

INTERREG Programme

CCI	2021TC16IPCB005
Title	(Interreg VI-A) IPA Bulgaria Türkiye
Version	1.0
First year	2021
Last year	2027
Eligible from	01-Jan-2021
Eligible until	31-Dec-2029
EC decision number	
EC decision date	
NUTS regions covered by the programme	BG341 - Бургас BG343 - Ямбол BG422 - Хасково TR212 - Edirne TR213 - Kırklareli
Strand	Strand A: CB Cross-Border Cooperation Programme (ETC, IPA III CBC, NDICI-CBC)

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1. Joint programme strategy: main development challenges and policy responses

1.1. Programme area (not required for Interreg C programmes)

Reference: point (a) of Article 17(3), point (a) of Article 17(9)

The Bulgaria- Türkiye cross border (CB) area is located in South East Europe and covers 5 NUTS III territorial units (or equivalent), namely: 3 districts on the Bulgarian side – Burgas, Yambol and Haskovo and 2 provinces on the Turkish side – Edirne and Kırklareli.

The border between Bulgaria and Türkiye is nearly 288 km long (including three operating border crossings Captain Andreevo – Kapıkule, Lesovo – Hamzabeyli and Malko Tarnovo – Dereköy). The total CB area covers around 29 000 km². In Bulgaria, it represents 14,99 % of the total country territory, while in Türkiye it represents 1,58 %.

The settlement structure of the area is characterized by the presence of 5 medium-large cities: Burgas, Yambol and Haskovo, on the Bulgarian side of the cross-border area and Edirne and Kırklareli on the Turkish side.

To the North-West, the area borders the Eastern Rhodope Mountains and the low branches of the Sakar Mountain in Bulgaria. To the South-West it borders the Aegean Sea in Türkiye. To the North-East, the Balkan Range in Bulgaria, to the East – the Black Sea coast and to the South-East, Strandja/Yıldız Mountains.

The water reserves of the CB area comprised of both surface and groundwater. Maritsa/Meriç River and Tundja/Tunca River are the biggest ones in the region. Strandja/Yıldız Mountains is the richest in water resources in the entire cross-border area, as five rivers take their sources from it. The surface waters are also presented by several big lakes situated both on Bulgarian and Turkish side.

The climate varies from transitional-continental to continental-Mediterranean. The border region is assessed as having rich cultural and natural heritage and a high level of environmental sensitivity in terms of climate change.

1.2 Joint programme strategy: Summary of main joint challenges, taking into account economic, social and territorial disparities as well as inequalities, joint investment needs and complimentary and synergies with other funding programmes and instruments, lessons-learnt from past experience and macro-regional strategies and sea-basin strategies where the programme area as a whole or partially is covered by one or more strategies.

Reference: point (b) of Article 17(3), point (b) of Article 17(9)

1. ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND TERRITORIAL DISPARITIES

Multifaceted factors collide and shape the specific context of the cross-border cooperation at EU external borders. It is impossible to shadow the dividing lines on the EU external borders whose particularities can be traced in every policy domain and institutional setting. One such factor is the diverse history and culture that each of the two countries enjoys, whose diversity, however, often hinders efforts to build inclusive CBC societies and adopt multicultural and multisectoral CBC policies with the aim to promote a lasting prosperity in the region. Another factor is the divergent institutional governance structures in both countries, which jeopardize attempts to joint and integrated actions and solutions. All these are only a few of the preconditions that determine different strategic focus and implementation approaches in Interreg programs. While most EU internal programs provide support for solutions to global challenges, the CBC-IPA territories are still confronted with the need to catch up in their socio-economic development. Thus, the main joint challenge of the CBC region for 2021-2027 is to take on a more technological course of development taking advantage of its growth-inducing economic performance, as well as to shrink income inequalities in access to services of general interest. The latter exhibits weak cross-border institutional context. When it goes together with an absence of carbon free practices, the prospects of the CB area for territorial cohesion in line with EU objectives (Territorial Agenda 2030; Green Deal) become further challenged. In overall, a number of opposite economic trends have been observed in both sides of the border, thus it creates favourable preconditions for exchange of knowledge and good practices that will ultimately contribute to the building of cooperative cross-border economic relations.

The carried out Territorial Analysis allows for structuring main findings into the following groups of policy areas, viewed from the perspectives of challenges and driving forces for development:

1.1. Opposite demographic trends

The population of the Bulgarian part of the programme area accounts for 10,84% of the country's total population and 49,35% of the total CBC region (NSI, 2020). Corresponding data for the Turkish part are 0,92% of the country's total population and 50,65% of the total CBC region (TÜİK, 2020). Turkish side of the programme area enjoys a bigger density population (63 persons per sq. km), while Bulgarian border territory is more sparsely populated (43 persons per sq. km). Distinct demographic disparities between both territories are observed in the natural population change and net migration. In the two sub-indicators for 2020 Bulgaria's values are negative, except for Burgas district whose net migration is positive, while Türkiye's data are all positive. Proportion of the population aged 65 years and more in the Bulgarian part of the border area does not favour economic growth. The age group 15-65 is again better represented on the Turkish territory, while the 'below 15 group' enjoys identical proportions in both territories[1].

1.2 Poverty and income inequalities

Poverty assessment perspective is offered by Eurostat data[2] which show that the CBC territory falls within the groups of regions with the highest rate of poverty risk and social exclusion. Nearly one third of the total population (BG – 33,6%, TR– 34,1%) were viewed as being at risk of poverty in 2020. 'The risk of poverty and social exclusion by activity status' indicator reveals national disparities and imply for some income inequalities across three main groups of persons as follows: employed (BG-15,3%, TR-27,9%), unemployed (BG – 51,5%, TR – 47,2%), retired (BG-48,8%, TR-18,4%). Bulgaria holds the second highest rate of retired persons in the EU-27[3] at risk of poverty in 2020, while reciprocal data for Türkiye place the country in a better position, being below the EU-27 average (19,2%). In terms of income inequalities, Eurostat data for 2020 (measured through "income quintile share ratio"[4]) show,

that both countries have a long way to go to catch up with the EU average, especially Bulgaria whose income equalization is worsening: Bulgaria - 8.01, Türkiye - 9.20, EU – 27 - 5.24.

1.3 Weak linkage between education and labour market

Although the share of attained primary and secondary education level in the whole CB area is slightly above or very close to the national average of the respective country[5], the share of those who leave the education and training systems reaches alarming proportions. On national level, ‘Early leavers from education and training (% of population aged 18-24)’[6] (Eurostat indicator) reveal important disparities between both countries for 2020: Bulgaria - 12,8%, Türkiye - 26,7% and EU – 27 - 9,9%. Türkiye and Bulgaria do not meet the ET 2020 (Strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training) benchmark of 10% share of early leavers from education and training. In overall, Bulgaria and Türkiye perform low in adult education. ‘Adult participation in learning’ indicator for 2020, maintained by Eurostat, places Bulgaria (1,6%) and Türkiye (5,8%) below the average of the European ranking (EC27: 9,2%).

The transition from education to work is well seen through the NEETs[7] indicator (young people neither in employment nor in education and training). The national data for 2020 on NEETs reveal weak transition from education to work exhibiting alarming proportions that call for an urgent need to struggle with the high rate of youth unemployment: Bulgaria - 19,2%, Türkiye - 33,6% (highest in Europe), EU-27 - 15,0%.

At district level, the employment rate in the Bulgarian part of the programme area is close to the national average. A growth of employment rate before the COVID 19 crises was observed, followed by decrease in 2020 to 67,6% in Haskovo district, 67,9% in Burgas district and 68,3% in Yambol district.

Employment rate of the TR 21 (Tekirdağ, Edirne, Kırklareli provinces) has been sustaining a relatively constant value since 2014 (55-60%). However, in 2019 and 2020 it marks a slight decrease, as of 2018 (61,4%), dropping down to 57,2% in 2020.

In the entire CB area, most employed are in the service sector, followed by the industry.

1.4 Inequalities in access to healthcare

The health challenges in border region are mainly related to (1) inequalities in the supply of health services across urban and rural areas, particularly on the Bulgarian side of the border (BG CB area); (2) the quality of health services, (3) shortages of medical professionals – more on the BG CB area. The coverage of health services differs significantly on both sides of the border. The health infrastructure on the Turkish side has larger capacity. and this is best seen through the ‘beds per inhabitants’ ratio. Data for the Bulgarian side is below the national average, while the opposite result characterizes the health basis on the Turkish side. Diametrically opposed data appear in the supply of healthcare professionals. Contrary to the perception that more beds require more health personnel, Turkish part of the border area has below-the-national-average ratio ‘inhabitants per physician’, while the Bulgarian side enjoys above-the-national-average availability of healthcare professionals. Reliance on eHealth solutions within the system carries a significant potential for efficiency gains in the system. Bulgaria lags behind in this regard according to the 2019 ESPON targeted analysis on e-health[8]. Overall, e-health in Türkiye follows slow-pace course of development, although it has already introduced a National Electronic Health Records (EHR) System, while Bulgaria still has not.

1.5 Disparities in competitiveness and business environment

In the 2018-2019 edition of the Global Competitiveness Index (GCI) (in 2020 the GCI rankings have been paused), Bulgaria ranks 49th out of 141 countries analysed, advancing from 51st place in the previous edition, while Türkiye is at 72nd globally. It has not moved since the previous edition. The enterprise environment in both counties resembles a distinct dual structure. At one extreme there exist a few large modern capital-intensive, resource-based, import-dependent and assembly-oriented enterprises, while at the other extreme there are small and micro enterprises that use very simple and traditional technologies and serve a limited local market. The number of enterprises from both sides of the border increases every year, along with an increase of their turnover, although data for the latter are available only for the Bulgarian border districts. Micro-enterprises account for 96% of all enterprises. Sectoral specialization of the CB area is concentrated in the service sector (wholesale and retail trade), followed

by construction and manufacturing. In addition, intensive agricultural industrialization takes place in the province of Edirne as it is located at the intersection point of three important rivers (Meriç/Maritsa, Tunca/Tundzha and Arda) which makes the region enjoy fertile lands. It should be noted that due to its strategic intersection of energy corridors bridging energy suppliers from the east and energy consumers in the west, the pipeline transportation is also well developed in the CB area.

In terms of business environment, Türkiye takes 33th place out of 190 countries in the 2020 World Bank 'Doing Business' ranking, while Bulgaria is ranked 61st.

1.6 Disparities in digital and innovation achievements

Ever since DESI index[9] has been built, Bulgaria has been ranked last in almost every edition of the index in its all indicators – human capital (internet user skills and advanced digital skills), connectivity, integration of digital technologies and digital public services. According to the Türkiye's Digitalization Index Report prepared by the Informatics Industry Association (TÜBİSAD), Türkiye's digitalization rating rose from 2.94 out of 5 in 2019 to 3.06 in 2020. Türkiye, although all the components of the index showed an improvement compared to last year, took place in the "average" category in digitalization within international benchmarking.

The European Innovation Scoreboard 2021 assesses Bulgaria and Türkiye as emerging innovators. Science, technology and innovation (STI) provide the means for the transition to high value-added products and services. Throughout the CB area STI outcomes remain modest. A lack of funding for research and development (R&D) limits the potential for innovation, while the wider diffusion of technology does not receive sufficient policy attention. In the future, a more structured link between business and academia would help facilitate the spread of cutting-edge research, while an emphasis on individual innovation could help foster a new creative sector.

Among the most important preconditions for implementing digital transformation policies is the internet connection and usage. Both countries score almost equally on the use of internet and the share of households with access to the internet at home, yet Türkiye performs slightly better than Bulgaria. Mobile broadband penetration is also expanding in both countries. In the 2019 GSMA's publication on The State of Mobile Internet Connectivity Bulgaria and Türkiye are placed in the group of advanced countries.

1.7 Underdeveloped year-round tourist infrastructure

The variety of natural and cultural assets in the CB area is a key precondition for defining target-oriented tourist offer, but tourism in the region recognizes insurmountable weaknesses: underdeveloped tourism product as a whole, underdeveloped network of tourism companies, insufficiently qualified staff in the field of tourism services, poor condition and limited access to natural and cultural-historical heritage sites, lack of cross-border competitive year-round tourist products.

Beside the intensive tourism development of the Black sea coast in Bulgaria, there are no other competitive tourism products of the programme area and year-round tourism potentials and opportunities remain untapped and underutilized. Burgas district contributes to nearly 40% of all beds, nights spent and tourism revenue in Bulgaria. The contribution of Yambol and Haskovo districts is below 1% [10]. Despite their cultural, historical and natural potentials, Edirne and Kırklareli are not that popular areas for tourist attraction in Türkiye. Both provinces perform under the national average in all key tourism indicators.

The border area has a very rich culture and history. Inhabited by the Thracians in antiquity, the area is famous with a large concentration of ruins of Thracian sanctuaries altars, dolmens and other archaeological objects. The mineral water resources allow a combination of climate and balneo-therapy (Pomorie, Burgas, Haskovo), which could attract many foreign tourists after appropriate promotion. The Strandzha/Yıldız National Parks, the İğneada Floodplain Forests National Park, the Lake Gala National Park with their natural landmarks, megalithic complexes, unique cultural heritage marsh, swamp, lakes and coastal sand dunes, do not yet contribute to the valorisation of regional tourism potential. All these constitute a key prerequisite for development of integrated tourist products, but despite the allocated so far vast Interreg support to individual tourism projects, sustainable integrated and cross-border tourism

effect (e.g. year-round CBC tourism products that includes visits to various CBC sites) has not been achieved.

1.8 High risk of natural hazards and biodiversity loss

Due to extensive industrial production with negative footprint on the environment, the CB area is at high risk of natural hazards and biodiversity loss. The biggest environmental polluter remains the largest oil refining enterprise on the Balkan peninsula – Lukoil Neftohim Burgas AD, despite the introduction of advanced technological solutions in hydrogen sulphide processing, the reduction of hazardous emissions into the atmosphere and water, and the eco-friendly waste management. The CB area acts as a strategic intersection of energy corridors bridging energy suppliers from the east and energy consumers in the west; therefore, it bears extensive environmental hazard. On top of all that, the majority of waste water produced in the region flows directly to the rivers causing significant environmental problems. Other key factors expected to adversely affect human health, environment, biodiversity, and economic growth include: (1) frequent floods, (2) powerful convective storms, (3) severe droughts; (4) landslides; (5) increasing frequency of forest fires due to insufficient afforestation, self-ignition of dry grass near forests, careless handling of fire, uncontrolled burning of household waste; (6) relatively high seismic hazard.

The integrity of almost all natural ecosystems in the CB area, including the bird migration routes – Via Pontica and Via Aristotelis, are currently threatened, due partly to ongoing climatic changes but also to anthropogenic pressures, resulting in habitat degradation and the increasing threat of forest fires. Currently applied management strategies do not provide for effective biodiversity conservation. Since the ecological infrastructure in the CB area is generally assessed as underdeveloped, the absence of ecosystem-based practices to deal with various environmental challenges, weakens efforts for addressing climate change issues.

1.9 Limited preparedness for green transition

Bulgaria's and Türkiye's economies are highly energy-intensive. The National Energy Efficiency Action Plan 2017-2023 of Türkiye (NEEAP) has defined energy efficiency as a priority area. Türkiye has been diversifying its energy mix by increasing investment in these sources. In one decade, installed renewable energy capacity, which was 17,3 GW in 2010, has almost tripled to 49,6 GW by the end of 2020[11]. Türkiye figures among the top world performers in installed capacity in 2017, especially in solar, wind, geothermal and hydro-power. Türkiye ranks 5th in Europe and 12th in the world in terms of renewable energy installed capacity. The share of renewables in electricity generation installed capacity has exceeded 52%. In 2020, owing to renewable electricity generation, almost 73 million tons of emissions were avoided. The target of Türkiye is to add 1 GW of solar and 1 GW of wind power generation into Turkish energy system each and every year over the next decade. The Electricity Energy Market and Supply Security Strategy had a target of 30% by 2023. This target has been exceeded, at almost 44% in 2019. The sector is, however, still in its development phase and the share of renewables is fluctuating, depending on hydropower production and the use of coal and gas.

Bulgaria remains the most energy- and greenhouse gas-intensive economy in the EU by a wide margin. The Country Report Bulgaria 2020 states that, in 2017, the country needed 3.8 times more energy and produced 4.4 times more carbon emissions per unit of GDP than the EU average. However, the country is still on track to achieve its targets for GHG emissions and renewable energy. On the other hand the reduction of energy consumption and respectively of the GHG emissions, leads also to the improvement of air quality.

In terms of resource efficiency, Türkiye needs to develop additional economic instruments for special waste streams. The recycling rate of municipal waste is the lowest in Europe – 0.3% in 2018. The country needs to redouble efforts to close its non-compliant landfills and invest in waste reduction, separation and recycling. Zero Waste Project is one such environmental initiative aimed at reduction of waste generation, sorting at source, recycling and saving resources. It is aimed to spread the Zero Waste Project throughout Türkiye until 2023, to increase the recovery rate to 35%. The recycling rate is 22,4% in 2020 and it is foreseen to increase to 35 % by 2023. With the new circular economy approach, 3.3 Mton alternative raw material and 1.22 Mton additive fuel have been saved in cement, lime, ceramic, brick and iron and steel sectors as of 2020.”

Although policy actions promoting green transition have been taken in Bulgaria, the country continues lagging behind the EU in all components of the circular economy[12]. The scale of resource productivity of Türkiye also is far below the EU28's[13] average. Both countries lack a circular economy strategy. Therefore, there is an urgent call on the two countries to rise to the challenge of promoting more actively the principles of the circular economy and the related production practices.

1.10 Persistent cross-border migration tensions

The latest wave of large-scale migration to Türkiye and the EU, that took place in 2015, has confronted the Bulgarian and Turkish cross-border authorities with an unprecedented situation which required a coordinated approach to handle it. None of the cross-border authorities, however, was prepared to act in such a way. This migrant crisis revealed many areas, of managerial and operational importance, that need strengthening the capacity for operational cooperation of the Bulgarian and Turkish law enforcement authorities to manage migrant flows in a cooperative and humane manner while at the same time preserving domestic stability and safeguarding national security. Although the number of asylum seekers in Bulgaria and the number of international protection applications in Türkiye has decreased more than twice since 2017, the number of irregular migrants in both countries grows every year, as ECRE[14] stresses out in its 2020 individual country reports. Furthermore, it is expected that irregular migration in the CB area is most likely to continue to raise security and humanitarian concerns taking into account the continuing social and political instability in the Middle East and Southern Asia. This situation requires adequate response to make sure that no deficiency in the migration management in the transit regions (like Türkiye and Bulgaria), that might result in a migration crisis would occur ever again. Since the questions of migration importance will continue to be a major issue of concern in Europe and at the border between EU and Türkiye and the complex nature of mixed flows of economic and other migrants, refugees and asylum seekers will further present additional challenges. Moreover, such a complex issue cannot be addressed solely by individual authorities from either side of the border. Rather, it requires a strategic, comprehensive and multilateral approach to substitute the prevailing ad-hoc responses with cross-border cooperative and durable solutions.

2. DRIVING FORCES

2.1 Favourable macroeconomic background

The pandemic of COVID-19 has disrupted lives across all countries and negatively affected global economic growth in 2020 beyond anything experienced in nearly a century. However, estimates indicate the outbreak reduced global economic growth in 2020 to an annualized rate of around -3,2%, with a recovery of 5,9% projected for 2021. Therefore, this section emphasizes on the macroeconomic stability and growth potential that both countries exhibited until COVID-19. As per Bulgaria, the country has hovered around 3% since 2016, with total factor productivity the main factor behind its expansion, alongside with growing export market share, increasing cost of labour per unit of output produced and continued integration in global value chains, have underpinned Bulgaria's competitive position. Driven by strong domestic demand and investments, GDP of Türkiye has increased by an average of 4,4% over the last 5 years before the COVID-19 crisis.

At the CBC level, some discrepancies in the regional GDP pop up. In nominal values, the economic output for 2018 of each of the Turkish CBC provinces is much higher than those of any of the Bulgarian districts. The GDP of Kırklareli (3,361 mln. euro), for instance is 6 times higher than the GDP of Yambol district (593 mln. euro). The largest economic output in the Bulgarian part of the CB area is produced in Burgas district (2,644 mln. euro), whose GDP is still less than that of Edirne (3,096 mln. euro) and Kırklareli (3,361 mln. euro)[15].

The Gross Value Added (GVA) is another important indicator for the economic output. SMEs made an important contribution to the Turkish 'non-financial business economy' in 2019[16]. They accounted for a considerable share (73,5 %) of overall employment, providing almost three out of four Turkish jobs, exceeding the EU SME average employment share of 65% by a large margin. However, their value added share of 52,6 % was slightly lower than the EU SME average share of 53%. In Bulgaria SMEs generate two thirds of total value added and three quarters of total employment in the country, far exceeding the respective EU averages of 56,4% and 66,6%. Annual SME productivity, calculated as value added per person employed, is approximately €12 800. In contrast, the EU average is 3 times

higher, at €44 600. On average, every person employed by a Turkish SME generated only approximately €10 000, about one quarter of the average for EU.

At the CBC level, most of the SMEs operate in the service sector whose GVA share shapes the regional specialization, followed by industry and agriculture which only in Edirne and Yambol has proportions above the CBC average. In terms of GVA, industry is more actively present in Kırklareli province, while services significantly dominate in Burgas and Haskovo.

It should also be highlighted that the positive trade exchange practices between Bulgaria and Türkiye is a key indicator for growth-inducing bilateral economic relations. Data shows a steadily increasing trend over the last years.

2.2 Potential for integration in international tourism network

One of the European cycle routes, namely EuroVelo 13 Iron Curtain Trail, passes through the CB area. It gives the possibility of visiting 20 countries starting in northern Finland passing near the Baltic Sea, Germany, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Romania and ending in Bulgaria at the Black Sea town of Rezovo. Following this route for more than 9,950 km is a living history lesson but also provides a welcome reminder of the peace that have followed the fall of the ‘Curtain’. Another cycling and hiking trail, passes through the CB area, is the Sultans Trail (known as Tsarigradski Put in Bulgaria and Carski Drum / Carigradski Put in Serbia). The Sultans Trail passing through 8 countries, starts in Viena and its final point is Istanbul.

2.3 Good regional connectivity and potential for multimodal transport

The CB area exhibits very good connectivity but its potential for multimodal transport remains underutilized. Through its territory passes one of the core TEN-T network corridors with extensions to third countries - Orient/East-Mediterranean corridor. Planned big scale public investments in transportations in Türkiye are focused on high speed train railways and highways. The railway Halkalı - Kapıkule will connect Europe to Asia passing through İstanbul, Tekirdağ, Kırklareli and Edirne. The air transport of the CB area is served by the only international civil airport - Burgas Airport, which is included in the comprehensive TEN-T network. Port of Burgas is the only seaport in Bulgaria included in the main TEN-T network.

Three cross-border checkpoints (BCCP) are in operation in the area: (1) Kapitan Andreevo-Kapıkule, (2) Lesovo–Hamzabeyli and (3) Malko Tarnovo–Dereköy. The Kapitan Andreevo-Kapıkule BCCP is among the largest and busiest in the world in terms of number of passengers and amount of cargo passing through it. Most of the trade between Türkiye/Middle East and Europe passes through this BCCP. The Lesovo–Hamzabeyli BCCP backs up Kapitan Andreevo-Kapıkule, while The Malko Tarnovo–Dereköy BCCP is used mainly for tourism purposes.

3. JOINT INVESTMENT NEEDS

- Investments for multidimensional integrated territorial measures addressing income gap, the relatively high poverty risk, social inclusion through community-based services and integrated employment, health and social mobile support in the home environment, improved access to and quality of general services for people and enterprises;
- Investments for implementation of attractive job prospects and comprehensive digital upskilling programmes, including measures of the silver economy, in order to build a sustainable path towards the 2030 employment target of 78%;
- Investments for improving the quality, labour market relevance and inclusiveness of education and training, incl. for tailoring education and training to labour market needs;
- Productive Investments aimed at paving the way for green transition, including renewable energy technology research and innovation, application of pilot projects and dissemination of best practices;
- Investments for dissemination of the ‘tech-with-a-purpose’ approach who would leverage R&I to create the solutions that match the urgency of the CBC environmental and social challenges;
- Investments for strengthening the level of institutional cooperation between law enforcement institutions in the field of migration management.

- Investments for utilization of the CBC potential for integration in international tourism network and for developing all-year-round tourism products with attractive offering of services in the off-peak season

4. COMPLEMENTARITIES AND SYNERGIES WITH OTHER FUNDING PROGRAMMES AND INSTRUMENTS

The programme between Bulgaria and Türkiye complements other funding instruments. In general, complementarity with the EU Programmes such as Citizens Rights and Values, Erasmus+, ESF+, Horizon Europe, Customs, Digital Europe, and Justice shall be sought. Close coordination between the Managing Authority and the EU Delegation in Türkiye will be maintained in order to maximise the effect of the assistance with other EU activities in the overlapping areas of support. The synergy and cumulative effect of this complementarity can be outlined per programme's priorities, as follows:

PRIORITY 1 ENVIRONMENTALLY-FRIENDLY CROSS-BORDER REGION (energy efficiency, circular economy)

The activities envisaged under *Priority 3: Fair energy transition* of the “***Programme Development of the Regions 2021-2027***” will be particularly focused on the development and implementation of innovative products, processes and business models aimed on increasing the resource efficiency of the economy, as well as support of innovations aimed at high carbon intensity of the economy, productive investments in SMEs, implementing technologies, systems and infrastructures for affordable clean energy, including investments in energy storage technologies, renewable energy, smart local mobility, improving the circular economy through waste reduction, resource efficiency, reuse, repair and recycling. Similarly there are measures promoting the transition to a circular economy under *Priority 1: Integrated urban development* and *Priority 2: Integrated territorial development of the regions*.

Another programme partially focused on these topics is ***Environment Programme 2021-2027***. The supported actions are aimed on promoting sustainable water management, transition to a circular and resource efficient economy, prevention of the generation of municipal waste, construction of reuse preparation centres, waste recycling, separate collection and recycling systems, infrastructure measures for collection, disposal and treatment of wastewater, along with reduction of air pollution from domestic heating and transport.

Measures for knowledge sharing, design methodology, innovation labs and pilots, testing and realizing new ideas shall also shape the programme interventions in the circular economy direction. They will stimulate the development of markets for climate neutral and circular products. This is clearly highlighted in “***Programme Competitiveness and Innovation in Enterprises 2021-2027***”.

Complementarity can also be found with the ***National Recovery and Resilience Plan of Bulgaria in terms of supporting the development of low carbon economy by implementing measures to contribute to the achievement of Green deal targets***.

The new Interreg IPA III programme will complement the measures by investments for reducing GHG emissions and development of circular based business models/solutions for the micro, medium and small business, combined with the unique opportunity for exchange of know-how, best practice and information between the relevant local businesses from both sides of the border as a tool to further activate the cross-border exchange and form the basis for joint activities.

PRIORITY 2 INTEGRATED DEVELOPMENT OF THE CROSS-BORDER REGION (effective integrated territorial development)

Effective integrated territorial development at a place-based level requires a broad range of economic incentives. A clear connection could be found with “***Programme Development of the Regions 2021-2027***” in regard with the actions for encouraging economic activity, infrastructure for healthcare, education, social activities, culture, sports, tourism and cultural heritage, for renovation of residential and public buildings, for sustainable urban mobility, road infrastructure and safety and development of functional connections, along with quality and safe environment, including green investments.

Complementarity is also identified with the National Recovery and Resilience Plan of Bulgaria in the area of development and promotion of cultural heritage and cultural services.

Similarly, Türkiye's Eleventh Development Plan offers a set of policies compatible with the integrated territorial development, aiming to reduce disparities between regions through an emphasis on employment, innovation capacities, and inter-regional cooperation opportunities, while preserving and promoting cultural characteristics, which is underlined as the main objective of the Plan under Article 668[17].

The new Interreg IPA III Programme will provide additional dimension to the territorial approach by extending the cross sectoral investments across the borders, involving partners from both Bulgaria and Türkiye to seek solutions to territorial needs based on dedicated territorial strategy.

PRIORITY 3 MORE SECURE CROSS-BORDER (migration)

Pursuing common efforts, cooperation and coordination in the fight against irregular migration and the humanitarian challenges related to the migrants with other authorities, the Interreg programme will seek complementarities with the Integrated Border Management Fund (IBMF), the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF) and the new Internal Security Fund (ISF), to make migration management a regional and EU success. Complementarities and synergies are also sought with the planned activities under the Border Management and Visa Policy Instrument (BMVI) and the IPA III Individual measures to strengthen the response capacity to manage migration flows and border management in the Western Balkans. As the strategic project is not mature enough at the stage of programme preparation, once the parameters of the project are available a protocol will be signed between the managing bodies of Interreg VI-A IPA Bulgaria-Türkiye, BMVI and IPA III with a view to establish clear complementarities and ensure lack of duplication. However, it should be noted, that the programme will focus on supporting the law enforcement authorities in the cross-border region to tackle the specific security and humanitarian challenges stemming from irregular migration in a cooperative and a solidarity-based manner. Synergies are expected to appear in approaches, standards and codes of conduct when dealing with migrants. Therefore, the new programme will generate added value to the strengthening of the border between EU and Türkiye, as a candidate county. Furthermore, the '2021 Communication on EU Enlargement Policy' Commission document assesses Türkiye as well integrated with the EU market in terms of both trade and investment links. The country is a key partner for the EU in essential areas of joint interest, such as migration, counter-terrorism, economy, trade, energy and transport. The programme opens up opportunities for cooperation in all of the delineated areas where Türkiye has made progress, therefore the programme makes significant contribution to the EU enlargement dialogue with Türkiye.

The programme is consistent with the strategic programming framework for the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA III), adopted with Commission Implementing Decision C(2021) 8914 final of 10 December 2021. Moreover, the programme builds strong synergies with IPA III assistance, whose strategic objective '*Economic, social and territorial development of border areas, fostering the cooperation among national local/regional authorities, associations, non-governmental organisations and enterprises from neighbouring regions*' coincides fully with the strategic and thematic scope of the programme. More specifically, both instruments contribute significantly to the following EU thematic clusters 'Greener and Improved resource efficiency' (TP2 under IPA III and PO2 under the CBC programme), 'Improved business environment and competitiveness' (TP5 and TP8 under IPA III and PO5 under the CBC programme), and 'Improved capacity of local and regional authorities to tackle local challenges' (TP7 under IPA III and ISO 2 under the CBC programme). In addition, the CBC programme:

- complements the IPA III Programming Framework on the civil society dialogue and inter-cultural exchange between civil societies in Türkiye and EU (Action #2 - Civil Society) by providing, under priority 2, diverse opportunities for networking across the border;
- complements the IPA III implementation of circularity practices (Action #4 Environment and Climate Change) by providing, under priority 1 and 2, opportunities for networking in circular production processes and development of new circular joint business models
- complements the IPA III support for disaster resilience (Action #4 Environment and Climate Change) by providing opportunities, under priority 2, for joint actions to reduce pollution and provide clean air, water and food and to mitigate and adapt to climate change

- complements the IPA III support for transition to a green economy and digital transformation (Action #7 Smart and Sustainable Economic Transformation) by providing, under priority 2, wide-ranged opportunities for transformation of the CBC economy through measures for digital and energy transition.
- complements the IPA III support for the effective implementation of Türkiye's Action Plan on the Fight Against Irregular Migration and promote regular migration (AoS#2 - Supporting Türkiye's Efforts for Efficient Migration Management) by funding a joint project of strategic importance aimed at enhancing the institutional coordination for operational cooperation in the field of inland detected illegal migration.

5. LESSONS-LEARNT FROM PAST EXPERIENCE

Despite the thematic concentration imposed by the EU Regulations in the 2014 -2020 period, the areas of intervention defined under INTERREG-IPA CBC Programme 2014 -2020 still remained quite diverse and without any interdependence. Opposite to limited (even reduced in 2014-2020 period) financial resources, the interest in the programme remained high during both periods. In the 2007-2013 period – under the 3 open calls 374 projects were submitted and 143 contracts signed while in the 2014-2020 period – under the 2 open calls (the 3-rd one is a restricted call for strategic project proposal) 325 projects were submitted and 101 contracts signed. This shows that more than 60% of the proposals were not financed and the scattered sectoral investments based on open calls led to severe competition and high expectations of potential beneficiaries and to dot-like interventions, some of which were not directly linked to the actual needs of the region. The low competence of some beneficiaries in project implementation and the low level of partnership between public and non-governmental sectors contributed to the insufficient capitalization of the project results. In addition, exhaustion in generation of project ideas was observed – e.g. increased number of projects, with already financed similar objectives and in all calls most of the applicants are one and the same organizations/institutions. In order to improve the capacity of beneficiaries to prepare and implement projects the new Programme will organise trainings and Partnership forums for identification of project partners.

The Impact Evaluation of the 2007-2013 Programme, as well as the Midterm evaluation of 2014-2020 Programme, showed that, in correspondence to the diversity of the spheres of intervention, a wide number and range of outputs were delivered. From a financial perspective, it was observed a drastic gap between available, requested and contracted funding - on average, the total applied budget has been 435% higher than the available, while 31% of the total requested funding has been contracted. Often, such financial disproportion preconditions weaken programme effects in terms of efficiency and sustainability. That is why it is difficult for the programme to bring out benefits for the communities, to intensify its effects for the region and especially its value added achieved through cooperation. In order to achieve a visible impact, a new, more results-oriented approach in the implementation of the future programmes was recommended. It is expected that a better programme focus would strengthen linkages between needs and resources (through directing more funds to most demanded intervention areas) and thus generate proportionate and sustainable (not tentative) effects on the territory.

6. MACRO-REGIONAL STRATEGIES AND SEA-BASIN STRATEGIES

Given the fact that the Bulgaria-Türkiye programme area includes Black Sea coastal regions (Burgas and Kırklareli), there is a need for strong correlation of programme resources with the Common Maritime Agenda and the Strategic Research and Innovation Agenda for the Black Sea (SRIA).

The Common Maritime Agenda focuses on fields related to the “blue economy”, contributing to the sustainable economic development of the region and especially of the coastal regions (maritime affairs, fisheries and aquaculture, research and innovation, connectivity, environment protection, tourism, education, renewable energy (including ocean energy and offshore renewable energy) and gas hydrates and the development of skills required for a maritime economy).

The Black Sea SRIA Initiative has identified four main pillars on which a new set of research and innovation actions can be developed: Addressing fundamental Black Sea research challenges - Black Sea Knowledge Bridge; Developing products, solutions and clusters underpinning Black Sea Blue Growth - Black Sea Blue Economy; Building of critical support systems and innovative Infrastructures - Key Joint

Infrastructure and Policy Enablers; Education and capacity building - Empowered Citizens and Enhanced Blue Workforce.

Blue Growth

Blue Growth strategy supports sustainable growth in the marine and maritime sectors. It seeks to provide a more coherent approach to maritime issues by increasing coordination among different policy areas in order to enhance the cooperation between coastal EU Member States and EU candidate and potential candidate countries. The strategy consists of three components: 1. Developing sectors that have a high potential for sustainable jobs and growth; 2. Providing knowledge, legal certainty and security in the blue economy, by improving access to information about the sea; integrated maritime surveillance to give authorities a better picture of what is happening at sea; 3. Ensuring tailor-made measures to foster regional cooperation between countries, by support of marine and maritime-related EU-funded projects and initiatives.

The Convention on the Protection of the Black Sea Against Pollution

The Convention on the Protection of the Black Sea Against Pollution was ratified by all Black Sea coastal countries in 1994. Its basic objective is to substantiate the general obligation of the contracting parties to prevent, reduce and control pollution in the Black Sea in order to protect and preserve the marine environment and provide a legal framework for cooperation and concerted action to fulfil this obligation.

EU Maritime Security Strategy, Revised Action Plan 2018

The European Union Maritime Security Strategy (EUMSS), adopted in June 2014, is a strategy to tackle all challenges from the global maritime domain that may affect people, activities or infrastructures in the EU. The EUMSS is complemented by an Action Plan designed to drive the implementation of the EUMSS forward. The 2018 revised EUMSS action plan features, for the first time, a section devoted entirely to regions and sea basins, and four actions dedicated to the Black Sea: 1) promotion of regional cooperation initiatives (B.3.1); 2) support for the synergies promoted by the Facility for Blue Growth (B.3.2); 3) support for the work done to tackle crime in the Black Sea basin (B.3.3); and 4) efforts to foster multi-stakeholder dialogue in the region (B.3.4).

7. PROGRAMME STRATEGY: main development challenges and policy responses

The policy and strategic framework of the programme came out as a result of a three-year long elaboration process. It first started in 2019 with regional consultations on both sides of the border complemented by a parallel study of cross-border territorial needs and potentials - both provided the bottom-up data and trends. During the meetings with the regional stakeholders some well-known territorial challenges have been confirmed as still unresolved (such as lack of diverse possibilities for work, weak employability skills, high poverty risk and social exclusion, low income, uneven economic and year-round tourism development across the CB area). At the same time, a number of opposite demographic, health and economic trends have been highlighted - negative net migration in Bulgarian part and positive one in Turkish part; health infrastructure on the Turkish side has larger capacity than that of its neighbouring area; Türkiye performs better on skills and innovation and worse on access to finance and internationalisation, while Bulgaria follows completely opposite directions in the same policy areas. Thus, participants suggested programme authorities to look for new programme approaches to overcome sharp sectoral disparities and strengthen the territorial cohesion. The need to provide SMEs with equal access to programme resources and perceive the enterprises as change boosters addressing, however, their specific needs, has been unanimously confirmed. This was also seen as one way to innovate the programme towards those who mostly need it. The prospects of establishing cross-border added value chains in certain sectors was positively assessed, especially in the energy sector, taking into account the role of the CB area as a strategic intersection of energy corridors bridging energy suppliers from the east and energy consumers in the west, whose externalities, however, bring extensive environmental hazard. Therefore, participants in the consultations expressed the need for more cross-border coordinated actions in the energy and environmental fields. The topic of migration, which is central to the programme area, has been left for resolving in the hands of the relevant public authorities. Irregular migration from Türkiye to the EU increased in 2019, although the figures continue to be substantially below those recorded prior to the EU-Türkiye Statement of 2016. This is also a partial

reflection of the increase in irregular migration towards Türkiye in 2019 as compared to previous years. Therefore, in parallel to the public consultations, a separate round of CBC institutional consultations dedicated on migration has been implemented to sort out project ideas of strategic importance. Talks with representatives from the relevant law enforcement institutions from Bulgaria and Türkiye from the area revealed that so far there have not been enough jointly implemented actions of institutional and operational cooperation to strengthen migration management in a coordinated and solidarity-based manner, despite the continuous topical discussions triggered by the refugee crisis in 2015. Thus, Bulgarian and Turkish law enforcement institutions agreed to develop a joint project of strategic importance aimed at strengthening the level of institutional cooperation in the field of migration management. The EU-Türkiye Statement continued yielding results, reducing irregular and dangerous crossings on the Eastern Mediterranean Route to Europe, and remained the key framework for cooperation on migration. The recently proposed New European Pact on Migration and Asylum stresses that in comprehensive partnerships, migration should be built in as a core issue, based on an assessment of the interests of the EU and its partner countries. Türkiye sustained its commendable efforts to host around 4 million refugees from Syria and other countries, in what is the largest refugee community in the world. The EU and Türkiye continue to provide significant support to refugees and host communities in Türkiye, a concrete testimony of EU solidarity. The ‘2021 Communication on EU Enlargement Policy’ document highlights the irregular migration as a key challenge for Türkiye and emphasizes on the cross-border cooperation as a critical factor for achieving success in migration management in the region. Therefore, the proposed project of strategic importance under the CBC programme aligns fully with the EU-Türkiye relations on enlargement. The outcomes of the CBC programme’s strategic project are expected to further strengthen the EU and Turkish common efforts, cooperation and coordination in the management of irregular migration. A credible enlargement policy is a geostrategic investment in peace, stability, security and economic growth in the whole of Europe.

Furthermore, the strategic and thematic scope of the programme fully corresponds with the IPA III programming framework, as exemplified in sub-section 4. Complementarities and synergies with other funding programmes and instruments of section 1.2. This comes to illustrate that the decision to provide support for green transition (from energy efficiency and circularity perspectives) to enterprises, as well as the support for institutional cross-border cooperation against inland detected irregular migration, was simultaneously bottom-up (consultations outcomes) and top-down (EU enlargement policy, EU Green Deal) driven and that legitimizes its selection.

Therefore, the programme is expected to contribute to the enlargement process and to the strengthening of the territorial cohesion taking into account socio-economic opposite trends that are currently undergoing across the CB area. Having regard to all this and to the need for preservation of cultural, social and economic links between the regions of both countries, the JWG agreed on the following overall objective of the Programme:

To strengthen the territorial cohesion of the Bulgaria-Türkiye cross-border region

The programme goal is ambitious – sharp territorial divergences are observed between the programme regions having opposite ranges of socio-economic development, while the overall economic performance of the area remains low in the EU and below national average. The programme response to this challenge is the delineation of programme priority “Integrated development of the cross-border region” with 65% budget earmarked for (1) achieving sustainable economic growth based on increased competitiveness of the local economy, digital and green transformation, and (2) expanding access and improving quality of services of general interest, incl. reducing pollution and the negative effects of climate change. The implementation of the priority through a dedicated Integrated Territorial Strategy addresses territorial challenges such as high unemployment (particularly youth one) and poverty risk, low income, underdeveloped cross-border tourism, green, digital and networking business opportunities. The integrated development aligns fully with the programme objective, because both concepts precondition strong collaboration between territorial actors. The promotion of genuine cooperation under that priority has been done at three levels: programming (JWG), implementation (through Interreg indicators preconditioning cross-border dimension of the investments) and management (joint committee/strategy board will be set up to participate in the project selection process).

The very selection of PO5 and the largest programme budget share it enjoys (65%), unequivocally reveals that building mutual trust (highlighted accession principle in the Communication from the Commission ‘Enhancing the accession process – A credible EU perspective for the Western Balkans’) and cooperation between territorial actors has been put on central in the programme strategy.

8. HORIZONTAL PRINCIPLES 2021-2027

The programme will scrutinize each project whether it contradicts the principles described here. The EU Charter of Fundamental Rights remains the main principle promoting equality and inclusiveness across Europe. The MA will seek to ensure gender balance in the composition of JMC, as well as it will require from project promoters to adhere to EU Charter and provide evidence for that. The MA will take any possible action to positively influence poverty eradication, social exclusion, inequality and discrimination by promoting social inclusion and encompassing the principles and objectives of the EU Charter and ensuring the respect for the principles of gender equality, non-discrimination and accessibility through the preparation, implementation, monitoring, reporting and evaluation of the programme. All supported project activities, regardless of their sectoral focus, must contribute to the achievement of at least one of the selected 7 Sustainable Development Goals (**SDGs**) that are most likely to be tackled by the programme. These SDGs are: (7) Affordable and Clean Energy, (8) Decent Work and Economic Growth, (9) Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure, (10) Reduced inequalities, (12) Responsible Consumption and Production, (13) Climate Action, (15) Life On Land. Selection of projects as to how they contribute to the sustainable development as set out in Article 11 of the TFEU, taking into account the UN Sustainable Development Goals, the Paris Agreement and the "Do No Significant Harm" principle, is ensured through the JEMS application form which will be used for all POs. Furthermore, to ensure maximum adherence to the principles and targets of the Green Deal, each project supported by the programme, should have gone a positive DNSH (Do No Significant Harm (DNSH) Principle) assessment during the selection process, based on the programme analysis for compliance with the DNSH principle.

During the implementation of the programme the managing authority will promote the strategic use of public procurement to support policy objectives (including professionalization efforts to address capacity gaps). Beneficiaries should be encouraged to use more quality-related and lifecycle cost criteria. When feasible, environmental (e.g. green public procurement criteria) and social considerations as well as innovation incentives should be incorporated into public procurement procedures. A monitoring mechanism will be set by the Programme on the reporting and follow up of the developments related to the horizontal principles. Overall progress will be reported to the European Commission regularly, accounting for all the operations. Finally, a dedicated part of the Programme evaluation will treat the actions in this regard.

The environmental dimension of the sustainability is rooted across the entire programme. To ensure maximum adherence to the principles and targets of the Green Deal, each project supported by the programme should have a green component that contribute to at least one of the environmental objectives set out in Article 9 of the Taxonomy Regulation. Such approach provides for broad promotion and applicability of the **Do No Significant Harm (DNSH) Principle**.

The programme will also promote the **New European Bauhaus** principle by requiring applicants and project promoters to align their project activities with the surrounding environment in order to provide for harmonious co-existence with nature, social inclusion and accessibility the objectives of this principle. Supported projects should ideally contribute to the regeneration of the environment, climate neutrality and the sustainable management of cultural landscapes.

A programme contribution to EU climate and biodiversity targets is envisaged. The Programme will take into account the importance of combating the decline of biodiversity and will address the Biodiversity Strategy for 2030, estimating an indicative contribution to biodiversity objectives representing approximately 10,15% of its ERDF allocation (based on related calculation methodology). The Programme estimates an indicative contribution representing approximately 30,00% of its ERDF allocation to support climate change objectives and approximately 41,55% to meet environmental objectives.

On e-cohesion, a fully functional system is set up (JEMS), which guarantees that all exchanges between beneficiaries and programme authorities are carried out by means of electronic data exchange in accordance with article 69(8) and Annex XIV of the CPR. The system will be fully functional with the launch of the Programme and will allow diminishing the administrative burden of beneficiaries.

All supported by the programme entities and undertakings should strive to ride the digital transformation wave and propose digital solutions under the concept of "one standard for all" and thus account for the applicability of the **e-Cohesion principle**.

Any CBC programme-related PP practice that is going to be carried out on the territory of Bulgaria, regardless of the type of procuring entity, will be aligned with the **Strategic public procurement principle**. This is so because the new EU Procurement Directives have been already transposed into the national PP legislation and thus the procuring organization will be legally encouraged to achieve greater incorporation of innovative, green and social criteria in awarding public contracts.

The **Durability of results principle** is embedded through regular monitoring practices to make sure the provided funding is strongly linked with the sustainability of the achieved results and bring in the desired territorial effect.

[1] <https://nsi.bg/en/content/2979/population-districts-age-place-residence-and-sex>

<https://data.tuik.gov.tr/Bulten/Index?p=The-Results-of-Address-Based-Population-Registration-System-2021-45500>

[2] https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Living_conditions_statistics_at_regional_level#Poverty_and_deprivation

[3] From 1 February 2020, the 27 European Union countries after the UK left the EU

[4] https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/ilc_di11/default/table?lang=en

[5] <https://www.nsi.bg/bg/content/3505/%D0%B7%D0%B0%D0%B2%D1%8A%D1%80%D1%88%D0%B8%D0%BB%D0%B8-%D0%BF%D0%BE-%D1%81%D1%82%D0%B5%D0%BF%D0%B5%D0%BD%D0%B8-%D0%BD%D0%B0-%D0%BE%D0%B1%D1%80%D0%B0%D0%B7%D0%BE%D0%B2%D0%B0%D0%BD%D0%B8%D0%B5-%D1%81%D1%82%D0%B0%D1%82%D0%B8%D1%81%D1%82%D0%B8%D1%87%D0%B5%D1%81%D0%BA%D0%B8-%D0%B7%D0%BE%D0%BD%D0%B8-%D1%81%D1%82%D0%B0%D1%82%D0%B8%D1%81%D1%82%D0%B8%D1%87%D0%B5%D1%81%D0%BA%D0%B8-%D1%80%D0%B0%D0%B9%D0%BE%D0%BD%D0%B8-%D0%B8-%D0%BE%D0%B1%D0%BB%D0%B0%D1%81%D1%82%D0%B8>

<https://data.tuik.gov.tr/Kategori/GetKategori?p=Education,-Culture,-Sport-and-Tourism-105>

[6] https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/edat_lfse_14/default/table?lang=en

[7] https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/EDAT_LFSE_20/default/table?lang=en

[8] https://www.espon.eu/sites/default/files/attachments/Final%20report.%202019%2003%2025_final%20version_0.pdf

[9] <https://ec.europa.eu/digital-single-market/en/digital-economy-and-society-index-desi>

[10] <https://www.nsi.bg/bg/content/1978/%D0%B3%D0%BE%D0%B4%D0%B8%D1%88%D0%BD%D0%B8-%D0%B4%D0%B0%D0%BD%D0%BD%D0%B8>

[11] <https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/sites/9789264309753-8-en/index.html?itemId=/content/component/9789264309753-8-en>

[12] <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/circular-economy/indicators/main-tables>

[13] Before 1 February 2020, the 28 European Union countries

[14] European Council on Refugees and Exiles, <https://www.asylumineurope.org/reports>

[15] NSI, TÜİK

[16] 2021 SBA Fact Sheet for Türkiye

[17] Eleventh Development Plan, Article 668, Presidency of the Republic of Türkiye, Presidency of Strategy and Budget, - https://www.sbb.gov.tr/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/Eleventh_Development_Plan_2019-2023.pdf, last access on 25.3.2022

1.3. Justification for the selection of policy objectives and the Interreg-specific objectives, corresponding priorities, specific objectives and the forms of support, addressing, where appropriate, missing links in cross-border infrastructure

Reference: point (c) of Article 17(3)

Table 1

Selected policy objective or selected Interreg specific objective	Selected specific objective	Priority	Justification for selection
<p>2. A greener, low-carbon transitioning towards a net zero carbon economy and resilient Europe by promoting clean and fair energy transition, green and blue investment, the circular economy, climate change mitigation and adaptation risk prevention and management, and sustainable urban mobility</p>	<p>RSO2.1. Promoting energy efficiency and reducing greenhouse gas emissions</p>	<p>1. Environmentally-friendly cross-border region</p>	<p>The economies of Bulgaria and Türkiye are among the most energy-intensive ones in Europe. Despite the progress in the last ten years, which reported a 17.4% decrease in the energy intensity index, outpacing the average improvement in the EU (14.5%), Bulgaria remains the EU country with the most energy-intensive economy, spending 3.6 times more energy resources per unit of GDP than the EU average. The OECD Environmental Performance Review of Türkiye for 2019 highlights two main environmental challenges before the country: (1) the highly carbon-intensive economy reliant on fossil fuels and (2) rapidly increasing greenhouse gas emissions. In its Eleventh Development Plan 2017-2023 (EDP), Türkiye points out its energy-intensive economic orientation by reporting an increase of 32.4% of the end-use energy consumption and 46% of the primary energy consumption in 2015 as compared to 2005. To achieve a carbon-free transformation, both countries take on identical strategic routes. In its Integrated National Energy and Climate Plan (INECP) the Bulgarian government has laid down the low-carbon pathway of measures in line with the 80 to 95% overall GHG reduction objective by 2050. In line with the EU's energy efficiency priorities, the INECP of Bulgaria has set national targets for achieving a 27.89% reduction in primary energy consumption and a 31.67% reduction in final energy consumption by 2030. The need for</p>

Selected policy objective or selected Interreg specific objective	Selected specific objective	Priority	Justification for selection
			<p>Bulgaria to take on vast energy efficiency measures is also recognized in the National Strategy for Small and Medium Enterprises 2021-2027. Similarly, the National Energy Efficiency Action Plan (NEEAP) of Türkiye for 2017-23 aims to reduce the primary energy consumption by 14% from business-as-usual scenario across several sectors. Türkiye is firmly committed to limiting GHG emissions growth by applying a sector-led approach. For example, the NEEAP 2017-2023 sets the target of achieving at least a 10% reduction in energy consumption of each subsector of the industry. A total of 4.8 billion USD was invested in energy efficiency for the 2017-2020 period. In return, savings of 3.19 million tons of oil equivalent and 1.2 billion USD were achieved cumulatively. The projects supported under this SO will be in the form of grants considering the nature of the operations (cross-border dimension and limited budget).</p>
<p>2. A greener, low-carbon transitioning towards a net zero carbon economy and resilient Europe by promoting clean and fair energy transition, green and blue investment, the circular economy, climate change mitigation and adaptation risk prevention and management, and sustainable urban mobility</p>	<p>RSO2.6. Promoting the transition to a circular and resource efficient economy</p>	<p>1. Environmentally-friendly cross-border region</p>	<p>The ‘take-make-use-dispose’ model that characterizes the linear economy, which is inefficient, costly and depletes natural resources, has gradually given way to closed-loop business models who enjoy the environmentally friendly concept of reusing materials. Bulgaria and Türkiye lag behind the EU in all components of the circular economy - resource productivity (e.g. 0.4 euro/kg - BG, 0.7 - TR, 2.3 - EU28), usage of circular material, waste management and competitiveness and innovation, with a better performance of Bulgaria in the waste management field and a made substantial progress of Türkiye in wastewater management (2019 OECD Environmental report for Türkiye). The report also emphasizes on the need for Türkiye to make a more substantial progress in the transition to a low-carbon, circular economy. The</p>

Selected policy objective or selected Interreg specific objective	Selected specific objective	Priority	Justification for selection
			<p>data for Türkiye of the Eurobarometer 2017 on SMEs, resource efficiency and green market show limited adoption of circular principles in the industry.</p> <p>The main assumption of the Integrated National Energy and Climate Plan (INECP) of Bulgaria is that the country is fully capable of a shift to using residual and waste biomass, industrial waste and municipal waste, which will boost new circular business models. To achieve sustainable use and management of resources as a condition for transforming the economy from linear to circular and to reduce resource intensity, enterprises will receive support for the introduction of low-carbon, circular technologies and business models, promotion of the efficient use of resources during the entire life cycle of the products, as well as development and implementation of innovations in the field of circular economy according to the Innovation Strategy for Smart Specialization 2021-2027 of Bulgaria (SSSB). The entire Bulgarian part of the CB area falls under the thematic area Green technologies, circular and low-carbon economy of the new SSSB. Yet, both countries have not developed their National Circular Economy Action Plans. In the absence of national guidance and strategic directions for applying circular solutions in the industry process, the programme will step on the pillars of the new Circular Economy Action Plan of EC. The projects supported under this SO will be in the form of grants considering the nature of the operations (cross-border dimension and limited budget).</p>
5. A Europe closer to citizens by fostering the sustainable and integrated development of all types of territories and local initiatives	RSO5.2. Fostering the integrated and inclusive social, economic and environmental local development, culture,	2. Integrated development of the cross-border region	The multi-thematic focus of PO5, in contrast to the single thematic one of PO-PO4+ISO1 and ISO2 has been highlighted, during regional consultations, as the most compelling factor for stakeholders to favour PO5

Selected policy objective or selected Interreg specific objective	Selected specific objective	Priority	Justification for selection
	natural heritage, sustainable tourism and security, in areas other than urban areas		<p>selection. Apart from that, there is a strong need to overcome the developed/underdeveloped dichotomy in the policy approaches to territorial development and to further strengthen the cohesion of the CBC region. This is viewed to be done by bringing more territoriality to the programme, and that is the main rationale behind the selection of PO5 – to lay the foundation for gradual transitioning from territoriality to functionality by refocusing away from individual projects towards territorial approaches and solutions. The dominating sectoral approach (vastly applied in the two previous programme periods, as well as conceptually rooted in PO1-PO4) failed to build cross-border territorial interlinkages. PO5 promotes “wise use of scarce resources” (Interact) through multi-sectoral interventions. This will help overcome the prevailing belief that territorial cohesion is made of bilateral relations bringing out the broad partnership and the multi-level governance instead. The CBC territory is still building its own collective identity. Actors from the territory must learn how to: 1) cooperate in a broader perspective going inter-sectoral and beyond administrative boundaries, and 2) establish mutually sustained CB networks and interdependencies to close socio-economic disparities and get the most out of the territorial commonalities. Projects under PO5 would build CBC culture and positive attitude towards CB shared management of territorial assets and jointly developed solutions. A key milestone in this course of action will be the set-up of a CB Board who will lead the implementation of the Territorial strategy that underpins the performance of PO5. The projects supported under this SO will be in the form of grants considering their CB dimension and the limited budget.</p>

Selected policy objective or selected Interreg specific objective	Selected specific objective	Priority	Justification for selection
7. Interreg: A safer and more secure Europe	ISO7.2. Mobility and migration management	3. More secure cross-border region	<p>With the increasing refugee population residing in Bulgaria and Türkiye the need to enhance the institutional coordination for operational cooperation in the field of inland illegal migration has become evident. The relevant institutions in both countries have been isolated from the EU support in the field and the process is managed in the lack of a migration cooperation strategy. Therefore, the main purpose of the strategic project is to enhance the coordination of the respective authorities to cope with irregular migration on their mandated territories in a cooperative and a solidarity-based manner. The respective police departments have never performed joint operational cooperation actions that address migration issues. Thus, the level of institutional cooperation between these institutions remains weak. Any deficiency of migration management systems in transit regions can result in higher pressure towards the EU. Despite the declining number of irregular migrants detected at EU borders, structural migration pressure remains strong: there is a need to build a system that can withstand future crises. This means moving from ad hoc responses to durable solutions and all this can be done if key institutional actors are involved in the process. Therefore, in order for the strategic project to provide support for the implementation of a migration strategy, the Turkish DG Customs Enforcement may be also partnering the project due to its migration control functions that extend inside the country. Having covered the main areas of an irregular migration detection (IRM), allows us to close the IRM's cycle and gather its constituting institutions to collectively strengthen their capacity for cross-border operational cooperation in a way to produce durable,</p>

Selected policy objective or selected Interreg specific objective	Selected specific objective	Priority	Justification for selection
			<p>cooperative and solidarity-based solutions and action standards. The project builds on the existing strategic documents (1) Strategy Document and National Action Plan on Irregular Migration 2021-2025 of Türkiye, (2) National Security Strategy of the Republic of Bulgaria, (3) National Strategy on Migration of the Republic of Bulgaria 2021-2025 and (4) Territorial analysis of the Bulgaria-Türkiye cross-border area within the CBC Programme. The implementation of the strategic project will go under the form of a grant. considering the nature of the operation.</p>

2. Priorities

Reference: points (d) and (e) of Article 17(3)

2.1. Priority: 1 - Environmentally-friendly cross-border region

Reference: point (d) of Article 17(3)

2.1.1. Specific objective: RSO2.1. Promoting energy efficiency and reducing greenhouse gas emissions

Reference: point (e) of Article 17(3)

Promoting energy efficiency and reducing greenhouse gas emissions

2.1.1.1 Related types of action, and their expected contribution to those specific objectives and to macro-regional strategies and sea-basin strategies, where appropriate

Reference: point (e)(i) of Article 17(3), point (c)(ii) of Article 17(9)

The main purpose of the selected policy objective is to support energy efficiency in industrial processes. Industry is the most energy consuming sector in Bulgaria and Türkiye. In Bulgaria there is stagnation in this sector in the norm of energy efficiency, and the reasons for this include the lack of significant changes in the industrial structure, as well as the lack of significant improvement in terms of technologies used and production processes (National Recovery and Resilience Plan). As a result, the energy intensity of Bulgarian industry remains the highest in the EU, almost three times higher than the EU average.

According to the International Energy Agency the progress that Türkiye has been made on the National Energy Efficiency Action Plan to date has been mixed and additional efforts will be needed to reach the 2023 target of 23.9 million tonnes of oil equivalent (Mtoe) saved with USD 10.9 billion invested. Implementation gaps remain across and within sectors, with policy progress slowed by delays in secondary legislation and lack of demand or incentives for energy efficiency products and services, among other factors.

All this lag far behind the EU energy efficiency achievements and determines the need for the programme support to be focused on the role of the energy-intensive industries (EIIs) in the transformation to a low-carbon economy. The Masterplan for a Competitive Transformation of EU Energy-intensive Industries Enabling a Climate-neutral, Circular Economy by 2050 (EC, 2019) provides the footing for the identification of EIIs. Outcomes of the Territorial Analysis show the dominant role of EIIs such as textile, food and beverages, chemicals, retail trade (identified as EIIs in the EC's Masterplan, 2019) in the CBC sectoral specialization. The EU Green Deal underlines that the need for decarbonisation and modernisation of the EIIs is essential. It is expected that all programme energy efficiency measures and investments can unlock huge energy saving potential of key EIIs in the CB area and thus contributing not only to the global decarbonization efforts and practices, but also to the lower levels of air pollution in the cross-border region. The precise EIIs, however, shall be identified at the stage of drafting the Guidelines for applicants to make the programme support consistent with up-to-date needs.

SMEs show low interest in energy efficiency investments which is a substantial risk for implementation and proper development of the cross-border region in line with the Green deal and national strategic plans. The SMEs in the border regions usually are not sufficiently knowledgeable about the concept of energy efficiency, which is often confused with renewable energy. Energy efficiency awareness is very low among SMEs. For SMEs, the data and documentation requirements of energy efficiency investments are complex and time consuming.

The lack of knowledge and readiness of local SMEs to actively participate in the transformation to a low-carbon economy justifies broad support for energy efficiency and reducing greenhouse gas emissions measures. The scarce programme resources, however, call for a more focused approach and prioritization of the SMEs actions in this direction, as well for demarcation from other EU funding programmes pursuing identical objectives. For Bulgaria these are "Programme Competitiveness and Innovation in Enterprises 2021-2027" (with a focus on renewable energy sources and energy efficiency

of publicly-owned building stock) and National Recovery and Resilience Plan (with a focus on SMEs from urban areas).

Non-exhaustive list of activities to be financed includes:

- Investments for reducing GHG emissions and energy consumption in the entire industry life cycle, also by replacing old equipment with new, more energy-efficient;
- Investments for energy efficiency of enterprise-owned building stock, where the production processes take place;
- Investments for implementation of digital solutions for collecting and analyzing data on GHG emissions and energy consumption on an enterprise level with the aim to assist data-driven decision-making;
- Investments for implementation of energy real-time information and management systems and energy end-use applications;
- Investments for implementation of technological solutions for reducing energy consumption in industrial processes and energy efficiency measures of enterprise-owned building stock;
- Joint development of new and providing access to existing technological solutions for energy efficiency and reduction of greenhouse gas emissions;
- Improving exchange of know-how, best practice and information between the relevant local businesses from both sides of the border in the area of energy efficiency and reduction of greenhouse gas emissions;
- Joint trainings and providing consultancy services to enterprises on energy efficiency;

The specific objective envisages direct support for micro, small and medium-sized enterprises within the meaning of Commission Recommendation 2003/361/EC, where applicable through the means of Small Project Fund which provides opportunities for simplified application and implementation corresponding to the needs of the enterprises for easy and fast access to support.

The types of actions have been assessed as compatible with the DNSH principle, since they are not expected to have any significant negative environmental impact due to their nature, and they have been assessed as compatible following the approach under the Recovery and Resilience Facility (RRF).

All projects that envisage building of new or rehabilitation of existing infrastructure, regardless of its property rights, must comply with the environmental legislation of the respective country before the implementation stage. This is verified by the MA and the NA at the application stage.

Investments to achieve the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions from activities listed in Annex I to Directive 2003/87/EC shall not be eligible for support.

The Black Sea Basin Strategy does not envisage energy-related actions, but the implementation of this specific objective goes in full accord with the environmental aspects of the Strategy.

The Programme will promote the durability of the project results with a durability period shorted to three years (Art. 65 CPR). The programme authorities acknowledge the availability of risks and uncertainties that could affect the capacity of the supported businesses to deliver results in the long term. The following main risks are identified: ongoing economic disturbances caused by the lasting COVID-19 pandemic, potential market fluctuations and downturns caused by conflicts close to the CBC region, insufficient experience working in a cross-border context. The administrative capacity of MSMEs is the issue where the Programme authorities could support enterprises to a great extent by providing tailor-made trainings and other dedicated events complemented by parallel mentoring and counselling upon beneficiary request, as well as through MA/NA/JS initiated online/offline meetings with concerned beneficiaries if their project performance and monitoring outcomes indicate potential issues.

2.1.1.1b. Definition of a single beneficiary or a limited list of beneficiaries and the granting procedure

Reference: point (c)(i) of Article 17(9)

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2.1.1.2. Indicators

Reference: point (e)(ii) of Article 17(3), point (c)(iii) of Article 17(9)

Table 2 - Output indicators

Priority	Specific objective	ID	Indicator	Measurement unit	Milestone (2024)	Target (2029)
1	RSO2.1	RCO84	Pilot actions developed jointly and implemented in projects	pilot action	0	11
1	RSO2.1	RCO116	Jointly developed solutions	solutions	0	11
1	RSO2.1	RCO02	Enterprises supported by grants	enterprises	0	22
1	RSO2.1	RCO01	Enterprises supported (of which: micro, small, medium, large)	enterprises	0	22

Table 3 - Result indicators

Priority	Specific objective	ID	Indicator	Measurement unit	Baseline	Reference year	Target (2029)	Source of data	Comments
1	RSO2.1	RCR104	Solutions taken up or up-scaled by organisations	solutions	0.00	2021	8	MA monitoring system	

2.1.1.3. Main target groups

Reference: point (e)(iii) of Article 17(3), point (c)(iv) of Article 17(9)

The main target groups for the SO Promoting energy efficiency and reducing greenhouse gas emissions, are:

- Existing and new MSMEs including those organized as cooperatives and social enterprises

2.1.1.4. Indication of the specific territories targeted, including the planned use of ITI, CLLD or other territorial tools

Reference: Article point (e)(iv) of 17(3)

The entire programme area is targeted.

2.1.1.5. Planned use of financial instruments

Reference: point (e)(v) of Article 17(3)

Support will be performed exclusively with Grants.

2.1.1.6. Indicative breakdown of the EU programme resources by type of intervention

Reference: point (e)(vi) of Article 17(3), point (c)(v) of Article 17(9)

Table 4 - Dimension 1 – intervention field

Priority	Specific objective	Fund	Code	Amount (EUR)
1	RSO2.1	IPA III	046. Support to entities that provide services contributing to the low carbon economy and to resilience to climate change, including awareness-raising measures	604 917,00
1	RSO2.1	IPA III	038. Energy efficiency and demonstration projects in SMEs and supporting measures	1 925 869,00
1	RSO2.1	IPA III	171. Enhancing cooperation with partners both within and outside the Member State	1 405 870,00

Table 5 - Dimension 2 – form of financing

Priority	Specific objective	Fund	Code	Amount (EUR)
1	RSO2.1	IPA III	01. Grant	3 936 656,00

Table 6 - Dimension 3 – territorial delivery mechanism and territorial focus

Priority	Specific objective	Fund	Code	Amount (EUR)
1	RSO2.1	IPA III	33. Other approaches - No territorial targeting	3 936 656,00

2.1.1. Specific objective: RSO2.6. Promoting the transition to a circular and resource efficient economy

Reference: point (e) of Article 17(3)

Promoting the transition to a circular and resource-efficient economy

2.1.1.1 Related types of action, and their expected contribution to those specific objectives and to macro-regional strategies and sea-basin strategies, where appropriate

Reference: point (e)(i) of Article 17(3), point (c)(ii) of Article 17(9)

In addition to environmental sustainability, the economic benefits and business relevance of the circular economy are increasingly recognised. Scaling up the circular economy from front-runners to the mainstream economic players will make a decisive contribution to achieving climate neutrality by 2050 and decoupling economic growth from resource use, while ensuring the long term competitiveness of the EU and leaving no one behind. As pointed out in the new Circular Economy Action Plan of EC, EU needs to accelerate the transition towards a regenerative growth model that gives back to the planet more than it takes, advance towards keeping its resource consumption within planetary boundaries and therefore strive to reduce its consumption footprint and double its circular material use rate in the coming decade. Enterprises from both sides of the border are not sufficiently equipped with relevant knowledge and skills about the benefits of the use of circular principles in their production processes. A recent study (“Impacts of circular economy policies on the labour market” by the Cambridge Econometrics, Trinomics, and ICF) estimates that applying circular economy principles across the EU economy has the potential to increase EU GDP by an additional 0.5% by 2030 creating around 700 000 new jobs. For citizens, the circular economy will provide high-quality, functional and safe products, which are efficient and affordable, last longer and are designed for reuse, repair, and high-quality recycling. A whole new range of sustainable services, product-service models and digital solutions will bring about a better quality of life, innovative jobs and upgraded knowledge and skills.

The challenges to the industrial sector from the CB area in the context of double transition objectives are significant, given the unsatisfactory starting points (low levels of digitalisation and resource productivity, very high levels of carbon intensity). Therefore, there is an evident and urgent need for the regional SME to adopt more actively the principles of the circular economy and the related production practices by making products fit for a climate-neutral, resource-efficient and circular economy and reducing waste across the entire product lifecycle.

In order to enable SMEs to transit to a circular economy the following non-exhaustive list of activities is suggested:

- Development of last-longer and suitable for reuse, repair, and recycling products, incl. purchase of relevant technological equipment. Recyclable designs should be comprehensive by keeping the recycling infrastructure in mind. Regulators should match recycling quotas (e.g., EU recycling rate of 75% of packaging waste by 2030) to regional capacities and plan the expansion of the recycling streams in coordination with those quotas.
- Development of new business models based on renting and sharing goods and services (the so-called product-as-service models);
- Development of circular business models to favour the establishment of the regional close-loop value chain by employing B2B, B2C and C2C models of cooperation;
- Development of circular biobased business models, solutions and products;

- Supporting measures for knowledge sharing, design methodology, innovation labs/hubs, clustering as approaches to promote circular products and circular production processes;
- Development of regional certification practices that reward regional products based on their different sustainability performance, environmental impact and circularity potential.

The types of actions have been assessed as compatible with the DNSH principle, in the same way as stated beforehand.

All projects that envisage the building of new or rehabilitation of existing infrastructure, regardless of its property rights, must comply with the environmental legislation of the respective country before the implementation stage. This is verified by the MA and the NA at the application stage.

The specific objective envisages direct support for to micro, small and medium-sized enterprises within the meaning of Commission Recommendation 2003/361/EC, where applicable through the means of the Small Project Fund which provides opportunities for simplified application and implementation corresponding to the needs of the enterprises for easy and fast access to support.

The Black Sea Basin Strategy does not envisage energy-related actions, but the implementation of this specific objective goes in full accord with the environmental aspects of the Strategy.

The Programme will promote the durability of the project results with a durability period shorted to three years (Art. 65 CPR). The programme authorities acknowledge the availability of risks and uncertainties that could affect the capacity of the supported businesses to deliver results in the long term. The following main risks are identified: ongoing economic disturbances caused by the lasting COVID-19 pandemic, potential market fluctuations and downturns caused by conflicts close to the CBC region, insufficient experience working in a cross-border context. The administrative capacity of MSMEs is the issue where the Programme authorities could support enterprises to a great extent by providing tailor-made training and other dedicated events complemented by parallel mentoring and counselling upon beneficiary request, as well as through MA/NA/JS initiated online/offline meetings with concerned beneficiaries if their project performance and monitoring outcomes indicate potential issues.

2.1.1.1b. Definition of a single beneficiary or a limited list of beneficiaries and the granting procedure

Reference: point (c)(i) of Article 17(9)

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2.1.1.2. Indicators

Reference: point (e)(ii) of Article 17(3), point (c)(iii) of Article 17(9)

Table 2 - Output indicators

Priority	Specific objective	ID	Indicator	Measurement unit	Milestone (2024)	Target (2029)
1	RSO2.6	RCO84	Pilot actions developed jointly and implemented in projects	pilot action	0	5
1	RSO2.6	RCO116	Jointly developed solutions	solutions	0	5
1	RSO2.6	RCO01	Enterprises supported (of which: micro, small, medium, large)	enterprises	0	10
1	RSO2.6	RCO02	Enterprises supported by grants	enterprises	0	10

Table 3 - Result indicators

Priority	Specific objective	ID	Indicator	Measurement unit	Baseline	Reference year	Target (2029)	Source of data	Comments
1	RSO2.6	RCR104	Solutions taken up or up-scaled by organisations	solutions	0.00	2021	4.00	MA monitoring system	

2.1.1.3. Main target groups

Reference: point (e)(iii) of Article 17(3), point (c)(iv) of Article 17(9)

The main target groups for the SO Promoting the transition to a circular economy are existing and new MSMEs, including those organized as cooperatives and social enterprises.

2.1.1.4. Indication of the specific territories targeted, including the planned use of ITI, CLLD or other territorial tools

Reference: Article point (e)(iv) of 17(3)

The entire programme area is targeted.

2.1.1.5. Planned use of financial instruments

Reference: point (e)(v) of Article 17(3)

Support will be performed exclusively with Grants

2.1.1.6. Indicative breakdown of the EU programme resources by type of intervention

Reference: point (e)(vi) of Article 17(3), point (c)(v) of Article 17(9)

Table 4 - Dimension 1 – intervention field

Priority	Specific objective	Fund	Code	Amount (EUR)
1	RSO2.6.	IPA III	069 Commercial, industrial waste management: prevention, minimisation, sorting, reuse, recycling measures	302 458,00
1	RSO2.6.	IPA III	072 Use of recycled materials as raw materials compliant with the efficiency criteria	302 458,00
1	RSO2.6.	IPA III	075 Support to environmentally-friendly production processes and resource efficiency in SMEs	541 111,00
1	RSO2.6.	IPA III	171 Enhancing cooperation with partners both within and outside the Member State	541 110,00

Table 5 - Dimension 2 – form of financing

Priority	Specific objective	Fund	Code	Amount (EUR)
1	RSO2.6.	IPA III	01 Grant	1 687 137,00

Table 6 - Dimension 3 – territorial delivery mechanism and territorial focus

Priority	Specific objective	Fund	Code	Amount (EUR)
1	RSO2.6.	IPA III	33 No territorial targeting	1 687 137,00

2.1. Priority: 2 - Integrated development of the cross-border region

Reference: point (d) of Article 17(3)

2.1.1. Specific objective: RSO5.2. Fostering the integrated and inclusive social, economic and environmental local development, culture, natural heritage, sustainable tourism and security, in areas other than urban areas

Reference: point (e) of Article 17(3)

Fostering the integrated and inclusive social, economic and environmental local development, culture, natural heritage, sustainable tourism and security in areas other than urban areas

2.1.1.1 Related types of action, and their expected contribution to those specific objectives and to macro-regional strategies and sea-basin strategies, where appropriate

Reference: point (e)(i) of Article 17(3), point (c)(ii) of Article 17(9)

The '8th Cohesion Report: Cohesion in Europe towards 2050' states that less developed regions and peripheral regions need a new development paradigm. Likewise, the experience from the previously implemented programmes and provided recommendations from the performed evaluation shows that there is a need to change the approach for achieving programme targets and objectives in a way to substitute the uncoordinated and dot-like investments with multilateral- and multi-sectoral-driven solutions in all key policy domains that define the degree of territorial cohesion. Integrated territorial development, anchored in place-based approaches and the involvement of all governance levels, as outlined in the new 2030 Territorial Agenda, is believed to be the new development paradigm making the most of the potential of the programme area. Priority 2 will give the opportunity common challenges of the border area to be pursued through a dedicated Territorial strategy (TS), applying integrated measures across different sectors. These common challenges can be summarised in three policy groups, as being agreed by local stakeholders who participate in the drafting of the TS: (1) Social cohesion (*addressing demographic disparities, high poverty risks and increasing gap between economically advantaged and disadvantaged persons - please see section 1.2*); (2) Economic cohesion (*with a focus on SMEs and tourism, as main driving forces for growth and cross-border cooperation, who are able to counter the scattered and heterogeneous economic activity across the area*), (3) Protection of environment (*it is a horizontal policy addressing the higher exposure of the CBC area to multiple environmental risk factors across the entire area of the TS*).

The current, pre-final draft version of the TS pursues two main strategic objectives, underpinned by several specific objectives, namely:

1. Achieving sustainable and inclusive economic growth based on increased competitiveness of the local economy, digital and green transformation (*addressing economic cohesion obstacles and missing links*)
2. Development of better access to services of general interest (*addressing social cohesion obstacles and missing links*)

From a typological point of view the TS shall support a wide range of actions – research and development activities; creation and dissemination of information, knowledge and skills; trainings; services; cooperation and networking; joint policy and decision making; minor renovation, improvement, and maintenance of roads and facilities of public importance; expanding access to public goods while strictly observing environmental regulations where applicable. The cumulative outcomes of all these diverse actions that are going to address broad thematic obstacles and challenges will produce the integrated effect on territorial development. The non-exhaustive list of actions to be supported includes:

- Joint and cooperative actions for promoting entrepreneurship, digitalization (incl. ICT based management and production solutions, such as Customer Relationship Management (CRM), Customer Data Platform (CDP), Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP)), technological modernization, participation in regional value chains and internationalisation, applying new business and technology innovation models, upgrading production and outreach strategies, wider adoption and implementation of circularity principles, solutions and models; marketing and research. It will be clearly communicated to potential applicants that under this priority the MSMEs will not receive direct support for implementing circular economy models in order to demarcate this support from the one under priority 1. Legal entities other than MSMEs can apply or participate as partners in integrated projects of circular economy significance..
- Upskilling and building new knowledge and skills of local employees and NEETs; joint development and implementation of new or improving existent settings for remote work; adoption of new human resource management practices to deal with younger generations;
- Joint development of new integrated regional tourist products where applicable with zero environmental footprint with the aim to overcome the seasonality in the sector, to increase the number of visitors and nights spent, to improve the access and quality of the tourism infrastructure by also strengthening the links between natural and cultural sites on both sides of the border, including through cross-border expansion of cycling path network; upgrading marketing and branding practices;
- Promoting joint actions for the development of ecosystem practices and services in the management of natural assets with tourism potential;
- Support for joint actions aimed at wide implementation of consumer-oriented approaches in the provision of services of general interest, as well as by incorporating digital and green solutions for servicing in a cross-border environment;
- Implementation of joint actions to reduce pollution and ecological footprint, and provide clean air, water and food, to mitigate and adapt to climate change and to prevent and mitigate the consequences of natural and man-made disasters.

The types of actions have been assessed as compatible with the DNSH principle, in the same way as stated beforehand.

All projects that envisage building of new or rehabilitation of existing infrastructure, regardless of its property rights, must comply with the environmental legislation of the respective country before implementation stage. This is verified by the MA and the NA at the application stage.

It should be noted that green and digital solutions will be incorporated as horizontal principles and thus become integral part of all supported, under the TS, projects. This decision is seen as a programme instrument to promote the new cohesion policy.

The TS is a multisectoral strategy and the support for the maritime sector has an important, though not a central, role in the projected course for integrated territorial development. Thus, the planned actions under the TS interact with and are expected to contribute to the Common Maritime Agenda for the Black Sea and The Black Sea Strategic Research and Innovation Agenda (both being components of the EU Blue Growth Strategy) particularly from the view point of boosting new knowledge, improving access to information and ensuring efficient and sustainable management of sea-related activities, incl. aquaculture and tourism, with the aim to sustain healthy marine and coastal ecosystems.

2.1.1.1b. Definition of a single beneficiary or a limited list of beneficiaries and the granting procedure

Reference: point (c)(i) of Article 17(9)

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2.1.1.2. Indicators

Reference: point (e)(ii) of Article 17(3), point (c)(iii) of Article 17(9)

Table 2 - Output indicators

Priority	Specific objective	ID	Indicator	Measurement unit	Milestone (2024)	Target (2029)
2	RSO5.2	RCO84	Pilot actions developed jointly and implemented in projects	pilot action	0	18
2	RSO5.2	RCO116	Jointly developed solutions	solutions	0	18
2	RSO5.2	RCO74	Population covered by projects in the framework of strategies for integrated territorial development	persons	0	850000
2	RSO5.2	RCO75	Strategies for integrated territorial development supported	contributions to strategies	0	1
2	RSO5.2	RCO58	Dedicated cycling infrastructure supported	km	0	16,00
2	RSO5.2	RCO77	Number of cultural and tourism sites supported	cultural and tourism sites	0	18
2	RSO5.2	RCO28	Area covered by protection measures against wildfires	hectares	0	588 200,00
2	RSO5.2	RCO76	Integrated projects for territorial development	projects	0	20

Table 3 - Result indicators

Priority	Specific objective	ID	Indicator	Measurement unit	Baseline	Reference year	Target (2029)	Source of data	Comments
2	RSO5.2	RCR104	Solutions taken up or up-scaled by organisations	solutions	0.00	2021	14	MA monitoring system	
2	RSO5.2	RCR64	Annual users of dedicated cycling infrastructure	users/year	0	2021	1000	Field survey	
2	RSO5.2	RCR77	Visitors of cultural and tourism sites supported	visitors/ year	45 000	2021	48 000	MA monitoring system	
2	RSO5.2	RCR36	Population benefiting from wildfire protection measures	persons	0	2021	290 000	MA monitoring system	

2.1.1.3. Main target groups

Reference: point (e)(iii) of Article 17(3), point (c)(iv) of Article 17(9)

The main target groups for the SO 2.1 Fostering the integrated and inclusive social, economic and environmental local development, culture, natural heritage, sustainable tourism and security in areas other than urban areas, are:

- Population in the cross-border region (Population of the Burgas, Haskovo and Yambol districts and Edirne and Kırklareli provinces)
- Local/ regional bodies and authorities, regional structures of central public authorities;
- Civil society;
- NGOs;
- R&D, academic and training institutions;
- Social institutions;
- MSMEs.

2.1.1.4. Indication of the specific territories targeted, including the planned use of ITI, CLLD or other territorial tools

Reference: Article point (e)(iv) of 17(3)

Locally developed and implemented Territorial Strategy (TS), in accordance with art. 28 (c) of the CPR Regulation, will underpin the implementation of Priority 3. The TS will seek to reinforce the integrated approach to further strengthen territorial development axes built upon functioning cross-border linkages in the business domain. The TS looks into existing socio-economic and governance flows across the border region making up the entire programme territory a functional area. The programme area is considered functionally coherent due to the following particularities:

- small size of the programme territory – below the (Interreg VI-A) IPA CBC programmes average. The smaller size questions the economic rationality for delineating functional areas for subsets of the territory;

- uneven spread of common territorial assets and economic activities across the entire programme area, resulting in scattered functional interlinkages.

Despite the fact that both sides of the border have access to the Black Sea, this strategic territorial asset cannot itself delineate a functional area. Unlike the Bulgarian part of the CBC area, who is exclusively oriented towards maritime tourism and reaps off fully from the excellent connectivity it has, the Turkish side does not enjoy identical peculiarities due to its territorial architecture (green areas prevail which predetermine the low population density and the limited infrastructure provision). Currently, there is only one BCCP in the maritime sub-area of the CB region located 100 km away from the coastline. No sea transport connects both countries;

- broad participation legitimizes the selected approach - a Task Force Group (TFG) made of local stakeholders, who develops the TS, has already agreed on the assessed territorial characteristics and functionalities.

The CBC area traditionally enjoys good cross-border relations in the fields of economic cooperation, tourism (as a sub-function of the macro business function) and not until recently – in the field of academic research. The existent cross-border linkages enjoy good CB connectivity in the area, though it is limited to road and rail transport, while the four modes of transportation (road, rail, air, sea) co-exist only on the Bulgarian side of the programme area. Since 1991, the CB business cooperation and its strong tourism-oriented specialization, has been gradually expanding and adapting to changing technological and competitive factors, eventually delineating the business function. The functional linkages, that this domain exhibit, are unevenly spread between the five regional centres of Edirne, Kırklareli, Burgas, Haskovo and Yambol, where often intersect each other. This gave rise to the emergence of business network structures, which are still in a position of lock-in into low-value added segments of the GVC. Lock-out is difficult, unless state and business actors have a shared interest in the economic and territorial development - a prospect that MA/NA will trigger promoting the integrated territorial development. Besides, the intercity relations of these 5 regional centres need to scale up and set up a sort of hierarchical networks of nodes and hubs in order to further develop functional links between urban and rural areas, mostly around the metropolitan centres of Edirne and Burgas. Regretfully, there is no credible and reliable statistics at CB level to illustrate the precise degree of border interactions in the business and the tourism domain. Instead, a proxy for this assessment is programme historical data underpinned by corresponding national-level statistics (see below). Following deductive approach, provided nation-level data can be narrow down to regional level and infer strong arguments in support of the delineation of the business functional area across the programme territory (31% of the priority budget) prioritizing the tourism as a sub-function of the business development (26% of the priority budget). Both enjoy a total cumulative share of 57% of the priority budget. Türkiye is one of the top five trade partners of Bulgaria (7.3% of all exports, 6.5% of all imports) . In the last five years, the total export of Bulgaria to Türkiye has been increased by 10%, while reverse data show a bigger growth rate of Türkiye's export to Bulgaria amounting to 36%. The border trading is also very active. Most of the bilateral visits are daily or weekend visits for shopping and sightseeing . Direction of visits are determined by the exchange rate between two countries. Recently, the appreciation of the BGN against the

TRY has made products in Türkiye cheaper and border city Edirne a centre of attraction and favourite shopping spot for Bulgarian daily tourists. It is estimated that each Bulgaria tourists spend on average 100 euro per visit. Thus, 2.7 million Bulgarian tourists spent 270 million euros in 2019 during their shopping visits . The most recent programme data (2014-2020) confirms this positive trend from the perspective of tourism funding needs. Nearly 57% of all project proposals and 66% of all contracted applicants were within the tourism programme priority. Considering the fact that the tourism is the sector with the largest economic impact on the area, the added value of focusing roughly the same TS budgetary appropriations on CB business cooperation (totaling 7,260,000 Euro, which also includes business-driven solutions for service provision) and tourism (totaling 8,000, 500 Euro) increases the intra-regional functionalities and strengthens further the cohesion of the territory. The composition of the TFG is also built on the concept of territorial coherence, i.e. actual participation of stakeholders in the TS evolution is done through nominations of persons, for members of the TFG, from the entire programme area. These persons act as representatives of various interest groups. After the development of the TS is finalized, the TFG will be transformed into Strategy Board (SB). The transition of TFG into SB is seen as a way to sustain the local ownership of the TS and at the same time to ensure broad public representation in its governance. Thus, SB reflects the partnership principle comprising relevant actors from both sides of the border. The SB will: (1) select project proposals based on jointly developed, with programme bodies, selection criteria, (2) agree on the content of the application package, and (3) govern the entire implementation of the TS by informing programme bodies on the TS progress within a certain timeframe. The TS shall be endorsed both by the SB and the JMC, and checked by the MA/NA – all that by the end of 2022/beginning of 2023.

2.1.1.5. Planned use of financial instruments

Reference: point (e)(v) of Article 17(3)

Support will be performed exclusively with Grants.

2.1.1.6. Indicative breakdown of the EU programme resources by type of intervention

Reference: point (e)(vi) of Article 17(3), point (c)(v) of Article 17(9)

Table 4 - Dimension 1 – intervention field

Priority	Specific objective	Fund	Code	Amount (EUR)
2	RSO5.2	IPA III	083. Cycling infrastructure	2 000 000,00
2	RSO5.2	IPA III	134. Measures to improve access to employment	540 000,00
2	RSO5.2	IPA III	158. Measures to enhancing the equal and timely access to quality, sustainable and affordable services	540 000,00
2	RSO5.2	IPA III	028. Technology transfer and cooperation between enterprises, research centres and higher education sector	540 000,00
2	RSO5.2	IPA III	136. Specific support for youth employment and socio-economic integration of young people	250 000,00
2	RSO5.2	IPA III	167. Protection, development and promotion of natural heritage and eco-tourism other than Natura 2000 sites	2 420 000,00
2	RSO5.2	IPA III	013. Digitising SMEs (including e-Commerce, e-Business and networked business processes, digital innovation hubs, living labs, web entrepreneurs and ICT start-ups, B2B)	540 000,00
2	RSO5.2	IPA III	016. Government ICT solutions, e-services, applications	1 340 000,00
2	RSO5.2	IPA III	021. SME business development and internationalisation, including productive investments	540 000,00
2	RSO5.2	IPA III	058. Adaptation to climate change measures and prevention and management of climate related risks: floods and landslides (including awareness raising, civil protection and disaster management systems, infrastructures and ecosystem based approaches)	1 000 000,00
2	RSO5.2	IPA III	059. Adaptation to climate change measures and prevention and management of climate related risks: fires (including awareness raising, civil protection and disaster management systems, infrastructures and ecosystem based approaches)	3 000 000,00
2	RSO5.2	IPA III	067. Household waste management: prevention, minimisation, sorting, reuse, recycling measures	1 500 000,00
2	RSO5.2	IPA III	079. Nature and biodiversity protection, natural heritage and resources, green and blue infrastructure	400 000,00

Priority	Specific objective	Fund	Code	Amount (EUR)
2	RSO5.2	IPA III	165. Protection, development and promotion of public tourism assets and tourism services	2 000 000,00
2	RSO5.2	IPA III	166. Protection, development and promotion of cultural heritage and cultural services	540 000,00
2	RSO5.2	IPA III	146. Support for adaptation of workers, enterprises and entrepreneurs to change	540 000,00
2	RSO5.2	IPA III	171. Enhancing cooperation with partners both within and outside the Member State	652 473,00

Table 5 - Dimension 2 – form of financing

Priority	Specific objective	Fund	Code	Amount (EUR)
2	RSO5.2	IPA III	01. Grant	18 342 473,00

Table 6 - Dimension 3 – territorial delivery mechanism and territorial focus

Priority	Specific objective	Fund	Code	Amount (EUR)
2	RSO5.2	IPA III	24. Other type of territorial tool - Other types of territories targeted	18 342 473,00

2.1. Priority: 3 - More secure cross-border region

Reference: point (d) of Article 17(3)

2.1.1. Specific objective: ISO7.2. Mobility and migration management

Reference: point (e) of Article 17(3)

Improving migration management

2.1.1.1 Related types of action, and their expected contribution to those specific objectives and to macro-regional strategies and sea-basin strategies, where appropriate

Reference: point (e)(i) of Article 17(3), point (c)(ii) of Article 17(9)

A strategic project connected with strengthening the capacity of the law enforcement institutions from both sides of the border to tackle irregular migration in a cooperative and a solidarity-based manner will be targeted to the priority More secure border region under INTERREG Specific Objective 2: A safer and more secure Europe. Project partners will be Haskovo Regional Directorate of Ministry of Interior, Burgas Regional Directorate of Ministry of Interior and Yambol Regional Directorate of Ministry of Interior from Bulgarian side and Governorship of Edirne and Governorship of Kırklareli from Turkish side.

With the increasing refugee population residing in Bulgaria and Türkiye as a result of the continuing migration pressure in the CB area, the need to enhance the institutional coordination for operational cooperation in the field of inland detected illegal migration has become evident. The Regional Directorates of the Ministry of Interior in Haskovo, Bourgas and Yambol (Bulgaria) and the Law Enforcement departments of Edirne and Kırklareli provinces (Türkiye) have been isolated, so far, from the vast EU institutional and financial support in the field of illegal migration, which goes mainly to border authorities. The above listed institutions deal with irregular migrants intercepted inside the territory of the respective country (inland detection) in the lack of a comprehensive irregular migration cooperation strategy and capacity to coordinate and implement such a strategy.

The project activities envisaged within this project are relevant to the Specific Objective: Improving migration management as they are aimed at enhancing the abilities of law enforcement officers on both sides and increasing the cross-border effect at the same time, which will all contribute to the specific objective. Planned trainings will enhance knowledge about regulations on international and European level and also increase language skills that will play an important role in diminishing barriers due to language. Supply of specialized equipment will provide law enforcement officers with the equipment necessary for more effective counteraction to irregular migration. The project will help to build a system in case a future crises and change the way of reaction from ad hoc responses to durable solutions, and all this can be done if key institutional actors are involved in the process, encompassing the two main areas where irregular migration has been detected – at the border and inland.

The indicative type of actions to be supported are related to:

- Conducting trainings, exchange of experience and good practices, study visits in order to improve institutional cooperation and capacity;
- Measures for the enhancement of the security in urban and suburban areas of the cross-border region;
- Delivery of specialised equipment/devices to improve the technical capabilities and enhance the physical capacity of the law enforcement officers/departments in the cross-border region.

The types of actions have been assessed as compatible with the DNSH principle, in the same way as stated beforehand.

The project that envisage building of new or rehabilitation of existing infrastructure, regardless of its property rights, must comply with the environmental legislation of the respective country before implementation stage. This is verified by the MA and NA at the application stage.

2.1.1.1b. Definition of a single beneficiary or a limited list of beneficiaries and the granting procedure

Reference: point (c)(i) of Article 17(9)

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2.1.1.2. Indicators

Reference: point (e)(ii) of Article 17(3), point (c)(iii) of Article 17(9)

Table 2 - Output indicators

Priority	Specific objective	ID	Indicator	Measurement unit	Milestone (2024)	Target (2029)
3	ISO7.2	RCO81	Participations in joint actions across borders	participations	91	367

Table 3 - Result indicators

Priority	Specific objective	ID	Indicator	Measurement unit	Baseline	Reference year	Target (2029)	Source of data	Comments
3	ISO7.2	RCR85	Participations in joint actions across borders after project completion	participations	0.00	2021	50.00	MA monitoring system	

2.1.1.3. Main target groups

Reference: point (e)(iii) of Article 17(3), point (c)(iv) of Article 17(9)

The actions supported under this priority are envisaged to bring benefits to the following target groups:

- Population in the cross-border region (Population of the Burgas, Haskovo and Yambol districts and Edirne and Kırklareli provinces);
- Visitors in the cross-border region;
- Migrants and asylum seekers;
- Public authorities and service providers;
- Enterprises;
- Potential investors and local economic operators;
- Law enforcement authorities in the border region;

Potential Beneficiaries:

- Regional Directorates of the Ministry of Interior in Haskovo, Burgas and Yambol;
- Law Enforcement department in the Edirne and Kırklareli province;
- Other law enforcement authorities.

2.1.1.4. Indication of the specific territories targeted, including the planned use of ITI, CLLD or other territorial tools

Reference: Article point (e)(iv) of 17(3)

The entire programme area is targeted.

2.1.1.5. Planned use of financial instruments

Reference: point (e)(v) of Article 17(3)

Support will be performed exclusively with Grants.

2.1.1.6. Indicative breakdown of the EU programme resources by type of intervention

Reference: point (e)(vi) of Article 17(3), point (c)(v) of Article 17(9)

Table 4 - Dimension 1 – intervention field

Priority	Specific objective	Fund	Code	Amount (EUR)
3	ISO7.2	IPA III	174. Interreg: border crossing management and mobility and migration management	1 471 093,00

Table 5 - Dimension 2 – form of financing

Priority	Specific objective	Fund	Code	Amount (EUR)
3	ISO7.2	IPA III	01. Grant	1 471 093,00

Table 6 - Dimension 3 – territorial delivery mechanism and territorial focus

Priority	Specific objective	Fund	Code	Amount (EUR)
3	ISO7.2	IPA III	33. Other approaches - No territorial targeting	1 471 093,00

3. Financing plan

Reference: point (f) of Article 17(3)

3.1. Financial appropriations by year

Table 7

Reference: point (g)(i) of Article 17(3), points (a) to (d) of Article 17(4)

Fund	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	Total
IPA III CBC	0.00	4,951,987.00	5,059,219.00	5,133,571.00	5,226,674.00	4,396,747.00	4,484,765.00	29,252,963.00
Total	0.00	4,951,987.00	5,059,219.00	5,133,571.00	5,226,674.00	4,396,747.00	4,484,765.00	29,252,963.00

3.2.Total financial appropriations by fund and national co-financing

Reference: point (f)(ii) of Article 17(3), points (a) to (d) of Article 17(4)

Table 8

Policy objective	Priority	Fund	Basis for calculation EU support (total eligible cost or public contribution)	EU contribution (a)=(a1)+(a2)	Indicative breakdown of the EU contribution		National contribution (b)=(c)+(d)	Indicative breakdown of the national counterpart		Total (e)=(a)+(b)	Co-financing rate (f)=(a)/(e)	Contributions from the third countries
					without TA pursuant to Article 27(1) (a1)	for TA pursuant to Article 27(1) (a2)		National public (c)	National private (d)	Total (e)=(a)+(b)	Co-financing rate (f)=(a)/(e)	Contributions from the third countries
2	1	IPA III CBC	Total	6,467,362.00	5,623,793.00	843,569.00	1,141,300.00	1,141,300.00	0.00	7,608,662.00	84.9999908000%	0.00
5	2	IPA III CBC	Total	21,093,844.00	18,342,473.00	2,751,371.00	3,722,444.00	3,722,444.00	0.00	24,816,288.00	84.9999967763%	0.00
7	3	IPA III CBC	Total	1,691,757.00	1,471,093.00	220,664.00	298,546.00	298,546.00	0.00	1,990,303.00	84.9999723660%	0.00
	Total	IPA III CBC		29,252,963.00	25,437,359.00	3,815,604.00	5,162,290.00	5,162,290.00	0.00	34,415,253.00	84.9999940433%	0.00
	Grand total			29,252,963.00	25,437,359.00	3,815,604.00	5,162,290.00	5,162,290.00	0.00	34,415,253.00	84.9999940433%	0.00

4. Action taken to involve the relevant programme partners in the preparation of the Interreg programme and the role of those programme partners in the implementation, monitoring and evaluation

Reference: point (g) of Article 17(3)

According to Art. 8 of Regulation (EU) 2021/1060 CPR, each MS organized a partnership with the competent regional and local authorities, according with the multi-level governance principle, to involve those partners throughout the preparation and implementation of the programme.

Regional consultations

The consultation process was designed to capture the stakeholders' vision on the challenges and needs of the cross-border area to agree on the strategic prioritization of the policy and specific objectives and, to engage them in the definition of the results to be achieved within each priority axis and the strategic interventions to be implemented in this respect. The cross-border relevant stakeholders have been involved during the entire programme preparation process, to ensure useful results and meeting their demands. This was achieved through various consultation activities, organized during different phases of the programme development process.

The consultations and meetings were held in the period August – October 2019, both on Turkish and Bulgarian territory. Six meetings of regional focus groups were conducted in Türkiye – 2 in Edirne (on 29.07.2019 and 30.07.2019) and 4 in Kırklareli (on 31.07.2019 and 01.08.2019) and a broad regional consultation meeting in Bulgaria (in October 2019 in Burgas). The aim of the conducted regional consultations was to identify the local needs, following the bottom-up approach and to incorporate proposals by the stakeholders regarding the prioritization of policy objectives and possible interventions. Stakeholders representatives took part in the meetings – among which local and regional authorities, educational institutions, local business, NGOs from the CBC region.

Participants in the extensive cross-border regional consultations agreed on the need to propose joint measures considering the untapped potential of the region and applying place-based approaches to contribute to the development of the region in a more sustainable way.

PO 5 “Europe closer to citizens” was supported by the participating stakeholders as the most suitable way for implementation of integrated measures that could contribute for solving common and diverse challenges in the border region. New type of beneficiaries, partnerships and activities will be included, ensuring sustainability and capitalizing the experience in cooperation between the two countries.

Implementation of measures dedicated to energy efficiency, reduction of greenhouse gas emissions and circular economy under PO 2 “Greener, low-carbon Europe” that will improve the state of the environment for the benefit of people and of the economy of the border region, was also discussed on the regional consultations.

Under the consultation topic on security and continuing migration pressure in the CB area was discussed. The participants agreed on the need of joint effort for strengthening the capacity of the responsible institutions from both sides of the border in the field of inland detected illegal migration.

Following the regional consultations a questionnaire was sent to the participants where they pointed out the challenges the area faces in regard to the socio economic development and the spheres of interventions in which the programme could bring an added value. The respondents strongly supported the programme to be more focussed by addressing local challenges and needs of the border region.

Joint working group on programming (JWG)

In November 2019 a JWG has been set up for elaboration of the Programme. One of its main tasks was to periodically review and make suggestions and proposals to the programming progress as well as to approve the main stages of the programme preparation and finally the Programme as a whole.

Respecting the partnership principle JWG is composed of a balanced number of representatives of the two partnering countries, including representatives of public authorities (national, regional and local), economic and social partners including environmental partners, and bodies responsible for promoting social inclusion, gender equality and non-discrimination. In order to ensure a transparent and balanced

representation of the civil society in the JWG, MA carried out a selection process of non-governmental organisations. Following the assessment of the submitted proposals, several NGOs in the area of education, ecology and social integration became JWG members.

The following documents have been adopted:

- The first meeting of the JWG took place in Edirne on 12.11.2019 on which Rules of procedure of the JWG and Concept paper with a time-schedule for the programming process were approved;
- The second meeting of JWG took place on 24.09.2020 (online) on which the Territorial analysis and First draft of the Intervention logic of the future programme was approved;
- On 24.02.2021 via written procedure the JWG approved the revised Intervention Logic of the programme (following the interinstitutional agreement at the end of 2020 on the draft cohesion policy regulations, including the draft Interreg regulation and its requirements on the thematic concentration);
- On the online meeting on 14.09.2021 the JWG approved the First draft of the programme – sections related with programme strategy - territorial needs and potentials, objectives and priorities of the programme, indicative actions, communication measures;
- On 8.04.2022 via written procedure the JWG approved the final programme.

Task force (TF) on the elaboration of the Territorial Strategy(TS) for the CBC region

For the purpose of implementation of PO 5, the MA and NA, supported the local stakeholders for the elaboration of a TS. A TF was established representing all relevant regional and local authorities and bodies, as well as other local stakeholders related to the preparation and implementation of the strategy (pursuant to Art. 29 of the CPR). The main responsibility of the TF is to collaborate with the Consultant during the elaboration of the TS under PO5 and to feed in results of dialogues with relevant stakeholders, databases, expert positions etc. The first draft of the Strategy has been published for consultations on 14.04.2021 as received comments from local stakeholders had been incorporated in the revised version of the document.

Public campaign for collecting project ideas under the Territorial Strategy

In order to be ensured the “bottom-up” approach and to be involved a wider range of stakeholders in the strategic planning process, a broad campaign for collection of project ideas that build the list of operations, part of the TS, was launched in November- December 2021 on both sides of the border. During the campaign, 4 educational webinars were organized attended by more than 140 participants, where the latter were also trained and supported in presenting their project ideas touching upon the complexity of PO5 and the functional area approach in the planning and implementation phase of the TS and the programme. The MA/NA will provide continuous training and educational support on that through digital (programme’s website) and in-person interactive communication (various programme events, such as meetings, campaigns, info days, topical trainings, consultations).

Public consultations of the Environmental assessment report (EAR) of the Programme and of the Territorial strategy for the CBC region

As a part of preparation of the EAR of the Programme and of the TS for the CBC region two rounds of public consultations were held. The first consultations were organised in July 2021 (in Bulgaria) and in August 2021 (in Türkiye) on scoping report for determination of the scope and content of the EAR. The second round consultations is conducted in the period December 2021 – January 2022 (in Bulgaria) and in January 2021 (in Türkiye) on the EAR. The received comments from all institutions and stakeholders from both countries were reflected in EAR.

Public consultations on the draft programme document 2021-2027

Regarding the preparation of the final version of IPA III programme public consultations had been initiated in the period January-March 2022. Various representatives of regional and municipal administrations, non-governmental organizations, companies, professional organizations, academia, media and other stakeholders from Bulgaria and Türkiye took part in the final round of public discussion and public consultations. Fruitful discussions were held not only on the final programme draft but also on the most important messages for the future implementation.

Implementation, monitoring and evaluation

In accordance with Art. 28 of Regulation (EU) 2021/1059, a Joint Monitoring Committee (JMC) to monitor the implementation of the programme will be set within three months after the approval of the Programme. The composition of the JMC shall be agreed by the participating countries and shall be in compliance with the provisions of Art. 29 of Interreg Regulation. The composition will respect the principles of partnership and multi-level governance and will include public authorities (regional, local and other); economic and social partners; representative of civil society, such as environmental partners, non-governmental organisations, and bodies responsible for promoting social inclusion, fundamental rights, rights of persons with disabilities, gender equality and non-discrimination; research organisations and universities and etc. It will be seek to ensure gender balance in the composition of JMC. The JMC shall also involve stakeholders from the regional consultations and members of the JWG. The approach will ensure closing the loop and continuity in the process of projects identification, monitoring of the implementation and evaluation of the programme. The JMC will be duly informed about the activities of the Technical Assistance.

The main competencies and responsibilities of the JMC will be set up in accordance with Art. 30 of the Regulation (EU) 2021/1059.

The Programme will continue to promote transparency by publishing all important documents for consultation on the Programme's website. All interested parties will be invited to send observations. An important role in the implementation of PO 5 belongs to the governing body of the TS of the CB area, who will work closely with the JMC of the Programme in order to ensure the successful implementation of PO 5.

At the local level of the Programme, several actions will be implemented, always taking advantage of the experience of previous programming. However, new initiatives will also find their place with the aim of strengthening the link between the Programme and potential beneficiaries. Workshops, surveys, meetings and bilateral exchanges are the most common means for the identification of the said information and the feedback of opinions.

In order to improve and consolidate the involvement of third-party partners in the implementation of the Programme, it is also proposed that "Consultation Days" could be organised once a year by the MA/JS. Thus reinforcing the decision making of the JMC through the provision of external "ad hoc" information and recommendations gathered from representatives of the civil society with experience/competencies/skills on specific thematic topics (for instance, to prepare calls for proposals, transferring processes, etc.). These "Days" could be organised in the form of webinars and target different audiences and organisations according to the subjects dealing with the JMC agenda(s).

The variety of the type of actions described allows the multi-level mobilisation of the Programme partnership at each key stage of its life (preparation, implementation, monitoring and evaluation), at the local level of the partnering countries.

5. Approach to communication and visibility for the Interreg programme (objectives, target audiences, communication channels, including social media outreach, where appropriate, planned budget and relevant indicators for monitoring and evaluation)

Reference: point (h) of Article 17(3)

The Programme will take stock of good practices in communication and show a flexible approach to reach out the targeted audience.

All these are translated into the following communication objectives by taking into account the communication needs specific for each stage of the Programme life cycle and of each target group:

- to raise general awareness towards the Programme
- to attract the interest of potential beneficiaries
- to support beneficiaries in project implementation
- to disseminate the achievements of the Programme and highlight the added value of EU funding

Each communication objective will be transferred into specific communication activities. The focus of the activities addresses the potential applicants, the beneficiaries, the stakeholders and the institutions involved in the implementation.

The communication strategy identifies the following main target groups: applicants, beneficiaries, national, regional and local governmental and non/governmental actors, SMEs and their professional organizations, R&D, education and training institutions, EU institutions, media from both countries.

The mix of communication channels takes due account of the programme's thematic objectives. There are both the digital instruments and events.

For PO2 the specific target audience are the local population and MSMEs. Being the "green" priority the main communication message will be focused on the additive and multiplicative effects that the projects deliver with decarbonisation of production processes and the introduction of smart energy technologies. As a new type of beneficiaries, MSMEs will receive thorough assistance and trainings.

For PO5 the specific target groups are the local population, administration, NGOs, R&D, academic, training and social institutions and SMEs. Being the Priority with the highest budget share the communication activities started during the elaboration of the strategy though a wide participatory approach involving all stakeholders. The implementation of the ITS will be accompanied by information campaigns and match-making events.

For ISO2 the specific target groups are the local population and administration. Being the project of strategic importance with focus on migrant management, communication activities will be in the light of "security" – up-to-date photo and video stories uploaded in social media, during all stages of implementation. For the completion of the project there will be an event with demonstration of the new equipment and skills acquired, with the participation of wide range of stakeholders, including the European Commission.

Communication Channels:

1.Digital

Like a main source of information, the new website will retain the main structure as the one from the 2014-2020 period. It will be linked to the single website portal providing access to all programmes of Bulgaria.

The Programme will use Facebook and YouTube as the main social media channels. In order to reach maximum audience MA will use Search Engine Optimization (SEO) and ads in Google (Google Ads), Facebook and You Tube.

Other communication activities include press releases, publications, interviews, video and photo stories, e-brochure/newsletters, info graphics, plates with the Programme logo and EU flag at the building of the MA, NA, JS.

2.Events/trainings

Events are envisaged for the European Cooperation Day and for the celebration of holidays in the CB area, thematically related to Programme objectives and the projects implemented. Meetings will be organised for match-making events and for public discussions. Trainings will be regularly provided for all beneficiaries at the stage of implementation of the projects. All learning materials will be available on the website and social media. Promotional materials will be disseminated on public events.

BUDGET

The communication budget is 0,3% of the total programme resources and is distributed for digital communication (57%), events and trainings (32%) and promotional materials (11%).

MONITORING AND EVALUATION

The communication officer will be appointed following the respective procedure. He will be responsible for monitoring and coordination of communication and visibility measures.

MA will report to the JMC once a year the progress in the implementation of the communication activities and on the achievement of the indicators. All actions will be regularly evaluated and results will be presented for approval to the JMC.

Sources of data for monitoring and evaluation will be the databases of MA, NA and JS, Google Analytics, specific tracking tools for social media platforms and surveys.

Evaluation of the communication strategy will be also part of the programme evaluation.

Type of activities | *Output indicator* / **Target 2029 | *Result indicator* | **Target 2029****

1. **Events** | No of events | **25** | Overall usefulness of the event | **75% CSAT**
2. **Events** | No of participants | **1300** | Overall usefulness of the event for attendees | **75% CSAT**
3. **Publications** | No of publications (including Social media) | **350** | Overall usefulness of the publications | **75% CSAT**
4. **Programme website** | No of visits | **70000** | Overall usefulness of the site/page for readers | **75% CSAT**
5. **Social media** | No. of followers/subscribers | **700** | No. of shares, likes, views, comments and hashtag mentions | **1000**

6. Indication of support to small-scale projects, including small projects within small project funds

Reference: point (i) of Article 17(3), Article 24

The programme allows for projects of limited financial volume to be implemented in compliance with Art.24 of the ETC Regulation.

The programme will provide direct support to regional SMEs to meet new challenges arising from the new EU policy courses of development related with green transition, namely energy efficiency and circular economy. The programme will devise the support to enterprises in full respect of the legally defined support framework which requires a strict application of the de-minimis rules (Regulation (EU) 1407/2013). The corresponding legal provisions impose financial limitations (EUR 200 000 for each undertaking over a 3-year period) on SMEs projects that are eligible for programme funding. Therefore, the support for enterprises under Priority 1 'Environmentally-friendly cross-border region' (20% of the programme budget) will go under the form of small-scale projects for up to EUR 200 000 per undertaking (that includes beneficiaries and partners).

The support to SMEs through a small project fund (as defined in Article 25 of the Regulation (EU) 2021/1059 on ETC) is considered an option whose feasibility will be examined and applied if applicable. Possible selection of SPF as an operation will be at the discretion of the JMC.

7. Implementing provisions

7.1. Programme authorities

Reference: point (a) of Article 17(6)

Table 9

Programme authorities	Name of the institution	Contact name	Position	E-mail
Managing authority	Ministry of Regional Development and Public Works Territorial Cooperation Management Directorate Republic of Bulgaria	Desislava Georgieva	Director of Territorial Cooperation Directorate	D.G.Georgieva@mrrb.government.bg
Audit authority	Executive agency Audit of European Union Funds, Ministry of Finance	Lyudmila Rangelova	Executive Director	aeuf@minfin.bg
National authority (for programmes with participating third or partner countries)	The Directorate for EU Affairs within the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Republic of Türkiye	Bulent Ozcan	Director General to the Directorate General of the Financial Cooperation and Project Implementation at the Directorate for European Union Affairs	bozcan@ab.gov.tr
Group of auditors representatives	Board of Treasury Controllers, Ministry of Treasury and Finance, Republic of Türkiye	Murat Erinc Bayrakci	Deputy Head of Audit Authority	erinc.bayrakci@hmb.gov.tr
Body to which the payments are to be made by the Commission	National Fund Directorate, Ministry of Finance	Manuela Milosheva	Director of National Fund Directorate	natfund@minfin.bg
Body other than the managing authority entrusted with the accounting function	National Fund Directorate, Ministry of Finance	Manuela Milosheva	Director of National Fund Directorate	natfund@minfin.bg

7.2. Procedure for setting up the joint secretariat

Reference: point (b) of Article 17(6)

In accordance with Article 46 (2) of Regulation (EU) 2021/1059, the Managing Authority in cooperation with the National Authority should set up a Joint Secretariat (JS) with staff, taking into account the programme partnership.

The Joint Secretariat assists the Managing Authority and the Monitoring Committee in carrying out their respective functions. The JS also provides information to potential beneficiaries about funding opportunities and assists beneficiaries and partners in the implementation of operations. Where appropriate, it also assists the audit authority.

Based on the positive experience gained in the previous two programming periods, the programme will keep the existing location of the Joint Secretariat in Haskovo, Bulgaria, with a branch office in Edirne, Türkiye. This will ensure smooth transition between the programmes 2014-2020 and 2021-2027 and quick launch of calls for proposals. The Haskovo and Edirne offices have entirely functional and experienced management structures with audited working procedures that can be easily updated.

Staff recruitment should take into account the programme partnership and the recruitment procedures will follow the principles of transparency, non-discrimination and equal opportunities. Recruitment of the new employees (main and branch office) shall be organised through a public procedure, ensuring balanced number of experts from the two countries. The selection procedure will be carried out by MA or NA in accordance with the relevant national legislation. The staff number and the job descriptions will be subject of approval by the JMC. The JS will have a staff fluent in English as well as in one of the official languages of the partner countries (Bulgarian or Turkish).

The Joint Secretariat will be funded by the technical assistance budget.

7.3. Apportionment of liabilities among participating Member States and where applicable, the third or partner countries and OCTs, in the event of financial corrections imposed by the managing authority or the Commission

Reference: point (c) of Article 17(6)

According to art. 69 (2) of Regulation (EU) 2021/1060 - CPR, Partnering Countries shall ensure the legality and regularity of expenditure included in the accounts submitted to the Commission and shall take all required actions to prevent, detect and correct and report on irregularities including fraud. Each partner State shall be responsible for investigating irregularities committed by the beneficiaries located on its territory. Financial correction shall consist of cancelling all or part of the support from the Funds to an operation or programme where expenditure declared to the Commission is found to be irregular. Financial corrections shall be recorded in the annual accounts by the managing authority for the accounting year in which the cancellation is decided.

The managing authority shall ensure that any amount paid as a result of an irregularity is recovered from the lead or sole partner. Partners shall repay to the lead partner any amounts unduly paid. Special provisions regarding the repayment of amounts subject to an irregularity shall be included both in the contract to be signed with the lead partner and in the partnership agreement to be signed between the beneficiaries.

If the lead partner does not succeed in securing repayment from other partners or if the managing authority does not succeed in securing repayment from the lead partner, the partnering country on whose territory the beneficiary concerned is located shall reimburse the managing authority the amount unduly paid to that partner. Where the partnering country has not reimbursed the managing authority any amounts unduly paid to a partner, those amounts shall be subject to a recovery order issued by the Commission which shall be executed, where possible, by offsetting to the respective partnering country.

The managing authority shall be responsible for reimbursing the amounts concerned to the general budget of the Union, in accordance with the apportionment of liabilities among the participating countries as laid down in the cooperation programme and as detailed in the bilateral Memorandum of Implementation.

In accordance with article 104 of Regulation (EU) 2021/1060 – CPR, the Commission has the right of making financial corrections by reducing support from the Funds to a programme and effecting recovery from the partner States in order to exclude from Union financing expenditure which is in breach of applicable Union and national law, including in relation to deficiencies in the effective functioning of the management and control systems.

In case of any financial corrections by the Commission, the two partnering countries commit to recover the amount proportionally with the approved project budgets and performed activities by respectively Bulgarian and Turkish beneficiaries affected by the financial correction. In case of financial corrections by the Commission, due to random or anomalous irregularities, the two partner States commit to investigate on a case by case basis. The financial correction by the Commission shall not prejudice the partner countries' obligation to pursue recoveries under the provisions of the applicable European Regulations.

The bilateral Memorandum of Implementation between the partnering shall provide for detailed provisions with regard to the apportionment of liabilities and debts recovery.

8. Use of unit costs, lump sums, flat rates and financing not linked to costs

Reference: Articles 94 and 95 of Regulation (EU) 2021/1060 (CPR)

Table 10: Use of unit costs, lump sums, flat rates and financing not linked to costs

Intended use of Articles 94 and 95 CPR	Yes	No
From the adoption, the programme will make use of reimbursement of the Union contribution based on unit costs, lump sums and flat rates under the priority according to Article 94 CPR	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
From the adoption, the programme will make use of reimbursement of the Union contribution based on financing not linked to costs according to Article 95 CPR	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

Appendix 1

A. Summary of the main elements

Priority	Fund	Specific objective	Estimated proportion of the total financial allocation within the priority to which the simplified cost option will be applied in %	Type(s) of operation covered		Indicator triggering reimbursement		Unit of measurement for the indicator triggering reimbursement	Type of simplified cost option (standard scale of unit costs, lump sums or flat rates)	Amount (in EUR) or percentage (in case of flat rates) of the simplified cost option
				Code(1)	Description	Code(2)	Description			

(1) This refers to the code for the intervention field dimension in Table 1 of Annex 1 CPR

(2) This refers to the code of a common indicator, if applicable

Appendix 1

B. Details by type of operation

C. Calculation of the standard scale of unit costs, lump sums or flat rates

1. Source of data used to calculate the standard scale of unit costs, lump sums or flat rates (who produced, collected and recorded the data, where the data is stored, cut-off dates, validation, etc):

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2. Please specify why the proposed method and calculation based on Article 94(2) is relevant to the type of operation:

3. Please specify how the calculations were made, in particular including any assumptions made in terms of quality or quantities. Where relevant, statistical evidence and benchmarks should be used and, if requested, provided in a format that is usable by the Commission:

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4. Please explain how you have ensured that only eligible expenditure was included in the calculation of the standard scale of unit cost, lump sum or flat rate:

5. Assessment of the audit authority or authorities of the calculation methodology and amounts and the arrangements to ensure the verification, quality, collection and storage of data:

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Appendix 2

A. Summary of the main elements

Priority	Fund	Specific objective	The amount covered by the financing not linked to costs	Type(s) of operation covered		Conditions to be fulfilled/results to be achieved triggering reimbursement by the Commission	Indicator		Unit of measurement for the conditions to be fulfilled/results to be achieved triggering reimbursement by the Commission	Envisaged type of reimbursement method used to reimburse the beneficiary or beneficiaries
				Code(1)	Description		Code(2)	Description		

(1) This refers to the code for the intervention field dimension in Table 1 of Annex 1 to the CPR and Annex IV to the EMFAF Regulation.

(2) This refers to the code of a common indicator, if applicable.

B. Details by type of operation

Name of the project: Increasing the capacity and cooperation of law enforcement authorities on the territories of Haskovo, Bourgas and Yambol Districts, Edirne and Kırklareli Provinces in the field of migration management for ensuring a safer and more secure Europe and Neighbours

Project summary:

The continuing migration pressure in the CB area is leading to the need to enhance the institutional coordination for operational cooperation in the field of inland detected illegal migration. The Regional Directorates of the Ministry of Interior in Haskovo, Bourgas and Yambol (Bulgaria) and the Law Enforcement departments of Edirne and Kırklareli provinces (Türkiye) have been isolated, so far, from the vast EU institutional and financial support in the field of illegal migration, which goes mainly to border authorities. The above listed institutions deal with irregular migrants intercepted inside the territory of the respective country (inland detection). Planned trainings will enhance knowledge about regulations on international and European level and also increase language skills that will play an important role in diminishing barriers due to language. Supply of specialized equipment will provide law enforcement officers with the equipment necessary for more effective counteraction to irregular migration. The project will help to build a system in case a future crises and change the way of reaction from ad hoc responses to durable solutions, and all this can be done if key institutional actors are involved in the process, encompassing the two main areas where irregular migration has been detected – at the border and inland. The communication activities will be in the light of “security” – up-to-date photo and video stories uploaded in social media, during all stages of implementation. For the completion of the project there will be an event with demonstration of the new equipment and skills acquired, with the participation of wide range of stakeholders, including the European Commission.

Timetable:

Launching the call for strategic project proposal – 2022

Assessment of the project proposal and pre-contracting procedures – 2023

Decision of the Joint Monitoring Committee – 2023

Contracting – 2023

Implementation –24-36 months

DOCUMENTS

Document title	Document type	Document date	Local reference	Commission reference	Files	Sent date	Sent by
Map of programme area	Map of Programme Area	20-May-2022	Map of programme area	Ares(2022)3826621	Map of programme area	20-May-2022	Georgieva, Desislava
Programme snapshot 2021TC16PCB005 1.0	Snapshot of data before send	20-May-2022		Ares(2022)3826621	Programme_snapshot_2021TC16PCB005_1.0_en.pdf	20-May-2022	Georgieva, Desislava