|  |
| --- |
|  |

***SUMMARY***

***in English***

**2022**

**ON THE COMPATIBILITY OF THE ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECTS OF THE "INTERREG-IPA CBC BULGARIA-** **TÜRKIYE" 2014-2020 PROGRAMME UNDER THE INSTRUMENT FOR PRE-ACCESSION ASSISTANCE (IPA II) WITH THE STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT (SEA) REPORT**

**ANNUAL REPORT**

INTRODUCTION

The Monitoring Report is prepared in accordance with:

SEA Report of the Interreg - IPA CBC Bulgaria – Türkiye Programme 2014 – 2020.

Directive 2001/42/ЕС on the assessment of the effects of certain plans and programmes on the environment (referred to as the Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive or SEA Directive)

GENERAL INFORMATION ON THE PROGRESS OF THE PROGRAMME IMPLEMENTATION

In Year 2022, the number of subsidy contracts monitored and implemented according to priority axis and their specific objectives is as follows:

* Priority axis 1 "Environment", Specific objective 1.1 – no projects were implemented in 2022;
* Priority axis 1 "Environment", Specific objective 1.2 – 2 investment projects (including the Strategic Project under the Third Call);
* Priority axis 2 "Sustainable tourism", Specific objective 2.1 – 10 investment projects;
* Priority axis 2 "Sustainable tourism", Specific objective 2.2 – no projects were implemented in 2022;
* Priority axis 2 "Sustainable tourism", Specific objective 2.3 – 1 "soft measure" project was implemented in 2022.

In 2022 the last 12 projects (11 investment and 1 soft measure) under the Second Call for Proposals of the Interreg - IPA CBC Programme Bulgaria - Türkiye were completed.

INFORMATION ON THE MEASURES AND REQUIREMENTS FOR PREVENTION, REDUCTION AND ELIMINATION AS FULLY AS POSSIBLE OF POTENTIAL NEGATIVE EFFECTS FROM THE PROGRAMME IMPLEMENTATION

According to item I “Measures and requirements for prevention, reduction and elimination as completely as possible of potential negative effects from the Programme implementation” of the MOEW Environmental Statement №: 9-5/2014 г., the following requirements shall be met by the project proposals:

1. Plans, programmes and projects, as well as investment proposals, subject of INTERREG-IPA CBC Programme Bulgaria- Türkiye, which fall in the scope of the Bulgarian Environmental Protection Act or outside it, and under the provisions of Art. 31 of the Biological Diversity Act are a subject of compatibility assessment with the scope and purpose of the preservation of protected areas. The above interventions may be approved only after a positive decision/statement on the EIA/SEA/environmental compliance assessment, following the respective recommendations, as well as the conditions, requirements and measures set in the decision/statement;
2. The development of tourism should be in conformity with the recreation capacity of the territory and a proper waste water treatment and waste management are to be ensured.
3. Development of tourist packages under Priority Axis 2 should consider that activities as "safari" hiking, "off-routes" tracking for monitoring of rare and endangered species” should not be included, since they lead to significant damages on the environment and in particular on biodiversity.

Taking into consideration the above requirements, the Managing Authority has included all of them in the Guidelines for applicants (GfA) under the First, Second and Third Call for proposals, as follows:

* Every investment proposal envisaging construction works is required to present as an attachment to the application form (AF) a positive environmental impact assessment (EIA) required by the national legislation or a statement issued by the relevant body clearly stating that Environmental Impact Assessment is not necessary;
* All investment activities have to be in line with the relevant national legislation for the respective type of construction works (including those related to development of tourism);
* Activities as "safari" hiking, "off-routes" tracking for monitoring of rare and endangered species” are included in the lists of ineligible activities for all Priority axes (PA).

According to the provisions in GfA, in case of investment projects that envisage construction works, the applicants shall provide:

- **Either** Positive Environmental Impact Assessment (positive opinion from the relevant body), required by the national legislation;

- **Or** Statement issued by the relevant body clearly stating that Environmental Impact Assessment is not necessary (Annex B6.4 to the Application Forms).

*During the assessment process* the compatibility of the project proposals to the above requirements was duly checked by the assessors and only projects that met the above criteria were proposed and approved for financing.

After contracting, all projects financed under the Second and Third Calls carried out a self-assessment of the expected environmental consequences of the activities envisaged in the projects in relation to the six environmental issues (air and climate; biodiversity, fauna and flora; waters; soils; population and human health; cultural/natural heritage and landscape). For the purposes of the self-assessment, the questionnaire set out in section 10.2 of the EC report was used, and the results were compared with the expected effects for the relevant Specific Objective according to the EC report.

The table below presents summary of the information on the self-assessment carried out at the final stage of implementation of the subsidy contracts under the Second Call, completed in 2022 and the annual self-assessment of the subsidy contract in progress in 2022 under the Third Call. The information collected from the beneficiaries is categorized to an ordinal scale from 1 to 10.

**SUMMARY**

of the expected effects on the six environmental issues

based on the answers provided by the Lead partners in the Compatibility Check Sheets

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Impact** | **Air and climate** | **Biodiversity, Fauna and Flora** | **Water** | | **Soil** | **Population and Human Health** | **Cultural/Natural Heritage and Landscape** |
| Number of projects | | | | | | |
| Neutral (1) | 8 | 10 | | 10 | 11 | 12 | 2 |
| Very low (2) | 2 | 1 | | 2 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| Low (3) | - | - | | - | - | - | - |
| Distinct (4) | 2 | - | | - | - | - | - |
| Moderate (5) | - | 1 | | - | 1 | - | 2 |
| Considerable (6) | - | - | | - | - | - | - |
| Significant (7) | - | 1 | | 1 | - | - | - |
| Strong (8) | 1 | - | | - | - | - | - |
| Very strong (9) | - | - | | - | - | - | - |
| Extremely Strong (10) | - | - | | - | - | - | 8 |

**INFORMATION ON THE MEASURES CONCERNING MONITORING AND CONTROL OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PROGRAMME**

The table below provides summarized information on the level of achievement of the SEA indicators under the Programme as presented in section 10.1 of the SEA Report. The values are in accordance with the ones in the draft Annual Implementation Report (AIR) for 2022.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| ID | Indicator  (name of indicator) | Measurement  unit | Target value (2023) | Annual Value | | | | | | | | Source  of data |
| 2016 | 2017 | 2018 | 2019 | 2020 | 2021 | 2022 | 2023 |
| OI 1.1.1 | Number of interventions related to risk prevention and management of natural and man-made hazards and disasters | number | 10 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 6 | 0 | 5 | 0 |  | Annual Implementation Reports |
| OI 1.1.2 | Number of joint strategies / common guidelines, trainings, public awareness campaigns, exchange of experience for risk prevention and management of natural and man-made hazards and disasters | number | 20 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 14 | 0 | 11 | 0 |  | Annual Implementation Reports |
| OI 1.1.3 | Population benefiting from flood protection measures (Persons) | number | 402749 | 0 | 0 | 200000 | 202749 | 0 | 127625 | 0 |  | Annual Implementation Reports |
| OI 1.2.1 | Number of nature protected areas addressed by interventions | number | 17 | 0 | 0 | 10 | 2 | 5 | 3 | 4 |  | Annual Implementation Reports |
| OI 1.2.2 | Number of capacity building / awareness activities related to nature protection, sustainable use and management of common natural resources | number | 39 | 0 | 0 | 19 | 10 | 13 | 12 | 7 |  | Annual Implementation Reports |
| OI 2.1.1 | Total length of reconstructed or upgraded access roads to natural, cultural and historic tourism sites | Kilometres | 7,84 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1,0272 | 0 | 1,483 | 5,386 |  | Annual Implementation Reports |
| OI 2.1.2 | Total length of newly built, reconstructed or upgraded cycling routes / walking paths | Kilometres | 9,88 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0,746 | 0 | 2,240 | 24,195 |  | Annual Implementation Reports |
| OI 2.1.3 | Number of newly built / reconstructed facilities in / leading to touristic sites | number | 19 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 7 | 0 | 3 | 9 |  | Annual Implementation Reports |
| OI 2.1.4 | Number of reconstructed / restored cultural and historical touristic sites | number | 15 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 3 | 10 |  | Annual Implementation Reports |

*Note: Reporting of the achieved values of the indicators is done with the final project progress reports. Annual performance is assessed for all completed projects in the respective year with approved final progress reports for each of them.*

**GENERAL CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

All specific measures and requirements for the prevention, reduction and as complete as possible elimination of subsequent negative consequences of the implementation of the Program laid down in the Opinion on the environmental assessment of the Ministry of Environment and Forestry have been duly fulfilled both during the stage of application, evaluation and selection, and during project implementation. 12 out of the 13 projects in implementation in 2022 envisaged investment activities for which the beneficiaries have provided the necessary environmental documents, issued by the relevant competent authorities (depending on the applicable national legislation). The submitted documents show that the planned activities will not affect the natural habitats and protected areas, and that there is no possibility of a negative effect on the environment and human health.

The summary and analysis of the results of the self-assessment carried out by the beneficiaries showed that all the projects had a ***positive or neutral impact*** on the environmental components. The impact on the various components of the environment is achieved or expected to be achieved mainly through the following measures:

* The relatively favorable impact on the "**Air and Climate**" component in Year 2022 is achieved through the planned activities under Specific Objective 1.2 and Specific Objective 2.1 related to environmental protection. They have an indirect effect on reducing air pollution, three of them support environmentally friendly transport, and through the implemented soft activities they promote responsible behavior of society, by involving citizens in the fight against climate change. Several projects within SO 2.1 have had a positive effect on reduction of air pollution, thanks to the reconstructed and modernized park areas and places for recreation and entertainment, the built pedestrian alleys and bicycle routes, new tourist facilities, and interventions in natural areas. The remaining projects do not have a significant direct contribution or have a neutral impact on the reduction of air pollution. Implementation of the Strategic Project is expected to have an indirect positive effect on air and climate.
* Regarding the "**Biodiversity, Fauna and Flora**" component, the projects implemented in 2022 had a neutral effect, as they did not have direct interventions in the protected natural areas, but primarily built responsible behavior through research activities and training courses for conservation and restoration of natural heritage. One of the projects under SO 1.2 has been assessed as having an indirect effect on the protection of ecosystems. Through the ongoing activities for the development of common methodologies and models for the responsible use of natural resources, implementation of the Strategic Project is expected to have a positive impact on the protection of biodiversity in the Black Sea in the long term.
* Regarding the "**Waters**" component, the implemented projects under SO 1.2, SO 2.1 and SO 2.3 have a neutral or weak positive effect. One of the projects within the scope of Priority axis 1 "Environment" - the Strategic project "Cross-border regions collaborate for BLUE GROWTH COLLABS" - is expected to have a positive effect on the ecological and chemical state of water bodies, the promotion of the sustainable use of water resources and the promotion of responsible public behavior by involving citizens in the sustainable use of water. The project envisages contribution to compensating for the lack of data and information on the ecological status of aquatic ecosystems in the target region, as well as developing and implementing common methodologies and pilot studies of aquatic ecosystems and diffuse pollution in the regions of Burgas and Edirne. The project will also build on existing capacity to research and monitor the ecological status of local ecosystems by providing infrastructure and equipment for scientists and experts. The activities of all projects implemented in 2022 within the framework of Priority axis 2 "Sustainable tourism" are not directly aimed at this component, but an indirect positive effect on the promotion of the sustainable use of water resources can be sought as a result of the initiatives to increase knowledge in the field of environmental protection and attracting the interest of tourists and young people to the sustainable use of water resources.
* Regarding the "**Soils**" component, all projects implemented in 2022 have been assessed with a neutral effect on preserving the functionality of soil resources, due to the fact that their activities are not directly aimed at this component. The soft measures implemented in 2022 under two projects are expected to have a favourable effect on the promotion of responsible behavior of society by organizing information and training events to familiarize with the problems of soil resources and their sustainable use, as well as through nature protection initiatives, training and exchange of experience related to the protection of soil resources.
* The "**Population and Human Health**" component was represented in the smallest part of the projects implemented in 2022 - only one project indicated insignificant positive impact on the component, which was due to the organized information and training events. The remaining projects have a neutral impact on the population and human health. It should be added here that the activities for the supply of recycling equipment carried out within SO 1.2 also have an effect on the promotion of sustainable waste management and the protection of human health.
* A significant positive effect was reported by most projects implemented in 2022 under the "**Cultural and natural heritage and landscapes**" component. These are the projects within SO 2.1, which are mainly aimed at increasing the attractiveness of the cultural and natural heritage through measures for its preservation and restoration, such as ensuring access, conservation and restoration, socialization of the environment, etc. The majority of projects financed under Specific Objective 2.1 and Specific Objective 2.3 are aimed at the use of natural resources to promote the development of sustainable tourism. The project activities are directly related to the four spheres of the component - preservation and restoration of cultural and natural heritage, the promotion of sustainable management and planning of cultural and natural landscapes, the sustainable use of natural resources to achieve sustainable tourism and the promotion of responsible awareness of society through increasing knowledge and awareness of preservation and protection of cultural heritage and landscape, while at the same time the contribution to each of them was highly appreciated by almost all projects. The "soft measures" of the projects indirectly contribute in a long-term aspect to the protection of natural and cultural heritage, by promoting the sustainable use and natural restoration and management of natural and cultural resources. The planned information campaigns on the projects increase the awareness and knowledge of the general public to promote responsible behavior for the protection of cultural and natural heritage.

According to the recommendations provided in the environmental opinion, activities such as "safari" tourism, "off-road" trekking for observation of rare and endangered species are not foreseen in the contracted projects. In addition, the realized investments are in accordance with the national legislation for the planned and implemented types of construction activities (including those related to the development of tourism, preservation of natural and cultural heritage, waste management, etc.).

All recommendations set out in the opinion on ecological assessment, prepared by the Ministry of Environment and Water of the Republic of Bulgaria, are strictly observed at every stage of application, evaluation and selection of the projects proposed for financing under the Interreg - IPA CBC Programme Bulgaria - Türkiye 2014 - 2020, and the recommendations brought to the attention of the Ministry of Regional development and Public Works with the letters of approval of the annual reports on monitoring and control of the impact on the environment and human health during the implementation of the Programme, have been taken into account in the preparation of subsequent annual reports.

Taking into account the above, a conclusion can be made that at the moment no corrective measures are necessary, since all the projects financed under the Second Call, which ended their implementation in 2022, as well as the project financed under the Third Call, which was in process of implementation in 2022, are in line with the provisions of the Strategic Environmental Assessment Report and none of them is expected to have a negative effect on the environment for any the six environmental issues set.