

Annex 7.7: Stakeholder Involvement

Applying a broad partnership and multilevel governance principles during the entire programming process provide extensive stakeholder involvement. In different stages (preparatory, drafting, finalisation), levels (Joint Working Group, broad public) and with different forms (on-line survey, Regional Consultative Forums, Joint Working Group, Task Force and other meetings, e-mail communication, web site announcements, information's/documents) of communication, coordination and consultation process was organised and implemented.

Joint Working Group

JWG: partnership structure with a strategic decision making role for the period of Programme preparation to periodically review the progress made and make proposals and comments concerning the respective parts of the Programme. The JWG had the responsibility of approving the main stages of the programme preparation and the Programme as a whole (preparatory stage, territorial and SWOT analyses with proposal for thematic priorities selection and final approval of the Programme). JWG members from the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia were nominated on 09.10.2012 and reaffirmed on 06.11.2013, and Bulgarian JWG members were nominated on 23.09.2013.

The JWG compose a balanced number of representatives of the national, regional and local authorities, economic and social partners, relevant bodies representing civil society, including environmental partners, non-governmental organisations, and bodies responsible for promoting social inclusion, gender equality and non-discrimination. Appendix 1, Table 1 present the list of Institutions represent in the Joint Working Group.

During the Programme preparation period November 2013-August 2014, three JWG meetings were organised. First one on 14.11.2013 in Sofia (overview of IPA II legal framework was presented, JWG Rules of Procedure and eligibility of operations according to their location were approved, and the timeline of programme preparation was presented), second on 23.04.2014 in Skopje (thematic priorities of the Programme were approved) and the last one on 21.08.2014 in Sofia (final Programme document was approved). Beside those meetings JWG was communicated and consulted on the situation analysis and mapping of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats as well as needs and challenges which were circulated to the JWG members on 11.03.2014 and approved in a written procedure. A proposal for thematic concentration was developed on the basis of the regional analysis, SWOT analysis as well as development needs and challenges, analysis of regional and national strategic documents from both countries, on-line survey among regional stakeholders, the first round of regional consultations, experiences gained with the 2007 – 2013 CBC Programme, and was sent to the JWG members on 08.04.2014. The first draft of the new IPA CBC programme was distributed amongst the JWG members for comments and was published on the Programme's website for public consultations on 20.06.2014. Internet based public consultations on the draft programme. The draft programme was available for public consultations on the Programme website since 20.06.2014 and a considerable feedback was received and integrated into the OP where appropriate.

The given feedback during this process was taken into consideration in preparing the revised draft programme that was submitted to both Managing and National authorities on 07.07.2014 so to be further proceeded for consultations with EC services. On 17.07 2014 the second draft programme was uploaded on the programme website.

As stipulated in Article 10 (2) of the JWG Rules of Procedure all the information for the JWG meetings and all relevant documentation for the elaboration of the programme has been published on the programme's website.

Task Force

Within the framework of the service contract Preparation of Bulgaria - the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia IPA Cross-border Programme 2014 - 2020, ID number EuropeAid/133413/D/SER/Multi - Lot 2, a Task Force was established comprising representatives of the Managing Authority, the National Authority and the Joint Technical Secretariat to support the programming process. The Task Force coordinated the work of the JWG and the Consultant; followed and reported on the implementation of the decisions made by the JWG; supported,

supervised and coordinated the work of the Consultant; stimulated and coordinated the dialogue among relevant stakeholders and channelled their opinion on local development needs and initiatives to the programme preparation process. The Team leader attended all three JWG meetings and the experts' team as a whole continuously provided support and established good working relations with the programming bodies.

Partners' involvement was organized in several stages and the Programme was developed in an iterative process. Appendix 1-Table 5 provides total data and overview on the type of institutions which participate on the consultation events (on-line survey and two rounds of regional Consultative Forums) organised during preparation Programme period. In total 376 participants were present on the consultation events where civil society was majority with 24% followed by the local public authorities 23%. Education/training was present with 12% and national public authorities with 11%. All other type of institutions had representation below 10% where Health services providers were present only with 1%.

On-line survey

In the context of programming the IPA CBC Programme 2014-2020 between Bulgaria and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia an on-line survey had been undertaken for exploring the opinion of national and regional stakeholders on the focus of the future Programme. The survey was conducted in the period between 03.02.2014 and 14.02.2014 through the web site of the current EU cooperation programme between two countries. The on-line questionnaire comprises three chapters with 9 questions. First chapter with 3 questions generate general responder information's on the origin, type of institution and its involvement in the current CBC programme. Second chapter with 3 questions deal with cross-border cooperation challenges and opportunities (major problems and barriers, major challenges and opportunities and major threats). Responders provided their preferences through weighting the potential answers depending of theirs importance. Third chapter with 3 questions provide information's on the cross-border cooperation added value in the perspective 2014-2020 (most value added, thematic priorities and major problems faced at implementing projects funded under IPA CBC Programmes). Here also responder's weight potential answers depending of theirs importance.

Questionnaire has been completed from numerous institutions and private persons from both countries. A total of 142 respondents (from Bulgaria 67-47.2% and from the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia 75-52.8%) gather the stakeholders' expectations related to the scope and content as well as other important aspects of the future programme. Appendix 1: Table 2 provides an overview on the on-line survey respondents (type of institutions).

The wide public consultations contributed to the programming with experience and know-how and it helped to identify specific demands and expectations towards the new programme among potential target groups. In Appendix 2 is the summary of the main findings from the on-line survey.

Results from the on-line survey concerning the new programming period 2014-2020 were published on the current CBC Programme web site on 10.03.2014.

Regional Consultative Forums

First round Regional Consultative Forums February/March 2014

Series of public consultations with relevant stakeholders have been held in the programme region in February and March 2014. These Regional Consultative Forums were designed as 4 hours interactive information / workshop events. During all sessions for the 1st Regional Consultative Forum present were 182 (79 female-43%) participants from which 62 from Bulgaria (34%) and 120 from the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (66%). Sessions for the 1st RCF were organized in Strumica on 26.02.2014 with 29 participants, Stip on 27.02.2014 with 50 participants, Kumanovo on 28.02.2014 with 41 participants, Kyustendil on 06.03.2014 with 30 participants and Blagoevgrad on 07.03.2014 with 32 participants. The target groups were representatives from municipalities, regional and national administration / public institutions, regional NGOs, Universities and other relevant institutions in the region. In Appendix 1: Table 3 provide an overview on institutions present during all five sessions for the 1st RCF.

The aim of these consultations was: to inform regional stakeholders in all 5 program districts (NUTS III Regions) about the ongoing programming process for the IPA II cross-border Programme and the expert findings on regional analysis and identified needs; to present and discuss a possible prioritization of Thematic Priorities for the future Cross-border Programme and to discuss potential actions that may be relevant for addressing the identified needs and challenges in the respective thematic priority areas.

The programming experts in cooperation with representatives of JTS and Managing / National Authorities had properly informed the participants about the frame for the new IPA CBC Programme and the findings of the SWOT analysis of the region as well as the challenges and needs for further development. The participants discussed and widely supported the findings of the programming team. The participants discussed the main arguments for selecting Thematic Priorities of the future IPA CBC Programme as well as possible actions. The main interests of the participants were manifested for Thematic Priorities TP2, TP4, TP5 and TP1 with TP7 during the sessions in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, TP4, TP2, TP1 and TP7 in Kyustendil, TP4, TP2, TP7 and TP8 in Blagoevgrad. In Appendix 3 is the summary of the main discussions presented per thematic priority from the first round of the RCFs.

Announcement, information and on-line registration for the 1st RCF were published on the web site of the ongoing CBC programme. On 12.03.2014 summary of 1st RCF results with the list of participants was also published on the web site.

Second round Regional Consultative Forum June 2014

Second joint cross-border Regional Consultative Forum has been held on 4th June 2014 in Strumica. This Regional Consultative Forum was designed as 3 hours interactive information / workshop events. On the 2nd Regional Consultative Forum present were 52 (19 female-36%) participants from which 14 from Bulgaria (27%) and 38 from the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (73%). The target groups were representatives from municipalities, regional and national administration / public institutions, regional NGOs, Universities and other relevant institutions in the cross border region. In Appendix 1: Table 4 provide an overview on institutions present during the 2nd RCF.

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

The programming experts in cooperation with representatives of Managing / National Authorities and JTS had properly informed the participants about the proposed Intervention Logic for the Programme with its three selected TPs. The participants discussed and widely supported the proposals of the programming team. The participants discussed the main arguments for proposed examples for activities for TP environment and competitiveness particularly, as well as the type of beneficiaries and type of actions (see notes below). IL for TP Tourism was completely supported by the participants and it fit with theirs expectations. In Appendix 4 is the summary of the main discussions presented per thematic priority from the 2nd RCF.

Announcement, information and on-line registration for the 2nd RCF were published on the web site of the ongoing CBC programme. On 04.07.2014 summary of 2nd RCF results with the list of participants was also published on the web site.

Appendix 1: List of consulted stakeholders

Table 1: List of Institutions represent in the Programme Joint Working Group

Republic of Bulgaria		Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia	
Institution	Number	Institution	Number
Ministry of Regional Development	4	Ministry of local self-government	7
Ministry of Economy and Energy	1	Secretariat for European affairs	1
Ministry of transport, information technology and communications	1	Ministry of labour and social affairs	1
Ministry of Environment and Water	2	Ministry of finance	1
Ministry of Labour and Social Policy	1	Ministry of foreign affairs	1
Ministry of internal affairs	1	Ministry of education and science	1
National association of municipalities	1	Ministry of internal affairs	1
Road infrastructure Agency	1	Ministry of economy	1
Regional. Development. Council of Blagoevgrad District	1	Association of the units of the local self-government	1
Bulgarian Chamber of Commerce and Industry	1	Centre for development of the South-East planning Region	1
Bulgarian Industrial Association	1	Centre for development of the East planning Region	1
Association of industrial capital in Bulgaria	1	State Statistical office	1
Confederation of the employers and industrialists in Bulgaria-CEIBG the voice of Bulgarian business	1		
Confederation of independent trade unions in Bulgaria	1		
Confederation of Labour - Podkrepa	1		
Association Ecological Forum for Sustainable Development	1		
Business incubator G.Delcev, center for entrepreneurship support	1		
Foundation Habitat for Humanity	1		
+ 19 Institutions with advisory role			
Total	22+19		18

Table 2: Overview on the on-line survey respondents (type of institutions)

Type of institution	Submission number	share
National public authority	17	12.0%
Regional public authority	5	3.5%
Local public authority	29	20.4%
University, Knowledge / Research Institute, institute for higher education	9	6.3%
Education / Training Centre	3	2.1%
Business support structure - chamber of commerce, business association, business cluster	4	2.8%
Institute of Culture - museum, library, art gallery, community centre, etc.	5	3.5%
Health services provider	2	1.4%
Civil society structure (association/foundation)	35	24.6%
Consultancy	6	4.2%
As an individual/private person	27	19.0%
Total	142	100.0%

Table 3: Overview on the type of institutions participating on the 1st RCF (all 5 sessions)

Type of institution	Strumica 26.02.2014	Stip 27.02.	Kumanovo 28.02.2014	Kyustendil 06.03.2014	Blagoevgrad 07.03.2014	Total 1 st RCF	
						number	%
-National public authority	2	2	4	5	4	17	9
-Regional public authority	3	2	1	1	3	11	6
-Local public authority	14	13	8	1	5	42	23
-University, Knowledge / Research Institute, institute for higher education		1	4	1	3	10	5
-Education / Training Centre	3	18	7	5	4	38	21
-Business support structure - chamber of commerce, business association, business cluster	1			2	1	5	3
-Institute of Culture - museum, library, art gallery, community centre, etc.		1	2	2		6	3
-Civil society structure (association/foundation)	4	12	14	2	11	47	26
-Consultancy	2	1	1	1	1	6	3
Total number of participants	29	50	41	20	32	182	

Table 4: Overview on the type of institutions participating on the 2nd RCF

Type of institution	Bulgarian participants	Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia participants	Total 2 nd RCF Strumica 04.06.2014	
			number	%
-National public authority	3	4	7	13
-Regional public authority		8	8	15
-Local public authority	3	14	17	33
-Education / Training Centre	1	4	5	10
-Business support structure - chamber of commerce, business association, business cluster	3	1	4	8
-Civil society structure (association/foundation)	3	6	9	17
-Consultancy	1	1	2	4
Total number of participants	14	38	52	

Table 5: General overview on the stakeholders participated on the consultation events organised during the preparation Programme period

Type of institution	On-line survey	1 st RCF	2 nd RCF	Total	%
-National public authority	17	17	7	41	11%
-Regional public authority	5	11	8	24	6%
-Local public authority	29	42	17	88	23%
-University, Knowledge / Research Institute, institute for higher education	9	10	0	19	5%
-Education / Training Centre	3	38	5	46	12%
-Business support structure - chamber of commerce, business association, business cluster	4	5	4	13	3%
-Institute of Culture - museum, library, art gallery, - community centre, etc.	5	6	0	11	3%
-Health services provider	2	0	0	2	1%
-Civil society structure (association/foundation)	35	47	9	91	24%
-Consultancy	6	6	2	14	4%
-As an individual/private person	27	0	0	27	7%
Total number of participants	142	182	52	376	

Appendix 2: Summary of the main findings from the on-line survey

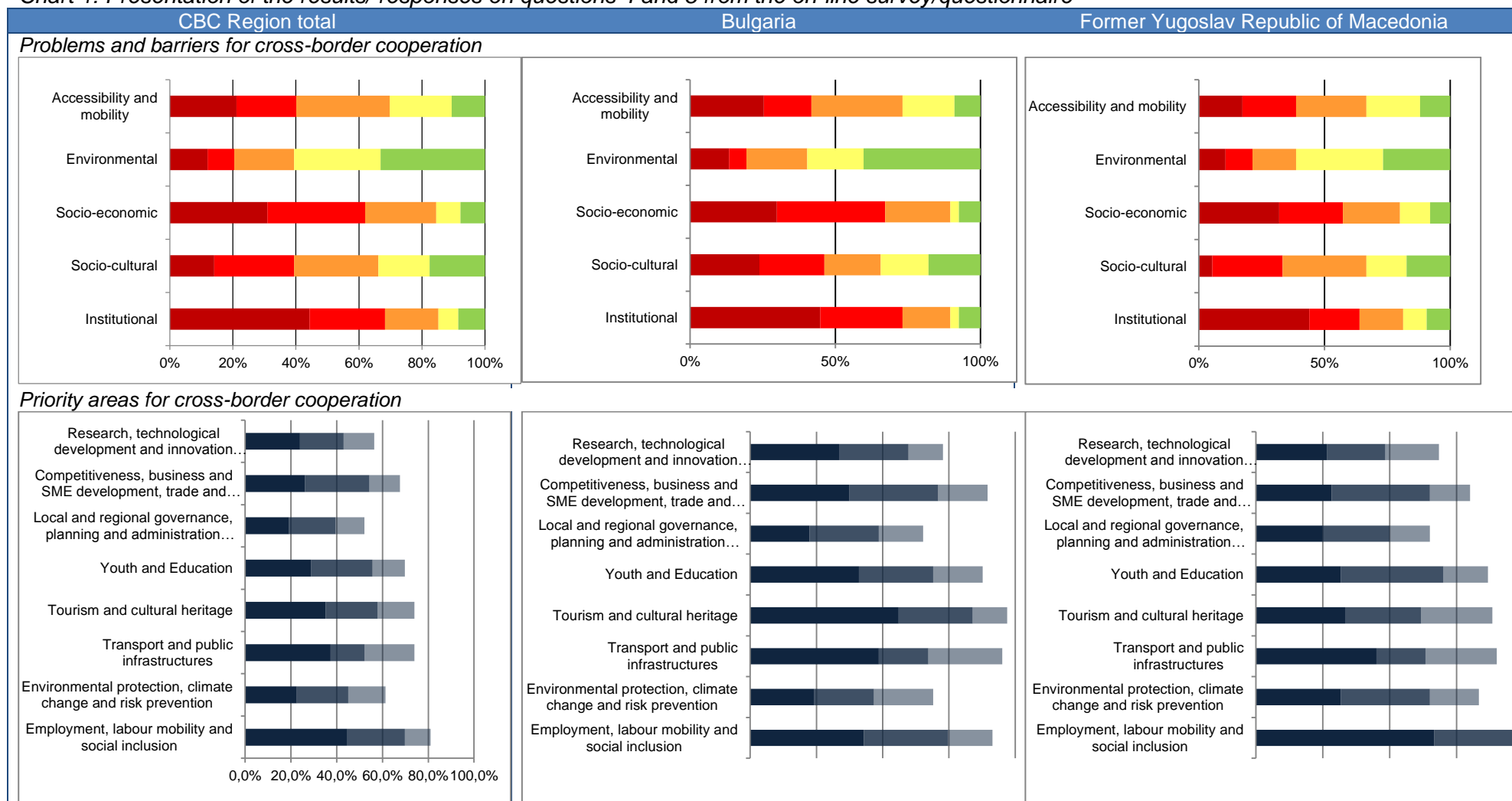
Challenges and opportunities for cross-border cooperation

- Responses preferences on the major problems and barriers for cross-border cooperation pointed institutional obstacles as the major barrier for cross-border cooperation between the two countries. About 2/3 rank this aspect 1st and 2nd. 62 % of the respondents also consider socio-economic differences as important obstacles for cooperation followed by problems with accessibility and mobility (40%). Respondents from both countries had very similar views in this respect.
- For the major challenges and opportunities for further strengthening the cross-border cooperation, transport infrastructure (almost 70,0%), tourism (65,5%) and competitiveness of the SMEs (63,3%) have been marked as most crucial challenges/opportunities (adding the marks 1,2 and 3). Comparing the responses from the two countries reveal that both consider transport infrastructure very important (Bulgaria 71%, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia 64%), but Bulgarian consider tourism even more important (78%) whereas the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia also consider competitiveness and SME development (61%) and employment (61%) and even environment (56%) more important than tourism (55%).
- For the major threats for cross-border cooperation the participants in the survey from both countries recognized social exclusion and poverty (around 72%), the current absence of economic growth (around 70%) and unemployment and the ageing population and trends for depopulation of the region (both around 66%) as the biggest threats (adding the marks 1, 2 and 3). Comparing responses from the two countries show that social exclusion and poverty are equal important for both parties (72% each). However the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia responders consider the absence of economic growth and diversification of economic activities even more important (former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia 76%, Bulgaria 65%).

Cross-border cooperation added value in the perspective 2014-2020

- For the most value added of the cross-border cooperation, most of the respondents consider the building of structures for future cross-border cooperation (56%) as the most significant expected value added from the perspective programme period. Around 40% of the participants see the organizational and policy learning as well as the solutions of common problems as major value added.
- Responders preferences on the thematic priorities in the new CBC 2014-2020 present that both countries consider priority areas of greatest significance for the community are employment, labor mobility and social inclusion (as per more than 80%), transport and public infrastructure as well as tourism and culture heritage (both 74%) and youth and education (70%)(counting marks 1, 2 and 3). Comparing the respondents from both countries show that the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia responders consider employment, labour mobility and social inclusion by far as most important (88%) for community value added, whereas Bulgarian rank tourism and cultural heritage first (%) followed by transport and public infrastructures (76%) and employment, labour mobility and social inclusion (73%).
- For the major problems faced at implementing projects under IPA CBC Programmes, most of the participants in the survey consider the lack of own finances (78%) as the most significant problem. On second place as major problems for project implementation are listed the complicated application procedures within the programmes and the limited project budget (both around 60%). The answers from both countries are similar, however with slightly different weight of the most problematic aspects.

Chart 1: Presentation of the results/ responses on questions 4 and 8 from the on-line survey/questionnaire



Appendix 3: Summary of the main discussions presented per thematic priority from the first round of the RCFs

TP 1 – (a): Participants in Bulgaria were split on this TP, some insisted on it mainly because if not selected, the social sector will not be supported. Other part, especially the business representative organisations, argued that employment should not be supported for the sake of it; employment-related initiatives should be supported under TP7 with the emphasis on their relevance of skills and competences for the business. The large national programmes for employment initiatives and trainings are additional argument against.

For the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia participants this is important priority usually positioned on 3rd or 4th position. Elements from this priority could be covered by TP Competitiveness. Employment is a priority which and currently is supported on the national level by different Government promoted measures.

Arguments for selection: (high unemployment; aging population, high % of deprived people (disabled, old, poor. Etc.); possible to achieve long term impact).

Needs: (joint employment initiatives, information and advisory services, joint structures for providing services to create new jobs, start-up business and self-employment schemes). Mobility was noted as difficult (apart from the people from Bulgaria minority living in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and having Bulgarian passports). Inter-regional mobility yes, but cross-border is not really relevant. In the need presented: “start-up SMEs and self-employment....consultancy schemes to support small entrepreneurs in rural areas” accent on rural areas only not need to be emphasised.

TP 2 – (b): Most of the RCF participants in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia agree on TP2 to be on 1st or 2nd priority position in the next CBC programme, as it is on national and regional Sector/Plan/Strategy agenda and priority, where neither central neither local governments have enough finances to implement what planned. Not big projects could be implemented, but awareness, small investment projects, energy efficiency, joint resource management, risk prevention, collector systems, small landfills, cultivation/resolving sites with illegal dumps, selection of waste, recycling of waste, youth engagement in activities for cleaning nature/schools/public areas, prevention of natural and biodiversity could be potential actions. As environment is most important for overall living and as environment degradation continues, this priority should continue in the next period. Weakness in the country is that environment protection laws exist, but they are not implemented properly and laws are not valid for each polluter

Possible actions:

- Joint training and initiatives for sustainable social enterprises, creating of new jobs through the creation of social enterprises. (Social enterprises, was pointed an interested topic for CBC cooperation. An example of such cooperation was mentioned)
- Exchange of experience on CB level on development of social services for old people and disabled
- Joint training, joint initiatives in enhancing employment of socially excluded groups (e.g. disabled)
- Developing of seasonal employment networks
- Exchange of experience in the area of employment in tourism
- Promoting of social entrepreneurship
- Enhancing entrepreneurship/stimulating the people from mountain areas to develop tourist activities
- promoting social enterprises, EU orientated activity, possibility for crafts, food, eco-tourism, raising of employment (in former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia obstacle could be the non-existence of a law on social enterprises)
- care for the elderly through opening/renovation of old age homes;
- organizing network of youth to help elderly
- joint actions on labour mobility
- activities for promotion small family business, craftsmen, tourism in rural area

(particularly mine lobby is very strong). Environment is cross cutting issue could be as a must sub-activity under all other TP.

In both Bulgarian RCFs this priority was not selected as No1 at first. Many problems were commented, mainly as obstacle to realize investment projects here (e.g. ownership of land and forests, long duration of project preparation if they require environmental assessment, large investment needed for reasonable projects, lack of competence of the regional stakeholders to realize such investment projects). But: both groups finally concluded that this TP should be selected due to its importance for the CBC area and because practically almost all type of regional actors can initiate projects in this field (municipalities, NGOs, schools, public institutions, etc.) All needs identified in the analysis were considered as relevant. Additional need for actions: to protect the species which are threatened with extinction. Also to add, risks from earthquakes (Pehchevo). Additionally it was noted that: it is necessary that the envisaged impacts from the interventions in this sphere should be

precisely defined. More argument for selection is the great biodiversity of the region; two economic sectors of primary importance to the region shall be particularly affected by climate change – tourism and agriculture; the region's environment may not be very much polluted at present, but potential future problems shall not be underestimated) joint management of river Struma - pollution is a joint problem, in recent time joint countries meetings were organized on this subject, but on national level.

Possible actions:

- Bogdanci anaerobic waste water treatment station;
- Ongoing CBC project on Study for RES capacities in South-East /South-West regions (solar, wind, bio, thermal water etc....) will recommend a lot of small investments in RES as potential activities for the next programme;
- small investments in solar panels, high voltage systems, energy efficiency renovation of public buildings/schools/kindergartens. Very good experience through implemented CBC projects, effects already visible in the first year of use these systems (30% savings of energy). When

TP 3 – (c): Important priority but available funds are too small for important/impact investment projects. Not selected in Bulgaria, mainly due to the fact that the size of the investments need is large, while the programme budget is limited. However the big need has been noted – the good road infrastructure shall contribute to CB cooperation (will make it more mobile and sustainable). It was also considered important to think about public transport and “soft measures” in this respect – improving transport schemes, introducing public information platforms, etc. ..., but no interest was shown in this respect. Needs: (concerning the state of the roads: it was noted that comments on IV class roads (currently only II and III class roads are

TP 4 – (d): Almost all the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia RCF participants agree that TP4 should be 1st or 2nd priority in the next CBC programme, as through tourism economy in general, SMEs, employment, education, youth, women, rural and many others will have benefits/ priority, will have impact. With more funds for development of the rural tourism, employment could be increased with measurable indicator.

In Bulgaria this was the number 1 priority for both RCF groups. Pointed as the one with a clear impact on CB cooperation and direct and indirect impacts on the integration of the area and improving the quality of life. A big accent on cultural tourism was put, though all participants agree that practically all forms of tourism can be developed in the region. Tourism can be a possible answer to the socio-economic problems of the region and can generate income for

investment projects are implemented, they are accompanied with soft measures, which in the previous program projects show very good results, particularly for schools and kindergartens where soft measures were raising youth awareness.

- raising awareness on pollution and waste with the youngest generation (starting from kindergarten and primary schools)
- green project-selection of waste in houses (it could be combined with tourism, employment projects also)
- project for certifying and issuing eco-label
- Soft measures – education on the subject for young people; joint training on environmental protection
- Actions to prevent the consequences of climate change based on developed climate models
- Early warning systems for prevention of flood; fires
- Intelligent management of street-lighting
- Cleaning of river beds

mentioned) as these are mainly the municipal roads (access to smaller sites). There was the opinion that new border crossings are not needed and it would be better to add needs for renovation of the existing ones; they do not see BCPs as an obstacle for CBC relations. However, there was the opposite opinion as well. Argument “against” a selection: Sustainable transport is a priority on national level and other finances, not CBC funds should be used. Small scale projects could be financed, as access roads to touristic sites (few km), to some villages, schools, bicycle trails in the towns.

the local population, thus generate further economic growth. Also an accent on the link between tourism and environment was put – sustainable tourism development – noted by many of the participants. Needs: (Joint strategies to develop regional cross-border tourist routes; Development of COMPLEX tourist products - as a sustainable result; Need to support archaeological research; Need to develop the tourist infrastructure). Notes on arguments: (There was a comment on one of the presented arguments “against” – programming experts say that this TP is not relevant for all geographic sub-regions. Participants do not agree with that – they think that for cultural tourism for example there is potential in all regions).

Possible actions:

- stimulation of small hotels/guest houses (even this is already covered by IPARD-rural development); development/establishment SMEs connecting tradition + culture; construction of bicycle/eco trails (for people with disabilities besides general accessibility)-problem in this projects is sustainability; Museum management, interesting for tourists exhibitions-exchange experience with Bulgarian partners; Archaeology excavation projects not possible as project implementation exactly defined but archaeological sites protection is possible project activities;
- support to information products, opening info points
- construction of bicycles paths
- stimulation on-line services (on-line hotel reservation)

TP 5 – (e): On Bulgaria side this area was noted as interesting; quite some initiatives have been realized in the previous programming period especially for youth. It was noted that there is a strong misbalance between education and business. However, it was not selected in Bulgaria as a priority theme. Education is too much focused on national level. However, the idea is to realize such activities under the other selected TPs (e.g. TPs 2,4,7,8), especially for youth. For example as an activity “CBC internship training in companies” – can be realized under TP7. Needs: Investments in youth mobility (employment, educational) focused on the life-long-learning concept and sustainable development.

For the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia participants it was considered an important priority as youth and education are the bases for better future (usually placed at 3rd priority position). Participants see the need for opening Centres for prolonged and lifelong learning (1 in East and North-East region and 1 in South-East region) and formal and informal education for target groups.

Possible actions:

- Exchange of educational initiatives in a CBC context

TP 6 – (f): In Bulgaria this was definitely not selected; In Kyustendil participants did not even like to comment on it. Main argument is that in Bulgaria there is a big national programme focused on it (e.g. “Good Governance”). Also this TP narrows the type of regional actors which can benefit from it. Results relevant to this priority can be achieved under other priorities, too. In Blagoevgrad there was a representative of the Regional Directorate of the Agency on Food Safety. A written statement was provided expressing their opinion on the programme. Of course, they insist on measures related to food safety; they note that investments in veterinary,

- education/trainings for employees in tourism for better services (touristic agencies, restaurants)
- stimulation of the categorization of rooms/guest houses/hotels
- support routes for monastery tourism
- Preparation of technical/investment projects for conservation of cultural and archaeological sites, for valorisation of “invisible” cultural values.
- Development of CB tourist routes and packages for exchange of tourists between the two countries.
- Organizing of joint tourist camps for children and youth in the CBC region
- Establishing and sustaining of CB tourism clusters

- Training on youth entrepreneurship and innovations
- creation network of not employed youth, forums for job founding, start-up own business, exchange ideas;
- additional to the regular primary and secondary schools, expansion of youth activities through additional engagements in specific schools for music, entrepreneurship, philosophy, sports, matches, competitions in different disciplines, exchange experience with youth from other towns and abroad;
- Creation networks between some particular category of population (example-with high education) and potential employers; fairs for new jobs.
- informal education for youth
- workshops for talented children
- Empowerment of youth for employment ITC/internet skills
- gathering of young people from the cross-border region, activities in the youth centers, joint activities through culture and tradition events
- empowerment practical work experience for youth, in SMSs, institutions, schools, universities
- project for youth inclusion in social life, exchange good practices

phito-sanitary and border control are needed; both countries need investments for modernization of the buildings, equipment and methods for performing the relevant food safety analyses.

In the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia there is an ongoing GIZ project (2008-2014) on local/regional governance and administrative building. Through these project 900 administrative servants were trained on different subjects and about 100 have visiting trainings in German institutions also. ZELS, association of municipalities in former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia the is closely involved in this project. According RCF participants (Stip) still needs exist concerning public administration training, efficiency,

communication, exchange experience and information's. Citizens need to have better services. Municipalities (mayors) are not seeing this TP as priority as lot of trainings already were delivered (and still are ongoing) to the

TP 7 – (g): In Bulgaria this was selected as an important TP for the next programme in both Blagoevgrad and Kyustendil. Additional Needs: To the identified need “Cooperation and exchange of experience in key development sectors” to add also in the “sphere of food safety” as it is relevant for the CBC trade (former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia still needs to apply this EU legislation).

In the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia this was an important priority for most of the RCF participants (usually at 4 positions) as economy drives development. On the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia side positive experience and practical examples exist in the last 8 years CBC projects. Threat: on the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia side there is not much, in number, eligible beneficiaries.

Possible actions:

TP 8 – (h): Selected in Blagoevgrad, not selected in Kyustendil. In Kyustendil the conclusion was that ICT can be more used as an instrument for interventions in other sectors, not to be a priority itself. In Blagoevgrad there was a real interest to this priority, they argue that in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia region there is a real need to even only talk about (promote) these issues. In the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, according the RCF participants this priority could be easily incorporated in youth and education. Also other EU programmes support innovation (FP7 and others) where very low interest from the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia side is shown up to now.

administration. Other reason for not attractiveness of this TP is that projects with trainings do not have visible results, whereas small infrastructure projects generate very visible results.

- Joint participation in fairs and exhibitions, business missions abroad
- Joint trainings related for improving the skills of employees to meet the requirements of the employees
- Development of new modern production zones (planning and infrastructure)
- Young people from both sides to work together in technological parks on creating of joint product (youth entrepreneurship) – relevant also to TP6
- The idea of the participants is to add actions here related to start-up and self-employment measures if TP1 is not selected.
- cooperation between the SMEs from the two sides of border
- establishment of business incubators, business centers for support and development of the Programmes for SMEs

Possible actions:

- Exchange of innovations on a CB level.
- Stimulating the use of ICT in the educational sector and in public sector as a whole (need for the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia particularly); training of teachers, students, other groups.
- Development of joint Internet-based platforms for training and education in specific spheres (green-business, tourism development, etc.)
- Workshops on research/innovation/ITC for youth with professionals and organization of competitions on local/regional and cross-border level.

Appendix 4: Summary of the main discussions presented per thematic priority from the 2nd RCF

TP 2 – (b) Protecting the ENVIRONMENT and promoting CLIMATE CHANGE adaptation and RISK PREVENTION

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

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

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

TP 4 - Encouraging TOURISM and CULTURAL HERITAGE

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

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

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

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

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