Number 2007CB16IP0008

Bulgaria - Turkey IPA Cross-Border Programme (2007-2013)

2007CB16IP0008-2013-3-004 - CAD/CAM

Target Group / Final Beneficiaries:

- Students and teachers of both partnering vocational schools in Bourgas and Kırklareli
- Experts in CAD/CAM systems
- Companies in the border region that use CAD/CAM systems in industrial production
- Employers of CAD/CAM systems who have joined to network CAD/CAM society

Project partners:

1. Vocational Technical school of Mechano-electrotechnics and electronics - Bourgas (Republic of Bulgaria) - Lead Partner
2. Kırklareli Technical and Vocational High School (Republic of Turkey) - renamed during project to Mimar Sinan Vocational and Technical Anatolian High School

Project budget:

EUR 122 075,45

Project start date / end date:

May 2014 - May 2015

Website:

www.cadcamproject.eu/

[www.facebook.com/
cadcamproject](http://www.facebook.com/cadcamproject)

[www.facebook.com/groups/
318618578298128/](http://www.facebook.com/groups/318618578298128/)

PROJECT SYNOPSIS

The project **CAD/CAM** aimed to improve social cohesion and social links in the cross-border region in order to achieve competitive staff in the labour market through sustainable improvement of vocational training in both Bulgaria and Turkey. In addition, the project aimed to contribute to the effective collaboration between different users of CAD/CAM systems. The project has also created proper conditions for modern practical training in technical drawing by using CAD-CAM systems in two professional high schools in Bourgas and Kırklareli. Finally, the project has contributed to the improvement of the competitiveness of both Bulgarian and Turkish students in the labour market.

During the project implementation the schools worked together to improve the quality of technical education through implementation of modern CAD/CAM systems. Both schools have actively worked together with local business to find the best solutions and software applications in CAD/CAM education. These key stakeholders of the project have created together a training methodology for vocational training with CAD/CAM systems, and further have set up a network of CAD/CAM society. As result sustained partnership between the two schools - Vocational Technical school of Mechano-electrotechnics and electronics (Bourgas, Bulgaria), Mimar Sinan Vocational and Technical Anatolian High School (Kirkklareli, Turkey) and local business have been created. During the project implementation two fully equipped modern labs with computers, adequate software and innovative training methodology have been developed and jointly tested in real operating environment. In long term perspective the project has improved the competitiveness of students on the labour market and gave ground for prevention of unemployment in the cross-border region.

“The opportunity to participate in a CBC initiative for both vocational training schools gave an unforgettable chance for enhancing the knowledge and skills of teachers and students in application of CAD/CAM systems. The strong partnership of the two schools has been continued by implementation of plenty of seminars, exchange of experience, field visits and technical drawing competitions. The newly equipped computer labs gave lots of benefits in terms of improved training environment.”

Mariana Bakardjieva,
teacher in Vocational Technical school of
Mechano-electrotechnics and electronics in Bourgas

SUCCESS FACTORS AND CHALLENGES

The key success factor of the project is the well-known partners. Over the last eight years they have had opportunity to work together under other EU projects or local initiatives. The project's idea has been initiated by the Bulgarian partner but it was fully accepted by their Turkish partner. Both partners have been actively working together during the project development phase so to carefully plan each single step of project implementation.

“It was an honour to be selected as one of the teachers to participate in this project and be able to enhance my skills, and so pass this knowledge of modern CAD/CAM Systems onto our students, giving them a helping hand towards their ultimate goal within the job market. It was also enlightening to experience the teaching systems of our Bulgarian partners, it gave me an insight in to how other countries educational methods differ to our own. Last, but not least, it gave me an opportunity to meet many new friends across the border and I would be more than happy to work on future projects with them.”

Ahmet Soner ÜNLÜLER,
teacher in Mimar Sinan Vocational and Technical Anatolian High School, Kirkklareli

In order to boost the project's sustainability, a network of **CAD/CAM society** has been established. It involves specialists in the field including teachers, students and business organizations that use CAD/CAM systems in their work. The common issues of this society, including new training methods and the most appropriate CAD/CAM systems for achieving success, have been discussed during the implementation of three round tables. This way the needs of companies in Bulgaria and Turkey for specialists in CAD/CAM systems and new CAD/CAM solutions and applications have been identified.

The second success factor of the project could be considered the „train-the-trainers“ approach that has improved the skills and knowledge of 10 Bulgarian and Turkish trainers in the field of new applications and CAD/CAM solutions. Variety of trainings gave the opportunity for exploring different applications and has provided exchange of experience in the training methods. Students from the 9th - 12th grades of both schools have been trained in using CAD/CAM systems by applying new training methodology, jointly developed during the project implementation. A set of auxiliary activities, such as exchange of experience, working visits, seminars and technical drawing competition, have been implemented during the project so to guarantee its success. The training continued for 6 months, 4 hours a week, and included 336 students from both schools. In addition, 1200 guide books in CAD/CAM systems in Bulgarian and Turkish/English languages have been published and distributed.

The third success factor of the project was the excellent communication with JTS, MA and NA of the IPA Cross-Border Programme, even though in some points the language barrier was a real challenge for the project team.

MAJOR ACHIEVEMENTS, TANGIBLE / INTANGIBLE IMPACTS AND SPIN-OFFS

The **improved skills** of both teachers and students from the partnering schools in application of modern CAD/CAM systems are the major achievement of the project. On one hand, the teachers have improved the training methods and their teaching skills, and on the other - the students have obtained new knowledge and skills in the field of CAD/CAM systems, so to be better prepared for the labour market. To be able to teach students to be competitive and to meet the requirements of the labour market, both schools needed modern labs with adequate technical equipment in terms of hardware and software. The existing software in CAD/CAM systems of both schools was not relevant to the modern requirements, including of the local business. In order to overcome this challenge, 32 new computers with proper software have been provided.

“The participation in the project gave me new opportunities to improve my skills in application of modern CAD/CAM systems. This helped me to enrich my knowledge and skills in technical drawing, to evaluate my current level of knowledge and skills in the field, and to find many new friends. I was very proud to be the winner of the final competition in technical drawing. My family and my schoolmates are also very proud of me. This has helped me to be more self-confident and responsible. As a result of my improved skills and knowledge I was a winner in two other national competitions. I'm glad I had the opportunity to participate in the project, to believe in myself and to continue to develop my learning abilities.”

Sjuleiman Tundjai Sjuleiman,
a student at the Vocational Technical school of
Mechano-electrotechnics and electronics in Bourgas

The next major achievement of the project was the established **strong partnership with the local business**. As a result, better opportunities for labour market realization of students of both schools have been established.

Following the project implementation, new joint initiatives have been developed, and are already under preparation for applying under various programmes for the period 2014-2020. This will help both project partners to further develop the training environment of the schools as well as to boost the learning capacities both of teachers and students.

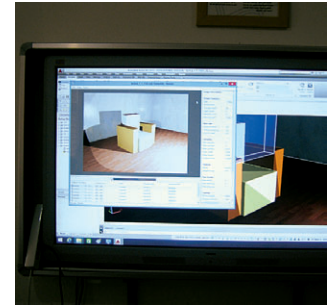
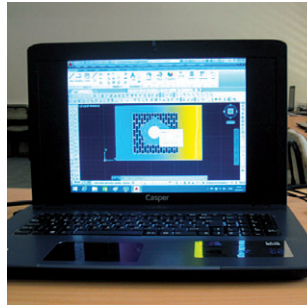
New knowledge or analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved knowledge and skills of teachers and students in modern CAD/CAM systems • Improved abilities of project partners to analyse labour market needs for trained in CAD/CAM systems experts
New ways of working	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved partnership with the local business • Increased projects sustainability by establishing a CAD/CAM cross-border network that involves variety of stakeholders - experts, teachers, trainers, students, and local business
Investment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Two modern labs fully equipped with adequate hardware and software

STRATEGIC CONTRIBUTION: LESSONS LEARNED

The project implementation has revealed that common efforts are needed at any single stage of project management cycle. In addition, a strong commitment of project partners is much needed for achieving a project success and sustainability.

In terms of project management and implementation, it was observed that timely communication between project partners is vital for implementation of activities planned.





„To-do“ Recommendations

- The best projects are developed with well-known partners.
- Wider involvement of partners during the project preparation phase gives ground for excellent future implementation.
- Curiosity and enthusiasm are much needed in project development and implementation.

„Not-to-do“ Recommendations

- Do not be scared to face the challenges of innovative projects - this makes you stronger and capable to create new ideas.

Joint information system for process optimization „One Health“ in the cross-border area

6.

Capacity of Local and Regional Authorities

Bulgaria - Serbia IPA Cross-Border Programme (2007-2013)

2007CB16IP0006-2011-2-250 JIS „One Health“



CCI Number 2007CB16IP0006

Target Group / Final Beneficiaries:

- Regional Food Safety Agencies' experts
- Farmers, hunters
- Local authorities

Project partners:

1. Bulgarian Food Safety Agency - District Pernik (Republic of Bulgaria) - Lead Partner
2. Veterinary Specialist Institute - Niš (Republic of Serbia)
3. Bulgarian Food Safety Agency - Regional Directorate Sofia-districts (Republic of Bulgaria)
4. Bulgarian Food Safety Agency - Regional Directorate Kyustendil (Republic of Bulgaria)

Project budget:

EUR 687 113,16

Project start date / end date:

January 2013 - January 2015

Website:

www.jis-onehealth.com

PROJECT SYNOPSIS

JIS „One Health“ is a model cross-border project improving the transboundary control of diseases of animal origin and preservation of animal and human health as a crucial condition for regional economic development. Transboundary animal diseases might sound remote, but some are standing on doorstep. Lumpy skin disease is one of the most recent examples. The veterinary services of the South East European region couldn't get the disease under control with existing policies for a

number of years. Since lumpy skin disease entered Greece in late 2015, and Bulgaria and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia in early 2016, the disease has been spreading at an alarming rate, and affecting new countries including Serbia, Albania and Montenegro.

The present project has contributed to the implementation of EU policy for Animal Health (2007-2013), as well as reduced the economic losses for farmers and the state compensation payments through strengthening the effectiveness of control over the spread of animal's disease, as well as diminished the danger for human health from diseases spread by animals.

SUCCESS FACTORS AND CHALLENGES

The effectiveness of the interaction at regional level suffers from lack of official data exchange, and hence, the delay of decisions for quick action in critical situations is extremely dangerous. The lack of relevant data usually results in an inappropriate response and creates large economic losses. Thus, the introduction of a uniform approach for official control is important for ensuring the rapid exchange of information between border control services.

The project idea was promoted by the Lead Partner „Bulgarian Food Safety Agency - Pernik“ who has a long lasting experience in topics related to effective protection on the territory of Bulgaria against penetration of contagious diseases of animals as well as protection of public health. Hence, it was jointly decided by the partners to establish **joint information system as an instrument for improvement the quality of the control mechanisms** of respective veterinary authorities, which would raise the level of readiness for quick and proper response and joint measures. In addition, it was agreed to increase the range of control activities through improved laboratory conditions for control and observation of the situation in the border region regarding zoonosis, as well as to increase the acquaintance of veterinarians, physicians, farmers, FBOs, and other stakeholders regarding EU and OIE policies and recommendations on JIS „One Health“ utilisation.

During the project implementation, project partners faced number of challenges resulting from parallel implementation of day-to-day professional operations and complicated project-specific activities. The development of a joint informational system required a heavy labour-intensive collecting, analysis and digitalisation of existing information. The renovation of premises in Trun (RFSD - Pernik, administrative building), on the other side, was one of the most demanding actions performed as the development of a joint informational system needed permanent and safe place for establishment of the core of the system (servers, UPS, network equipment, etc.). Small scale renovation was done as to ensure the required parameters for JIS establishment as well as the rest of premises which are used for administrative work, control and provision of services to stakeholders across the border.

MAJOR ACHIEVEMENTS, TANGIBLE / INTANGIBLE IMPACTS AND SPIN-OFFS

Major achievement of the project is the new knowledge which becomes available to Food Safety and Veterinary Authorities after the introduction of a cross-border JIS. It consists of a database, software environment, hardware, and communication channels for securing the work points for input of collected data from the control activities. The JIS provides data (in real-time rate) and

knowledge to national authorities and EU bodies about the possible disease outbreaks, but also provides a framework for future cooperation of these institutions (movement controls, culling infected animals, emergency vaccinations, etc.).

Another important „intangible“ achievement of the project is the significantly improved cooperation between the Food Safety and Veterinary Authorities, resulting in enhanced working methods, skills, practices, and procedures. The joint seminars for exchange of good practices were also an important tool to provide information on JIS „One Health“ project to general public and promote change of policy and public behaviour. Information materials on the JIS „One Health“ concept and approach were designed as products, briefly outlining the main principles, facts and recommendations related to the human and animal health preservation. The guides (made on CDs due to vast amount of information included) were spread among experts, farmers, veterinarians, physicians and other stakeholders who needed detailed information.

However, the project has delivered also quite substantial „tangible“ impacts in terms of equipment and vehicles delivered as to cover the needs of border veterinary control structures to properly implement their everyday services.

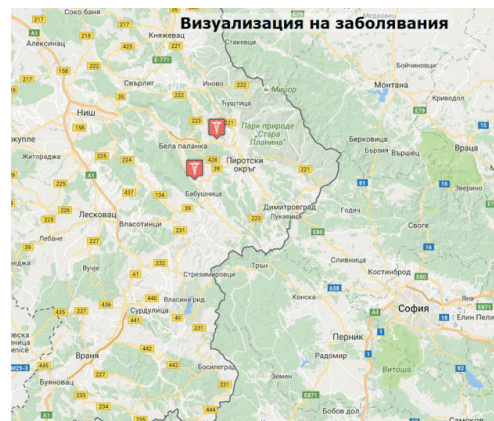
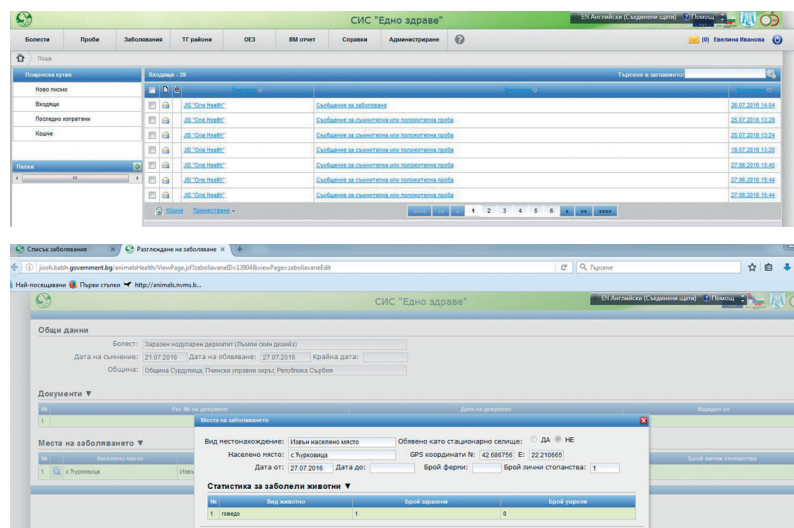
New knowledge or analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gap and needs analysis related to development of unified approach for prevention and control • Exchange of good laboratory practices (harmonisation efforts in relation to compliance with ISO 17025)
New ways of working	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information network • Joint operational procedures established • Joint working groups, work meetings, visits for exchange of lab practices, performance of joint on-the-spot inspections on animals (domestic and wild)
Changes to policy or public behaviour	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wide awareness raising on appropriate joint mechanisms for prevention and control over different human and animal's health disease and risks
Investment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Renovation of premises (RFSD-Pernik, administrative building), needed for establishment of the JIS core systems (servers, UPS, network equipment, etc.) • Supply of vehicles for control in off-road places • Development of software environment and supply of equipment for operating the Joint Information System (JIS) • Supply of equipment for input work points of JIS, as well as such for improving the conditions for certified laboratory and control activities
Product or services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Centralised, WEB-based JIS „ONE HEALTH“

STRATEGIC CONTRIBUTION: LESSONS LEARNED

The JIS „ONE HEALTH“ project was ambitiously planned while incorporating all possible project components known (i.e. reconstruction, deliveries, development of WEB-based information system, various analytical and know-how exchange ac-

activities, as well as wide public awareness). This proved to be not an easy project scope for handling, given also the sensitive nature of professional duties all 4 partners are dealing in principle, but also their busy and time-consuming daily schedules. However, the partnership have succeeded to manage and overcome all possible challenges met during the life-span of the project, not without the support of the respective National Administrations in Bulgaria and Serbia, and also with the active support of Programme's management structures.

The joint efforts of JIS „ONE HEALTH“ partners have created an example for sustainable IPA cross-border project practice, but also proved in reality what the IPA Cross-Border Programmes are actually designed for - i.e. **co-operation, integration and harmonisation across borders**. Furthermore, given its pilot character, the practice established could be easily multiplied across all other external borders of Republic of Bulgaria, as well as further popularised across Europe.



„To-do“ Recommendations

- Plan the project team well and have a dedicated expert for secondary procurement.
- Project partners should all have clear, substantive and defined roles and responsibilities.
- Concentrate on media and publicity to a wider audience on success stories and spreading the message of cooperation and development

„Not-to-do“ Recommendations

- Project partners are to be selected based on their long-term (functional) interest in the project intervention area. Avoid project partners, and partnerships, whose main interest is the implementation of a project rather than the use of results.
- Don't enter project planning and implementation without a clear „exit strategy“ and sustainability.

Prevention of crime through improvement of capacities for crime scene investigation and analysis of biological and other traces

6.

Capacity of Local and Regional Authorities



CCI Number 2007CB16IP0006

Bulgaria - Serbia IPA Cross-Border Programme (2007-2013)

2007CB16IP0006-2011-2-034 - ForensicBulSer2011

Target Group / Final Beneficiaries:

- Criminal police officers of Bulgarian and Serbian Police Departments, Serbian and Bulgarian Prosecutions and Courts
- The Border Police Departments' representatives
- Crime scene investigators from Serbian Police Departments; Crime scene investigators and police officers from 5 border Regional Directorates of the Bulgarian Ministry of Interior

Project partners:

1. Ministry of Interior, National Criminal Technical Centre in Niš (Republic of Serbia) - Lead Partner
2. Ministry of Interior, International Projects Directorate - Research Institute of Forensic Sciences and Criminology (Republic of Bulgaria)

Project budget:

EUR 882 590,30

Project start date / end date:

January 2013 - January 2015

PROJECT SYNOPSIS

ForensicBulSer2011 proved to be an important cross-border project aimed to contribute the fight against crime in the border region, while also attaining of international standards (ENFSI) in the field of forensic science in both the Republic of

Serbia and the Republic of Bulgaria. Representatives of the two ministries have agreed to launch a joint project initiative as to firstly improve the material and technical conditions of the respective units in the border area, but also to enhance the level of training for law enforcement, thus the respective employees improve their skills in forensic crime scene processing, while also establishing direct contacts for mutual cooperation among law enforcement technical staffs on both sides of the Serbian-Bulgarian border.

SUCCESS FACTORS AND CHALLENGES

During the continual contacts between the project partners, various joint problems concerning the border safety and prevention of organised crime have been identified. The collaboration of the two Criminalistics' centres has started in 2008 through the European Network of Forensic Science Institutes (ENFSI), while both being members of this reference European organisation for the forensics science. As an extremely important aspect of international police cooperation, the ENFSI stresses the need for exchange of information and databases analysis of collected crime traces. As a prerequisite of such cooperation, a set of international standards should also be followed in the skills attained, necessary equipment for forensic laboratories, as well in processing of the crime scene.

During project preparation, a number of challenges have been faced due to relatively inexperienced police officers as regards EU project planning, as well as partially to the very sensitive nature of police and crime investigations data being necessary for performing proper project's need analysis. Finally, both partners have agreed that the Serbian lack of proper crime investigation equipment is a major challenge, than it was previously thought. E.g. CSI had processed 9991 crime scene investigation during year 2011, of which only 5173 material evidences (of any kind) were fixed; 975 biological traces were only collected; and only 1252 latent finger prints were developed. The majority of investigations were completed without collecting any material traces. Such poor results are a direct consequence of the lack of proper equipment. On the other hand, the DNA National laboratory equipment at the Bulgarian side does not have capacity for profiling of the persons that should be registered in the national database and auxiliary equipment was limited.

MAJOR ACHIEVEMENTS, TANGIBLE / INTANGIBLE IMPACTS AND SPIN-OFFS

As a results of this cross-border project, both partners and the respective border units have been properly equipped according to their current needs - i.e. specialised sets of CSI, counter diversion examinations, IT equipment, vehicle and forensics consumable have been provided to the Police Departments in Bor, Zajecar, Niš, Leskovac, Pirot, Negotin and Vranje, while enhancing the searching and fixing traces and evidence during crime scene investigation on the Serbian side of the border, which then allows for further laboratory analysis. Additionally, specialised sets of DNA analysis, CSI and IT equipment have been provided to the Bulgarian RIFSC.

Six joint workshops have also been organised on topics of crime scene management, crime scene investigation and crime scene preservation (4 in Serbia and 2 in Bulgaria). An expert from Sweden has been invited as to share their methodology for crime investigation. Thanks to the common trainings carried out, Police Directorates in the border region nowadays work on

a common methodology. Special handouts were printed in order to be made available to all the servants in the system. The methodology and handouts have also proved to be of use to students in the Bulgarian Ministry of Interior's Academy. The „train-the-trainers“ special programme put in place ensured that all newly appointed staff in both Mol systems will pass through identical training courses, which will result in continuous improvement of skills for fight against crime on the territory of the Serbian-Bulgarian border region.

New knowledge or analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Train-the-trainers educational programme for crime scene management, crime scene investigation and crime scene preservation • Methodology for crime investigation
New ways of working	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Significant improvement in working methods and procedures related to CSI and laboratory tests • Personal contact among colleagues on both sides of the border that facilitating access to specific information
Changes to policy or public behaviour	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Affected policy changes related to the fulfilment of the standards related to the EU Council conclusions on the vision for European Forensic Science 2020 • The choice and disposition of the devices for the crime scene examination can exert public influence toward full harmonisation with the standards ISO 17025 and ISO 17020 • Enhanced image of the border region as a unified area in fighting organised crime by using modern crime investigation methods, procedures and techniques
Investments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Specialised sets of CSI, counter diversion examinations, IT equipment, vehicle and forensics consumables delivered for the Serbian counterpart; and specialised sets of DNA analysis, CSI and IT equipment - for the respective Bulgarian partner and its border units.

STRATEGIC CONTRIBUTION: LESSONS LEARNED

The project implementation was a real challenge to the management team as due to usual time gap between project initiation and project implementation certain changes appear to happen in both partnering structures. While this happens often, it is then necessary to know that a project should always start with detailed revisiting of the plan and its components - if necessary even re-defining the project plan in view of the current conditions at the time of implementation. Thus, most of the potential gaps and future problems might be mitigated.

Furthermore, in a project with lots of deliveries' components, a separate procurement plan needs to be prepared in full details, since potential problems with performing these key project components might negatively influence all other accompanying activities dependent on the deliveries.



„To-do“ Recommendations

- Budgetary planning is the key element of project preparation.
- Plan the project team well and have a dedicated expert for secondary procurement.

„Not-to-do“ Recommendations

- Team-building and working meetings should not be neglected during project planning phase.

Stara Planina - New Network (Knowledge base for planning, problem solving and development)

6.

Capacity of Local and
Regional Authorities

Bulgaria - Serbia IPA Cross-Border Programme (2007-2013)

2007CB16IP0006-2011-2-008 - SMART START



CCI Number 2007CB16IP0006

Target Group / Final Beneficiaries:

- Regional and Local authorities
- SMEs in the border regions

Project partners:

1. Faculty for Management - Zajecar (Republic of Serbia) - Lead Partner
2. Vidin District Administration (Republic of Bulgaria)
3. RARIS - Regional Development Agency Eastern Serbia (Republic of Serbia)

Project budget:

EUR 131 210,64

Project start date / end date:

January 2013 - January 2014

Website:

www.raris.org/bazaznanja/eng/

PROJECT SYNOPSIS

The **SMART START** project combines efforts of regional governance experts, education society and business as to enhance planning, problem-solving and development capacity, while also improving administrative, business and academic links between stakeholders in the border area. The target group includes 19 local administrations, regional development institutions as well as business and education sectors' organisations.

The regions of Vidin, Zajecar and Bor are among the least developed in both Serbia and Bulgaria. It is obvious for national Governments that urgent measures are needed as to overcome the local deficits, but what has been done so far was just a piecemeal; there is no unified development strategy for this peripheral territories in both countries. Therefore, the project target-

ed the creation of a common virtual space - the „Knowledge Database“, where the information as regards the development of the border area is available to all interested stakeholders. It covered a wide spectrum of data (e.g. strategic, programme and sectoral development documents, research and analysis, as well as specific and professional analytic materials) thus a strong foundation for future development be created and avoid further chaotic initiatives in the region.

SUCCESS FACTORS AND CHALLENGES

In the very preliminary phase of the project, the partnership's team made a profile of the joint border region called VIZABO (an abbreviation of the first 2 letter of Vidin, Zejcar and Bor district). Secondly, the project team made a comparative analysis of the Regional Development Strategies (both for Eastern Serbia and Vidin District) in order to identify relevant common development areas of all three NUTS III regions covered - i.e. Bor, Zajecar and Vidin districts. It was widely acknowledged that infrastructure, agriculture, environment and tourism are the priority areas to be jointly focused for further development. Based on the above, a „Knowledge Database“ platform have been elaborated in 3 major sub-domains: **Planning and development documents** (e.g. local and regional strategic documents); **Experts' database** (e.g. profiles of professionals registered and operating in the border regions); **Research studies** (e.g. research papers and studies concerning the border area development).

A major challenge for the project partners, while developing this virtual knowledge platform, was the identification of local experts in the 4 strategic areas identified, thus to put into operation the experts' database. From one side, there is a real lack of specialist in these very peripheral territories as most of them for years are searching professional careers in bigger cities (capitals) or even emigrate abroad. But from another side, those still living and working in the area do not have the self-confidence as being „experts“, and this obstacle needed further work with regional professionals as to enhance their inner strengths in what they know and work, while also making them public for all those that might need their skills.

Additionally, the identification of relevant and region-worth research studies was a real provocation, as most of them are either not public and/or are kept in central research institutions (mostly in Sofia and Belgrade). However, the joint efforts of all project partners gave a result as a significant number of studies from archives were transferred to the „Knowledge Database“ platform and made available for wider use in the region. As to enable the direct exchange of experience and initiate the process of knowledge transfer in the four key development areas identified, an informal „cooperation network“ was established - e.g. Sector Development Forums were initiated, thus enhancing the use and application of knowledge, experience and documents collected within this project.

MAJOR ACHIEVEMENTS, TANGIBLE / INTANGIBLE IMPACTS AND SPIN-OFFS

Undoubtedly, the greatest project's achievement is the collection at one place of all available information as regards the border region development. The informal network created enables the direct exchange of experience and initiate the process of cross-border knowledge transfer, and hence, allows for future cooperation between the institutions and experts in the area.

“In the process of implementing the project we realized that there are good experts in various fields of development, but they are simply invisible to us because we had no contact with them, and they themselves do not have the confidence to declare themselves as being “experts”.

Zoran Milovanović, projekt menadžer

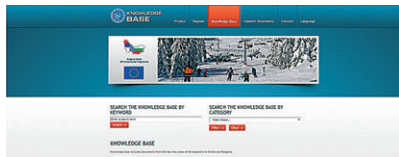
RARIS - Regionalna agencija za razvoj istočne Srbije

An important „intangible“ impact of the project are the forums and meetings carried out, as they gave a ground for exchange of information on EU regulations in view of the forthcoming accession of Republic of Serbia to European Union.

New knowledge or analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Web-based „Knowledge Database“ platform
New ways of working	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information database where interested target groups can access information and relevant data related to key areas of importance for regional economic development • Links between Eastern Serbia and North-west Bulgaria established in order to maximise the social and economic cohesion
Changes to policy or public behaviour	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved links between local and regional business communities, public authorities and entrepreneurs
Community integration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Informal network for exchange of information as a mechanism for cross-border cooperation on economic and development

STRATEGIC CONTRIBUTION: LESSONS LEARNED

The major factor leading the project idea to a successful outcome is the **long-standing partnership** between the organizations involved. The established way of working, frequent meetings outside the current project to discuss new ideas and vision for development of the region also contribute to the smooth implementation of the project. Additionally, the created facility („Knowledge Database“) is kept sustainable as permanent maintenance of the database is ensured by one of the project partners (the Faculty for Management - Zajecar) through the Multi-User Centre created, and which is fully equipped as to continuously host the virtual platform.



Thanks to meetings held within the project's thematic areas, experts from both sides of the border had the chance to meet and discuss for the first time on issues of common interest. Existing practices were then exchanged and new ideas for development were born.

„To-do“ Recommendations	„Not-to-do“ Recommendations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If you have a good partner, life is easy - good partnership and successful project implementation leads to new ideas for development. • Preliminary analysis of the situation and careful selection of activities, are the basis for proper implementation of any project. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do not underestimate yourself.

7.

Competitiveness,
Business Environment,
SMEs, Trade and Investment



CCI Number 2007CB16IP0007

Agribusiness without borders

**Bulgaria - the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia
IPA Cross-Border Programme (2007-2013)**

2007CB16IP0007-2011-2-008 - AWB

Target Group / Final Beneficiaries:

- Local authorities
- Agro-producers
- Students and teachers

Project partners:

1. Municipality of Sandanski
(Republic of Bulgaria) -
Lead Partner
2. Municipality of Novo Selo
(the former Yugoslav Republic
of Macedonia)

Project budget:

EUR 460 054,57

Project start date / end date:

July 2012 - July 2014

PROJECT SYNOPSIS

Agribusiness without borders defines a strategy for common local development by utilising economic complementarities of two border municipalities, while also targeting enhanced agro-production sustainability and opportunities for common exploration of market niches.

There are long lasting relations between Municipality of Sandanski and Municipality of Novo Selo; they often meet and discuss ways to tackle common problems as well as exchange views on initiating common actions. The present project is a real example of such continuous collaborative efforts, realised with the assistance of a Cross-Border Programme.

SUCCESS FACTORS AND CHALLENGES

In Sandanski there was a need for a designated place where local agricultural producers can sell their products (mainly fruit and vegetables). Due to the fact that such was not existent, farmers had themselves formed a kind of a market place, which

in fact was illegal as it didn't obtain any municipal permission for operation. This, however, was also unacceptable for people living in the area as the noise and waste disturbed them and they often complain in front the municipal administration. Similar problems have been observed in Novo Selo with reference to the existent life stock and farmers market.

Hence, the idea of joining efforts for creation of modern open markets, where farmers could have the legal opportunity to exhibit and sell their products, has been transformed into a reality. Even thou it might sound simple, the project faced a number of challenges. The first was to find the right compromise between farmers and citizens as to where such markets should be established, how to operate them and how finally to satisfy the various interests expressed. Therefore, wide information campaigns have been initiated, both with publication and media involvement, but also with various forums and meetings with stakeholders affected. The technical designs for the marketplaces construction were widely communicated and people had the chance to express their views and propose changes and recommendations. These steps significantly facilitated the subsequent implementation of the investment actions at both sides of the border.

Another, not less substantial challenge faced, was how to extend the benefits of these investment measures beyond creating just facilities for local agro-trade - namely, how to find new commercial niches thus enhancing the local economic development. A solution was found in introduction of organic agro-production, but local farmers were not ready for such an advanced technologies. Hence, it was realised that a continuous training in organic agriculture is needed. Curiously, but fact, the first organic cropping of kiwi in the region originates from this very cross-border project initiative.

MAJOR ACHIEVEMENTS, TANGIBLE / INTANGIBLE IMPACTS AND SPIN-OFFS

The major project's achievements relate to enhanced agro-business facilities modernisation, but also creating active cross-border links for transfer of experience and best practices, as well as promotion of common products and services. This gave further impetus to creating new steady partnerships between agro-producers from the cross-border region.

The project created agro-trade facilities in both bordering municipalities (i.e. one in Sandanski and two in Novo Selo). The brand new open market for fruit and vegetables, situated in the heart of the town of Sandanski, have been equipped with new pavement, selling booths, lighting, waste collection facilities, as well as with full access for people with disabilities. The construction of a livestock market in Novo Selo, on the other side, was the first such market in this region, which naturally attracted a lot of visiting and buying livestock from both sides of the border. It was equipped with separate boxes for different kinds of livestock (for poultry, for smaller livestock, and for larger livestock); additionally the utility infrastructure has been improved (e.g. the sewage system, water supply, pathways, lighting, a scale for weighing the livestock, etc.). For further strengthening the security systems, the whole livestock market has been closed with perimeter fence. And lastly, as to close the circle of agro-products supply, a separate milk-market place has also been organised in Novo Selo, while strictly following all HACCP standards for the construction of facilities as well as for proper selling of milk products.

In parallel to all investment actions, the project partners have initiated two forums for exchange of experience between agricultural producers from the region. The purpose of the forums was to stimulate the creation of new partnerships between

farmers and traders, as well as to promote the common supply of products and services across the border. Additionally, training sessions were held on subject like over-use of chemical fertilisers, the benefits of organic agro-production and channels for realisation such organic products at the European markets. The closing project forums organized both in Sandanski and Novo Selo provide further opportunities for strengthening cooperation between the partnering countries local authorities with emphasis on local economic and social development of the cross-border region.

New ways of working	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Educational and training curricula developed for both farmers and students from vocational agro-schools, promoting organic production of agricultural products
Investment or infrastructure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Construction of new open marketplace for fruit and vegetables, as well as such for livestock and milk products trade
Product or services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A catalogue of agro-producers and trading companies in the border region
Community integration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wide information and awareness campaigns initiated covering various stakeholders (farmers, traders, students and teachers, as well as wider public from the region)

STRATEGIC CONTRIBUTION: LESSONS LEARNED

Selecting project participants between local farmers, business companies dealing in the sector and education institutions (most important for creating new generations of skilled professionals), together with significant efforts made by the two municipal administrations, was an important step towards successful implementation of project activities.

Furthermore, the created infrastructure facilities provided visible and immediate effects on the people living in the border area since they were targeting the surmounting of their daily needs and problems.



The results of the project (particularly in former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia) had a further unexpected effect as such investment actions (i.e. livestock and open markets) were later on included as an eligible measure for funding under the IPARD programme, and was good example for other surrounding municipalities to follow this path.



„To-do“ Recommendations

- Prioritizing the existent needs, and proper selection of appropriate measures that would give visible and immediate impacts, are necessary pre-conditions for project success.
- Sharing information, training and education are helpful methods for introducing novelties.

„Not-to-do“ Recommendations

- For investment actions planned, do not underestimate the public hearings - they are not just obligatory, but really necessary as to find the right approach satisfying the views of all stakeholders.

7.

Competitiveness,
Business Environment,
SMEs, Trade and Investment



CCI Number 2007CB16IP0007

Cross-border wine production: Sharing of experience and information in wine production industry - a way for cross-border economic development

**Bulgaria - the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia
IPA Cross-Border Programme (2007-2013)**

2007CB16IP007-2011-2-002 - Cross-border wine production

Target Group / Final Beneficiaries:

- Wine production business - owners, managers, directors of wineries
- Viticulturists and Enologists
- Exporters, traders, restaurant owners

Project partners:

1. Association Regional Centre for Cooperation - SPECTAR Kriva Palanka (the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia) - Lead Partner
2. Eurointegra Association (Republic of Bulgaria)
3. Union of Enologists in Bulgaria - Blagoevgrad branch (Republic of Bulgaria)

Project budget:

EUR 88 738,21

Project start date / end date:

May 2013 - May 2014

Website:

www.cbcbwine.eu

PROJECT SYNOPSIS

Cross-border wine production project aims to contribute the economic development of the border region by improving quality and promoting cross-border wine production both at national and European level. It is also a good example for project multiplication - i.e. it is generated following the lessons learned from another project initiative implemented at the Bulgarian-Romanian border territory.

The project's strengths are to be seen in two major aspects: firstly, this is its **integration** component expressed in sharing of experience and information in wine production industry as a way for cross-border economic development, and secondly, these are the **harmonisation** effects aimed at assisting the business in the partnering country to meet the pre-accession challenges of harmonising their practices with EU regulatory framework.

SUCCESS FACTORS AND CHALLENGES

Viticulture and wine production are one of the traditional economic activities in the border area. However, the stakeholders in the two countries are facing obstacles related to lack of coordination between viticulture and wine production, shortage of qualified specialists and outdated training programmes for such, as well as problems with unorganized individual home wine production. In order to be competitive at the EU markets, both the wine production and trading businesses need a better compliance with EU regulations (namely: (EC) No 607/2009, (EC) 606/2009, and (EC) 479/2008 on the common organisation of the wine market). For the Bulgarian stakeholders this regulatory framework is well-known, therefore, the exchange of experience on EU harmonisation challenges was more than welcomed by their colleagues on the other side of the border.

Many of the above issues are usually dealt with in professional and branch organisations (i.e. the viticulturists' and enologists' unions and associations). However, at the start of this project no such structure was existent in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, and hence, one of the first challenges met was how such institutional weakness can be overcome. At present, „Association of Enologists“ in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia is already a fact, and this is a result of the joint efforts of project partners. Additionally, the project has provoked a two-way process of exchanges, namely: the Bulgarian stakeholders have the opportunity to share their expertise in EU harmonisation as regards wine production and wine market organisation, while their colleagues promote their well-established vocational training system and practices.

Therefore, as a major success of this project is to be noted its „win-win“ approach, creating benefits for both sides of the border. This is also expressed in good partnership relations established between the respective branch organisations - i.e. a Memorandum of Understanding has been signed between the Union of Enologists and the Enologists' Association in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. The two branch organisations continue to cooperate in order to exchange information and good practices in promoting viticulture, winemaking and wine tourism, as well as application of European regulations and reciprocal and joint sale of wine production in both countries.

MAJOR ACHIEVEMENTS, TANGIBLE / INTANGIBLE IMPACTS AND SPIN-OFFS

The project impacts are built upon the strengths of the wine sector development in the region and its targeted efforts to improve coordination between viticulture and wine production through exchange of experience and establishment of an Enologist



Association in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. Further, a map of vineyards and wine producers in the region has been elaborated, with collected data structured as a database available in printed and e-version. The mapping organises information for geographical indications/designations of origin for winegrowing areas, and thus, supports the application of (EC) Regulation 479/2008 for reform at the EU wine market. This will add further value to restructuring and modernization of vineyards in the border area.

Through both formal and informal trainings, stakeholders had the opportunity to learn more about trademarks and their importance in the winemaking process, innovations in primary production and research and a selection of wine yeasts, as well as EU regulations and best practices in wine production. A manual, presenting detailed information (with experts' comments) on EU Regulations in the wine sector, has also been elaborated and widely disseminated. Additionally, several joint tours to wineries in both countries have been organised with view of enhancing the wine sector networking. One particular visit, namely that to Vocational School „Goce Delchev“ in Valandovo, have made a substantial input to common knowledge sharing as it is a practical example for „*knowledge triangle*“ approach application (e.g. interaction between research, education and innovation; the school has its own winery and according to local legislation is authorised to sell on the market its own productions).

New knowledge or analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A wine map and database of vineyards and wine producers in the region • A bi-lingual manual „Innovations in the world of oenology“ published (both as hard copy edition and e-version)
New ways of working	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Institutionalisation of the viticulture and wine production sector in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (e.g. establishment of „Macedonian Oenologists' Association“)
Community integration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Joint tours to wineries in both countries

STRATEGIC CONTRIBUTION: LESSONS LEARNED

Exchange of experiences among wine producers on both sides of the border during study trips and capacity building through training are among the main results achieved by the project, that continue also after its completion.

The knowledge transfer and exchange of practices through well-determined target groups and well- selected methods of trainings, joint visits/tours and full use of technological means are the key points of project success.



Additionally, the balanced partnership, established following the business „win-win“ principles, has proven to be a positive driver for a cross-border cooperation initiative as well.



„To-do“ Recommendations

- Develop and implement projects by utilising the local expertise available.
- As for a project to be successful, a detailed needs analysis is to be prepared much in advance, and then, all activities planned should tackle those deficiencies identified.
- Project partners should be carefully selected and with long-term perspective of cooperation.

„Not-to-do“ Recommendations

- Do not be over-ambitious when structuring a project. Try to set out project objectives as simple as possible - this will ease the project's implementation.
- It's not necessary to implement very complicated project activities. If they are well-targeted and planned, even simple joint visits/tours could work out as to achieve the needed sharing of experience and/or strengthening of cross-border relations.

7.

Competitiveness,
Business Environment,
SMEs, Trade and Investment



CCI Number 2007CB16IP0008

Transboundary Cooperation for Agrochemistry and Pest Control Education

Bulgaria - Turkey IPA Cross-Border Programme (2007-2013)

2007CB16IP0008-2013-3-051 - Edupest Network

Target Group / Final Beneficiaries:

- Farmers, entrepreneurs
- Science and research institutions
- Public institutions

Project partners:

1. Uzunkopru Commodity Exchange (Republic of Turkey) - Lead partner
2. University „Prof. Asen Zlatarov“ - Burgas (Republic of Bulgaria)

Project budget:

EUR 79 181,46

Project start date / end date:

March 2014 - March 2015

Website:

www.edupestnetwork.com

PROJECT SYNOPSIS

The **Edupest Network** project was aimed to increase the knowledge and skills of farmers in environmentally compatible and profitable modern agriculture, thus overcoming the inherited manner for excessive or wrong treatment with pesticides.

The rationale behind the project idea were the identified problems with lack of adequate education and skills for pest management and control, and the following reduced productivity and impaired quality of agricultural products. Uzunkopru area of Edirne Province and Bourgas region are well known by their rich traditions in agricultural production, therefore, an innovative, vibrant, greener agriculture has been promoted as unique approach that satisfies public needs for high-quality and safe agricultural products. As a result, the project has contributed to increased knowledge and skills of farmers in the region to produce qualified, wholesome and safe agricultural products, thus improving the agro-ecological environment of the border region.

SUCCESS FACTORS AND CHALLENGES

The first key project's success factor was the common understanding of the partners, that development of sustainable agriculture, founded on scientific approach and effective education and training would result in efficient protection of agricultural products grown in the region. Each of the partners has its specific expertise and skills in the project's context, thus contributing to establishing a capable and well-balanced project's team. Successful cooperation between all project's stakeholders and strong communication channels established represent a further impetus to successful project implementation. Additionally, the project was fully supported by all public institutions responsible for pest control in the region.

A challenge for the project was the entirely new partnership established, but the outcomes achieved has proven that by having a good will and trustful relations, as well as commonly recognised working rules set up, a project of such nature can be led to a successful end. In addition, the regular live meetings, e-mail correspondence, use of social media for improvement of communication had helped in building common project management culture in both partners.

MAJOR ACHIEVEMENTS, TANGIBLE / INTANGIBLE IMPACTS AND SPIN-OFFS

The project has successfully developed a model for improvement of knowledge and skills in the field of pest control by establishment of a strong partnership between science, farmers and business of the border region. It succeeded to promote cross-border cooperation via transferring academic research & expertise into project initiatives thus enhancing the sustainable agricul-



Безопасност на храните

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PARTNERSHIP

tural production, economic development and integrated approach to food safety. In addition, two „think-tank“ groups have been created (one per partner), which have formulated 4 model training courses for the target groups identified. More than 16 scientific institutions have been reached and involved in elaboration of project’s trainings agendas: e.g. in terms of pesticides use, the impact of genetically modified organisms on the health and nutrition, paths for pollutants (pest) involvement in the agricultural products. Moreover, two manuals for sustainable use of pesticides have been developed and distributed among the target groups, as well as published on-line for general public use. The latter further increased public awareness about the negative impact of excessive and wrong use of pesticides.



In line with the above, a Pesticide Action Network (PAN) has been created, being an instrument for improvement of agrochemical regional policy. In order to obtain smooth functioning of this innovative network a Joint Action Plan has been elaborated. This has ensured a constant interaction among stakeholders that play a key role in pest use and control - i.e. farmers, business, science and authorities (local/regional). PAN is further contributing to promotion of ecologically sound alternatives of pesticides, and is open for support from similar EU networks.



New knowledge or analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased knowledge and skills in the field of modern agriculture • Increased analytical skills for performing agro-ecology researches
New ways of working	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Active co-operation with local and regional stakeholders in the field of pest control • Innovative training approach by establishment of „think-tank“ groups
Community integration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wide participation of the general public in project’s events • Wide disseminated of project results across the region

STRATEGIC CONTRIBUTION: LESSONS LEARNED

As a result of growing concerns about health and environmental problems associated with pesticides, both institutions and businesses are facing increasing demands from the society to explain and justify the use of pesticides. However, applying pesticides safely and effectively requires substantial expertise and skill. The project has brought together people, communities, authorities, farmers and business by use of innovative tools for linking science and real life thus building an integrated cooperative area for implementation of sustainable agriculture.

Following the successful completion of the project, the developed Pesticide Action Network (PAN) is continuing to provide support to agricultural producers in the border region as to apply modern, innovative and sustainable techniques in organic farming production.

„To-do“ Recommendations	„Not-to-do“ Recommendations
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Constantly improve your knowledge and skills in project management. Each project is a completely new and unique challenge - be prepared for it.• The choice of a project partner should be done carefully, with full awareness of its capacity (both as human resources and financial stability), as well as willingness to work under pressure.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• When structuring a project, be sure that what you are planning to do is within your own capability to manage. Don't include overambitious activities.

8.

Research, Technological
Development, Innovation
and ICT



CCI Number 2007CB16IP0008

Joint study of anthropogenic air pollution in the Burgas - Kirklareli cross-border area as a step towards future assessments on its impact on the population and the environment

Bulgaria - Turkey IPA Cross-Border Programme (2007-2013)

2007CB16IP0008-2013-3-025 - SAAP4FUTURE

Target Group / Final Beneficiaries:

- Research institutions and universities
- Municipalities
- Regional offices of environmental agencies and Ministries of Environment; regional health offices
- Stakeholders from agriculture, tourism and industry
- Citizens of Burgas District and Kirklareli Province;
- Ecological NGOs

Project partners:

1. National Institute of Meteorology and Hydrology, Bulgarian Academy of Sciences (Republic of Bulgaria) - Lead Partner
2. Headquarters of the Kirklareli Chamber of Agriculture (Republic of Turkey)

Project budget:

EUR 122 156,07

Project start date / end date:

January 2014 - January 2015

Website:

www.saap4future.ecobg.org

PROJECT SYNOPSIS

The **SAAP4FUTURE** project is the first joint study on air pollution for the Bulgaria - Turkey cross-border area, showing the complexity of the atmospheric transport and deposition mechanisms and providing a good basis for further studies. The project was aimed at identifying the main air quality problems in the border region and at obtaining new scientifically-based

information on air pollution. Additionally, the project has stimulated the communication and exchange of data between environmental experts from the two partnering countries, while also raised awareness on the current status of air pollution and possible threats. The established collaboration between partners as well as joint working methodologies exchanged gave ground for further joint initiatives.

SUCCESS FACTORS AND CHALLENGES

It is well known that air pollution has adverse effects on humans, and the deposition of pollutants on the earth surface can damage water quality and fish abundance, agricultural crops, vegetation, and buildings. Thus, it is very important to know the air quality in this region both for protecting human health, and for estimating the threats to the regions' main assets (natural, cultural, historical).

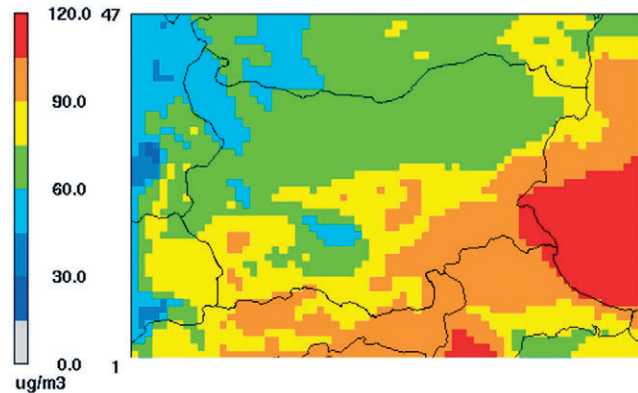
As the cross-border region does not have significant anthropogenic air pollution sources, routine air quality monitoring data are very limited in number and do not provide sufficient information on important indicators for agriculture and forests, such as acidity and chemical composition of the precipitations. Hence, the major challenge faced by the project was to set-up the frame for the first joint Bulgarian-Turkish evaluation on air quality and air pollution problems in the cross-border area, in view of protecting the environment and preserve the attractiveness of this region for tourism, recreation and agricultural activities.

Generally, the project idea was triggered by several facts: a) air pollution does not have borders; pollutants emitted in one place can be transported by atmospheric processes and deposited far away from the sources provoking adverse effects on humans and ecosystems; b) the main assets of the border region (natural parks, rich biodiversity and tourism) are vulnerable to adverse effects of air pollution, and that effects might be further pronounced with climate change; c) no previous joint actions, addressing air pollution problems from scientific perspective, have been organised in the cross-border area.

Overall, the challenges faced in the course of project implementation were actually linked to the different profiles of the partners - research institution from Bulgaria and public organisation related to agricultural activities in Turkey. However, the partners have managed to adapt their previous experience from different kind of projects for defining project goals, activities and outcomes. Further challenge was the short period of project execution vs. the broad spectrum of activities planned within the partnership. To deal with this, experts with different background were employed, and partners' responsibilities for the different tasks were timely specified and (when needed) further adapted.

Surface Ozone (modelled)

25.10.2014 16:00 UTC



MAJOR ACHIEVEMENTS, TANGIBLE / INTANGIBLE IMPACTS AND SPIN-OFFS

A joint survey on air quality status in the border region has been performed, that has revealed main problems with particulate matter and nitrogen oxides in urban areas, as well as ozone during the summer, mainly along the coast. Parallel field campaigns have been further organised for sampling the atmospheric deposition at Burgas, Ahtopol, Kirklareli and Kaynarca that has resulted in collection of more than 300 samples. A set up of a common database with data on chemical composition has also been developed. Additionally, air pollution maps, based on state-of-the-art air quality modelling system for the surface concentrations of main pollutants (ozone, nitrogen oxide, sulphur dioxide, and particulate matter) and deposition of sulphur and nitrogen for selected specific periods of 2014, have been further obtained.

Furthermore, the project gave the opportunity to upgrade the partners' research equipment and facilities with the acquisition of automatic wet only deposition sampler (unique type of instrument for Bulgaria), the assembly of manual sampling systems for different type of deposition and with portable devices for measurement of precipitation acidity.

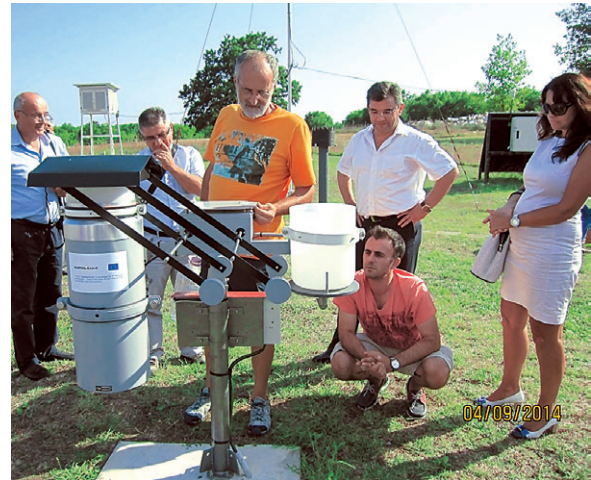
New knowledge or analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Combined analysis of new observational and modelled data on the complexity of the atmospheric processes in the border region • 12 publications, published in scientific journals and reports, as well as presented at scientific conferences
New ways of working	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A synergy between partners' expertise was obtained, with elaborated practices that allowed combined evaluation of scientific results • Establishment of contacts between researchers and stakeholders; among researchers with different background; between researchers from different institutions (i.e. Academy of Sciences, Universities) from both sides of the border
Changes to policy or public behaviour	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The new data and results, indicating common air quality related problems can contribute to the development of Joint Environmental Strategy for the region • Raised public awareness on air pollution issues and its adverse effects
Product or services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A survey on the current status of air quality in the cross-border region • A common database for the chemical composition of atmospheric deposition, modelled air pollution maps for specific situations

STRATEGIC CONTRIBUTION: LESSONS LEARNED

The project implementation has revealed that **common efforts are needed** not only to identify air pollution problems, but also to establish approaches for mitigating its adverse effects.

In terms of **project management and implementation**, the timely communication between project partners has shown to be vital for implementation of project activities and finding timely response to any project challenge faced.

As regards establishing the proper **partnership structure** - the complementary expertise, the willingness to take part in the activities, good financial capabilities, good ability to communicate with target groups, the commitment to bring tasks to successful end, being open for discussions, and also being correct in implementing common decisions - are seen as a must for the success of any cross-border cooperation project.



„To-do“ Recommendations

- **At project development phase:** (1) clarify all ideas on every single activity (e.g. who, when, and what to do, as well as what is to be obtained; (2) compile budget carefully.
- **At implementation phase:** (1) ask for help and clarifications JTS or MA every time you have doubts how to implement Programme rules; (2) be pro-active for maintaining contacts with partners; (3) dedicate resources for explaining project goals and outcomes to different target groups.

„Not-to-do“ Recommendations

- Don't plan a broad range of activities within a short project duration period.
- Choose carefully both the type of external expertise employed, but also its number - the more experts you are hiring, the more problems you might face for solving.

8.

Research, Technological
Development, Innovation
and ICT



CCI Number 2007CB16IP0006

Mobile Internet, E-services and Training for Rural Community in Cross-border Region

Bulgaria - Serbia IPA Cross-Border Programme (2007-2013)

2007CB16IP0006-2011-2-026 - E-INCLUSION

Target Group / Final Beneficiaries:

- Farmers, entrepreneurs and employers
- Local authorities and communities (from small disadvantaged municipalities in the border region)
- Primary schools and NGOs

Project partners:

1. Centre for the Development of Jablanica and Pcinja Districts (Republic of Serbia) - Lead Partner
2. Agency for Economic Development Kostinbrod (Republic of Bulgaria)
3. Municipality of Surdulica (Republic of Serbia)

Project budget:

EUR 233 459,24

Project start date / end date:

April 2013 - November 2014

Website:

www.centarzarazvoj.org
vest.php?id=559&oblast=projekti

[www.facebook.com
domkulture.alakince/?fref=ts](http://www.facebook.com/domkulture.alakince/?fref=ts)

PROJECT SYNOPSIS

E-INCLUSION visualises the phenomenon of a digital and social gap (in terms of technology and literacy) between the urban and rural-border regions, which impacts the youth (residing in the rural areas) migration to urban areas where they have access to ICT technology as well as access to better (technological) education. Hence, it could be considered a pilot and demonstrational project that provides a model for promotion of ICT awareness & literacy and life-long learning culture among the rural population, teachers, students and entrepreneurs in Bulgarian-Serbian cross-border region.

Project strategy aimed to promote ICT awareness and literacy through providing fixed, mobile and web-based e-services, distance learning and training for rural community in the border region. **E-INCLUSION** assists target groups to understand and use ICTs, and particularly use Internet and available e-services. The core of this project is the combination of physical and distant learning options for rural population in the targeted area. This was implemented through creation of ICT Community Centre and a mobile Internet unit equipped to provide ICT training in the rural communities on both sides of the border.

SUCCESS FACTORS AND CHALLENGES

The project idea was promoted by the Lead Partner (Centre for the Development of Jablanica and Pcinja Districts), following the cooperation with their Bulgarian partner (Agency for Economic Development Kostinbrod), which started under previous Bulgaria - Serbia IPA Cross-Border Programme call for proposal, while the Municipality of Surdulica has been introduced as a new eligible partner. Based on the results of a vast survey conducted in the cross-border area (i.e. a questionnaire has been prepared and submitted to 468 addressees on the Serbian side of the border, and another 152 addressees on the Bulgarian one), some 200 people from 20 rural communities in Bulgaria and Serbia successfully participated in trainings and research about ICT technologies in education and business, e-services and management.

The established ICT Community Centre in Surdulica (Village Alakince) or **TRAINING CENTRE E-INCLUSION** is designed to provide full access to ICT resources to rural population from the region, such as training, internet and web-conferencing, while 20 rural communities have signed a protocol of cooperation as to further institutionalise partnerships links.

However, as most of the cross-border cooperation projects, also this one did not pass smoothly its implementation. Certain problems have occurred due to budgetary cuts, changes of publishing procedures for international tenders and differences in thresholds for supply tenders given in PRAG and applicable Programme Implementation Manual. Both project partners and Programme's Managing Authority demonstrated a pro-active attitude in finding the best solution as the situation faced was result of factors that were not under control of both project partners and the Programme.

Given the above, the key success of the project was the cross-border partnership itself - which has managed difficult project modifications and delays, and yet successfully delivered the promotion of ICT awareness/literacy by providing fixed, mobile and web-based e-services, distance learning and training in one of the most underdeveloped rural areas of the Serbian-Bulgarian cross-border region. Project partners worked jointly on finding best solutions in order to mitigate risks, and all partners demonstrated high level of professionalism and pro-active attitude towards implementation of project activities, and thus, ultimately and successfully finalised all tasks during the project lifetime.

MAJOR ACHIEVEMENTS, TANGIBLE / INTANGIBLE IMPACTS AND SPIN-OFFS

The project realised an in-depth research of informational and training needs among 20 rural communities of the Serbian-Bulgarian border region. Some of the key research findings are that there is less availability of ICT equipment in rural areas by 21% against national average, while the usage of ICT is less than 12% against the national average. In addition, the results of the research provided new knowledge input to the project team as to create training programmes with very precise definition

of target groups, time and duration, learning objectives, table of contents, training methods, evaluation system and materials.

Resulting from the above, the newly-acquired knowledge provides a framework for further cooperation by also enabling access to 8 popular e-services (Agricultural Information Services, Business Information Services, Public Registries, Tax Administration, Regulations, Public procurement, Job search and E-Government). Moreover, 2 ICT training modules, as well as 5 modules aimed at management and job-related trainings, have been created by the project team. In total, 200 people from 20 rural communities in Bulgaria and Serbia successfully participated in trainings and research about ICT technologies in education and business, E-services and Management.

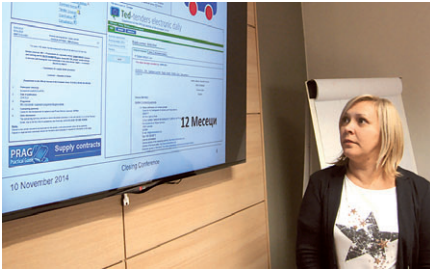


Cooperation and integration of local communities on both sides of the border was based on real needs of rural population and was visible through their high interest and participation. The Facebook page of the E-Inclusion Community Centre in Alakince (www.facebook.com/domkulture.alakince/?fref=ts) is a textbook example of a vibrant rural community cohesion that integrates a healthy mix of education, cultural, sports and community activities - to the benefit of local people.

New knowledge or analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • E-inclusion study
New ways of working	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Distance learning through Web-conferencing
Changes to policy or public behaviour	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Raising awareness of ICT importance for the local development has resulted in similar ICT initiatives being launched in neighbouring rural communities (Dugojnica, Masurica) • Local action plans revised
Investment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establishment of Community ICT Centre Surdulica (Village Alakince) • Purchase of mini Internet and research unit (MIRTU)
Product or services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access to 8 popular e-services • 2 ICT training modules and 5 modules on management and job-related training
Community integration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 20 Protocols on cooperation and partnership has been signed between 20 communities (villages) in the cross-border region • Organised final conference for raising public awareness

STRATEGIC CONTRIBUTION: LESSONS LEARNED

From the vicinity of their experience, project partners have learnt that risk management is very important element of the project implementation. Even if there is a good budget planning, subsequent budget cuts are to be always foreseen. Especially, when a project envisages the application of complicated sub-contracting procedures, extra time is to be reserved as to cover any potential delays (even tender relaunches). However, no matter how big and complicated the problems are - with vision, right people and pro-active attitude they can be solved.



„To-do“ Recommendations

- Build strong partnerships - reliable partners are those that will help you when things go wrong.
- Be flexible and pro-active, as projects represent an ongoing process, which requires constant monitoring and corrective measures as to combat any issues that are encountered. There are many variables that can be changed and adapted.
- Identify all possible risks early and include contingency plans to cover for risks and uncertainties.

„Not-to-do“ Recommendations

- Don't try to manage crisis by yourself, but try to involve local and cross-border partners as soon as possible.

Performance of Impact Evaluation of the IPA Cross-border
Programmes 2007-2013, managed by the Republic of Bulgaria

HANDBOOK

of best practices

November 2016

