



European Territorial Cooperation Programme

**Greece-Bulgaria
2007-2013**

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ABBREVIATIONS

AA	Audit Authority
BG	Bulgaria
CA	Certifying Authority
CAP	Common Agricultural Policy
CBC	Cross-Border Cooperation
CI	Community Initiative
EC	European Commission
ERDF	European Regional Development Fund
ESF	European Social Fund
EU	European Union
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
IT	Information Technology
JPD	Joint Programming Document
MA	Managing Authority
MS	Member States
NGO	Non Governmental Organization
NSRF	National Strategic Reference Framework
NUTS	Nomenclature of Territorial Units for Statistics
OP	Operational Programme
PA	Priority Axis
Programme	Programme Greece-Bulgaria 2007-2013
RP	Regional Policy
SMEs	Small and Medium sized Enterprises
SWOT	Strengths, Weakness, Opportunities, Threats
TA	Technical Assistance
VAT	Value Added Tax

A. INTRODUCTION

I. Introduction

The Greece – Bulgaria INTERREG IVA 2007-2013 Programme is an important program under the European Territorial Cooperation Objective of the Programming Period 2007 - 2013, given the recent inclusion of Bulgaria as a new Member State in the European Union in 2007. The European Territorial Cooperation objective has been proposed by the European Commission as part of its cohesion policy reform package for 2007 aiming at strengthening cooperation in order to encourage balanced, sustainable development throughout the European area.

To this scope, the present Programming Document that has been formulated for the Programme aims to meet the challenges set by the opportunities and the difficulties of the targeted area and to provide means to overcome the hurdles posed for balanced and sustainable economic and social development.

The eligible area of the programme is comprised of 7 Districts on the Greek side (Evros, Kavala, Xanthi, Rodopi, Drama, Thessaloniki and Serres) and 4 Districts on the Bulgarian side (Blagoevgrad, Smolyan, Kardjali, Haskovo), covering an area of 40.202 km² and 2.812.236 inhabitants. The first draft of the programme was presented to the Directorate General of Regional Policy on the 9th of March.

The Programming Document has been formulated in line with Regulations No 1080/2006 and 1083/2006 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 5 July 2006 on the European Regional Development Fund, all relevant EC Regulations on ERDF and Structural Funds, National Legislation, and according to the EU directive 2001/42/EC. An analytical description of the strategic scope of the Programming Document, its specific goals, priority axes, etc. is described below.

II. Legislative Framework

The present document was formulated based on the following European and National Legislation:

European Legislation

- Council Regulation (EC) No 1083/2006 of 11 July 2006 laying down general provisions on the European Regional Development Fund, the European Social Fund and the Cohesion Fund and repealing Regulation (EC) No 1260/1999
- Corrigendum to Council Regulation (EC) No 1083/2006 of 11 July 2006 Annex IV – categories of expenditure (already mentioned by the last bullet point)
- Regulation (EC) No 1081/2006 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 5 July 2006 on the European Social Fund and Repealing Regulation (EC) No 1784/1999
- Regulation (EC) No 1080/2006 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 5 July 2006 on the European Regional Development Fund and Repealing Regulation (EC) No 1783/1999
- Council Decision of 6 October 2006 on Community Strategic Guidelines for Cohesion
- Commission Decision of 4 August 2006 fixing an indicative allocation by Member State of the commitment appropriations for the European territorial cooperation objective for the period 2007-2013
- Commission Decision of 31 October 2006 drawing up the list of regions and areas eligible for funding from the European Regional Development Fund under the cross-border and transnational strands of the European territorial cooperation objective for the period 2007 to 2013
- Commission Regulation (EC) No 1828/2006 of 8 December 2006 setting out rules for the implementation of Council Regulation (EC) No 1083/2006 laying down general provisions on the European Regional Development Fund, the European Social Fund and the Cohesion Fund and of Regulation (EC) No 1080/2006 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 5 July 2006 on the European Regional Development Fund and its corrigendum

Other European Documents

- Programming Period 2007-2013: Aide-Mémoire for the Desk Officers, EC DG REGIO
- The New Programming Period 2007-2013 – INDICATIVE GUIDELINES ON EVALUATION METHODS: MONITORING AND EVALUATION INDICATORS (Working Document No. 2), EC DG REGIO, August 2006

- The New Programming Period 2007-2013 - INDICATIVE GUIDELINES ON EVALUATION METHODS: EVALUATION DURING THE PROGRAMMING PERIOD (Working Document No. 5), EC DG REGIO, October 2006

Greek Official Documents

- National Strategic Reference Framework 2007-2013, Hellenic Republic, Ministry of Economy and Finance, General Secretariat of Investments and Development, January 2007
- Operational programme of Macedonia and Thrace 2007-2013 (2nd draft, December 2006)
- Sectoral Operational Programmes 2007-2013

Bulgarian Official Documents

- National Strategic Reference Framework 2007-2013, Republic of Bulgaria, December 2006
- Operational Programme Regional Development 2007-2013, Ministry of Regional Development and Public Works (Draft version 9, October 2006)
- Regional Development Programme of South-West Planning Region 2007-2013, Ministry of Regional Development and Public Works (June 2005)
- Regional Development Programme of South-Central Planning Region 2007-2013, Ministry of Regional Development and Public Works (June 2005)
- Sectoral Interim Evaluation of the EU Pre-Accession Instrument Phare R/BG/REG/0601 (19/7/2006)
- Interim Evaluation of the EU Pre-Accession Instrument Phare R/BG/TRA/0506 (1/9/2005)
- Interim Evaluation of the EU Pre-Accession Instrument Phare R/BG/TRA/0402 (7/12/2004)

B. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. Programme Summary

The present Operational Programme lays down the framework for European Territorial Cross Border Cooperation between Greece and Bulgaria. The programme aims at promoting cross border cooperation by bringing together the different actors of the cross border area to strengthen the development of the region and its transformation into a centre for sustainable development and expansion of the European Economic Area in the hinterland of the Balkans, the Black Sea zone and the Eastern Mediterranean Sea's.

The Territorial Cross Border Cooperation Operational Programme Greece-Bulgaria 2007-2013 focuses at the strengthening of networks and the cooperation in the fields of border security, natural resources' management, business and research networks, in order to provide viable solutions for unhindered communication via modern infrastructure.

Furthermore it intends to promote the harmonious, balanced and sustainable development of the cross border area, while reducing the economic and social territorial disparities which have arisen in counties and regions lagging behind, and speeding-up their economic and social restructuring. In this context the Programme will support the development and implementation of joint projects / operations in the cross border area.

This European Territorial Cross Border Cooperation Operational Programme is the first to address the Greece-Bulgaria border area as an internal border of the EU, as a result of Bulgaria's accession to the EU in January 2007. The proposed strategy represents a coherent and effective response to the cooperation area's identified needs, obstacles and weaknesses and intends to be the vehicle for its socio-economic sustainable cohesion and development.

The Programme will promote cooperation across the cross border area by concentrating on the strategic dimension of European territorial cross border development which involves and benefits local communities.

2. Description of the Programming Process

The Greece – Bulgaria INTERREG IVA Cross-border Programme 2007-2013 has been prepared under the European Territorial Cooperation Objective (Objective 3) for the new Programming Period by a Joint Task Force composed of staff from the INTERREG Managing Authority on the Greek side and representatives of the Ministry of Regional Development and Public Works on the Bulgarian side. During the formulation of the programme document, the Joint Task Force was supported by external experts. Several factors were taken into account: the inclusion of Bulgaria as a new Member State, the changes induced in the cross-border cooperation because of this fact and the new regulations for the new Programming Period.

The Joint Task Force proceeded to the selection of the Technical Consultant for the drafting of the Programming Document (TREK Consulting S.A.), of the Ex-ante Evaluators and the SEA Assessors (ECO 3), and of the Technical Consultants for the Drafting of the Programme Manual (AAM Management Information Consulting Ltd.).

It should be noted at this point that the programme covers all conditions required by the relevant Structural Funds Regulations. In order to provide the programme partners with additional information, a programme manual will be produced. The Programme Manual will include and further specify information already included in the Programme, such as the criteria for the eligibility of Beneficiaries, the detailed description of the procedures for the call of proposals and the selection of projects, the specific areas of intervention per Priority Axis, guidelines and rules on project preparation and formulation, and any other information that will help and support project partners in the preparation of the project proposals.

Different methodological tools were used for the drafting of the Programming Document, which ensure the convergence of the document both to EU policies, regulations and National policies of the two participating Member States and to the considerations of the beneficiaries to be addressed by the programme. Thus, both a bottom – up and a top - down methodological approaches were used. Each of these methods and steps undertaken for collecting and analyzing data will be further analyzed in the following paragraphs with the scope to support readers comprehend the different analyses and considerations taken into account for the formulation of the current Programming Document.

As regards the top-down approach, all relevant EU regulation and policies, previous interventions at the cross-border area, the current National Strategic Frameworks of the two countries, the NSRFs currently under approval (approved for the Greek side on the 30/03/2007) and the respective sectoral and regional plans were taken under consideration, as well as all other relevant documentation thoroughly listed in Part I entitled "Legislative Framework". The consultation of all this documentation resulted in the identification of the European and national priorities and interventions promoted at a national and international level.

The formulation of the Programming Document provides a thorough analysis of the existing situation in the cross-border area. Data and information were collected from multiple reliable sources and analyzed, so as to produce results that could then be incorporated in the SWOT Analysis. Furthermore, the main developmental tendencies for each sector were recorded and analyzed. All the aforementioned information was used to formulate the Strategy and Priority Axes of the Programme.

At the same time, a bottom-up approach was also initiated for collecting information and opinions. To this scope, a questionnaire was formulated and distributed by the relevant authorities (MA in Greece and MRDPW in Bulgaria) based on the idea that information should be collected to find out the ranking of interest of the thematic sectors in the cross-border area and the possible project ideas that could be jointly generated. This information could then be used for the identification of the strategic Priority Axes of the Programme.

The formulated questionnaire had two main parts:

- In the first part, the potential beneficiaries had to rank the thematic sectors with a scale from 1 to 12.
- In the second part, the potential beneficiaries were invited to suggest project proposals and provide detailed information on the maturity of the projects, the potential consortia etc.

A total of 65 questionnaires were gathered from different organizations located in the Programme area, while another 16 were received on joint project ideas from organizations residing on the Bulgarian side.

The analysis of the questionnaires resulted in the identification of the thematic sectors having a major interest for the beneficiaries of the cross-border area, while at the same

time, the thematic sectors for which mature project ideas already exist have been identified (pls. view Annex II Analysis of Questionnaires).

The information collected from the questionnaires (bottom-up approach) was then combined with the identified needs and opportunities of the cross-border area (top-down approach) and resulted in the identified strategy, priority axes and areas of intervention of the Programme. What should further be noted is that, the strategy and Priority Axes finally formulated by the Joint Task Force were publicly presented and discussed during a Public Consultation held in Komotini on the 12th of February 2007. Multiple representatives from both Member States attended. Feedback from this Public Consultation was also taken into consideration in the drafting of the Programming Document.

It is important to note that the 3rd Draft of the Programming Document was discussed in Brussels with the Directorate General of REGIONAL POLICY on Friday 9th March 2007, where feedback was collected from all sides for the finalization of the Programming Document. Furthermore, the final versions of the Ex-Ante Evaluation and SEA of the Programme were presented and discussed at the Workshop held in Sofia on Tuesday 27th March. The final versions were taken into consideration and their summaries were integrated in the present Programming Document.

The following table summarizes the Joint Task Force meetings that took place and their respective conclusions:

Meetings	Main points
14/12/2005 Sofia, Bulgaria	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Joint working bodies need to be established for co-ordination and better project preparation and implementation. An emphasis has to be given on future programming, establishment of relevant structures and project pipeline preparation.
26/1/2006 Sofia, Bulgaria	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Terms of Reference to be made for the tendering procedures to start as soon as possible. A strict timeschedule and division of responsibilities has to be established. Appointment of the members of the Programming Committee and the drafting Working Group has to be finalised. Examples of Terms of Reference / tasks / composition will be sent by EC representative.
2/3/2006 Thessaloniki, Greece	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Synthesis of the Drafting Working Group – delegation of responsibilities. The issue of the Monitoring Committee was thoroughly discussed. Creation of link within the INTERREG website related to the preparation of the programmes.
13/4/2006 Sandanski, Bulgaria	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The requirements for EX-ANTE and SEA experts were discussed. Joint Programming Committee (JPC): discussion on its role and composition. It was decided that the draft of the JPC structure and rules of procedures would be sent before Easter. A contact point was proposed to be situated on BG territory
20/9/2006 Thessaloniki, Greece	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The formulation of a Programme Complement (or Programme Manual) was decided. The consultant to undertake the task will be selected by the Bulgarian side after a call for proposals. Discussion on the JPC, its role and composition. Joint Technical Secretariat; consisted of 8 members, three members from each side, one secretary staff and a head officer.
30/10/2006 Blagoevgrad, Bulgaria	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Confirmation of Bulgarian eligible regions and discussion on Potential beneficiaries. Discussion on the methodology and distribution of Questionnaires to the potential beneficiaries. The final version of the questionnaire to be sent to the stakeholders, accompanied by explanatory letter.

Meetings	Main points
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Task Force decided to hold three public consultation meetings in border region (two in Greece and one in Bulgaria)
7/2/2007 Sandanski, Bulgaria	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Presentation of draft Chapter Two of the Operational Programme for the period 2007-2013 and discussions on the proposed Strategies, Priority Axes and Areas of Intervention. Preparation of the public consultation that took place in Komotini, Greece, on 12 February 2007.
12/2/2007 Komotini, Greece	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <u>Managing Structures:</u> The current meeting focused on clarifying the role and composition of the Joint Technical Secretariat and the Info Point in the Bulgarian side of the border that will be located in Smolyan. <u>Project Selection process:</u> The main points of the Project Selection process were discussed. Programming Document will only introduce an outline of the Implementing Procedures and will not go into details, unless this is explicitly requested by the EU guidelines The Technical Assistance Consultant, selected by the Bulgarian side, is already working on a Programme Manual / Internal Document that will detail all necessary implementation procedures.
9/3/2007 Brussels, Belgium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Presentation of the Draft OP to the DG REGIO
27/3/2007 Sofia, Bulgaria	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Presentation of the final versions of the Ex-Ante evaluation and the SEA for the OP Greece-Bulgaria 2007-2013. The PHARE Implementing Agency cannot further extend the contract with ECO 3 for SEA and Ex-Ante without financial coverage of the additional tasks. The Greek side informed the participants that they will explore the possibility for solving this problem by a "direct contract" to the same expert/s.

C. PROGRAMME AREA

3. Eligible Areas (NUTS III)

TABLE 1: ELIGIBLE AREA	
NUTS II	<p style="text-align: center;">4 REGIONS:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eastern Macedonia-Thrace (GR11) • Central Macedonia (GR12) • South-West (BG41) • South-Central (BG42)
NUTS III	<p style="text-align: center;">7 PREFECTURES & 4 DISTRICTS (OBLAST):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evros (GR111) • Kavala (GR115)* • Xanthi (GR112) • Rodopi (GR113) • Drama (GR114) • Thessaloniki (GR122) • Serres (GR126) • Blagoevgrad (BG413) • Smolyan (BG424) • Kardjali (BG425) • Haskovo (BG422)
NUTS IV	154 MUNICIPALITIES

¹ Based on the flexibility rule provided by Article 21 (1) of the ERDF Regulation, Kavala district / Greece (NUTS III) to be included in the Program Greece – Bulgaria 2007-2013 as adjacent area with a total project expenditure undertaken in this area not exceeding 20% of the total expenditure under the programme.

4. Maps



Figure 1: Map of the Eligible Area Greece-Bulgaria²

² http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/9/90/EU_location_BUL.png

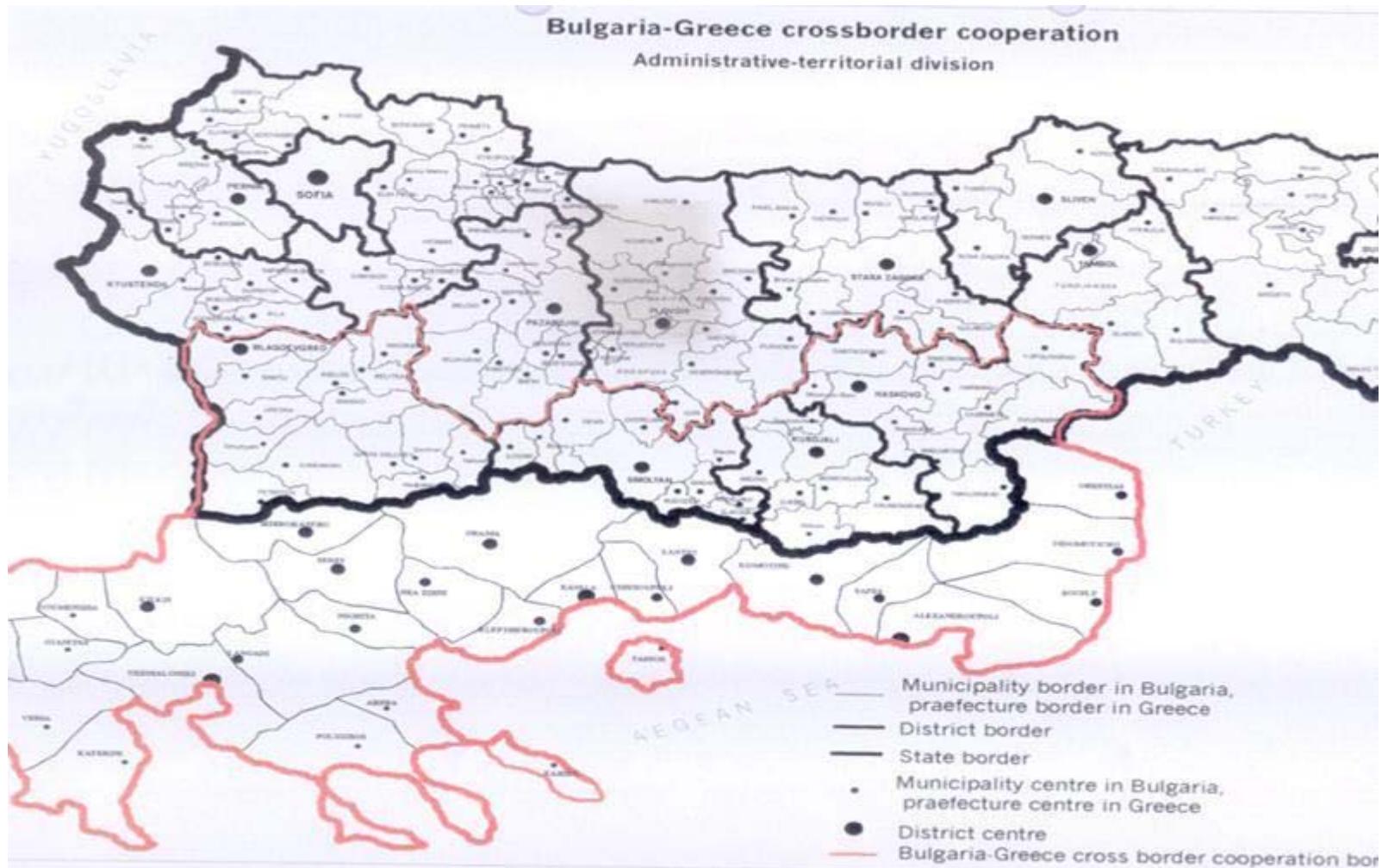


Figure 2: Administrative – Territorial Division of the Eligible Area Greece-Bulgaria³

³ Programming document INTERREG III A/PHARE CBC GR – BG, REVISED VERSION 2004

5. Adjacent Area

In addition to the eligible NUTS III area for the implementation of the Greece – Bulgaria Cross-border cooperation programme 2007-2013, it is suggested, based on the flexibility rule provided by Article 21 (1) of the ERDF Regulation, that Kavala would be included as an adjacent NUTS III area with a total project expenditure undertaken in this area not exceeding 20% of the total expenditure under the programme.

There are sound arguments to include Kavala in the Programme area, as it is an eligible NUTS III area in the current INTERREG/PHARE CBC Greece-Bulgaria programme. Projects of almost 6.000.000,00 € enhancing and promoting entrepreneurship, highlighting tourist resources in the broader area mostly with Blagoevgrad and Smolyan (Bulgaria), protecting and promoting biotopes and cultural resources, are currently being implemented.

As the area of Kavala, was part of the eligible area during the former programming period 2000-2006 and actively participated in the successful realization of projects in the above-mentioned sectors, organizations, local authorities and other entities (public and private) of the area have developed networks of cooperation and exchanges.

The unhindered cooperation between Kavala and mainly Blagoevgrad and Smolyan, has been encouraged by the proximity and the easy access. Kavala is the closest port giving access to the Aegean Sea. The Port of **Phillippos II** in Kavala, with commercial and tourist facilities, provides unique opportunities to the inhabitants living in the Bulgarian side of the eligible area. The International Airport **Great Alexander** in Kavala is closer to people living in the districts of Blagoevgrad, Smolyan and Kardjali than any other airport (within or outside the eligible area).

The commercial, cultural, scientific, technical and other type of exchanges and cooperation between people and authorities of both Kavala and the eligible Bulgarian areas, are facilitated by the existing networks (Egnatia odos), the foreseen ones (vertical axis of Ehinos-Xanthi), and the cross border station in Exohi- Xanthi that decrease the time and the distance facilitating access to both sides.

This district shares the same needs, constraints and features with the cross border area. With its inclusion, the eligible territory becomes more cohesive.

D. PRESENTATION OF THE PROGRAMME

Part 1: Analysis of the Existing Situation and Socioeconomic Environment

1.1. Existing Situation Analysis in the Programme Area

The cross-border cooperation area extends to 40.202 km² and has a total population of 2.812.236 inhabitants. It covers four territorial units level NUTS II (Regions), 11 territorial units NUTS III (Prefectures in Greece & Districts in Bulgaria) and 154 territorial units NUTS IV (Municipalities), as indicated in the following table 2.

TABLE 2: General Data of the Eligible Area

	CBC area	Greece	Bulgaria
Territory (km²)	40.202	21.808,00	18.393,90
% of the country		16.5%	16,6%
Population	2.812.236	1.923.035	889.201
% of the country		17,28%	11,52%
Administrative-territorial and planning units			
NUTS II	2 regions: Eastern Macedonia-Thrace and Central Macedonia 2 planning regions: South-West and South-Central		
NUTS III	7 Prefectures: Evros, Kavala*, Xanthi, Rodopi, Drama, Thessaloniki, Serres (GR) <i>*Kavala (as adjacent area)</i> 4 Districts: Blagoevgrad, Smolyan, Kardjali, Haskovo (BG)		
NUTS IV	154 municipalities		

The eligible area extends to the cross-border frontiers of Greece and Bulgaria. During the last years the cross-border area developed a significant degree of cooperation. Significant impetus to cross-border cooperation was given by the Community initiative INTERREG I (1989-1993), despite the relatively small amount of funds that were allocated.

Since the mid 1990's and through the INTERREG II Community Initiative (1994-1999), the need for cross-border cooperation was established and significant projects were promoted as essential prerequisites for the strengthening of economic cooperation between the two countries, focusing on the border areas.

The Programme INTERREG IIIA / PHARE CBC Greece–Bulgaria 2000-2006 was approved by the European Union on 27/12/2001, pursuant to decision No (2001) 4076/27-12-2001 of the European Commission. The general objective of the programme was the region's development into a centre and focal point for peace, sustainable development and expansion of the European Economic Area in the hinterland of the Balkans, the Black Sea zone and the Eastern Mediterranean Sea. The programme enhanced the cross-border cooperation in the fields of border security, natural resources' management, business and research networks, and provided viable solutions for unhindered communication via modern infrastructure.

1.1.1. Geographical Features & Environment

Geography

The cross-border co-operation area covers 40.202 km². It spreads from the Bulgarian frontier with the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia in the West, to the valley of the **Maritsa (Evros) River** in the East, and the **Thracian** lowlands in the North. The region comprises the mountain ranges of **Rila**, **Pirin** and **Rhodopi**, featuring outstanding forests and great potential for development of tourism. In the area are also located the rivers **Strymon (Struma)**, **Nestos (Mesta)**, **Ardas (Arda)** and **Evros (Maritsa)** and a plethora of lakes.

The main features of the eligible area are the big mountains, which hinder the easy access to the regions on both sides of the border. Due to the mountainous character of the area, there is high atmospheric precipitation which supplies the hydrographic network that is of strategic importance for economic growth. At the same time, the water resources support fragile ecosystems (wetlands, riverside forests, etc.), which require attention in terms of their management.

Natural Environment

The eligible area is one of the most ecologically sensitive areas in the Mediterranean. It includes important boundary mountain ranges and ecosystems of ecological value and biodiversity, as well as coastal areas protected under the **RAMSAR⁴** Convention. The eligible area includes 76 **NATURA 2000** sites. This number is expected to increase since Bulgaria expects the approval of a new proposal for the protection of natural resources in the lands located in Pirin and Rila. A significant number of cultural and natural monuments and sites is listed under the **UNESCO World Heritage List**.

The most important protected areas, as specified in the legislation on the preservation of the natural environment, of flora and fauna, are:

- **RAMSAR Wetlands:** Evros Delta, Lake Vistonida - Porto Lagos Lagoon and Lake Mitrikou, Lake Ismarida and Thrace Lagoon Complex, Nestos Delta, Lake Volvi and Lake Koroneia, Lake Kerkini {GR}
- **UNESCO World Heritage List:** Pirin National Park (since 1983) {BG}
- **NATURA 2000:** 76 sites in total expected to increase in 2007 {GR}
- **National Parks:** Rila National Park and Pirin National Park {BG}
- **Forests of outstanding beauty:** Nestos river valley {GR}
- **Listed natural monuments:** Haidou Koula Beech Forest {GR}, Pirin National Park {BG}, Fraktos Forest{GR}, Virgin Forest of Central Rhodopi{GR}, Vrontous - Lailias Mountains{GR}
- **Important bird-life regions:** 8 areas in Thrace, 10 areas in Eastern Macedonia and 24 areas in Central and Western Macedonia{GR}
- **Biogenetic reserves:** Mount Haidou Koula and surrounding peaks {GR}, Virgin Forest of Central Rhodopi {GR}.

⁴ Ramsar Convention: The Convention on Wetlands, signed in Ramsar, Iran, in 1971, is an intergovernmental treaty which provides the framework for national action and international cooperation for the conservation and wise use of wetlands and their resources. There are presently 154 Contracting Parties to the Convention, with 1671 wetland sites, totaling 151 million hectares, designated for inclusion in the Ramsar List of Wetlands of International Importance.

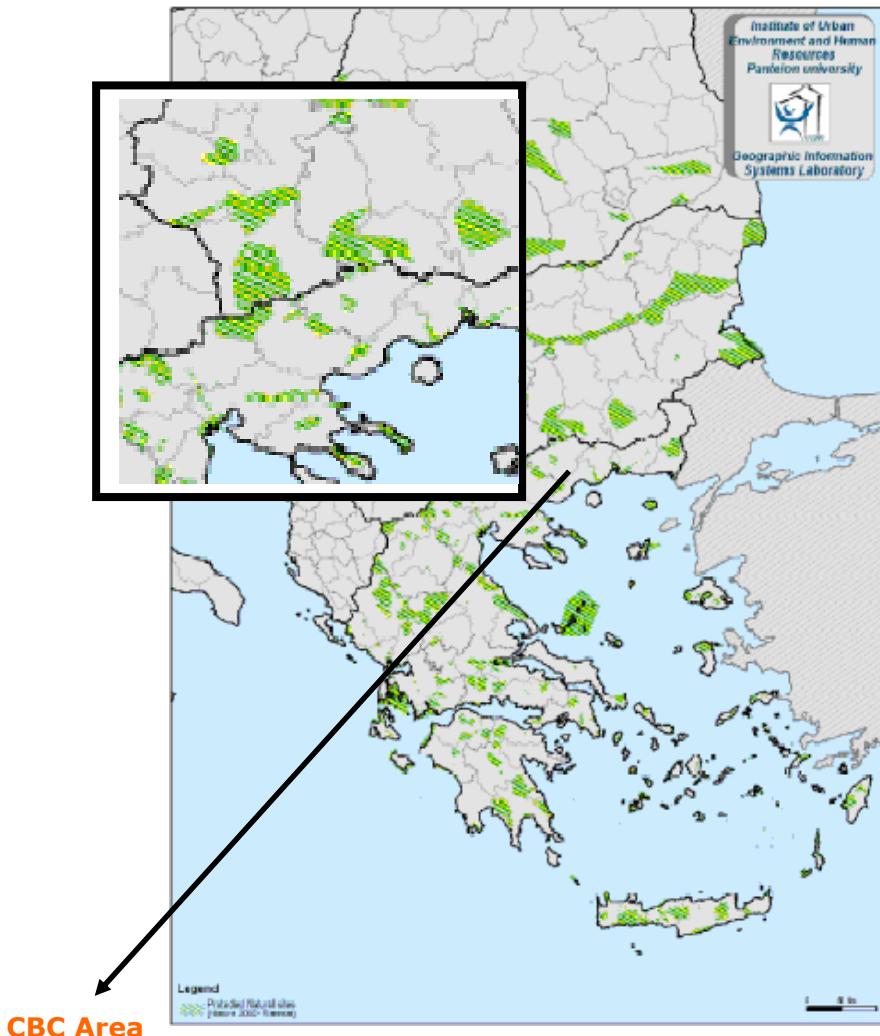


Figure 3: Protected Natural Sites⁵

Water Resources & Management

Three dams along **Nestos (Mesta)** River valley have been constructed in the Drama NUTS III area (on the Greek side) for energy production and irrigation purposes: in **Thisavros, Platanovrissi and Temenos**. The largest of the three is the pump storage plant in Platanovrissi, which is also the highest in Europe. In the Kardjali district, there are also **three dams along the Arda** River serving for energy and irrigation purposes⁶.

⁵ Institute of Urban Environment and Human Resources Panteion University, Athens

⁶ Unesco: www.unesco.org / Ministry of Environment: www.minenvi.gr / Power Plant Corporation: www.dei.gr / Municipality of Kardjali: www.kardjali.bg

Flooding is an important issue across the cross-border area. The rivers **Nestos (Mesta)**, **Arda** and **Evros (Maritsa)** flood frequently due to seasonal rains. Water management must be carried out in common for the entire river basin and not independently by the two countries. There has been some improvement in the cooperation between the two countries regarding the water resources monitoring and management, but there is still room for further progress⁷.

Pollution & Environmental Risks

The energy production plant in **Maritsa Istok** is one of the most polluting industries in the region. It produces harmful emissions which spread over a broader area. The filtering of produced gasses must comply with the European standards.

Air pollution is significant in the urban centres (primarily the Metropolitan Centre of Thessaloniki) due to industrial activity. The quality of the air is also downgraded by the operation of the thermoelectric PPC plant in the district of Komotini. However, so far, there have not been any measures regulating air-pollution in the entire CBC area.

Water pollution is an extremely important issue in the area as the water bodies are being used for human water supply and irrigation purposes.

Development Tendencies

The eligible area is rich in natural resources. There are cross-border rivers, forests, surface water, protected areas and a raising of the public and of authorities' awareness for environmental issues. Additionally, a large number of NGOs is active in the area focused at promoting environmental issues and preserving natural resources. Still, it is necessary to insist on the need for further cooperation to promote, manage and protect the natural resources. The ecosystem found in the CBC Area is particularly sensitive and needs sustainable management, in order to avoid major threats such as the downgrading of the quality of water, soil and air, and the peril of protected fauna and flora species. Initiatives supporting water management have been taken by different authorities, to avoid natural disasters caused by flooding in order to ensure rational use of water and fertilizers for agriculture purposes.

⁷ http://ec.europa.eu/environment/water/flood_risk/links.htm

The variety of Natural Resources in the CBC Area offers a unique opportunity for the development of alternative forms of tourism which, nonetheless, are at present at an early stage and need further development.

The eligible area is rich in natural resources such as water bodies, forests, physical sites of interest etc. There is growing awareness among the people and the authorities as well as on environment issues, as is evidenced by the large number of NGO's that are active in the region.

1.1.2. Socio-demographic Data

The population of the cross border area amounts to 2.812.236 inhabitants⁸. According to the data on age distribution, there seems to be a rather homogenous situation; a typical feature is the high concentration of population in the age groups of 15-64 (see Table A of Annex I) and also the increasing percentage of the age group over 60 years old, that depicts an ageing population. Furthermore, there is a tendency of depopulation of the rural regions due to the continuing trend towards the urban centres, a trend enhanced by the job-seeking difficulties.

It is estimated that the population in Drama, Xanthi, Rodopi, and Evros has slightly increased compared to 1996 (593.580). This however does not include the influx of refugees and migrants that have entered the country over the current decade. The urban population amounts to 40% of the total population and is showing increasing trends in combination with signs of depopulation in areas neighbouring with the Bulgarian side and in mountain areas. The agricultural population amounts to 43% of the total, and is decreasing in relation to 1981.

The total population of Thessaloniki and Serres amounts to 1.315.565 inhabitants (46,78% of the total population of CBC area). The urban population amounts to 71,4% and 25,1% for the Prefectures of Thessaloniki and Serres while the rural population amounts to 7,4% and 51,4%⁹ respectively.

According to preliminary data of the population census of 2005 for the Haskovo, Kardjali, Blagoevgrad and Smolyan Districts, run by the Bulgarian National Statistics Institute, the population of the eligible region amounts to 889.201 people and accounts for 11,52% of

⁸ National Statistical Service of Greece, 2006 & National Statistics Institute of Bulgaria, 2005

⁹ National Statistical Service of Greece, 2006 & National Statistics Institute of Bulgaria, 2005

the total population of Bulgaria. What is of importance is the high concentration in the population aged above 60 years old, that shows a serious ageing of the population, while the respective figures in all areas for the children aged between 0 and 9 are relatively small. This is also evident from the birth and death rates available for the Bulgarian Districts, where it is shown that, only in Kardjali the respective ratios are equal.

As regards the density of the population in these districts, it is important to notice that Smolyan is among the least populated regions with an average population density of 41.7 inhabitants per km² (2004), followed by Haskovo (48.5) and Kardjali (49.8); only Blagoevgrad with an average density of 51.9 inhabitants per sq.km. is slightly closer to the national average of 69,9.

Development Tendencies

The eligible area is characterized by an ageing population and therefore a declining workforce. The group of people over 60 years old is significantly high in contrast with the population of less than 15 years. What is also important is the tendency for internal migration from the countryside to the urban centres, mainly for employment reasons, a phenomenon that is particularly obvious in Thessaloniki, acting as a Metropolitan centre of the Northern Greece and the South Eastern Balkans in general.

In brief the demographic profile of the area could be summarized as follows: ageing population, abandonment of rural areas in favour of big towns, urbanization.

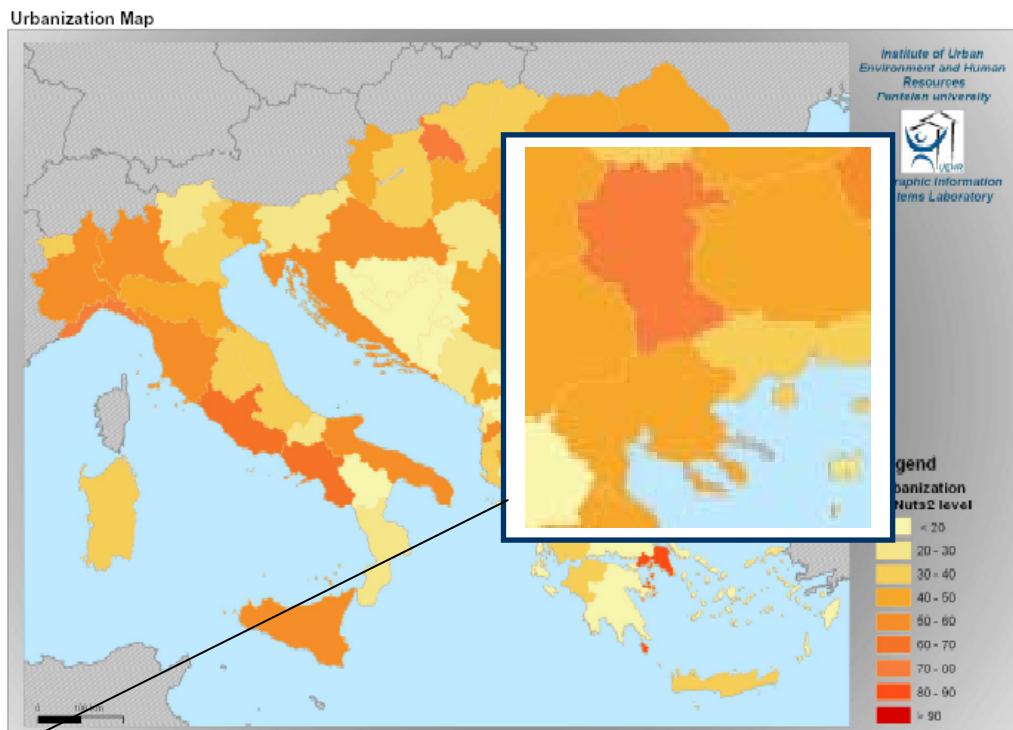


Figure 4: Urbanization

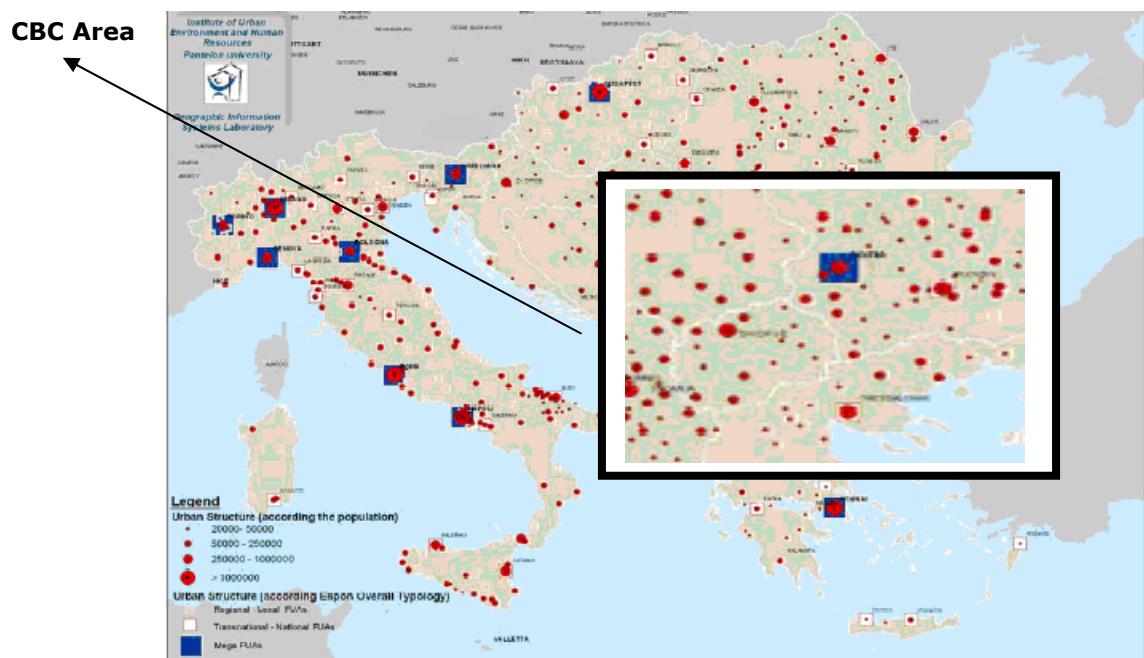


Figure 5: Urban structure according to population¹¹

¹⁰ Institute of Urban Environment and Human Resources Panteion University, Athens

¹¹ Institute of Urban Environment and Human Resources Panteion University, Athens

1.1.3. Economic Data

There is a heterogeneous economic structure in the cross-border area primarily due to the fact that, like other post-communist countries in the region, Bulgaria is undergoing a period of transition marked by economic, fiscal and institutional reform. Table B of Annex I reveals the contribution of each sector in the GDP and employment in the cross-border area (in %). This table clearly shows that the tertiary sector is the largest in terms of contribution in the GDP, and it accounts for a large part of the labour force. The secondary sector also plays an important role. Table C of Annex I represents the GDP per Capita in the eligible area, a fact that depicts the economic heterogeneity mentioned above. The GDP is far behind the national averages of both countries; the only exception is Thessaloniki which is closer to the average Greek national GDP.

Primary sector

The primary sector in the eligible area is considerably developed, compared to the national average and is linked to the secondary sector, focusing on both national consumption and exports. Thus, there is an intraregional imbalance regarding the importance of the primary sector, which can be easily explained by the profile of the eligible NUTS III areas (i.e. Kardjali and Rodopi, due to their geographic and demographic features, appear to have an important primary sector compared to Thessaloniki or Serres which have less rural population).

The primary sector in the Haskovo, Smolyan, Kardjali and Blagoevgrad districts is represented by agriculture and forestry: cultivation of intensive crops, such as vegetables, vineyards, tobacco, potatoes, cotton, fruits, as well as cereals. The trend noted in the '90s, towards considerable reduction of the production output and yields, has began to swing back in positive direction; however, the problem of finding markets for the agricultural production and organization of the sector continues to act as an important limiting factor for the development of the area. The sector provides 22,75% of the employment in the region on average, i.e. 11,15% above the national index¹² (22,4% for 2004, BG NSRDP 2007-2013).

The application of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) shall lead to new, more competitive and cost effective cultivations. In general terms, it seems that there are

¹² National Statistical Service of Greece, 2006 & National Statistics Institute of Bulgaria, 2005

efforts made to change the traditional cultivation of cereals and turn to other crops, organic ones included. However, there is still a long way for the adaptation of the sector to the new CAP.

The presence of fishery is also quite important since a significant part of the CBC area is situated next to the sea. In Thessaloniki and Alexandroupoli, there is an important population active in fishery and fish cultivations in the Thermaikos gulf represent a large part of the national economy.

Secondary sector

There is a developed secondary sector in the eligible area; namely, industry, and especially the processing industry (mostly in Thessaloniki). Private investment projects are under way in newly organized development areas and **industrial parks** already exist in **Serres, Rodopi, Xanthi, and Evros**¹³. Through the ROP programmes of Central Macedonia and of Eastern Macedonia-Thrace, similar initiatives shall be extended and upgraded. More than 15.000 enterprises operate in the secondary sector in the Greek side of the eligible area.

Industry is also important in Haskovo, Smolyan, Kardjali and Blagoevgrad areas. Considerable efforts have been made for strengthening the secondary sector. In Blagoevgrad area and in particular in Gotse Delchev, a modern instrument exists to support "green projects" entrepreneurship, the **Business Incubator**.

Other main industrial sub-sectors, apart from the traditional extracting industry, are the food and beverage production, tobacco industry, machine tools engineering and metallurgy, clothing and textile industry. The heavy drop, experienced during the industrial development of the region in the '90s, resulted in the considerable decline of the sector and the implementation of unfavourable structural changes. At present, no industrial parks exist in the Bulgarian eligible area, contrary to other neighbouring Bulgarian regions.

Another economic issue of great importance for the cross-border area is the moving of enterprises within its regions. In the past few years, many enterprises of the textile sector moved from Drama, Serres and Thessaloniki to the districts of Blagoevgrad and

¹³ Hellenic Ministry of Development: www.ypan.gr

Smolyan in order to decrease the production cost by taking advantage of the low wages of the Bulgarian workforce¹⁴.

Most of the enterprises operating in the CBC Area are small or very small and present a delay in the adoption of new technologies and the rationalization of their production capacity.

Tertiary sector

The service sector of the CBC area is very active, benefiting from the presence / support of financial institutions and their advanced technology and its relation with the Balkan and Black Sea countries. The enterprises operating in the tertiary sector are mainly located in big urban centres, such as Thessaloniki, Blagoevgrad and Serres. The majority of these enterprises is active in the financial / banking services, telecommunications, trade and logistics and presents a dynamic potential for development. It is also expected that the trilateral cooperation Russia-Bulgaria-Greece in the exploitation of oil transport will promote new investments in energy and other satellite activities. Thessaloniki, as the main Metropolitan centre, has also developed competitive Health Services offered by private health organizations that enjoy high reputation and prestige and attract patients / customers from Northern Greece and other Balkan countries¹⁵. However the lack of data focusing on the origins of the patients makes it difficult to derive to sound conclusions.

Tourism

The cross border area has a significant competitive advantage, namely, its outstanding combination of natural resources. The mountain relief, the seashores, the rivers and forests, the natural reserves suggest an attractive pole for tourism during all seasons. The eligible area has the potential to welcome visitors with diversified interests and offer them alternative solutions for leisure and tourism.

Nonetheless tourism, either mass tourism during the summer season or alternative tourism is not equally developed in the eligible area. Major intraregional imbalances are observed. The tourism industry is constantly developing and perspectives for additional progress are high. It should be noted, however, that the initiatives taken so far lacked

¹⁴ Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Thessaloniki

¹⁵ Hellenic Ministry of Development

strategic coordination. Indeed, in some areas like Thessaloniki or Kavala, tourist infrastructure exists for mass and business tourism, but without particular interconnection between services and professionals of the tourism sector.

On the other hand, during the past ten years, especially in the Greek part of the eligible area (due to ROP and to Community Initiative LEADER), a burst of agrotouristic infrastructure, like small cottages, traditional restaurants and business with local products and gastronomy has been recorded. This trend is quite dynamic in both sides of the eligible area and seems to be capable of transforming entire regions into poles of agrotouristic interest. Additionally, the multiple unique resources can easily attract visitors and offer them a multitude of choices. Indicatively, in the area the following options can be explored:

- Archaeological sites and museums (i.e. Melnik, Peperikon, ancient theatre of Kavala, Philippi)
- Natural mineral Spa (i.e. Sandanski, Devin, Serres)
- Churches and Monasteries (Rila Monastery listed in the UNESCO Heritage list)
- Ski centres (Pamporovo, Lailias-Serres, Falakro-Drama)

As per the business and congress tourism, it should be recorded that in the CBC area (mainly in Thessaloniki), every year, numerous business events, exhibitions, congresses and summits are hosted. Addressed to a specific target group with high expectations and standards, they demand an integrated strategy and the diversification of the products and services offered in terms of quality, price and authenticity¹⁶.

Development Tendencies

The area's GDP per capita indicates its heterogeneity and the intraregional imbalances. The economic profile presents a strong decrease of the share of the primary sector, generally a decreasing employment trend in the secondary sector and a fast growth in the tertiary sector.

The primary sector demands drastic and immediate rationalization in order to get prepared for the new CAP. The establishment of a sustainable secondary sector requires the existence of quality business infrastructure, professional assistance and other

¹⁶ Hellenic National Tourism Organization / www.gnto.gr, Hellenic Association of Tourism and Travel Agencies – HATTA / www.hatta.gr, Agrotouristiki SA / www.agrotour.gr, Municipality of Blagoevgrad / www.blagoevgrad.bg

important services for enterprises, available in the entire border area. Developing business infrastructure and services should constitute a priority of the border area. Creation of cooperation networks, integration of innovative methods and tools, that has already started, needs further development and support. Activities like energy, telecommunications, food industry and logistics, attract the interest of the investors and should dynamically participate in the economic growth of the area.

Despite the potential of the programme area, there is still a rather confused approach to tourism as an industry sector at the national and regional level; a lack of an integrated approach is identified. It is particularly notable that there is no cross border dimension in the existing tourism initiatives in the programme region. Nonetheless, the natural and other resources create the possibility of different forms of tourism. The CBC area requires an integrated approach dedicated to quality, focusing on customer satisfaction and based on the economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development.

1.1.4. Employment – Unemployment

There are divergences in employment in the eligible programme area, with a clearly more positive picture for the Greek side and mainly for the Region of Central Macedonia. It is worth noting that the high standards of education in this region have turned it into a pole of attraction for the whole of the country. Consequently, the labour market in the region offers high standards of services in specialized sectors of the new economy.

Employment

As far as the employment structure is concerned across the sectors of economic activity, the primary sector has a notable participation in the economy (Table B of Annex I), featuring high employment figures, although this is precisely the sector which has suffered the most important job losses. This is due to the ageing of the population in agriculture and the shift of young people towards non-farming activities. Compared to the country total, the Region of Central Macedonia is intensely agricultural, although the percentage of employment in the primary sector is steadily going down; on the other hand, the sector of services is quite dynamic and is the one with potential to absorb significant workforce in future.

The labour force in the Bulgarian area accounts for 12,4% of the country's employed population¹⁷. The share of primary sector employees in the area is among the biggest in Bulgaria, particularly in Kardjali District, which ranks first. The high share of employment in this sector is due to the loss of jobs in the other sectors, and, above all, in the secondary sector. Employment in the secondary sector absorbs significant part of the labour force, whereas the share of employment in the tertiary sector is lower than the national average, due to the underdevelopment of certain areas.

Unemployment

The cross-border area experiences high rates of unemployment (Table E of Annex I)¹⁸, with pressing needs for specialized skills and re-training (mainly in the eligible area of Bulgaria). The development of the active population and employment has been declining over the last few years, while the average rate of unemployment is at a lower level compared to the respective national average. In addition, the quality characteristics of unemployment do not greatly differ from the national ones. Although employment is generally rising, subject to temporary fluctuations, the number of unemployed is continuing to increase, also due to women and young people joining the labour force at a rate much higher than that of the corresponding creation of jobs. Unemployment has also a gender profile, as women are twice as much affected by unemployment than men. In Table F, the rate of woman unemployment in the areas of the Greek eligible part of the CBC area (respective data were non available for the Bulgarian eligible side), clearly demonstrates that women suffer from unemployment more frequently than men do.

Unemployment in the Bulgarian area in the year 2004 was between 8-17%, while the national average was 12,2%. This indicator is particularly high for Smolyan District (17,3%); Blagoevgrad has an unemployment rate of 8,7%, Haskovo 13,8% and Kardjali 13,6%. As a result of the implemented active structural changes (privatization, closure of inefficient production facilities, restructuring), the unemployment level has increased considerably throughout the region as well as countrywide. The negative consequences of these processes in terms of both employment and unemployment are manifested with particular gravity in the Smolyan District.

¹⁷ National Statistical Service of Greece, 2004 & National Statistics Institute of Bulgaria, 2004

¹⁸ National Statistical Service of Greece, 2004 & National Statistics Institute of Bulgaria, 2004

Development Tendencies

The structure of the economy in the eligible area plays a decisive role related to the qualitative and quantitative characteristics of employment and unemployment. The loss of jobs is related to low or insufficient specialization, whereas the demand for specialized workforce, knowledge based, is increasing. Unemployment can also be of a structural nature related to the abandonment of traditional activities (i.e. agriculture in the rural areas), and the transfer of enterprises in regions with low operational cost (i.e. low wages). The gender aspect of unemployment is also to be taken into consideration¹⁹. In brief, the situation could be described as follows:

Increasing demand for qualified, well trained personnel, in enterprises of the tertiary sector and in tourism; Abandonment of agricultural activities and migration to urban centres; Need for revalorization and reorientation of labour force to more competitive sectors of activity; Initiatives for integrated programmes in the eligible area, properly designed and focused in areas that present structural economic problems; Development of policies in order to promote, encourage and support small and very small enterprises, integrating new technologies and ICT tools; Exchange of know-how and creation of networks between authorities and enterprises and between enterprises of the same sector (clusters).

¹⁹ Hellenic Observatory of Employment and Eurostat

1.1.5. Education – Culture – Research

Education

According to human resource market surveys, there is a shortage of properly trained personnel in the new sectors of the economy and the management of international business activities, despite the presence of research and university institutes with highly qualified human resources in the region.

Indeed, there are six Universities, three Technological Institutes and several colleges in the cross-border area (Table G of Annex I)²⁰. The Universities located in the cross-border area are:

- Aristotle University of Thessaloniki
- University of Macedonia in Thessaloniki
- Democritus University of Thrace (located in Xanthi, Komotini and Alexandroupoli)
- American University in Blagoevgrad
- South-West University "Neofit Rilski" in Blagoevgrad
- Medical College (branch of Thracian University of Stara Zagora) in Haskovo

The universities include diverse faculties and university departments, covering different scientific fields like: Natural Sciences, Human Sciences, Health Sciences, Economics, Business Administration, Languages and Literature, Fine Arts etc. Prestigious post-graduate studies are offered, in the majority of the faculties, to Masters and PhD level. It is worthwhile to mention the UNESCO seat in the Aristotle University, established in 1997. It offers cross sectoral studies in Human Rights and Peace.

The level of education in the eligible area, from primary to tertiary educational levels, could be described as quite satisfactory (Table H of Annex I). There are several programmes of student mobility that encourage the exchanges between Universities from other countries. However, Universities have not updated records regarding the origin and the number of students visiting host universities; therefore, it is not possible to verify the movement of students to Universities within the eligible area. On the other hand, there is

²⁰ National Statistics Institute of Bulgaria, 2004 & Ministry of National Education and Religious Affairs Greece, 2007

no cooperation on a permanent basis between Universities from the Greek and the Bulgarian side²¹.

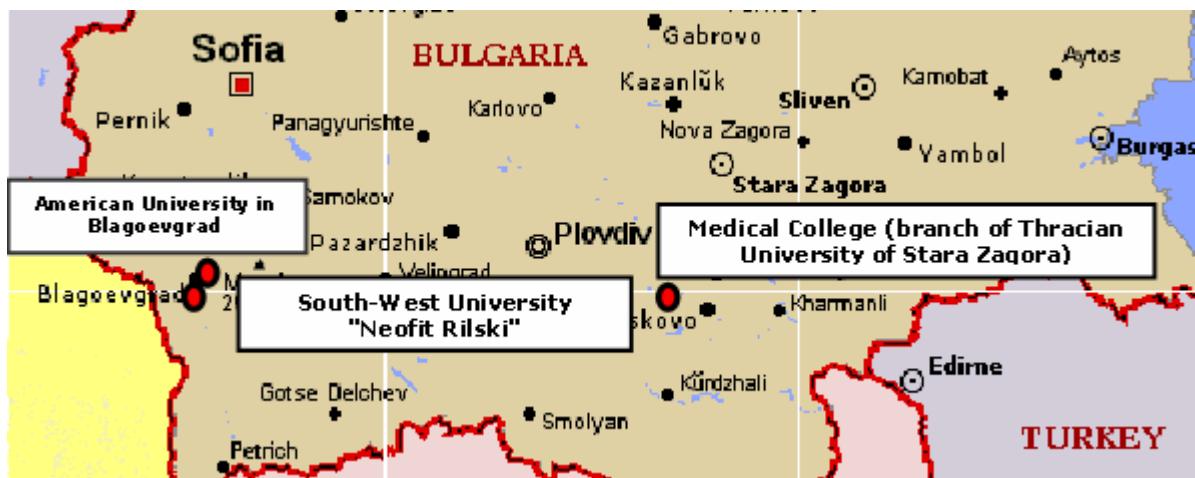


Fig 6a: Universities & Academic Institutes in the CBC Area



Fig 6b: Universities & Academic Institutes in the CBC Area

²¹ Aristotle University of Thessaloniki / www.auth.gr , South West University Neofit Rilski / en.wikipedia.org/wiki/South-West_University_%22Neofit_Rilski%22, Ministry of Education and Science - Bulgaria / www.minedu.gov.bgs, Ministry of Education - Greece / www.ypepth.gr

Culture

The eligible area is rich in cultural resources. Rich in history and in monuments from different historical periods, the area is an attraction pole for visitors, students and researchers. There are archaeological sites, Byzantine sites, monasteries and churches, fortresses, ancient theatres from different periods. Theatres, museums, lyric operas and thematic cultural events, all over the year, form the cultural and artistic picture of this area. Furthermore, the rich and widespread folk culture is expressed through folk music meetings and many exchanges organized by local authorities, NGOs and associations.

Research

The role of research is essential in the new economy, acting as the intermediary link between entrepreneurship and the technological and scientific achievements. More opportunities for research exist in the Greek side than in Bulgarian, due to the Community Support Framework. However there is still plenty to be done in the field of research which can contribute to the development of a knowledge based economy. In particular in the cross border area, this effort is supported by:

- National Centre of Research and Technological Development, Thessaloniki
- Centre of Sciences' Dissemination, Thessaloniki
- Technological Park of Thessaloniki
- Chemical Process Engineering Research Institute, Thessaloniki
- Institute of Informatics and Telemedicine, Thessaloniki
- Hellenic Institute of Transport, Thessaloniki
- Agro biotechnology Institute, Thessaloniki
- National Agricultural Research Foundation, Thessaloniki

Most research institutes are located in Thessaloniki, however, research activities in diverse scientific and technological sectors are performed in Universities spread all over the CBC area²².

²² General Secretary of Research and Technology, Greece / www.gsrt.gr

Development Tendencies

Education shall play the most important role in the development of economic and social cohesion in the cross border area, essentially in promoting knowledge based economy. For this purpose, further cooperation is necessary amongst the cross border educational organizations, research and academic institutes. This can be achieved via the exchange of students, professors, scientists and researchers that approach the area as an entity and implement common research projects. Furthermore, research is an important actor in the welfare of the society as it promotes by its achievements, the entrepreneurship and the competitiveness of the investments.

Last but not least, culture and common traditions across the CBC area, as well as the cooperation of local authorities that has started in the past years, is growing fast through cultural exchange, twinning of municipalities (i.e. Kardjali and Komotini – twin cities) and other events. What is also important is the increased involvement of young people in associations and NGO's aiming at preserving and promoting the cultural heritage and the traditions. However, the difference of language is sometimes an issue that needs to be resolved by proper initiatives and actions.

1.1.6. Health

In the eligible area there is significant health infrastructure. However, the dispersion of health establishments and the quality of health service provided is unbalanced between rural and urban centres. Inhabitants of remote villages have limited or no access to health services, whereas, in big cities like Smolyan, Blagoevgrad, Thessaloniki, there is sufficient infrastructure and medical care of competitive level. As already mentioned, health sector might turn out to be a pole of attraction for patients from other regions (outside the CBC area), who prefer for reasons of proximity, security and accessibility to receive medical care in big health establishments located in the eligible area.

Development Tendencies

The health sector is an indicator of social welfare and cohesion. Therefore, the actual tendency is to continue the cooperation across the eligible area between health establishments and to promote new forms of service via telemedicine and other methods that ensure access, medical care and prevention in the most distant places.

1.1.7. Infrastructure²³

In terms of infrastructure, the specific cross-border area is regarded as a key node for the Balkan region and enjoys the support of a large amount of investment in increasing the capacity of the major transport infrastructure (trans-European axes, ports, airports). Investments have been planned for improving infrastructure. However, the planning is not sufficient to meet the needs which have been identified. Further improvement of accessibility, through the completion of the new frontier cross-points, constitutes a first priority of cross-border cooperation between Bulgaria and Greece, at least until Bulgaria become member of the Schengen zone when the respective need will be eliminated. Figures 7, 8 and 9 illustrate the corridors and the road network in the eligible area.

In the following paragraphs a short description of infrastructure is given.

Motorways

The status of the road network in the region has improved significantly during the past few years. The improvement of road axes around the two main frontier passing / crossing points (Promachona and Ormenio), the opening of three new crossing points and the respective road axes foreseen in the bilateral Greek-Bulgarian agreement of 1995 (Drama-Exohi-Gotse Delchev, Xanthi – Ehinos – Eledge Rudozem, Komotini-Nimfaia-Kurdali) have significantly improved the mobility of people, goods and services and supported the development of entrepreneurship and competitiveness.

After the completion of the crossing point of Exohi-Ilinden, two more crossing points are foreseen at Komotini – Nimfaio – Makaza – Kurdjali and Xanthi – Ehinos – Eledge – Rudozem, the financing of which has been integrated in the current and / or the upcoming programming periods. Finally, the opening of the fourth, cross-border point of local importance, Kyprinos – Ivailovgrad has already been foreseen (respective agreement of 14.4.2006).

In addition, once the eastern section of the Egnatia Motorway and its four vertical axes are completed, it is expected that the transport infrastructure will greatly improve. The Egnatia Motorway is incorporated in the trans-European networks and covers the axis of Igoumenitsa - Kipi of Evros Bridge, which is about 680 km long, while part of it (258 km

²³ Ministry of Public Works Bulgaria /www.mrrb.government.bg/indexen.php, Ministry of Environments Physical Planning and Public Works Greece / www.minenv.gr , Ministry of Transports Greece/www.yme.gr, Egnatia SA / www.egnatia.gr, Hellenic Railway Organisation / www.ose.gr

long) passes through the Region of Eastern Macedonia – Thrace, which is part of the eligible area. The Egnatia Motorway is linked to nine vertical road axes, which aspire to link Greece with the main trans-European road axes network. Five of these vertical axes are located in the eligible area, linking Greek and Bulgarian frontiers areas, and have a total length of about 254 km, namely:

- Thessaloniki-Serres-Promahonas-Kulata highway (Vertical axis of Egnatia). Part of the Pan-European Corridor IV.
- Komotini-Nymfaia-Haskovo highway (Vertical axis of Egnatia, in construction). Part of the Pan-European Corridor IX.
- Xanthi-Ehinos-Bulgarian borders highway (Vertical axis of Egnatia, to be included in the projects of the CSF IV).
- Ardanio-Ormenio-Bulgarian borders highway (Vertical axis of Egnatia). Part of the Pan-European Corridor IX.
- Drama-Nevrokopi-Exohi-Bulgarian borders (Vertical axis of Egnatia).



Figure 7: Egnatia Odos & Vertical Axes in the Eligible Area²⁴

²⁴ Observatory of Egnatia Odos, 2006

Corridor IV



Corridor IX

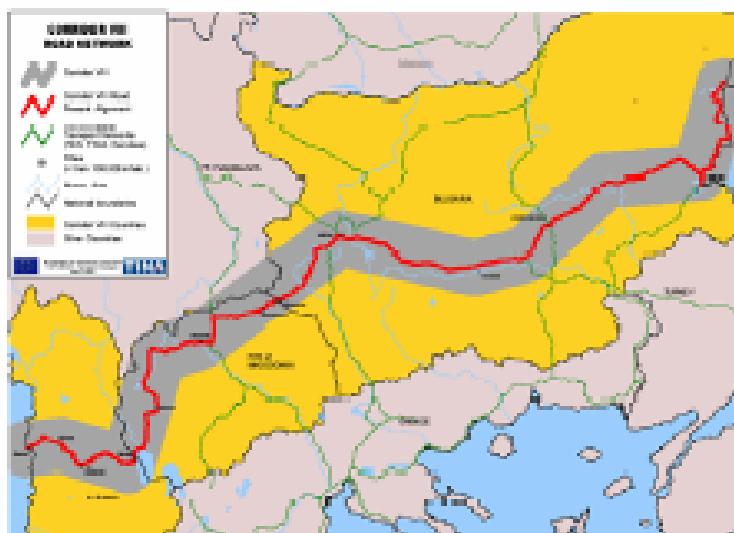


Figure 8: Pan-European Transport Corridors IV & IX in South Eastern Europe²⁵

The leading mode of transport in the eligible region in Bulgaria is road transport. The priority development of this mode of transport is due to its easier adaptation to the predominating mountainous conditions.

²⁵ europa.eu.int/comm/regional_policy/sources/docgener/studies/pdf/danube/maps/map24.pdf

The territory of the cross-border area is traversed by three Trans-European Transport Corridors - No. 4, No. 9 and No. 10. Transport Corridor No. 10 runs in a direction that is rather tangential to the region, since it serves the border via the border crossing point Novo Selo-Ormenio. Transport Corridors No. 4 and No. 9 run in North-South direction and this orientation contributes to the direct serving of the region. However, while there is an operational border crossing point along the direction of Corridor No. 4 (Kulata-Promahonas), Corridor No. 9 is not yet used for cross-border flows due to absence of an operating border-crossing point. In general, the spatial configuration of the international transport corridors contributes both to the incorporation of the eligible area in the system of Pan-European transport corridors and to the direct cross-border transportation of passengers and freight. However, a certain portion of the existing railway and road communication facilities, that currently shape these corridors, do not comply with the international standards and requirements for high speed transportation.

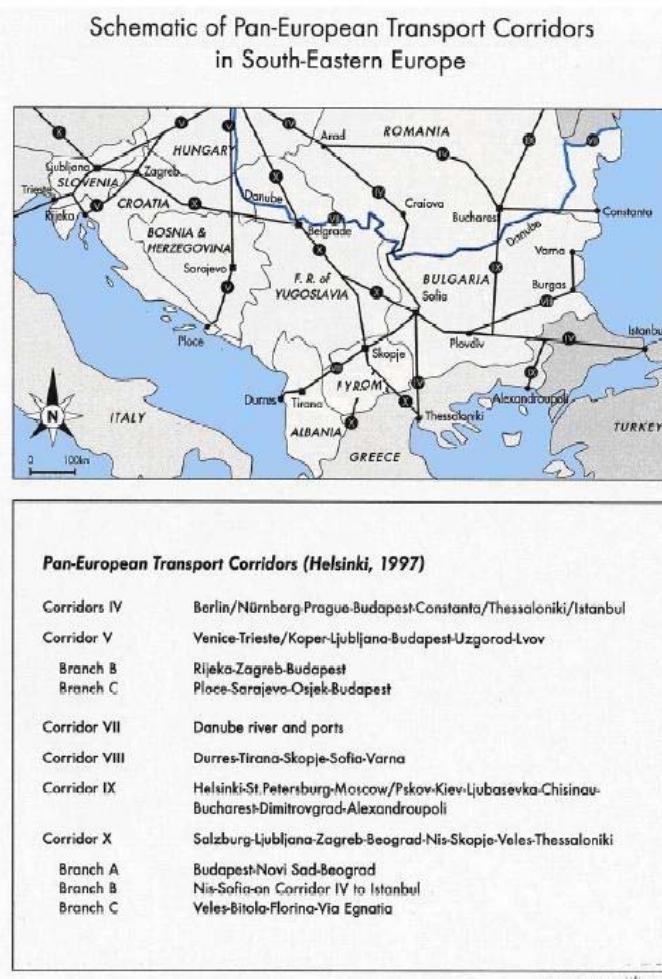


Figure 9: Pan-European Transport Corridors in South Eastern Europe²⁶

²⁶ europa.eu.int/comm/regional_policy/sources/docgener/studies/pdf/danube/maps/map24.pdf

It is also important to underline that the state of intraregional, inter-prefectural and inter-municipal roads is not the best possible, as there are parts of roads that are in a really bad condition, causing problems in the accessibility of the inhabitants of distant villages and towns.

The role of Thessaloniki in the field of transports is worth mentioning for the eligible area. At an inter-prefectural level, the road axes that pass through Thessaloniki are in a good status, although this does not always seem to be the case for the connection of the other urban centres of the eligible area between one another. Thanks to the convergence of the transport infrastructure (road, railway, sea and air transport system), Thessaloniki constitutes a real transport junction at an international, national and regional level; the city features among the nodal points for transport in the EU.

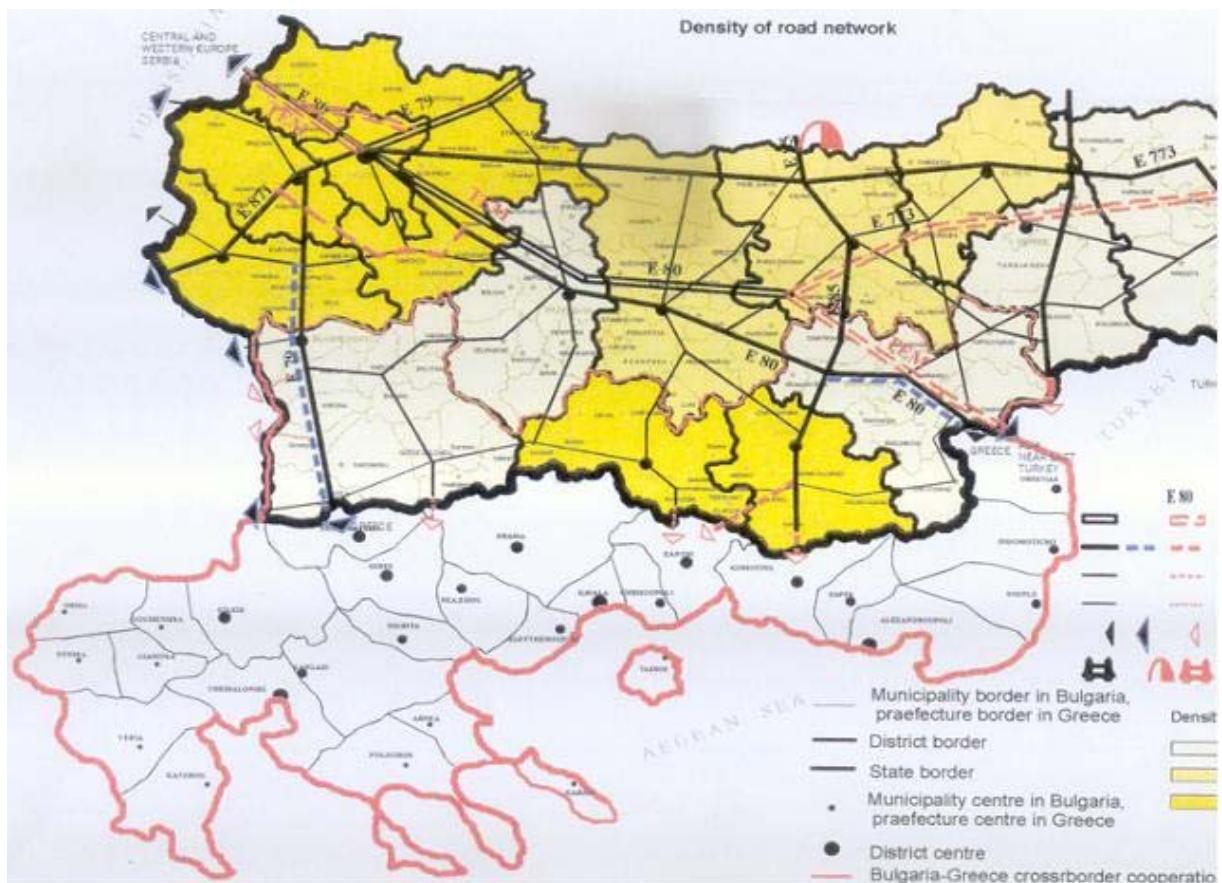


Figure 10: Density of the Road Network in the Eligible Area²⁷

²⁷ Program document INTERREG III A/PHARE CBC GR – BG, REVISED VERSION 2004

Railway

The principal railway axes in the eligible area that play an important role for the development are the railroad Sofia-Kulata-Thessaloniki and Sofia-Plovdiv-Svilengrad where are located the scarce railway border-crossing points to Greece: at Kulata, providing connection to Promahonas, and at Novo Selo-Ormenion. There is also a railway line serving Eastern Macedonia - Thrace of a total length of about 400kms which passes through 4 Prefectures, starting from the boundaries of the Prefectures of Serres and Drama and going up to the Frontier Station of Ormenio, at the borders with Bulgaria.

Airports

In the eligible area and precisely in Thessaloniki, an international civil airport called "Macedonia" is located in Mikra. The airport is 16 km away from the centre of Thessaloniki. It has an international role and it is of great national and regional importance. There are also two state civil airports operating in Alexandroupoli and Kavala. In the Bulgarian part of the eligible area, there are no airports serving national or international flights.

Sea ports

The eligible area has 8 ports, of two different categories: national and regional. The first category includes the new commercial ports of Thessaloniki, Alexandroupoli and Kavala, which are included amongst the 13 most important Greek harbours in relation to the traffic of passengers and cargo, while the second category includes two ports in the mainland, three in Thassos and one in Samothrace. Moreover, there are 7 fishing refuges in the mainland, 2 in Thassos and 1 in Samothrace.

The port of Alexandroupoli is an artificial one, deployed along the South-East open sea-front of the city and is divided in two functional areas: the New Commercial - Passenger Port and the old port. In Kavalla, the new port is currently being constructed in the area of N. Karvali. The port of Thessaloniki, which is situated at a very sensitive geographical place between the East and the West, strengthens the role of the wider area and makes it a natural gateway to the Balkan Peninsula, as well as a junction for the transit trade of the inland. The port of Thessaloniki covers an area of 1.500.000 m² and handles about 15.000.000 tons of cargo per year.

Telecommunications²⁸

The level of the telecommunications infrastructure in the eligible area is considered relatively adequate. The cross-border connections are at a relatively high level, while there are two international optic cable axes between Thessaloniki and Sofia (with the use of a modern SDH, 622 Mbs digital transmission system), and Thessaloniki and Haskovo.

It should be mentioned that the Hellenic Telecommunications Organization (OTE) has made important investments to offer various services, such as internet-provider services, ISDN, etc. Furthermore, all centres of the Hellenic Telecommunications Organization have ISDN connections, which offer the ability to transfer sound, image, text and data simultaneously. In addition, a number of nodes have been established to transmit high definition images. Furthermore, the Hellenic Telecommunications Organization is setting up a special optic fibre network that ends up in big companies, with a view to upgrade the services offered to them.

Currently, many municipalities are implementing broadband technologies and upgrading the quality of their networks. There are still major steps that need to be taken. The imbalances in the telecommunications network are decreasing; however, distant and small towns in the eligible area have not yet access to mobile communication neither to high speed networks.

Development Tendencies

Infrastructure is a significant factor in the eligible area for the promotion of accessibility, cooperation and the development of economic and social life. As mentioned above, the Programme area is a node to transportation from North to South Europe and East to West. The completion of the transport infrastructure will provide to the area a significant competitive advantage for the improvement of transport of persons, goods and services. Also, it will constitute an accelerator of entrepreneurship and new investments in dynamic sectors like logistics, transports and other services. The eligible area is endowed with access to the sea; therefore, the development of sea transports can also offer new opportunities. On the other hand, closer cooperation must be encouraged in order to resolve accessibility problems to distant areas but also to prevent phenomena of smuggling and illegal immigration.

²⁸<http://www.worldbank.bg/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/COUNTRIES/ECAEXT/BULGARIAEXTN/0,,menuPK:305464~pagePK:141132~piPK:141109~theSitePK:305439,00.html> World Bank Bulgaria, Hellenic Organization of Telecommunications / www.ote.gr

Regarding the telecommunication sector, it attracts major investments, while efforts are being made to provide solutions to more distant parts of the area. ICT usage, which is inextricably linked with telecommunications' advancement, still lags in some places but presents a potential of integrating all aspects of economic and social life.

1.1.9. Energy

The latest developments of cooperation between Bulgaria, Greece and Russia for the transport of oil through the pipeline Burgas – Alexandroupoli signals a new era in the energy sector for the three countries as a whole, and the eligible area in particular.

The importation of natural gas favours the eligible area to a big extent, since one of the two parts of the pipelines for the importation of natural gas in Greece (that is the part of the pipeline that comes from Russia) passes through Central Macedonia. The entrance station from Bulgaria is situated in Koulata - Promahonas and the basic monitoring site can be found in Strimonohori, Serres²⁹.

Development Tendencies

The transport of oil and gas through a significant part of the eligible area, introduces new perspectives for the whole region with major impacts. The closest cooperation of all involved partners of the area is necessary to avoid any downgrading of the sensitive environment and retain the competitive advantage of the energy transport. The construction of the pipelines is bound to attract investments in the area and offer employment directly or indirectly to the inhabitants of the region.

²⁹ Ministry of Development Greece/ www.ypan.gr , Ministry of Economy Greece/ www.mnec.gr

1.2. Analysis of Results of Previous Interventions in the Area

1.2.1. Cross-border Experience from the Implementation of the CIP Interreg IIIA / Phare CBC Greece-Bulgaria 2000-2006

The Programme INTERREG IIIA / PHARE CBC Greece-Bulgaria 2000-2006 was approved by decision of the European Commission (EC) 4076 of 27/12/2001. With the decision (EC) 1703 of 26/07/2002, it was awarded an extra fund of 7.248.000 Euro as special aid for the areas neighbouring with candidate countries.

The central idea was to invigorate cross-border cooperation by financing projects of common interest. During the implementation period, certain problems occurred due to the delayed launching of the programme, and especially to the existence of two financial instruments which made it difficult to plan joint projects.

According to the Mid-term Evaluation of the programme INTERREG IIIA / PHARE CBC GREECE-BULGARIA 2000-2006 (2005) and the last Interim Evaluation of Phare R/BG/REG/0601 (2006), delays were noticed in the implementation of the projects, which were mainly related to their cross-border nature. It is underlined that the programme for the Greek side was financed by ERDF and for the Bulgarian side by PHARE CBC. Due to that, no real joint cross border projects existed, but only mirror projects. Some obstacles occurred during implementation that were mainly related to the different nature of the institutional frameworks that governed the two different financing instruments and concerned the criteria for eligibility, the duration of the projects, and the exchange of information. Another crucial factor was the large number and diversity of the potential final beneficiaries, which created a need for additional information and clarifications. Finally, it was noticed that the number of staff employed at the programme's Managing Authority of the Community Initiative programme was insufficient, in relation to the number of projects managed, the number of partners, and the complexity of the procedures.

In the following paragraphs some general remarks from the Mid-term Evaluation and from the Interim Evaluation of Phare are mentioned, with the aim to highlight the most important aspects to be taken into consideration for the next Programming Period 2007-2013.

Based on the conclusions of the Interim Evaluation Report no R/BG/REG/0601/19.07.2006, the Joint Small Projects Fund (JSPF) grant schemes recorded a significant improvement over the previous years. The JSPF, implemented in Bulgaria, continued to be an effective mechanism for initiating cross border partnerships and contributing at the local level to the overall policy of encouraging engagement between neighbouring regions.

Within the transport and environmental infrastructure priorities, the project selection and evaluation processes were viewed as generally successful, even though some delays were faced; allocation of further resources was necessary to deliver the required outputs. In Bulgaria, project implementation was centralized at the level of the EC Delegation in Sofia, resulting in lengthy coordination and communication processes. Thus, no important large investment was identified and selected during the period. Therefore, the framework for economic cooperation must be improved and promoted.

As the border stakeholders became more familiar with Phare regulations and the required mechanisms, the administrative capacity continuously developed. The previous cross-border programmes have undoubtedly contributed to introduce the principles of EU funding to the border areas and have increased their ability to implement larger and more complex projects. Also, they have been effective in establishing cross border partnerships at the local level and supporting the under-resourced civil society sector.

Despite the progressive and favourable developments resulting from the previous programmes, the need remains for further training of stakeholders in the management of projects and in the EU's procurement and accounting processes, at local, regional and national levels.

It is also important to take into consideration the constraints related to the Bulgarian administrative capacity and their ministries acting as Implementing Agencies. Further efforts to reinforce their capacity need to be implemented, in order to support horizontally public administration reform and carefully follow-up the projects implementation.

Another issue which was raised as an obstacle to the sound implementation of the previous programme according to the mid-term report was the late establishment of the MA (2002) which delayed the implementation and approval of the Programme Complement. However, the procedures for the elaboration of the Programme

Complement were quick, a fact that led to the approval of the Programme Complement on 2002, by the 1st Joint Monitoring Committee. Another crucial factor was the large number and the diversity of the beneficiaries of the Programme which created additional needs for further information Activities.

1.2.2. Lessons Learnt – Good Practices

The CIP INTERREG IIIA / PHARE CBC GREECE-BULGARIA 2000-2006 endowed the involved parts of the cross-border area with significant experience. The lessons that both sides can extract from the implementation of the programme are related to the nature of the projects and the typology of the final beneficiaries.

Nature of Projects

- In the priority axis “Cross-Border Infrastructure”, the projects concerned had significant budgets and were of national and international importance (major roadways, vertical axes, railways, etc.).
- In the priority axis “Economic Development and Promotion of Employment”, the projects were mainly focused in strengthening the cooperation in business, entrepreneurship, research and education
- In the framework of priority axis “Quality of Life/ Environment/ Culture”, the projects funded related to the preservation and management of natural and other resources and were mainly addressed to municipalities and other local authorities.
- The priority axis “Special Support for the Areas Bordering Candidate Countries”, addressed the needs of the Greek side through significant projects of national and international interest, mainly in infrastructure (e.g. connection of vertical axis with the port of Alexandroupoli).
- Finally, the “Technical Assistance” priority axis referred to the management and support of the programme.

Typology of Beneficiaries

The typology of the beneficiaries of the CIP INTERREG IIIA / PHARE CBC GREECE-BULGARIA 2000-2006 presented below, demonstrates a wide range of public institutions, central and local government, and other entities.

The beneficiaries included: Ministries, Regional Authorities, Prefectures of the cross border area, Local authorities (municipalities, communities), Public Organizations, Chambers, Financial Institutions, Intermediate Management Agencies, , Public and Private Law entities, NGO's / NPO's, Tertiary Education Institutions, Research institutions, Consortium of technical companies, Managing Authority of the Greece – Bulgaria INTERREG IIIA / PHARE CBC programme.

For the next Programming period 2007-2013, the eligibility of the Beneficiaries will be based on specific criteria which will be further specialized in the Programme Manual.

Good Practices

The concept of good practices, in the context of INTERREG IIIA / PHARE CBC GREECE-BULGARIA 2000-2006, needs, first of all, to be defined. In general, a good practice is constituted by "any project outcome" (e.g. new policy, service, method or instrument etc.), which was facilitated by the programme, with confirmed success, demonstrated by result indicators and with a potential to be transferred.

It is important to identify good practices based on the specific partners' experience and available resources, as opposed to good practice at a wider context. In line with standard evaluation practices, good practices require confirmation in the form of output, and most importantly, result indicators; in other words, identifying what has happened as a result of project activity. Furthermore, good practices should incorporate innovation either in the methodology or the process and/or the outcomes.

Projects identified as good practices jointly by the Managing Authority of INTERREG IIIA and the Bulgarian Ministry of Regional Development and Public Works during the period 2000 – 2006 are listed in Annex III. The success of these projects lies either in the level of cross border cooperation demonstrating exchange of knowledge and experience or in the initiatives taken. The projects listed are given as good examples of cross-border cooperation and form a good basis for further collaboration of the two Member States.

Lessons Learnt

The conclusions that can be drawn from the implementation of projects can be summarized as follows:

- Enhancement of the region's natural and cultural wealth could be a valuable point of reference for the development of closer relations between the residents of the cross-border region and for the protection and development of the natural environment.
- The development of human resources should be a connecting factor that will boost all the actions included in the proposed programme, aimed at creating or supporting institutions and structures with a view to improve the quality of life of the residents of the cross-border region.
- Further improvement in the cross-border infrastructure is essential to strengthen the region's position and enhance the overall economic and social development of the cross-border and broader region.

The reinforcement of actions, related to the creation of more sound and efficient prerequisites for further growth in cross-border entrepreneurial activity in sectors of common interest, will have a multiplier effect on further development of the region's economic structure. In particular, priority can be given to the development of alternative forms of tourism by making full use of the advantages offered by the physical diversity of the region and its rich natural resources.

1.3. Analysis of Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT)

Taking into account the existing situation analysis mentioned above, the following tables show the synthetic diagnosis and findings in the form of SWOT analysis.

TABLE 3: Analysis of Strengths and Weaknesses

Sector	Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Business Environment & Primary Sector • Tourism 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Geo-economic position in relation to the Balkan and Black Sea countries • Strong agricultural and fishery profile • Important investments in energy and communications • Concentration of significant economic activities in urban centres • Thessaloniki, centre of economic activity • Existence of incubators for SMEs • High potential of economic growth • Both areas belong to EU member states • Previous Experience from INTERREG IIIA Programme • Energy networks • Diversification of the economy in rural regions / development of ecologic production • Development of networks of cooperation • Rich area in natural resources • Existence of mountains, lakes, rivers • Rich biodiversity (fauna and flora) • Ski centres in the cross-border area 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Low employment rate of the active population • High unemployment of vulnerable groups of population • Structural problems in the primary/secondary sector • Dominance of traditional business • Lack of employees' specialization • Insufficient preparation for adaptation to the new CAP • Delay in the adoption of new technologies and incorporation in productive activities • Increased labour cost • Structural economic problems • Frequent smuggling phenomenon • Lack of tourism policy • Lack of highly specialized human resources

TABLE 3: Analysis of Strengths and Weaknesses

Sector	Strengths	Weaknesses
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • International port and airports in the area • Connection with modern high-ways (Egnatia, European Corridors, PATHE highway) • Natural parks and reserves • Churches, monasteries, museums, archaeological sites & monuments 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Natural & Urban Environment • Infrastructure • Information Society 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sufficient water potential • Rich forest and aquatic ecosystems • Existence of preserved areas (NATURA 2000, animal reserves, national parks) • Existence of important urban centres in both sides and also secondary smaller ones • Construction of Egnatia Highway • Passage of the gas network • Railway connection Thessaloniki-Sofia • Three International Airports (Thessaloniki, Alexandroupoli, Kavala) • Ports of Thessaloniki, Kavala, Alexandroupoli • High level of telecommunication infrastructure in the Greek area, supported by optic fibres • Existence of irrigation and electricity production dams • Sufficient infrastructure to support high speed IT connections • Development of telecom enterprises 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Environmental pollution mainly in the urban centres • Heavy environmental problems in /urban areas • Urbanism in combination with abandonment of rural areas • Heavy pressure on the water resources • Limited number of cross-border frontier stations • Difficulties in transports due to mountain relief • Insufficient secondary transport network between Prefectures, especially in rural areas • Important distance from developed West European centres • Low integration of high technology in the majority of the productive sectors

TABLE 3: Analysis of Strengths and Weaknesses

Sector	Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Human Resources (Education, Vocational training, Research, Social inclusion, demographic profile, equal opportunities) • Public Administration 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Existence of prestigious Universities and Technological Institutes in the area • Existence of Research Institutes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ageing population • Significant number of unqualified human resources • High unemployment of young people and women • Population imbalance between urban over-populated centres and rural under-populated peripheral municipalities and mountainous areas • Low cooperation between research and entrepreneurship • Already mentioned: Lack of highly specialized human resources
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Culture 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rich cultural heritage (museums, churches, monasteries, etc.) • Rich traditional heritage (music, folklore, dances) • Networks and cultural exchanges reinforced during the past cross-border experience. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oral and written communication between people in the CBC area is difficult

TABLE 4: Analysis of Opportunities and Threats

Sector	Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Business Environment & Primary Sector • Tourism 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Significant investments in the cross-border area • Financial instruments and assistance for entrepreneurship • Increased interest for investments in the area due to the recent accession of Bulgaria to the EU • Funding opportunities through the 4th Programming Period 2007-2013 • Transfer of know-how and business networks and cooperation via EU cross-border programmes • Development of high technological production and improvement of relationship between business and research centres • Investments in new technologies and innovation • Entrance of business to the European market • Important investments in energy and communications • Attractive area for new and foreign investments • Increasing trade between the two countries • Protection and promotion of cross-border tourism resources • Increasing tourist attractiveness of the region • Development of tourism • Development of alternative forms of tourism (natural, health, religion, sport, business, agricultural etc.) • Increasing demand of diversified and specialized high standard tourist products and services. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Low cross- border cooperation and integration of local economies • Accumulation of economic activities in the urban centres • The new CAP affects current agricultural activities • Entry of new workforce from the neighbouring countries • Deterioration of the market conditions for the local traditional enterprises due to strong competitiveness of the European companies • Loss of traditional markets • Ageing labour force • Massive and low standard tourism • Loss of working places • Loss of conventional markets

TABLE 4: Analysis of Opportunities and Threats

Sector	Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Natural & Urban Environment • Infrastructure • Information Society 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • International, European, regional and local interest on issues regarding environmental protection • Cooperation in resolving common problems like water management (river Nestos / Mesta, river Evros) • Large investments in high technology and research for environmental sustainable management • Motives for investments in renewable energy • Current programming period and the new one for 2007-2013 include many measures for sustainable management of environment • Sewage systems in all towns and villages • The development of a Pan-European Road Axis and a Pan-European railway that will connect South-East Europe with the countries of Central-North Europe • The anticipated development of the sea connection between the Aegean and Black Sea • Five out of nine vertical axes connect Greece with Bulgaria • Three of the vertical axes are part of the Pan-European Corridors • The construction of pipeline Burgas – Alexandroupoli and the pipe of natural gas Turkey–Greece–Italy • Building the auto highway STUMA (in the Bulgarian side) and opening of border control check points • Improving products and services • Decreasing cost and improving work conditions • Improving competitiveness of economy and of the public administration • Strengthening communication through innovative 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Devalorisation of ecosystems by exhausting and irrational use of resources • Further devalorisation of urban environment due to overpopulation • Anarchic urban constructing activity • Water supply problems • Degrading of the environment due to extraneous factors (forest fires, tourist activities, constructions) • Extinction of rare species • Climate change and natural calamities • Delay in building the auto highway STUMA and opening of border control check points • Unfinished important parts of Egnatia and the vertical axes • Delay in constructing the two vertical axes of Egnatia that connect Greece–Bulgaria • Low integration of new technologies in rural and remote areas.

TABLE 4: Analysis of Opportunities and Threats

Sector	Opportunities	Threats
	<p>methods</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sufficient level of telecommunications in Bulgarian area with two international axes of optic fibres. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Human Resources (Education, Vocational training, Research, Social inclusion, demographic profile, equal opportunities) • Public Administration 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Free and unhindered access (regardless their sex, origins, beliefs etc.) to all levels of education • Developing research activities and innovation • Increasing labour force efficiency • Improvement of social inclusion • Measures that promote women and special groups suffering from exclusion, towards entrepreneurship, employment, training and education • Investments in education and training • Employment programmes to decrease unemployment • Programmes for training, re-qualification, job-search, mentoring • High technology and innovation in the service of Public Administration • Training programmes for public servants • E-government initiatives • Modernization of public administration. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deterioration of demographic index • Immigration of active population to urban centres and/or other EU countries • Reluctance of the oldest to new technologies • Resistance in change • Centralized Public Administration
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Culture 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Culture as a vehicle for understanding and cooperating with neighbouring countries • Development of cultural industry • Preservation and research of the origins, history, culture. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of investments

Part 2: Definition of the Strategy for the Programming Period 2007-2013

2.1. Introduction

The strategy elaborated in the framework of the Cross-Border Programme Greece-Bulgaria 2007-2013 further analyzed below, aims at setting the framework of cooperation for enhancing the strategic role of the cross-border region. The strategy that has been developed, builds on a number of policies researched and thorough analyses undertaken in the framework of the Programming Document, namely:

1. EU policies, more specifically: Lisbon and Gothenburg Agendas, Community Strategic Guidelines for Cohesion Policy 2007-2013
2. National policies: National Strategic Reference Frameworks, National Sectoral Programmes and Regional Development Programmes, Rural Development Programmes, of Greece and Bulgaria for the programming period 2007-2013
3. The actual needs of the cross-border area, as identified in chapter 1
4. The SWOT Analysis
5. The remarks of the Ex-Ante Evaluation and the Strategic Environmental Assessment performed alongside the current programming document.

The overall aim of the strategy is to help overcome the weaknesses identified in the past and build on the opportunities of the cross-border region, so as to achieve convergence to the Lisbon objectives, the Gothenburg priorities and the goals set at the national level for the participating areas. The cohesion of the strategy both to the EU strategies and the National Strategies is further analyzed in Part 5 given below.

The Cross-Border Cooperation Area is an area with many needs and great potential; the strategy of the Programme aspires to convert it to a logistics, energy and entrepreneurship centre for the wider Balkan and Black Sea area so as to ensure its innovative, balanced and sustainable development.

2.2. Overall Strategic Goal

The overall strategic goal of the Greece-Bulgaria cross border cooperation programme 2007-2013, integrates the objectives and priorities of the Lisbon Agenda, the Gothenburg agenda and the National policies for the welfare and the future of the cross-border area and its residents. The Strategic Goal is, thus, identified as follows:

**To Promote the Cross-Border Area by Ensuring
Regional Cohesion and Enhancing Competitiveness**

The **Cohesion** of the eligible area involved is related to the implementation of interventions of economic and social nature, in order to ensure a sustainable and balanced development for the physical, social and financial well-being of the region and its residents. The cross-border eligible area is characterized by significant regional disparities, primarily caused by its geographical morphology, the lack of accessibility and the existence of strong metropolitan areas. According to the Third Cohesion Report, "[...] people should not be disadvantaged by wherever they happen to live or work in the Union". This perception of the term "cohesion" was also shared by the parties and stakeholders participating at the Public Consultation process for the formulation of the Programming Document.

To this scope, the enhancement of regional cohesion aims to ensure that all regions of the cross-border area will have equal opportunities to a fair allocation of resources (referring both to goods, services and human resources), to transport, energy and knowledge networks and eventually, to economic and sustainable development. This includes improving territorial integration and encouraging cooperation so as to increase efficiency and effectiveness and ultimately, utilise the rich resources of the area under consideration for the economic development and competitiveness of the wider Balkan area and European space.

In order to ensure cohesion, the integration notion, i.e. equal access to all, need also be addressed. The establishment of efficient transport and communication networks and the facilitation of access to information for all are of outmost importance for the cross-border area.

Competitiveness, on the other hand, a term widely used and addressed at different policy documents and programmes, needs to be considered under a wider spectrum, including much more than purely economic factors. The strategy of this programme views

competitiveness as a contributor to enhancing the overall attractiveness of the area, including, besides the economic development, the upgrading of quality of life, the integration of horizontal issues such as environment, gender equality, etc. The competitiveness of the cross-border area will depend largely on whether several goals are achieved: reversing the population flee tendency identified, promoting the rich natural and cultural resources and utilizing its favourable geopolitical position.

Nonetheless, competitiveness also greatly depends on a number of purely economic factors, such as the ability of the region to compete with other European or world areas and markets (both in terms of market shares and human resources), to attract investments, to upgrade to a centre of technological and scientific development and to promote innovation. The cross-border region is lagging behind in terms of ICT usage and innovation; it, thus, needs to take fast and active steps to reach and overcome more developed European areas and compete at the European market on equal terms. At the same time, the upgrading of the human resources level (in terms of qualifications) is also essential for promoting competitiveness.

The aforementioned elements of **Regional Cohesion and Competitiveness** should not be considered as independent notions; they are highly interlinked and are deemed as prerequisites for the achievement of the overall strategic goal of the programme. Based on these notions, which are in line with the Lisbon and Gothenburg agendas and the National policies, the overall strategic goal is further analyzed to strategic objectives and priority axes.

2.3. Specific Objectives

The overall goal of the Programme will be reached via the following two strategic objectives:

- A. Strengthening the Attractiveness of the Area by Upgrading the Quality of Life & Improving Accessibility Structures**
- B. Enhancing Competitiveness by promoting entrepreneurship, establishing networks of cooperation and investing in human resources**

Specific Objective A: Strengthening the Attractiveness of the Area by Upgrading the Quality of Life & Improving Accessibility Structures

Based on the thorough existing situation analysis and the SWOT Analysis presented in Part 1, the Cross-Border Area of the Programme is an area rich in natural and cultural resources, with numerous environmental and cultural sites. Its economy is based mainly on agricultural and secondary sector activities, but the majority of its economic activities is concentrated in the urban centres. Its geographical morphology, an advantage in terms of natural resources, causes problems in terms of accessibility and deteriorates regional disparities. The area faces serious problems of decreasing population, especially of young people, that move to urban, metropolitan centres.

The upgrading of the attractiveness of the area is, thus, considered a priority for the Programme. The rational management of environmental and cultural assets will ensure this heritage for future generations and contribute to the balanced spatial development of the area. Furthermore, the development and/or enhancement of transport and communication networks are prerequisites for better exploiting the potential of the area and strengthening its territorial integration and cohesion.

Specific Objective B: Enhancing Competitiveness via Entrepreneurship, Networks of Cooperation and Human Resources

The cross-border area is facing many structural problems that compromise its competitiveness. Its low employment rates and low level of human resources specialization, the flee of young people towards metropolitan centres, the delay in the adoption of ICT and the insufficient cooperation between research and economic activities

are all factors that need to be directly targeted in order to stimulate entrepreneurship and trigger economic development.

To this respect, initiatives towards supporting entrepreneurship, networking research and economic activities can boost efficiency and effectiveness with a direct impact to the competitiveness and the development of the area. At the same time, investment in human resources can significantly contribute to the balanced and sustainable territorial development and mitigate regional disparities.

2.4. Priority Axes

The strategy and the specific objectives identified in the present Programming Document aim at producing specific results and at stimulating favourable initiatives for the further economic and social development of the cross-border area, according to the needs specified in the SWOT analysis. To this scope, the specific Priority Axes for the implementation of the Programme are:

- **Priority Axis 1: Quality of Life** – Upgrading and Management of Environmental & Cultural Assets, Health & Social Issues for the improvement of Quality of Life in the cross-border area and the welfare of its residents.
- **Priority Axis 2: Accessibility** – Improving the transport and communication networks and ensuring an easy and safe circulation of goods, services and people in the cross-border area.
- **Priority Axis 3: Competitiveness & Human Resources** - Stimulating entrepreneurship, investing in human capital and promoting research and innovation so as to increase competitiveness and improve the economic and social development of the cross-border area.
- **Priority Axis 4: Technical Assistance** – Aiming at supporting the overall management and smooth implementation of the Programme.

The Overall Strategic Outline of the Programme is depicted in the following diagram:

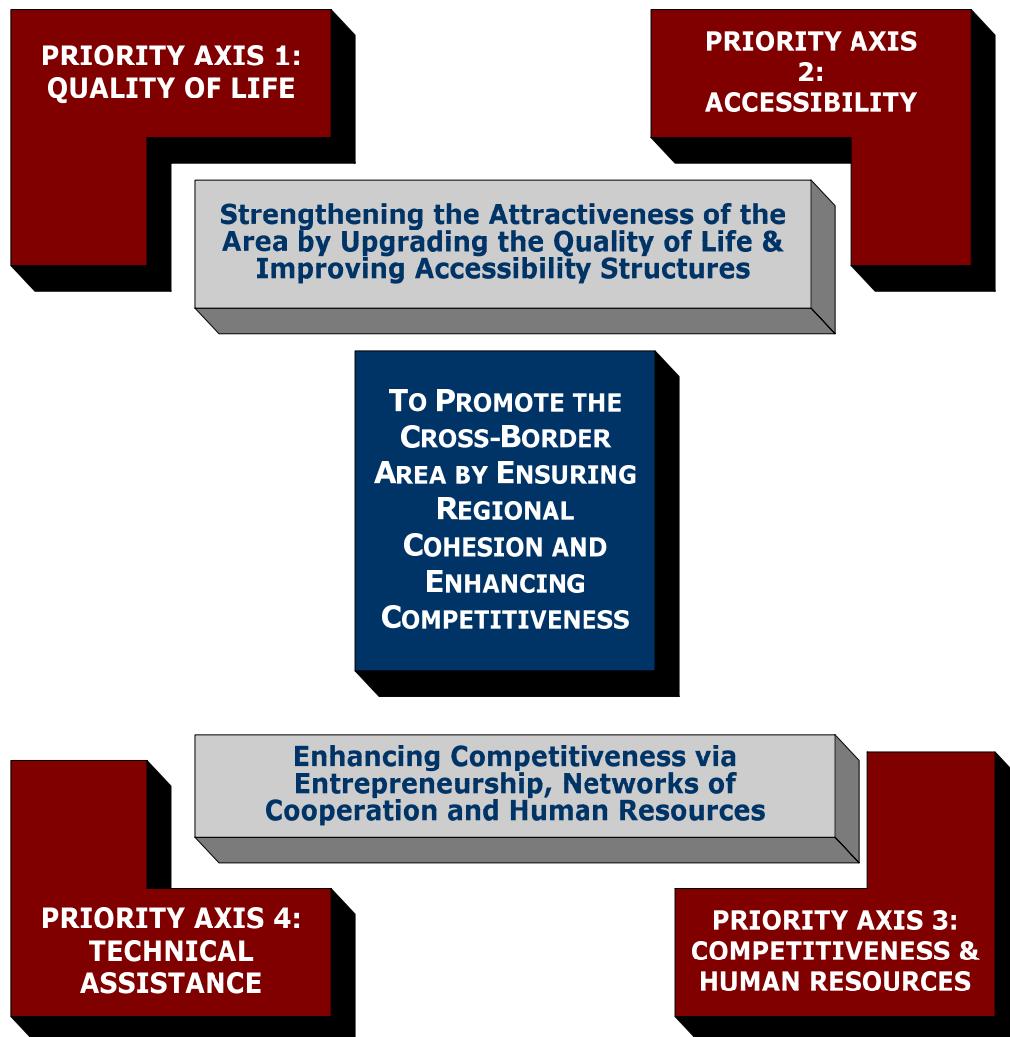


Figure 11: Overall Strategic Outline of the CP Greece-Bulgaria 2007-2013

Part 3: Priority Axes

3.1. Introduction

As identified in Part 2 of the Programming Document, the strategy of the Programme aims at promoting the Programme Area to an area of social inclusion and economic development by improving its attractiveness and ensuring its sustainable and viable growth. The Programme aspires to promote initiatives that will strengthen the attractiveness of the area and enhance competitiveness so as to upgrade the quality of life and ultimately benefit the residents of the wider programme area both in social and economic terms. To this scope, the Strategy and the Priority Axes have been formulated so as to consolidate the priorities and objectives set at the European level (by the Lisbon and Gothenburg Agendas and other European Union Policies, etc.) with the ones set at national level (via the National Strategic Reference Frameworks, the National Development Plans, either regional or sectoral, etc.); at the same time, the specific needs and great potential of the area and the new opportunities created by the accession of Bulgaria as a new Member State of the European Union have also been taken into consideration.

In order to ensure the aforementioned objectives and achieve the set out results and impacts foreseen for the Programme Area, specific Priority Axes have been identified to ensure the triggering of concrete actions and interventions that will ensure the sustainable development and the regional cohesion of the cross-border area.

Each of the Priority Axes identified in 2.4 is analyzed below. More specifically, for each of the Priority Axes given, an overview of the current problems and opportunities of the area that generated the need for implementing the specific intervention is given. Furthermore, this section presents the main objectives targeted, the main areas of intervention identified and project ideas. What needs to be noted is that the indicative project ideas, even though not exhaustive, aim at providing guidelines to potential project partners with a view to ensuring also the need for continuity and complementarity with the projects running in the past programming period, irrespectively of the fact that this is the first genuinely joint Programme.

The analysis provided has a dual scope: on the one hand, to use the analysis of the Axes to build an even more solid and integrated strategy; and on the other hand, to support beneficiaries comprehend the framework of each Axis and its expected results.

3.2. Priority Axis 1: Quality of Life

3.2.1. Rationale of the Intervention

The analysis undertaken for the drafting of the current Programming Document has revealed the clear dynamics of the cross-border area as regards its natural and cultural resources and the exploitation of its wealthy environment. At the same time, common problems regarding environmental management and health management have emerged; it is clear that the two Member States need to take advantage of this cross-border cooperation to jointly overcome the identified threats and exploit the opportunities that arise. Moreover, they will discuss measures related to the climate change as this is deemed as an issue of major importance that can affect the ecological resilience. A detailed description of the interventions or indicative actions will be provided in the Internal Document that is currently being elaborated by the two Member States.

Based on the SWOT Analysis, the Programme Area should make the most out of its favourable geo-economic position in relation to the Balkan and Black Sea countries. Its environmental resources, including significant water potential, rich forest and aquatic ecosystems, environmentally protected areas, etc. need to be preserved and managed. Further on, the area has a rich cultural and traditional heritage to protect and promote. At the same time, the cross-border area needs to intensify cooperation to jointly address environmental problems, prevent natural and man-made catastrophes, encounter common health problems that arise and use culture as a vehicle for cooperation and sustainable development.

Additionally, Quality of Life has also been listed amongst the priorities of the potential beneficiaries of the new Programme. The questionnaires collected during the formulation phase of the Programming Document and the Public Consultation that took place in Komotini on 12th February 2007 revealed a significant interest of the potential beneficiaries in environmental and cultural issues (Annex II, Analysis of Questionnaires). National policies of both Member States have also stated a clear priority for similar issues.

Improving the quality of life via environmental interventions will significantly upgrade the attractiveness of the area. At the same time, interventions regarding health and social issues will benefit the residents of the cross-border area, reverse the flow of young people towards urban centres and, ultimately, contribute to the sustainable development

and the mitigation of regional disparities in the area. The cultural networking and promotion of common heritage elements will further support cohesion in the area and can prove to be an asset as regards the extroversion of the economic and social activities of the region.

The primary scope of Priority Axis 1 is to contribute to the achievement of Specific Objective A, i.e. the strengthening of the Attractiveness of the Area so as to ultimately support the promotion of the cross-border area, primarily by ensuring its regional cohesion and economic, sustainable and viable, development.

3.2.2. Main Objectives

Based on the rationale analyzed above, the main objectives of Priority Axis 1 are:

- To protect and promote the rich and diverse natural resources of the area as a vehicle for balanced and economic development
- To promote joint risk management in the fields of water management, waste management and risk management against natural and anthropogenic disasters
- To promote and protect cultural assets and create cultural cooperation in the cross-border area
- To establish cooperation in health and social protection issues

3.2.3. Areas of Intervention / Indicative Categories of Project Ideas

Priority Axis 1 incorporates a wide range of interventions that need to be targeted in order to cover the overall notion of upgrading the Quality of Life. In order to facilitate the achievement of the specific objectives set, a further specialization of Areas of Intervention has been identified. Each Area of Intervention targets one specific field; thus, in the framework of Priority Axis 1, three Areas of Intervention have been identified: one on Environmental issues, one on Cultural Issues and one on Health and Social Security Issues. At this stage, indicative categories of project ideas are listed, so as to help readers to better comprehend the rationale of each Area of Intervention suggested; once again, the need of continuity and complementarity to projects that were implemented during the previous programming period for the two programmes need to be underlined.

3.2.3.1. Area of Intervention 1.1: Protection, Management & Promotion of the Environmental Resources

Rationale

The analysis of the existing situation has revealed the importance and wealth of the environmental resources of the Programme Area in terms of water, forests, reserved areas, flora and fauna. The environmental resources of the eligible area are a major asset for its development and future potential. Even though it, up to now, constituted a physical defect for the area (the mountain relief creates communication and transportation problems, "encourages" smuggling and discourages investments), it is now viewed as an opportunity for "green" investments in environmental assets so as to support and promote the development of the area.

Thus, Area of Intervention 1.1 aspires to stimulate joint projects that will aim at preserving the natural resources for future generations, manage environmental resources for present exploitation and future growth and promote them as a means for attracting different forms of investments, always taking into consideration the EU policies regarding environmental protection issues. The Programme Area will thus build on its natural capacity to promote its economic activities and mitigate regional disparities.

Indicative Categories of Project Ideas

This area of intervention concerns projects that address issues relevant to environmentally sensitive sites, common river basin management, environmental resources that need to be protected, interventions for the benefit of areas rich in natural resources, etc.

Indicatively, categories of project proposals could include:

- Joint Risk Management projects' implementation against Natural and Anthropogenic Disasters
- Joint Water Management Interventions
- Waste Management Interventions
- Common projects for the improvement of the quality of drinking water in areas that face problems with drinking water supply
- Promotion & management of natural environment (e.g. NATURA sites, biotopes, etc.)
- Promotion for the efficient use of Renewable Energy Resources
- Co-operation Networks & Actions for the Promotion of Alternative Forms of Tourism of Environmental Interest

- Networks & actions for the Improvement of the Urban Environment, spatial planning and environmental planning including innovative approaches
- Development of cross-border training programmes and certifications of competitiveness and capacities in the field of tourism in compliance with ecological and social limitations
- Strengthening of cross-border environmental education and training
- Actions increasing awareness on environmental standards

All interventions to be introduced on the Greek side on environmental issues will be implemented in accordance with the Action Plan for the Protection of Nature and Biodiversity 2007-2015 issued by the Greek Ministry of Environment, Spatial Planning and Public Works.

3.2.3.2. Area of Intervention 1.2: Protection, Management & Promotion of the Cultural Resources

Rationale

Under the area of Intervention 1.2 the project proposals eligible for funding must aim at protecting and promoting the cultural assets of the cross-border area as a basis for cooperation, networking and promotion of the economic development of the area. The Programme Area has a rich and diverse cultural and traditional heritage of great importance that should be built upon as a vehicle for cooperation, networking and regional cohesion. The networking and cultural links can significantly help to overcome regional disparities, bring people together, strengthen territorial cooperation and create a common vision for the future of the area.

Area of Intervention 1.2 has been formulated with a view first to protect and preserve and then to utilize the rich cultural heritage of the cross-border area with a development perspective. Joint initiatives will help establish new or strengthen existing links between the two Member States; communication problems will be overcome and opportunities for economic development and social cohesion will be built upon.

Indicative Categories of Project Ideas

The projects to be funded under the area of Intervention 1.2 should aim at promoting and protecting cultural assets of the cross-border area as a basis for cooperation, networking and promotion of the economic development of the area. To this scope, indicative categories of project ideas could include:

- Networks of cooperation for the promotion of cultural assets of major importance in the cross-border area (*museums, archaeological and other sites, etc.*)
- Co-operation Networks & Actions for the Promotion of Alternative Forms of Tourism of Cultural Interest
- Maintenance of cultural assets with the use of ICT
- Actions for the preservation and promotion of customs, dialects and social mores of the cross-border region
- Networks and action plans for the exchange of know-how between organizations of the local administration on tourism development with special focus on integrated sustainability aspects.

3.2.3.3. Area of Intervention 1.3: Cooperation and Networking in Health and Social Welfare Issues

Rationale

Common Strategies for tackling Health issues have gained importance at the European and global level in the last years. Cross-border areas have a major role to play as regards the encountering and prevention of transmittable viruses; cooperation is one of the prerequisites that ensure the good health and well-being of all citizens. To this scope, Area of Intervention 1.3 aims at promoting directly the welfare of residents of the Programme Area by stimulating joint projects that address common health and social welfare issues.

The Quality of Life and the overall attractiveness of an area are highly dependent on the conditions that the residents of the area live in. The upgrading of the attractiveness of an area can, attract further economic activities, resulting in higher social cohesion and sustainable development and, ultimately, improve the overall extroversion of the area and its economic and social features.

Indicative Categories of Project Ideas

This area of intervention will primarily target the "soft" aspects of the two sectors in terms of prevention, joint planning and collaboration, etc. Thus, indicative categories of project ideas could include:

- Medical Informatics issues, such as the recording and classification of mutually interesting medical data at the cross-border level with the usage of ICT
- Cooperation and collaboration protocols and studies for the prevention of transmittable diseases and other common health problems

- Common planning and cooperation on social welfare issues
- Networks of cooperation and actions between medical staff and hospitals of the cross-border regions to provide better health services to the citizens (Primary Health Care System)
- Secondary infrastructure (complementary medical units, etc.)
- Development of cross-border Health and Emergency medical programmes (infrastructure, volunteer and national rescue teams, insurance vouchers etc) for tourists with regard to the outdoor activities
- Networks of cooperation and common actions for facing illegal activities (drugs' trade, migration, trafficking) taking place in cross-border area
- Actions for strengthening and promoting non-discrimination issues (wage, nationality, language, gender, etc) with regard to the employees and the general population of the cross-border areas

3.2.4. Target Groups / Areas

As stated in Part 4 of the Programming Document, the general typology of Beneficiaries identified for Priority Axis 1 - Quality of Life, includes Public Organizations (Ministries and relevant Ministries' structures, Regional and Local Authorities), NGO's – NPO's (Non-governmental and non-profit organizations), Academic and Research Institutes, Local Health Centres, State Cultural Organizations, Public Entities and Public Equivalent Organizations, Euroregions.

The target area of Priority Axis 1 covers the whole cross-border area.

3.2.5. Quantified Targets / Outputs & Result Indicators*

Priority Axis 1: Quality of life – Output Indicators			
Indicator	Measurement	Type	Existing Baseline & Target 2013
Joint Actions for the preservation of the natural environment	Number	Output	?? 5
Establishment of joint co operations for the promotion of cultural assets	Number of co operations	Output	?? 6
Number of participants in training seminars on environmental issues	Number of participants	Output	?? 100
Number of joint projects dealing with common water management issues	Number	Output	0 3
Number of joint projects undertaken in the fields of health management against common health problems	Number	Output	0 5

* Baseline and Target values will be provided with the first Annual Report to be submitted to the European Commission.

Priority Axis 1: Quality of life – Result Indicators		
Indicator	Measurement	Type
NATURA areas in which management joint actions are implemented	Percentage of NATURA areas, End of Programming Period	Output
Number of joint partnerships/ networks developed in the framework of the priority axis	Number, end of programme	Result

3.3. Priority Axis 2: Accessibility

3.3.1. Rationale of the Intervention

The Programme area has a special geographic morphology that creates issues of accessibility. The existing infrastructure is considered insufficient, while delays exist in the construction of the new railway and road networks. The same goes for the secondary road network, especially in the rural areas, perpetuating regional disparities rather than promoting regional cohesion. Most important problems arise due to the small number of crossing points that do not ease the quick and safe transportation of people, goods and services.

Taking into consideration all the aforementioned elements, the Programme aims at tackling these difficulties by introducing Priority Axis 2 – Accessibility. This Priority Axis will support initiatives that build on the existing infrastructure and basically complement the actions to be undertaken by both Member States, at the National Level, for ensuring the upgrading of the infrastructure (railway, road and ICT) throughout the cross-border area.

Five vertical axes of the Egnatia Highway (Thessaloniki- Serres-Promahonas, Komotini – Nymfaia- Haskovo, Xanthi-Ehinos, Ardanio- Ormenio, Drama –Exohi), most still under construction, are located in the Programme area, connecting it from south to north, three of which are part of the Pan European Corridors IV and IX. A railway line connects the main urban centres of the area while telecommunication infrastructure is also available. Thus, the main issues that Priority Axis 2 aspires to deal with are the support of further infrastructure (both road and railway) and the support of easy and safe circulation of people and goods in the area.

The issue of accessibility has been strongly supported by the representatives of the relevant authorities of both countries and other interested parties who participated in the Joint Task Force meetings, the Public Consultation of the Programme or took part in the consultation via the questionnaire that was distributed by the Joint Task Force. Accessibility has been recognized as priority for both Member States at national level; nonetheless, the recognition of Bulgaria as a new EU Member State, and its forthcoming inclusion in the Schengen zone, creates a new reality for both countries. The eligible area and its population will need to quickly adapt to these new conditions, so as to make the most out of the potential given and overcome any difficulties that may arise.

Improving the accessibility in the Programme area is a prerequisite for mitigating regional disparities, ensuring regional cohesion and boosting economic activities. The easy and safe circulation of people, goods and services will help to boost entrepreneurship, strengthen the cooperation at the cross-border area, improve the quality of life of its residents and, ultimately, result in a sustainable and viable development.

The primary scope of Priority Axis 2 is to contribute to the achievement of Specific Objective A, i.e. to strengthening the attractiveness of the area by improving the accessibility structures. Nonetheless, it will also contribute significantly to improving the quality of life, establishing networks of cooperation and promoting entrepreneurship, i.e. also to achieving to Specific Objective B of the Programme.

3.3.2. Main Objectives

The main objectives identified in the framework of Priority Axis 2 are as follows:

- To improve the road and railway networks as a means of social and economic development of the cross-border area
- To improve the mobility of goods, services and people in the cross-border area
- To coordinate infrastructure initiatives at the cross-border area so as to boost its economic activity and ensure balanced spatial development.

3.3.3. Areas of Intervention / Indicative Categories of Project Ideas

The Priority Axis 2 framework will include only actions that will have a complementary role to the initiatives undertaken at the national level of the two Member States in terms of infrastructure. To this scope, two areas of intervention have been identified: one for the enhancement of the road / railway network and one for the establishment / upgrading of the cross-border facilities in the Programme area. Project ideas to be submitted under this Priority Axis, should be formulated with a view to ensure, as much as possible, complementarity with the projects implemented in the previous Programming Period in the same cross-border area.

The ICT infrastructure has been identified as equally important, but will not be targeted in this Programme for two main reasons: first, the existing infrastructure is considered rather sufficient – what is of importance at this stage is to help people actually use new technologies and ICT tools; secondly, similar actions are foreseen by sectoral programmes in both Member States. Thus, in order to avoid overlapping, the current Programme will not support this type of activities.

3.3.3.1. Area of Intervention 2.1: Development of the road & railway network

Rationale

As thoroughly described in the analysis of the Existing situation, the main road and railway networks in the Programme Area are considered adequate. Three of the vertical axes of the Egnatia Odos are part of the Pan-European Corridors, while two vertical axes are under construction. Road networks on the cross-border area are being built or have already been included in the national programmes. A railway connection between main urban centres of the Programme area already exists. There are already crossing points in the cross-border area, but the inclusion of Bulgaria as a new member state to the European Union calls for new infrastructure so as to ensure and ease the transportation and circulation of people and goods in the eligible area.

Improving and enhancing the transport infrastructure of an area contributes to the promotion of its sustainable development and cohesion, mitigating regional disparities, and providing equal opportunities for all. To this scope, Area of Intervention 2.1 referring to the development of the road & railway network aims at funding projects that complement initiatives undertaken at the national levels of both Member States. The establishment of new infrastructure and the enhancement of existing ones will undoubtedly support the competitiveness and viable growth of the Programme Area.

Indicative Categories of Project Ideas

Area of Intervention 2.1 will primarily support project ideas that aim at upgrading the level of the existing road & railway network with a focus on the areas located closer to the borders. The creation of an enhanced network will facilitate accessibility via different "passages" that connect the cross-border area. This area of intervention will include, among others, road and railway network building. The indicative list of project ideas includes:

- Enhancement (small scale interventions for upgrading, widening, etc.) of the road network (e.g. obsolete secondary network, etc.)
- Enhancement / Improvements of the railway network (e.g. rehabilitation of train stations, etc.)
- Development of new border crossings
- Creation of logistics co-operations and networks on the border line
- Road design studies, Transboundary Existing Situation Analysis (ESA) and Environmental Impact Analysis (EIA) for cross-border infrastructure activities
- Studies and pilot projects for the promotion and usage of environmental friendly means of transport and innovative solutions to resolve bottlenecks

3.3.3.2. Area of Intervention 2.2: Improvement of Cross Border Facilities

Rationale

The small number of crossing points (three) in the cross border area is mentioned in the SWOT Analysis as one of the identified weaknesses in the Infrastructure Sector. The recent inclusion of Bulgaria as a new Member State in the EU calls for investments ensuring that the cross-border mobility will be significantly improved and that the circulation of people and goods will be facilitated. At the same time, the everyday relationships and interactions between Greece and Bulgaria are expected to alter significantly in the upcoming years, especially in view of the adaptation of Bulgaria to the new rules, regulations and procedures. Thus, for example, the upcoming inclusion of Bulgaria in the Schengen zone will soon make existing border crossing points unnecessary; nevertheless, still much needs to be done to enhance and facilitate the access of people (locals, tourists or businessmen), goods and services in the eligible area.

The improvement of cross-border mobility is necessary for the development of the Programme Area. No economic activity can flourish, no networks can be established and no joint projects and initiatives can smoothly be implemented if problems arise with the circulation of people and goods. Facilities at the borders need to be upgraded, actions need to be undertaken and co-operations need to be established in order to promote and support the circulation and mobility of goods and / or people either for leisure, business or everyday actions.

Indicative Categories of Project Ideas

The objective of this Area of Intervention can be achieved by funding the establishment and enhancement of facilities that promote mobility in the cross-border area. These projects may belong to the following categories:

- Enhancement of mobility of people for leisure in the cross-border area via soft actions or small-scale investments (cross-border pedestrian walks and bicycle routes in areas of cultural or environmental interest, etc.)
- Cooperation and synergies to enhance trade & entrepreneurship
- Develop cross border public means of transport and joint billing systems (e.g. regional ticket).
- Development of information channels with regard to the transport of dangerous goods and identification of relevant actions to inform the relevant bodies or groups.
- Shifting of traffic towards environment friendly transportation systems.
- Use of existing technology to coordinate the schedules of Public Transport providers (seasonal provision of routes on demand also in relation to tourist activities).

3.3.4. Target Groups / Areas

As stated in Part 4 of the Programming Document on Final Beneficiaries, the general typology of Beneficiaries identified for Priority Axis 2 – Accessibility, includes primarily Public Organizations (Ministries and relevant Ministries' structures, Regional and Local Authorities, etc.) and Public equivalent organizations.

The target area of Priority Axis 2 - Area of Intervention 2.1 covers the whole cross-border area. At the same time, though, Area of Intervention 2.2 will cover solely areas located across the border line. The specific areas will be specified in the Programme Manual.

3.3.5. Quantified Targets / Outputs & Result Indicators

Priority Axis 2: ACCESSIBILITY – Output Indicators		
Indicator	Measurement	Type
Reconstruction / Rehabilitation of the road network	Km	Output
Reconstruction / Rehabilitation of the railway network	Km	Output
Number of new crossing points created in the eligible area	Number, end of programme	Output

Priority Axis 2: ACCESSIBILITY – Result Indicators		
Indicator	Measurement	Type
Number of joint partnerships and networks established in the framework of the Priority Axis	Number, end of Programming period	Result
Number of citizens inside the cross-border regions who will benefit from the new accessibility infrastructure and actions	Number, end of Programming period	Result

3.4. Priority Axis 3: Competitiveness & Human Resources

3.4.1. Rationale of the Intervention

The Programme area faces significant challenges in terms of ensuring its competitiveness and upgrading its human capital. The problems are related to the significant numbers of unqualified human resources, ageing population, high unemployment rates, especially among young people, and serious population imbalances between urban over-populated centres and rural under-populated peripheral areas. On the other hand, there is a number of prestigious Academic and Research Institutions in the region and a free and unhindered access for all people to all levels of education.

The concentration of investments, in new technologies and innovation, energy and communications, illustrates the increased interest of the business sector in the Programme area. The previous cross-border programmes have played an important role by establishing business networks, promoting cooperation and supporting transfer of know-how. In addition, the region is evolving into a pole of attraction for tourism business. On the other hand, the cross-border area is facing significant threats due to the restructuring of the economy and the deterioration of the market conditions for the local traditional enterprises (that constitute a significant number of the overall number of enterprises), the loss of market share and the entry of new workforce by other countries.

The need to stimulate entrepreneurship, overcome structural problems and increase competitiveness is essential for any economy to survive. Especially for the cross-border area that is facing so many challenges and so many opportunities, its transformation to a highly competitive and innovative centre is essential to ensure its sustainable development and economic blooming. In order to ensure this, the Programme aims to primarily build on the human capital of the area. Long-life training can contribute in dealing with the problems of the ageing population. Networking and establishing synergies between the Academic Institutions and the business community will create more opportunities for young people to enter the labour market. Therefore, the targets of Priority Axis 3 will be to promote entrepreneurship and new technologies to stimulate innovation and improve competitiveness by supporting a) the creation of networks between research and technological centres and the business sector and b) the promotion of innovation in the business community.

Priority Axis 3 will primarily contribute to Specific Objective B, i.e. to enhancing competitiveness by promoting entrepreneurship, establishing networks of cooperation and investing on human resources. At the same time, it will, of course, also contribute to the improvement of the quality of life of the residents of the eligible area and the overall promotion of regional cohesion and economic development.

3.4.2. Main Objectives

The main objectives identified in the framework of Priority Axis 3 are:

- To use the restructuring of the economy as an opportunity for economic and spatial sustainable development
- To invest on human capital as one of the most valuable resources of the cross-border area for promoting economic activities
- To stimulate entrepreneurship and integrate ICT and new technologies to all economic sectors as a vehicle for economic and social cohesion
- To network research and economic activities so as to integrate innovation in the productive sectors of the economy
- To foresee proactive initiatives in view of the forthcoming open labour market in the cross-border area

3.4.3. Areas of Intervention / Indicative Categories of Project Ideas

In order to achieve the above-mentioned objectives, the actions to be implemented in the following Areas of Intervention would need to be complementary to the initiatives undertaken in the previous Programming Period but also to the ESF initiatives which will be developed in the new Programming Period 2007 – 2013.

3.4.3.1. Area of Intervention 3.1: Support and Valorisation of Human Resources
– Support of Preparatory Actions in view of the Open Labour Market

Rationale

The human capital of the cross-border area is identified as one of its most valuable assets for ensuring and promoting sustainable development. The shifting of the fleeing population to urban centres and the upgrading of the qualifications level of the human resources are a major priority for the cross-border area. The Programme Area is currently facing significant imbalances as regards the distribution of qualified and unqualified workforce between urban and rural areas respectively, causing significant job losses for rural and undeveloped areas and, subsequently, serious deterioration in the economic activities of specific areas. The current situation is causing serious regional disparities that need to be urgently tackled.

The cross-border area is in a transitional phase as regards the labour market. Indeed, the regulatory measures that are in effect for regulating the labour market, foresee a transition period of two years before an open labour market is ensured for the two Member States. Taking this element into consideration, the Programme area would need also to create the basis in the area to handle and exploit the upcoming opportunities to be created once the labour market is fully open.

The valorisation of human resources and the maintenance of high specialized human resources equally distributed throughout the eligible area will contribute to mitigate regional disparities and promote economic development throughout the eligible cross-border area. Highly qualified human capital will boost economic activities, resulting in better economic and social cohesion and sustainable development for the cross-border region, thus, contributing to the overall strategic goal of the Programme.

Indicative Categories of Project Ideas

The support and valorisation of Human Resources primarily aims at promoting projects that aim at shifting the fleeing of population towards urban centres and upgrading the level of qualifications of the human resources, using innovative tools (e.g. new technologies and ICT tools) and methods. Additionally, Area of Intervention 3.1 will further promote joint projects & mechanisms that will help in the creation of a regulatory scheme to support stakeholders in meeting the requirements of the open labour market to be introduced in two-year time. Thus, indicative categories of project ideas could include:

- A monitoring system using ICT tools for the mobility of Human Resources in the Cross-border Area
- Joint projects for the formulation of regulatory strategies for the preparation of the cross-border area and its stakeholders to the open labour market.
- Support of sectoral mobility and exchange of specialized personnel among the productive entities of the cross-border area / exchange of know - how and technological innovation diffusion
- Joint projects for the support of employment and entrepreneurship of youth and women in main economic sectors of interest (such as tourism, culture, environment) so as to ensure their stay in the region
- Facilitation of access to employment for long term unemployed and other socially sensitive groups
- Cooperation and networks offering continuous (long-life) education to human resources according to the needs of the labour market.
- Joint projects for the promotion of employment in actions relevant to environment and sustainable development
- Development of Initiatives to harmonize legal requirements for cross-border labour markets, economic and social systems (establishment of joint labour market monitoring and information system, elaboration of databases, exchange of information, experiences, best practices)

The implementation of qualification programmes on the Greek side will be harmonized and monitored by the Common Regulatory Framework to be formulated by the Ministry of Labour & Social Welfare.

3.4.3.2. Area of Intervention 3.2: Encouragement of Entrepreneurship & Actions that Cope with the Restructuring of the Economy

Rationale

The Programme Area is an area that is facing serious restructuring problems; the primary sector of economy, the most productive one until recently, is being threatened by the changes in economy, while the evolutions in the other sectors do not respond to the challenges posed by the new economy. The growth rates show a need for speeding up and improving the productive procedures of all sectors by introducing innovative methods and new tools. At the same time, the area seems to be attracting internal and foreign investments from different fields, creating significant opportunities for entrepreneurship.

Interventions for the stimulation of entrepreneurship in all sectors of the economy and projects that deal with the restructuring of the economic model are essential for ensuring the competitiveness and the economic development of the cross-border area. Area of Intervention 3.2 aims at targeting these two issues for the Programme area and supports primarily its economic activities in order to promote its overall development.

Indicative Categories of Project Ideas

In the framework of Area of Intervention 3.2 the projects that will be financed will primarily refer to economic activities targeting new economic trends and attracting entrepreneurs (and, hence, investments) to the cross-border area. Indicative categories of project ideas could include:

- Usage of ICT for upgrading and increasing the competitiveness of the economic sectors
- Promotion of alternative forms of tourism aiming at both tourist and new investments in the region
- Formulation of networks of cooperation among organizations operating in the same fields of activities to exchange expertise
- Strategies and plans for the creation of joint Industrial Parks
- Actions for increasing accessibility by improving telecommunication infrastructure
- Actions supporting regional supply chains and supply chain management
- Actions supporting the promotion and commercialisation of local products (including products of agriculture, aquaculture and fisheries)
- Support the undertaking of Environmental Management Systems (e.g. ISO, EMAS, Eco labels).

3.4.3.3. Area of Intervention 3.3: Promotion of Cooperation between research, technological and academic institutions and business organizations

Rationale

Both the SWOT Analysis and the Public Consultations carried out in the cross-border area underline a strong lack of communication between research, technological and academic institutions and business organizations. The cross-border area has an adequate number of research and academic institutions with a significant work to show at the national and European level. Unfortunately, strong links between these academic organizations and business organizations seem to be nonexistent.

The lack of direct communication and links between the research and business communities creates drawbacks for the introduction of innovative ideas and methods in the productive sectors of economy and, ultimately, threatens the competitiveness of the cross-border area. Given that innovation is a major driving force for economic wealth, the present situation threatens the economic development and social cohesion of the cross-border area.

Therefore, area of Intervention 3.3 will primarily target at introducing actions that will promote networking between the research and business organizations, so as to create channels that will infuse innovation to the productive procedures of the economy with the ultimate goal to promote competitiveness and boost economic development. The ultimate objective is to transform the cross-border area to an economic and investment centre with multiplying benefits in the economic and social life of all its residents.

Indicative Categories of Project Ideas

The projects to be financed by Area of Intervention 3.3 will target activities that cope with the restructuring of the economy, stimulate entrepreneurship and establish partnerships between the research and business organizations of the economy. Indicative categories of actions could include:

- Creation of “structures” for the integration of human resources trained by the research/technological/academic institutions to the productive economic sectors
- Networks of cooperation for channelling experts to specific fields of activities
- Networks of cooperation among research / technological institutions and business organization for Innovation & Technology Transfer.
- Cooperation among Universities and Business Organizations in the cross-border area
- Improved cooperation of innovative and regional actors by implementing a better regional governance of the relevant policies
- Strengthen the cooperation in the field of education and qualification, esp. joint qualification in sectors such as environmental technologies, renewable energy sources and ecotourism

3.4.4 Target Groups / Areas

As stated in Part 4 of the Programming Document, the general typology of Beneficiaries identified for Priority Axis 3- Competitiveness & Human Resources, includes Public Organizations (Ministries and Ministries' structures, Regional and Local Authorities, Euroregions, Public Entities) and Public Equivalent Organizations, Business Unions / Organizations, Academic and Research Institutes.

The target area of Priority Axis 3 covers the whole cross-border area.

3.4.5 Quantified Targets / Outputs & Result Indicators

Priority Axis 3: Competitiveness & Human Resources – Output Indicators		
Indicator	Measurement	Type
Number of long-life training programs / seminars organized	Number	Output
Joint Actions networking Business Organizations with Research Institutions	Number	Output
Number of experts exploiting the exchange of experts' programmes	Number	Output

Priority Axis 3: Competitiveness & Human Resources – Result Indicators		
Indicator	Measurement	Type
Number of partnerships and networks established in the framework of the Priority Axis	Number, end of Programming Period	Result
Percentage of women benefiting from the training seminars as part of the total participants	Percentage, annual	Output

3.5. Priority Axis 4: Technical Assistance

3.5.1. Rationale of the Intervention

As already stated above, Priority Axis 4 – Technical Assistance is solely targeted at ensuring the smooth programming, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the overall application of the Programme. To this scope, Priority Axis 4 will finance activities that refer to the Management Structures and procedures of the Programme and ensure that the beneficiaries are fully and completely informed on the priorities and projects, that the Call for Proposals are timely and correctly launched, that the evaluation and approval procedures are completed on time, that the financial management of the Programme is correct, that all monitoring and evaluation procedures posed by the EC are respected, etc.

It is noted that the strategy of the Programme and the respective Priority Axes and Areas of Intervention cannot be correctly implemented unless relevant activities referring to the overall management of the Programme are ensured. Thus, Priority Axis 4, even though not directly targeted to the cross-border area is of extreme importance for ensuring the final success of the Programme.

3.5.2. Main Objectives

The main objectives identified in the framework of Priority Axis 4 are:

- To make the most out of the funds given to the Programme for an effective and efficient implementation
- To ensure the sound financial management and implementation of the Programme
- To ensure the coherence of actions approved under the Areas of Intervention and Calls for Proposals launched
- To support beneficiaries
- To publicize and communicate the Programme in the most effective and efficient way
- To ensure the correct monitoring and evaluation of the Programme, as regards EC policies and priorities set

3.5.3. Area of Intervention / Suggested Actions

Two Areas of Intervention have been identified under Priority Axis 4. The Actions to be financed will be decided and approved by the Management Structures of the Programme via procedures to be finalized in the Programme Manual.

3.5.3.1. Area of Intervention 4.1: Core Programme Management Activities

Rationale & Indicative Actions

This first Area of Intervention refers to all the obligatory activities which need to be undertaken for the preparation, management, implementation, monitoring, control and evaluation of the Programme, as set out by the EU regulations and procedures. The objective is to ensure the proper management and implementation of the Programme. Indicative actions that will be approved by the Management Structures of the Programme include:

- Activities in connection with the preparation, selection, evaluation and follow-up of projects (preparation of Call for Proposals, evaluation, selection and approval, etc.);
- Activities for the administrative support of the joint structures;
- Management and running of the Joint Technical Secretariat;
- Preparation and organization of the Joint Monitoring Committee and Joint Steering Committee (translation/interpretation costs);
- Preparation and publication of reports, studies, analysis and surveys on general and specific problems concerning the border area (e.g. annual reports, on going evaluation, etc.);
- Acquisition, installation and integration of IT equipment for management, monitoring, evaluation and coordination of the Programme;
- Expenditure related to controls, audits and on-the-spot checks of operations;

3.5.3.2. Area of Intervention 4.2: Project Generation and Information & Communication Activities

Rationale & Indicative Actions

This second Area of Intervention will aim at supporting all activities guaranteeing the preconditions (material and personal resources) for calls follow-up and mentoring, including the diffusion of information and publicity, the support of final beneficiaries, etc. To this scope, indicative actions could include:

- Information and publicity activities;
- Assistance to potential final beneficiaries;
- Design and maintenance of a website for the programme;
- Actions promoting a greater awareness and understanding of the EU assistance, monitoring and implementation (seminars, conferences, information days, events, visits)

3.5.4. Target Groups

The Target Group of Priority Axis 4 includes all the beneficiaries of the Programme identified in Part 4 who will be further specified using the criteria set in the Programme Manual, as well as the members of the Programme Management Structures that will carry out the actions for the implementation and control of the Programme.

In order to avoid overlapping with existing EU structures, to explore synergies with these structures and ultimately, complement the technical assistance, the communication and linkages with the INTERACT Programme will, of course, be ensured. The INTERACT Programme focuses on the good governance of territorial cooperation and provides needs-based support to stakeholders involved in implementing programmes under the European Territorial Co-operation objective. The target groups for INTERACT are primarily the authorities to be established according to Council Regulations 1083/2006 and 1080/2006, as well as other bodies involved in programme implementation. In order to ensure maximum benefit from the INTERACT programme for the implementing bodies of this programme, the use of INTERACT services and documentation, as well as the participation in INTERACT seminars will be encouraged.

3.5.5. Quantified Targets / Outputs & Result Indicators

Priority Axis 4: Technical Assistance		
Indicator	Measurement	Type
Number of calls for Proposals, evaluation and approval	Number	Output
Preparation and maintenance of the programme's website	Number, end of Programming Period	Output

3.6. Summary Table of Programme Strategy & Priority Axes

OVERALL STRATEGY		
To Promote the Cross-Border Area by Ensuring Regional Cohesion and Enhancing Competitiveness		
SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES		
A. Strengthening the Attractiveness of the Area by Upgrading the Quality of Life & Improving Accessibility Structures	B. Enhancing Competitiveness by promoting entrepreneurship, establishing networks of cooperation and investing on human resources	
PRIORITY AXES		
PRIORITY AXIS 1: QUALITY OF LIFE	PRIORITY AXIS 2: ACCESSIBILITY	PRIORITY AXIS 3: COMPETITIVENESS & HUMAN RESOURCES
Areas of Intervention		
<p>1.1: Protection, Management & Promotion of the Environmental Resources</p> <p>1.2: Protection, Management & Promotion of the Cultural Resources</p> <p>1.3: Cooperation and Networking on Health and Social Welfare Issues</p>	<p>2.1: Development of the road & railway network</p> <p>2.2: Improvement of Cross Border Facilities</p>	<p>3.1: Support and Valorisation of Human Resources - Support of Preparatory Actions in view of the Open Labour Market</p> <p>3.2: Encouragement of Entrepreneurship & Actions that Cope with the Restructuring of the Economy</p> <p>3.3: Promotion of Cooperation between research, technological and academic institutions and business organizations</p>
PRIORITY AXIS 4: TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE		
<p>4.1: Core Programme Management Activities</p> <p>4.2: Project Generation and other Information & Communication Activities of the Programme</p>		

3.7. Indicative Budget Breakdown

The overall budget of the Programme amounts to Euros **130.277.598**, of which ERDF allocation to the Programme for the new Programming Period amounts to Euros **110.735.958**.

The initial allocation per Priority Axis foreseen at this stage is the following:

Priority Axis 1: 46%
Priority Axis 2: 24%
Priority Axis 3: 24%
Priority Axis 4: 6%

The following table presents the indicative ERDF allocation per priority theme.

TABLE 5: Codes for the Priority Theme Dimension

CODE	PRIORITY THEME	INDICATIVE ERDF ALLOCATION (€)
01	R&TD activities in research centres	3.986.494
04	Assistance to R&TD particularly in SMEs (including access to R&TD services in research centres)	2.657.663
07	Investment in firms directly linked to research and innovation (innovative technologies, establishment of new firms by universities, existing R&TD centres and firms, etc)	2.657.663
21	Motorways (TEN-T)	15.945.978
23	Regional / Local roads	5.315.326
26	Multimodal transport	5.315.326
45	Management and distribution of water (drinking water)	8.150.167
51	Promotion of biodiversity and nature protection (including Natura 2000)	4.075.083
55	Promotion of natural assets	4.075.083

TABLE 5: Codes for the Priority Theme Dimension

CODE	PRIORITY THEME	INDICATIVE ERDF ALLOCATION (€)
56	Protection and development of natural heritage	5.093.854
58	Protection and preservation of the cultural heritage	7.640.781
59	Development of cultural infrastructure	9.168.937
63	Design and dissemination of innovative and more productive ways of organizing work	5.315.326
69	Measures to improve access to employment and increase sustainable participation and progress of women in employment, to reduce gender-based segregation in the labour market and to reconcile work and private life, such as facilitating access to childcare and care for dependent persons	3.986.495
71	Pathways to integration and re-entry into employment for disadvantaged people: combating discrimination in accessing and progressing in the labour market and promoting acceptance of diversity at the workplace	3.986.495
73	Measures to increase participation in education and training throughout the life-cycle, including through action to achieve a reduction in early school leaving, gender-based segregation of subjects and increased access to, and quality of initial vocational and tertiary education and training.	3.986.495
76	Health infrastructure	12.734.635
85	Preparation, implementation, monitoring and inspection	4.207.966
86	Evaluation and studies; information and communication	2.436.191
Total		110.735.958

TABLE 6: Codes for the form of Finance Dimension

CODE	FORM OF FINANCE	ERDF ALLOCATION (€)	PERCENTAGE
01	Non-Repayable Aid	110.735.958	100%

TABLE 7: Codes for the form of the Territorial Dimension

CODE	TERRITORY TYPE	ERDF ALLOCATION (€)	PERCENTAGE
08	Cross-border cooperation area	110.735.958	100%

Financial commitments to the Programme shall be made, on an annual basis, according to the following plan:

TABLE 8: Year by source for the programme

YEARS	ERDF (€)
2007	15.170.492
2008	14.654.527
2009	14.952.542
2010	15.542.630
2011	16.137.851
2012	16.781.396
2013	17.496.520
GRAND TOTAL 2007-2013	110.735.958

Payments are made as reimbursements of expenditure, actually paid out according to the following plan.

Operational programme reference (CCI number): CCI 2007CB163PO059

Priority axes by source of funding (in euros):

TABLE 9: Budget Breakdown per Priority Axis of the Programme

	Community Funding (a)	National Public Funding (b)	National Private Funding ³⁰ (c)	Total funding (d) = (a)+(b)	Co-financing rate (e)* = (a)/(d) as %	For information	
						EIB contri- butions	Other funding ³¹
Priority Axis 1: Quality of Life	50.938.541	8.989.154	--	59.927.695	85%	--	--
Priority Axis 2: Accessibility	26.576.630	4.689.994	--	31.266.624	85%	--	--
Priority Axis 3: Competitiveness & Human Resources	26.576.630	4.689.994	--	31.266.624	85%	--	--
Priority Axis 4: Technical Assistance	6.644.157	1.172.498	--	7.816.655	85%	--	--
Total	110.735.958	19.541.640	--	130.277.598	85%	--	--

* This rate may be rounded in the table. The precise rate used to reimburse payments is the ratio (e) **with no rounding**.

³⁰ Priority axes are expressed in total costs.

³¹ Including national and private funding when priority axes are expressed in public costs. May also include financing from other participating countries (e.g. Norway, Switzerland)

Part 4: Identification of the Final Beneficiaries

4.1. Introduction

During the programming period 2000-2006, the number of Beneficiaries from the cross border area was significant, while the nature of their organizational structure and their capacity in managing projects and/or actions was, in some cases, questionable. The beneficiaries of this Programming Period are generally described in this chapter, and will be further identified in the Programme Manual.

It is important to underline the importance of the Lead Partner Principle for the projects that will be implemented in the 2007 - 2013 Programming Period. The Lead Partner principle is a basic requirement for all operations financed under the Operational Programme. For each operation, a lead beneficiary shall be appointed by the beneficiaries among themselves.

According to the Lead Partner principle, the Lead Partner of each project bears the entire responsibility for the administrative and technical implementation of the project; it represents all the project partners/beneficiaries in relation to the Operational Programme structures. Detailed provisions regarding the tasks and functions of the lead partner will be included in the Programme Manual.

4.2. Beneficiaries per Priority Axis of the Programme (2007 – 2013)

For the programming period 2007-2013 the Beneficiaries shall demonstrate sufficient administrative capacity and comply with specific requirements and criteria that will be duly described in the Programme Manual.

At this stage, only general categories of beneficiaries per priority axis of the Programme have been identified. More specifically:

For Priority Axis 1- Life Quality, the **Beneficiaries can be** Public Organizations, Academic and Research Institutes, Local Health Centres, State Cultural Organizations, Public Entities and Public Equivalent Organizations, Euroregions.

For Priority Axis 2 – Accessibility, the **Beneficiaries can be** Public or public equivalent Organizations.

For Priority Axis 3 - Competitiveness and Human Resources, the **Beneficiaries can be** Public Organizations and Public Equivalent Organizations, Business Unions / Organizations, Academic, Educational and Research Institutes.

Priority Axis 4 – Technical Assistance will refer only to the Management and Administration of the Programme and will, thus, include funds solely targeted to the smooth implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the Programme. Thus, the funds reserved for this Priority Axis will be used for internal purposes. Target Groups will then be the staff of the Management Structures of the Programme and, ultimately, all beneficiaries identified under the three Priority Axes of the Programme.

4.3. Conclusion

The description of Beneficiaries at this stage is of general scope and will be further analyzed and identified in the Programme Manual, where the selection criteria of the Beneficiaries shall be fully described. Furthermore, the specific beneficiaries that the Call for Proposals to be launched in the framework of the Programme will address, will be decided upon by the Managing Authority in due time.

Part 5: GR-BG 2007-2013 Programme and other EU Policies

5.1. Ensuring Sustainable Development

Sustainable Development is addressed as one of the main long-term goals of the European Union. The Member States should provide a better quality of life for the present and the future generation. All rules dictated by the EU should be followed by the Member States in all issues relevant to social, economic and environmental policies. The priorities and axes of the Common Programme Greece-Bulgaria for the new programming period 2007-2013 should include the guidelines for Sustainability addressed by the Lisbon Agenda and the Gothenburg Strategy of 2001, and the renewed Sustainable Development Strategy for the enlarged Europe.

The relevant cross-border Operational Programme Greece-Bulgaria 2007-2013 takes into consideration these "key" rules for combat climate change, sustainable transport, spatial planning, public health threats, better management of natural resources, social inclusion / demography / migration and global poverty^{32,33} through the Strategy developed and thoroughly analyzed in Part 4 of the current Programming Document.

Additionally, special focus is given on the Directives 92/43/EEC³⁴ & 79/409/EEC³⁵ of Article 6 for "*Habitats - Ensuring Biodiversity through the Conservation of Natural Habitats and wild Fauna and Flora in the European Territory of the Member States where the Treaty is applied*" and "*Conservation of Wild Birds*" respectively, primarily via Priority Axis 1 "Quality of Life" and area of intervention 1.1 "Protection, Management and Promotion of the Environmental Resources", whose main aim is to support projects relevant to environmental sensitive areas, management of water resources, protected environmental resources, initiatives for promoting areas with rich environmental resources, by taking into consideration rules for the conservation of the environment etc.

Moreover, the Programming Document promotes issues relevant to Gender Quality and Equal opportunities on social integration. According to the key objectives and policy guiding principles of the Renewed European Sustainable Development Strategy (SDS) specified in Brussels on the 9th of June 2006, all Member States should "Promote a

³² <http://ec.europa.eu/environment/eussd> (European Union Strategy for Sustainable Development)

³³ Renewed Sustainable Development: European Council DOC 10117/06 (15-16 June 2006)

³⁴ Managing Natura 2000 sites / The provision of the Article 6 of the "Habitats" Directive 92/43/EEC, p.8

³⁵ Managing Natura 2000 sites / The provision of the Article 6 of the "Habitats" Directive 92/43/EEC, p.8

democratic, socially inclusive, cohesive, healthy, safe and just society with respect for fundamental rights and cultural diversity that creates equal opportunities and combats discrimination in all its forms³⁶". The Member States should adopt the following policy guiding principles³⁷ for sustainability in social inclusion (*Promotion and protection of Fundamental Rights*), demography (*Solidarity between and within generations*) and migration (*an Open and democratic Europe*).

Furthermore, the employment policies under which Guideline 18 states "the promotion of a life-cycle approach to work" as a major priority and calls on Member States to take "resolute actions to increase female participation and reduce gender gaps in employment, unemployment and pay" has also been taken into consideration. Simultaneously, the same policies call for the "better reconciliation of work and private life and the provision of accessible and affordable childcare facilities and care for dependants"³⁸ to be adopted and enhanced.

The aspect of Sustainability has been adopted on the strategic framework of the current Operational Programme. Its main axes and priorities focus on the promotion of sustainable development, not only on aspects relevant to the environmental conservation, but also on aspects for improving quality of life, gender equities, in order for the gap to be eliminated and equal opportunities to be promoted through non-discrimination according to the European guidelines and main principles. The main strategic aim of the Programming Document is "the promotion of the cross-border areas through the security of the Regional Cohesion and the Enhancement of the Competitiveness". The achievement and promotion of this aim will lead on the enhancement of the compatibility and challenge for a secure sustainable and stable development. The sustainability is being presented in all Priority Axes and Areas of Intervention of each axis.

Additionally, the improvement of the accessibility through the restoration of the existing railways and road networks will further enhance competitiveness of the cross-border areas by offering opportunities for new investments and better mobility of the citizens to the cross-border areas. As a result, the development of the eligible cross-border areas will be achieved.

³⁶ Renewed Sustainable Development: European Council DOC 10117/06 (15-16 June 2006)

³⁷ Renewed Sustainable Development: European Council DOC 10117/06 (15-16 June 2006)

³⁸ EWL (European Women's Lobby) Calls for Renewed Commitment to Achieving Gender Equality in the Lisbon Strategy, European Spring Council, March 2006 Brussels

Moreover, the programming document has adopted sustainability in priority axis 3 named "Competitiveness & Human Resources" and especially Area of Intervention 3.1 "Support and Valorisation of Human Resources". Through the respective intervention, projects relevant to the enhancement of the mobility of human resources and the improvement of their knowledge as regards languages and ICT tools will be promoted by supporting the sustainable development of the area, offering equal opportunities and gender equalities among all residents of the Programme area, irrespectively of gender or other regional or national discriminations.

5.2. Conformity with EU Policies and Priorities

The new Programme Greece-Bulgaria conforms to the principles addressed by the EU regarding European policies and priorities for Equality, Sustainability, Cohesion, Competitiveness, etc. All of its axes and priorities are based on the principles for a more dynamic economy, fostered by a flourished innovation and entrepreneurship, whilst securing social equity and a healthy environment.

The new Cohesion Policy addressed by the European Union focuses on four main principles³⁹:

- Encouraging Innovation, Entrepreneurship and promoting Knowledge Economy.
- Improving the attractiveness of the Member States and their regions through accessibility, quality of life and environmental conservation.
- Providing more and better jobs for women, for a gender convergence to be achieved, as well as more opportunities for the vulnerable groups and the ethnic minorities.
- Convergence between urban and rural areas in order for a limitation of the gap between the rich and the poor to be achieved.

All the aforementioned principles are consistent to the Lisbon Agenda and the Gothenburg Strategy for Sustainable Development. Both National Strategic Reference Frameworks (Greek and Bulgarian) make use of the synergies decided between European rules for Sustainable Development (quality of life, coherence policy areas and inter-intra generational equity) and Lisbon Agenda (sustainability with competitiveness, economic growth and enhancing job creation).

The main objective of the Structural Funds (ERDF & ESF) and Cohesion Fund is to promote sustainability, equal job opportunities, better and more opportunities for working, enhancing entrepreneurship through innovation, funding and investments, information society and promotion of R&D.

The new Programme conforms to the European Policies and Priorities since its main axis and priorities will be focused on the promotion and application of the abovementioned European directives.

³⁹ Community Strategic Guidelines on Cohesion 2006/702/EC, Council Decision, 6/10/2006

Taking into consideration Article 16 of the 1083/2006 European Legislation with reference to the equality between men and women and their non-discrimination, as well as the general approach of the General Aim 11 of ESDP, the Operational Programme Cross-border cooperation Greece-Bulgaria 2007-2013 will also secure:

- » The promotion of gender equality through specific actions which have already been included in the OP and
- » The Integration of the gender's perspective in the overall interventions foreseen

A fair amount of funds will be committed for the promotion of gender equality and the achievement of the Programme's aims with respect to this action. The percentage of the final funding will be decided by the Joint Monitoring Committee of the Programme.

5.3. Conformity with National Policies and Priorities

The Common Programme Greece-Bulgaria for the new Programming Period 2007-2013 is based on the main guidelines provided by the National Strategic Reference Frameworks (NSRF) of both Member-States, as well as on the priorities given by the EU as far as the promotion of Sustainability and Cohesion is concerned.

The Greek and the Bulgarian NSRFs represent the National Policies and priorities for Sustainability, Entrepreneurship and Innovation, Investments and Promotion and embracing of more and better jobs. All the aforementioned priorities have derived from the Treaty, the renewed Lisbon Agenda, as well as the new Regulations of the Structural Funds, and the renewed directive for Sustainability that will be applied in the current programming period.

Greek National Strategic Reference Framework

The Greek policy for Cohesion is based on the European principles according to which the European Union should:

1. become a more attractive place to investments (foreign and internal) and employment;
2. enhance innovation and knowledge economy for embracing spatial development;
3. offer more and better jobs and assure equal opportunities.

The main keywords of the aforementioned principles are "Territorial Cohesion and Cooperation", "Improving Infrastructure", "Conservation of the Environment", "Promotion and enhancement of Traditional forms of Energy", "Enhancing Competitiveness and Entrepreneurship, Innovation and Knowledge Economy", "Funding" and "More and better jobs".

According to the new principles for Cohesion and the new directives given by the Structural Funds (ERDF, ESF) and other aid Funds (EARFD-European Agricultural and Rural Development Fund, EFF-European Fishery Fund), the Greek NSRF promotes:

- Competitiveness and accessibility
- Digital convergence
- Environmental conservation and Sustainable Development
- Education and lifelong learning
- Improvement of Civil Servants' skills.

According to the aforementioned analysis, the strategy for the Cohesion and Development of the country is relevant and convergent to the ESDP and the European Framework of Priorities and Principles for Equality, Lisbon and Gothenburg Strategies and Structural Funds' regulations. The new regulations take into consideration the spatial integration and enlargement of the European Union, in order to secure social and economic cohesion and prosperity.

Bulgarian National Strategic Reference Framework

The Bulgarian Policy and Principles for Cohesion is two-fold. It is based on the promotion of the:

1. High and Sustainable Growth, and
2. Employment.

The aforementioned principles can be achieved through:

- Improving infrastructure;
- Improving human capital with a focus on Employment;
- Fostering entrepreneurship;
- Favourable business environment and good Governance; and
- Supporting Balanced and Territorial Development.

The National Principles for Cohesion are conformed to the European directives given by the Structural Funds (ERDF, ESF) and other aid Funds (EARFD, EFF). All principles have been adopted at a National level, focusing on the socioeconomic development of the country.

The strategy of the Programme is formulated so as to ensure complementarity with National Policies, both at the regional and sectoral level. Regarding the conformity of the Programme with the National and European Guidelines, several meetings have taken place in order to avoid the overlapping with actions undertaken at the national level. Specifically, representatives of ministries, regional and local authorities were invited to participate in discussions of the draft version of the Programming Document. The comments and feedback collected by all participants were taken into consideration for the formulation of the updated Programming Document; there was also a political commitment that the interventions proposed by the new Operational Programme Greece-Bulgaria 2007-2013 would be complementary to the priorities and actions foreseen to be implemented at national level and would not overlap.

Additionally a Public Consultation was held in both countries. All potential project partners (representatives from Regional and Local Authorities, Private Authorities, NGOs and citizens from the eligible areas of both countries) were invited to express their

viewpoints about the programme and give feedback as regards the final priorities and axes. All comments received were taken into consideration for the formulation of the final Programming Document, while the discussion that followed the presentation of the new Programme further ensured that the initiatives and categories of project ideas proposed have a complementary, rather than overlapping, role to the regional and national strategies of both Member States.

Hence, it should be once again noted that the Programming Document Greece-Bulgaria 2007-2013 has taken into consideration both national policies and programmes and the feedback received from final beneficiaries. The strategy and priority axes, as formulated, have ensured the covering of the needs of the cross-border area, complementing but not overlapping the actions and initiatives undertaken at the national and regional levels.

Recognising the importance of the above issue, the Managing Authority, in close cooperation with the Bulgarian National Authority, is planning to elaborate an Internal Document (Programme Manual), which will include specific criteria on how to avoid overlapping with interventions promoted by national Regional or Sectoral Operational Programmes.

Furthermore, the presence of the Managing Authorities of the Sectoral and Regional NSRF Operational Programmes as well as the Rural Development Programmes, and the national authorities / contact points / persons of other relevant Programmes in both countries as observers in the Monitoring Committee of the present Programme shall be strongly encouraged, in order to ensure the coherence and complementarity of the interventions.

Finally, an administrative mechanism is foreseen to be applied for that purpose. The idea is the following:

- Beneficiaries will be required to submit a declaration that their project is not receiving financing (partly or wholly) from any other programme.
- For measures eligible for funding under more than one programme and addressing common target groups, ad-hoc consultations between the representatives of the ministries managing the sectoral / regional national programmes will be conducted to synchronise the implementation of the measures. The National Coordinating Authority of the Ministry of Economy and Finance (for Greece) has currently undertaken this role.

Nevertheless the Greece-Bulgaria Programme refers to cross-border cooperation and as such it only supports projects which have a genuine cross-border character, involve partners from the partner countries and benefit the communities of both countries. Therefore it is expected that any other type of intervention will be excluded further to the evaluation and selection procedure and the specific criteria to be set.

5.4. Summary of the Ex-Ante Evaluation

Comprehensive Assessment of the Final Draft of the OP (Version 4.1)

This chapter provides an updated assessment of the detailed analysis illustrated in Chapter 3. This adaptation was made necessary after the substantial improvement of the Draft OP between Version 3.0. of 05/03/2007 and Versions 4.1 of 02/05/2007 and 4.2 of 18/06/2007.

The components of the assessment correspond with those contained in the relevant Working Paper on Ex Ante Evaluation of the EU Commission:

1. Appraisal of the Socio-economic Analysis, Relevance of Strategy
2. Rationale and Consistency of the Strategy
3. External Coherence with other policies (national levels, EU)
4. Expected results and impacts
5. Implementation systems

Appraisal of socio-economic analysis, relevance of strategy

The **socio-economic analysis** presents an accurate overview of the current situation in the co-operation area. Generally, the analysis contains recent and relevant information on the economic, environmental and social situation of the programme area. The main disparities, deficits and development potentials, relevant to the programme's strategy are presented in a concise manner. The addition of a headline "**development tendencies**" is a positive feature, assisting in the comprehension of the area dynamics. However, some weak points remain. While availability of comparable data and information is an obstacle which can not be overcome, care should be taken in chapters regarding thematic fields which are object of the Priority Axis. In this sense "**Energy**" with respect to energy sources and flows and renewable energy sources should be further elaborated (See Area of Intervention 1.1).

Regarding the **SWOT**, the recommendations of the ex-ante evaluators have largely been integrated. However, the SWOT remains very wide-stretched. The detail included, while useful, blurs the necessary strategic focus of the SWOT. Information included is, in some cases, redundant (e.g. tourism related aspects in the Weaknesses) or misplaced. In some cases, the level of detail in the SWOT is not reflected in the analysis and is not necessary. The Evaluation Team recommends two possible approaches:

- Either provide a short SWOT covering all Areas of Intervention to be generated or
- Provide a comprehensive SWOT targeted to each subsequent Priority Axis.

At all cases it is recommended to recapitulate the contents of the SWOT in a short chapter containing the **main development challenges** of the eligible area. This chapter should close the SWOT and act as a bridge between Analysis, SWOT and Strategy.

The Evaluation Team has developed an alternative SWOT and generated "**Strategic Choices for Action**" which have been aggregated to possible "activities groups" (e.g. "Utilisation of Natural Resources in the Energy Sector"). These activities groups have been compared to the proposed Priority Axis and corresponding Areas of Intervention.

The hypothesis is that two expert groups (the Programming Group and the Evaluation Team) should come to coherent conclusions starting from the same Analysis. The score of the Draft OP v3.0 was 3,50 (1 being the lowest and 5 the highest grade), while OP version 4.1 reached an overall of 4,02. This is a considerable improvement and can be regarded as satisfactory.

Rationale and consistency of the strategy (Internal Coherence)

The structure of objectives is adequate. The general formulation of the Overall Strategic Goal and the Specific Objectives is coherent to the Analysis and the SWOT in a very broad sense. The objectives are a useful starting point, but could become more concrete taking in account the funds available and the nature of interventions envisaged.

The Total Internal Coherence Index improved from 3,41 to 4,16 mainly due to the added detail in the indicative interventions. This score can be regarded as satisfactory.

Table: Internal Coherence Index (1 lowest, 5 highest score)

PRIORITY	Internal Coherence Index (ICI) within each priority	Internal Coherence Index (ICI) per priority against the entire programme
Priority Axis 1: Quality of Life	3,89	4,07
Priority Axis 2: Accessibility	4,00	4,28
Priority Axis 3: Competitiveness & Human Resources	3,89	4,13
TOTAL ICI for the whole Programme		4,16

However, the here illustrated Coherence Index is a theoretical one. Experience in the period 2000-2006 showed very different paces of progress between Priority Axes in the Interreg IIIA/PHARE CBC framework. Infrastructure projects developed well, while measures addressing human resources and entrepreneurship lagged behind. The Programme Management and especially technical assistance should take care that this theoretical coherence materialises.

External coherence with other policies (EU, national level)

The draft OP is coherent with the ERDF Regulation 1080/2006, notably Article 6. It is equally in line with the Community Strategic Guidelines Framework, especially on the issues on territorial co-operation.

The draft OP was assessed for coherence with the Greek and Bulgarian National Strategic Reference Frameworks (NSRF), the Greek National Reform Programme, the Bulgarian National Development Plan, the Greek and Bulgarian Rural Development Plans and the relevant national OP in both countries (mainly environment, transport, human resources, competitiveness etc.).

The draft OP was rated against the objectives and priorities of the aforementioned documents using the rating scale introduced in the assessment of the internal coherence (1 lowest, 5 highest score). This assessment has revealed that all Priority Axes of the draft OP are in line with the objectives and priorities of the aforementioned documents.

The Coherence Index to the Community Strategic Guidelines improved from 3,42 in draft OP version 3.0 to 3,95 in Final Draft OP version 4.1.

The External Coherence Index to the Greek documents improved from 3,44 in draft OP version 3.0 to 3,95 in the Final Draft OP version 4.1.

The External Coherence Index to the Bulgarian documents improved from 3,59 in draft OP version 3.0 to 3,86 in the Final Draft OP version 4.1.

These scores should be regarded as satisfactory, taking in account the broad range of documents assessed. The higher score (4.02) achieved in the "Strategy Choices" assessment is deemed to be more significant. Last but not least, the Programme Management should take extra care to guarantee the complementarity and the avoidance of overlapping with the ROP Macedonia-Thrace in Greece and the OP Regional

Development in Bulgaria, which were assessed to be highly coherent to the present CBC Programme.

Expected results and impacts

The **financial allocations** at priority level were agreed in a collaborative manner between the Programme partners, taking into consideration their thematic preferences, their estimation on the potential for project generation and the experience gained during the 2000-2006 Programme period. Based on these premises and the financial requirements for the envisaged indicative activities in Areas of Intervention like AoI 1.1 and AoI 1.3 (e.g. water and waste management infrastructure and primary health care infrastructure), the resulting distribution seems plausible.

The Draft OP contains a basic set of core **output and result indicators**. The output indicators meet the likely reporting requirements of the EC according to the Working Document No. 2 on indicators for monitoring and evaluation. Proposed **result indicators**, however, seem to be not measurable, while no baselines are given (especially in priority axis 3).

In order to assist overviews and to avoid overlaps and redundancies, the Evaluation Team suggests merging all indicators in one table. The core indicators, proposed in the Working Document No. 2, should be correctly identified as either output or result. Concerning mainly the result indicators, baselines should be reconsidered. Since the Draft OP makes frequent reference to the need to continue from the point reached by the predecessor Interreg IIIA/PHARE CBC, baselines of value "zero" or definition of reference values for indicators expressed as increase in % should be reconsidered.

The addressed Implementation Manual can contain an additional set of indicators, which should provide more detailed and qualitative information on the projects supported by the programme, including a more detailed breakdown of indicators per area of intervention (AoI).

The **quantification** of indicators (**targets**) should be based on three plausible assumptions, namely average project size, capacity of the Programme Management and capacity of the intended applicants, especially in Bulgaria. The Implementation Manual should consider these aspects.

Examples of **activities** within cross-border partnerships that can be supported under the areas of intervention have been added. Those indicative activities should be reflected in the indicative breakdown by codes for the **priority theme** (in accordance with Annex II of the Commission Implementing Regulation 1828/2006). A part of the examples of activities (project ideas) is not covered by the proposed **codes** for the priority themes. That concerns all three Priority Axes. On the other hand, codes representing firms support (e.g. 07-investments in firms) contradict with the defined beneficiaries (e.g. Public Organisations, Business Unions). It is recommended to develop the coherence between activities- thematic codes – beneficiaries more thoroughly. Last but not least, the outlined indicative breakdown by codes for the **priority theme** should be represented **at programme level** and not at priority axis level (in accordance with Annex II of the Commission Implementing Regulation).

Implementation system

The draft OP contains a basic overview of the structures and procedures for programme implementation, including descriptions for project proposal submission and selection procedure, responsibilities of the beneficiaries, financial flows, monitoring and evaluation and information and publicity. Especially the continuity of the Management Authority is an important asset for the Programme. Nevertheless, the information contained in the OP at this stage can be regarded as sufficient, but absolutely minimum. Crucial points like the assistance to project generation and development, the request for an evaluation plan (Article 47, Regulation 1083/2006 and Working Document No 5 from April 2007 on Evaluation during the Programming Period) and the proactive communication strategy should be stressed out and a commitment for their development in the Implementation Manual mentioned. At this point the Evaluation Team would like to repeat two points included in previous versions of the Ex-ante Report, namely

- The definition of “top-down strategic projects” in a procedure beyond open calls for proposals. The suggestions of the Evaluation Team considering Technical Assistance could assist in that direction.
- The definition of “inception projects” in a procedure beyond open calls for proposals. In many cases (e.g. Water Regulation and Flood Protection), many projects cannot be implemented due to the absence of prerequisites (e.g. Transboundary agreements, Memoranda of Understanding etc.). In other cases, large amounts of funds are committed to projects which face delays in the implementation. “Inception projects” could be used as preparatory actions and risk assessment, hence avoiding misplaced commitment of funds and cumbersome recovery actions. The Technical Assistance could generate gap analysis studies

for such sectors, which can lead to individual projects pursuing the securing of preparatory steps for larger projects. The procedure can be similar to the “top-down strategic projects”.

For overview reasons a table containing all the recommendations of the Evaluation Team and its consideration in the OP is provided here.

Table: Recommendations from the Ex-Ante Evaluation.

No	Recommendations from the Ex-Ante Evaluators	Status	Comments
1	The OP of GR-BG CBC area 2007-2013 should contain more specific output and result indicators per Priority Axis & Area of Intervention given.	✓	The 4 th version of the OP GR-BG CBC 2007-2013 took into account the recommendations made by the Ea Evaluator with regard to the indicators. Result indicators were added to the proposed quantified indicators of each priority axis.
2	Each area of intervention should include more extensive list of examples of project ideas. Indicative categories of interventions were suggested by the Evaluator.	✓	The indicative categories of project ideas per priority axis and action of intervention have been enhanced in the 4 th version of the relevant OP. Some of the suggested indicative project ideas of the Evaluator have been taken into consideration by the drafting team and have already been included in the new version of the OP; some new have also been added.

No	Recommendations from the Ex-Ante Evaluators	Status	Comments
3	Codes of intervention are missing in the OP. DG Regional Policy has pointed out that the codes of intervention are necessary to be included in the OP according to the regulations of the ERDF Implementing Regulation and the aide-mémoire.	✓	The new version of the current OP has taken into consideration the comment of the European evaluators. The drafting team has included the codes for the priority theme dimension.
4	While there is a need for a thorough and detailed analysis, Existing Situation Analysis part should concentrate on the main outcomes of the analysis and consequently cover a limited number of pages	✓ ¶ X	The efforts of the drafting team were focused on the main outcomes of the analysis and provided another approach of the most important elements of the CBC area. As regards to the size of the analysis, it is covering more pages than suggested, but it arrives to present the area and introduce its particular features and characteristics, in order to give a precise picture.
5	More detailed maps could be included.	✓ ¶ X	The drafting team incorporated maps representing the area with its environmental, geographical, demographic and other features. Unfortunately, it has been unfeasible to find more detailed map of the eligible area.
6	Sex balance of the population in the Overview Chapter could be included.	X	The revised version took into account the remarks of the Ex-Ante Evaluation, however, the retrieved data regarding the CBC area were not comparable, therefore there were not included.

No	Recommendations from the Ex-Ante Evaluators	Status	Comments
7	Geographic Chapter could eventually be merged with the Chapter Environment.	✓	The two chapters were merged under the heading of a new Chapter <i>Geographical Features and Environment</i> .
8	The Existing Situation Analysis Part should describe the environmental situation.	✓	The drafting team described the environmental situation by providing data of the natural resources, environmental monuments, the preserved areas, pollution, dams etc.
9	The analysis should describe the situation in terms of equality between men and women, with regard to labour market opportunities.	✓	The remarks were incorporated and, in the analysis of the situation regarding employment and unemployment, data were examined also under the spectrum of the equality of men and women.
10	Socio demographic data, some hints could be included mainly on the implications of the Demographic Structure.	✓	The revised version incorporated the remarks and, in the presentation of the demographic condition of the area, the formation of dipole between rural and urban region (Thessaloniki included) and also the demographic pressure by the ageing population is clearly described.
11	Economic Data: while most of the statements in the SWOT analysis are valid, they don't have sufficient backing in the Analysis area.	✓	The drafting team appreciated the weight of this remark and further analysed it by providing economic data by sector of economic activity and incorporating a separate chapter on tourism and its economic aspect.
12	Economic data, add GDP per capita figure.	✓	The remark was also taken into consideration and these statistics were incorporated in the relevant chapter.

No	Recommendations from the Ex-Ante Evaluators	Status	Comments
13	Employment, Unemployment, Education, many important issues, not evident in the analysis. In education, make references in size, capacities and curricula of the Academic Institutes.	✓	Employment and Unemployment are presented in a single chapter and are enriched with more detailed data regarding the rate of employment per sector and per district, and also regarding unemployment. As regards education, a separate entity describing and analysing in particular the Tertiary education and the relations of the Academic Institutes with the research was incorporated in the revised version.
14	PATHE motorway could be removed.	✓	In the last version of the OP the PATHE motorway was removed.
15	Infrastructure, ports, airports, motorways; smart solutions, completion dates. Minimise ports chapter.	✓	Detailed presentation of the transport infrastructure provided with all available data. Paragraph referred to ports was minimised.
16	Telecommunication: sketchy reference to the whole area and spatial dispersion could be useful.	✓	This part was further elaborated, as it is quite important, and more details were presented regarding the quality of the telecommunication, the characteristics and the dipole in term of the integration of the telecommunications in the country and in cities.
17	Gas: this heading could be extended to energy.	✓	The drafting team added the chapter energy with all available information.
18	Improve "energy".	✓	This chapter was improved and adequately elaborated following also the ex-ante recommendations
19	Main development tendencies.	✓	They are presented after each sector
20	Add "main development challenges".	✗	This chapter was included in the part where main development tendencies are described.

No	Recommendations from the Ex-Ante Evaluators	Status	Comments
21	SWOT analysis: shorten it and reconsider or omit the presentation in sectors.	X	The drafting team reconsidered the chapter of the SWOT analysis and arrived in the conclusion that the detailed analysis is of importance for readers. Thus, the length of the analysis was kept as originally foreseen. Nonetheless, some of the comments proposed by the Ex-Ante Evaluators for moving strengths to weaknesses and opportunities to threats, or visa versa, were taken into consideration and integrated in the 4 th draft.
22	Make Overall Strategic Goal and the Specific Objectives more precise.	✓	Corrections and details further included in the document satisfy this recommendation of the ex- ante evaluation.
23	Guarantee through Programme Management and especially technical assistance the internal coherence for ensuring the maximum impact to the objectives set.	✓	In the chapter Implementing Entities and Procedures, the section referring to the Programme Management procedures, guarantees the appropriate technical assistance and internal coherence.
24	Cross border experience lessons learnt should be further elaborated.	✓	This section was elaborated with more details and lessons extracted from the past programme period.
25	Guarantee the complementarity and the avoidance of overlapping with the ROP Macedonia-Thrace in Greece and the OP Regional Development in Bulgaria.	✓	ROP of Macedonia – Thrace and the OP of Regional Development in Bulgaria were taken into consideration, not any overlapping was observed, but a high complementarity instead.
26	Develop measurable result indicators with proper baselines	✓ & X	Result indicators were developed, however, baselines were not specified yet from the working committee.

No	Recommendations from the Ex-Ante Evaluators	Status	Comments
27	Merge all indicators in one table	✓	Recommendations were taken under consideration and the indicators were merged.
28	Identify core indicators proposed in the Working Document No. 2 correctly as either output or result.	✗	See the recommendation and comment No 1 in the present table.
29	Base the quantification of indicators (targets) on the three mentioned plausible assumptions.	✗	See the recommendation and comment No 1 in the present table.
30	Develop the coherence between activities, thematic codes and beneficiaries more thoroughly.	✓	Coherence was further developed.
31	Correct minor mistakes like the inclusion of code 82	✓	Minor mistakes were corrected, code 82 included (it was deleted).
32	Represent thematic codes at programme level.	✓	Thematic codes have been included.
33	Add the two dimensions of finance and territory.	✓	Tables representing territorial and financial dimension have been added.
34	Develop implementing provisions in depth in the Implementing Manual.	✓	Implementing provisions are analyzed in depth and in detail in the respective chapter.
35	Make a commitment for provisions considering assistance to project generation and development, evaluation plan and proactive communication strategy.	✓	This part was thoroughly developed providing details on assistance in issues guaranteeing the unhindered project generation, development and proactive attitude.
36	Include an option for "top-down strategic projects" and "inception projects".	✗	Such option has not been suggested, as the working committee opted for a general description of the indicative projects.

5.5. Non-Technical Summary of the Strategic Environmental Assessment

Programming and Strategic Environmental Assessment framework

The Task Force of the Programme on Cross-Border Cooperation "Objective 3 OP CBC Bulgaria-Greece 2007-2013" developed a draft operational programme in line with Art. 6 of the ERDF Regulation 1083/2006. The Programme area consists of the Districts of Blagoevgrad, Smolyan, Kardjali, Haskovo, Drama, Evros, Kavala, Rodopi, Xanthi, Serres and Thessaloniki.

According to the SEA directive (2001/42/EC), a Strategic Environmental Assessment has been conducted. The environmental report, as part of this assessment, was elaborated according to Annex I of the SEA directive. The Task Force cooperated closely with the Evaluation Team which was assigned with the Ex-ante Evaluation of the Programme and the compilation of the present Environmental Report.

Current state of the environment

The Programme area is characterised by a very large variety of natural environments, ranging from Mediterranean to alpine and continental zones. The area is densely forested and offers habitat to numerous species including large mammals. Natural resources and biodiversity are protected within a dense network of protected areas and NATURA 2000 sites. Human activities are concentrated in the coastal zone and on the northern side of the Rhodope. Intensive agriculture, transport, water pollution and urban sprawl are the largest threats. The rivers of the area are important elements for nature and humans but also cause heavy floods partly due to natural phenomena but also due to dam interventions.

Structure of the Operational Programme

The **Overall Strategic Goal** is the promotion of the Cross-Border Area by Ensuring Regional Cohesion and Enhancing Competitiveness through:

- the Strengthening the Attractiveness of the Area by Upgrading the Quality of Life & Improving Accessibility Structures and through

- Enhancing Competitiveness by promoting entrepreneurship, establishing networks of cooperation and investing on human resources.

The programme will be delivered through three main priority axes:

- Priority Axis 1: Quality of Life – Upgrading and Management of Environmental & Cultural Assets, Health & Social Issues for the improvement of Quality of Life in the cross-border area and the welfare of its residents,
- Priority Axis 2: Accessibility – Improving the transport and communication networks and ensuring an easy and safe circulation of goods, services and people in the cross-border area,
- Priority Axis 3: Competitiveness & Human Resources – Stimulating entrepreneurship, investing in human capital and promoting research and innovation so as to increase competitiveness and boost the economic and social development of the cross-border area.
- A fourth Priority Axis 4 on Technical Assistance is aiming at supporting the overall management and smooth implementation of the programme.

Environmental objectives in Bulgaria and Greece

Bulgarian and Greek laws and strategies were analysed considering their environmental provisions and objectives. Since both countries are EU Member states in the programming period 2007-2013, EU Directives and Regulations along with the 6th Environmental Action Programme were considered as relevant to the assessment of the Programme. Additionally, national documents, like the Bulgarian National Strategy for the Environment (NSEAP) 2005-2014 or the Greek OP Environment and Sustainable Development 2007-2013, were taken in account.

The Priorities of the Programme do not contradict any of the National laws, the EU Directives and Regulations and the Priorities of the 6th Environmental Action Programme. The Assessment showed that no conflicts exist at the objective level.

Methodology of impact assessment

For each area of intervention, possible effects on the relevant environmental issues were analysed, referring to “guiding questions” and environmental protection objectives based on legislation and strategic policies on international, community or state level. The areas of intervention of the Programme are described at a strategic manner. Hence, they

cannot be sufficiently detailed to perform a quantitative assessment. The assessment concentrates on a qualitative description of possible impacts (positive, neutral or negative) on relevant environmental issues referring to SEA directive (2001/42/EC).

The Evaluation Team adopted an interactive approach, in close cooperation with the Programme Task Force. Hence, the Programme was improved step by step through debates on the envisaged activities, elimination of possible sources of a negative environmental impact and through enhancement of environmental protection provisions and actions.

Possible environmental impacts of the programme

Priority Axis 1 has a focus on the environment. This Priority Axis receives comparatively the largest percentage of the funds (46%). Projects implemented under this Priority Axis are expected to have a clear positive impact on the Environment. However some interventions could also have negative impacts on aspects like biodiversity and cultural landscapes. National Environmental Impact Assessment legislation is expected to provide remedy in these cases. The Programme, however, provides for the introduction of the transboundary approach in those interventions.

Priority Axis 2 is focused on accessibility. Projects related to road construction will have in some cases a negative impact. The majority of those projects will concern the completion of transport network gaps near the border. The Environmental Assessment purposes stress out the need for a transboundary approach in the conduction of the compulsory Environmental Impact Assessment in each country.

Priority Axis 3 is considered to be largely neutral to the environment. An assessment of possible positive or negative effects cannot be performed for all areas of intervention, due to the lack of information on details about possible activities. However, the nature of the activities described herein will have only a limited impact.

Negative impacts on environmental issues cannot be fully excluded if the programme supports the preparation of transport infrastructure (road, rail, waterways) without taking into account environmental impacts. This could lead to an increase in land take, fragmentation of habitats and additional impact through air and noise pollution in sensitive areas. Large scale water management infrastructure, implementation of risk technologies (like genetic engineering) or the enhanced exploitation of energy sources and the realization of industrial sites in sensitive areas could have negative impacts on

landscape, soil and biodiversity. These impacts should be taken into account by strict project selection criteria.

Main results and recommendations

The Programme is a strategic document. Hence a quantitative assessment is hardly possible. The assessment concentrates on a qualitative description of possible impacts. Most of the programme priorities and areas of intervention will have positive impacts on the relevant environmental issues. Significant negative impacts on the environment are not expected. During programme implementation environmental project selection criteria must be elaborated in line with the specific objectives of the programme and the overall principle "promotion of sustainable development". The „guiding questions" of the present report can be a starting point for this purpose. Measures for an efficient environmental monitoring on project level are included and will be adopted in the Programme Management System.

Part 6: Implementing Entities and Procedures

6.1. Management and Control Authorities & Bodies

6.1.1. Introduction

The two authorities, responsible for the formulation of the current Programme Document have commonly agreed and designated the Programme Structures according to the Council Regulations (EC) No 1083/2006, 1080/2006, 1828/2006 that lay down the general rules governing the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), and the principles and rules on partnership, programming, evaluation, management, financial management, monitoring and control on the basis of responsibilities shared between the Member States and the Commission.

Thus, the two Member States have commonly agreed to designate the following authorities responsible for the implementation of this Operational Programme:

Managing Authority

The Managing Authority of CIP INTERREG at the Ministry of Economy and Finance is designated as the Managing Authority of the Programme and is located in Thessaloniki, Greece

www.interreg.gr

Bulgarian National Authority

Ministry of Regional Development and Public Works
Sofia, Bulgaria

www.mrrb.government.bg

Certifying Authority

The Paying Authority for the CSF, the Community Initiatives and the Cohesion Fund at the Ministry of Economy and Finance is designated as the Certifying Authority of the IPA CBC Programme.

General Secretariat for Investments and Development
Ministry of Economy and Finance, Greece

Audit Authority

Financial Control Committee

General Secretariat for Fiscal Policy

Ministry of Economy and Finance, Greece

6.1.2. Organisational Chart

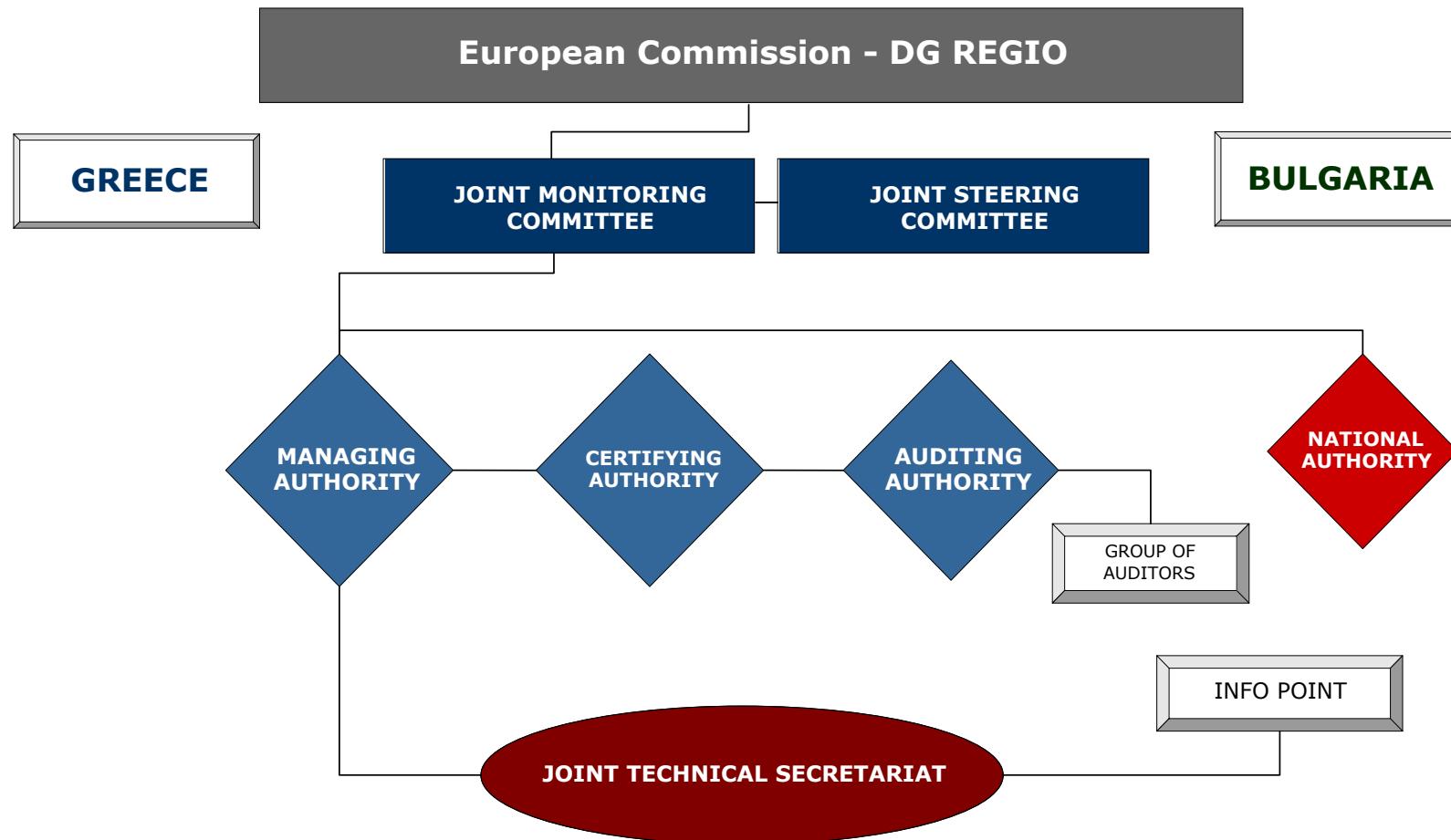


Figure 12: Organisational Chart of the Management Structures of the OP Greece – Bulgaria 2007 - 2013

6.2. Management and Control Authorities and Bodies

Description

6.2.1. Managing Authority

The Managing Authority shall be responsible for managing and implementing the Operational Programme in accordance with the principle of sound financial management and carry out the functions set out in Article 60 of Regulation (EC) No 1083/2006.

The Managing Authority of the Operational Programme (OP) shall be responsible for:

- ensuring that operations are selected for funding in accordance with the criteria applicable to the Operational Programme and that they comply with applicable Community and national rules for the whole of their implementation period. In particular, the Managing Authority shall:
 - ✓ ensure that beneficiaries are informed of the specific conditions concerning the products or services to be delivered under the operation, the financing plan, the time limit for execution and the financial and other information to be kept and communicated
 - ✓ satisfy itself that the beneficiary has the capacity to fulfil these conditions before the approval decision is taken
 - ✓ ensure that the procedure for evaluating proposals was carried out in accordance with the terms of the call for proposals, including the operations selection criteria, approved by the Joint Monitoring Committee.
- ensuring that expenditure declared by each beneficiary participating in an operation is verified by the controller referred to in article 16(1) of Regulation (EC) No 1080/2006 (Article 1(1) of Regulation 1080/2006). The individual responsibilities of the MA regarding certification of expenditures are analysed in chapter 3.1: Certification of Expenditures.
- laying down the implementing arrangements for each operation, where appropriate in agreement with the lead beneficiary

- ensuring that there is an operating system for recording and storing in computerised form accounting records for each operation under the Operational Programme and that the data on implementation necessary for financial management, monitoring, verifications, audits and evaluation are collected.
- ensuring that beneficiaries and other bodies involved in the implementation of operations maintain either a separate accounting system or an adequate accounting code for all transactions relating to the operation without prejudice to national accounting rules.
- ensuring that the evaluations of the Operational Programme referred to in article 48(3) of Regulation (EC) No 1083/2006 are carried out in accordance with article 47 of the above mentioned regulation.
- setting up procedures to ensure that all documents regarding the expenditure and audits required to ensure an adequate audit trail are held in accordance with the requirements of article 90 of Regulation (EC) No 1083/2006.
- ensuring that the certifying authority receives all the necessary information on the procedures and verifications carried out in relation to expenditure for the purpose of certification.
- supporting the work of the Joint Monitoring Committee and providing it with the documents required, to permit the quality of the implementation of the operational programme to be monitored in the light of its specific goals.
- drawing up proposals for the review of the OP and submitting them to the Joint Monitoring Committee for approval
- submitting to the Commission, after approval by the Joint Monitoring Committee, the annual and final reports on implementation [article 67 of Regulation (EC) No 1083/2006]. The reports are prepared by the Joint Technical Secretariat of the OP.
- ensuring compliance with the information and publicity requirements laid down in article 69 of Regulation (EC) No 1083/2006
- providing the Commission with information to allow it to appraise major projects

- supervising the work of the Joint Technical Secretariat
- contracting the lead beneficiaries of the selected operations, on the basis of the decisions of the Joint Steering Committee. The Head of the Managing Authority in Thessaloniki, Greece, signs the contracts with the lead beneficiaries of selected operations.

The Managing Authority for the Programme is the existing Managing Authority of CIP INTERREG at the Ministry of Economy and Finance, Greece.

6.2.2. Bulgarian National Authority

The institution supporting the activity of the MA in implementing the programme on the Bulgarian side will be the Ministry of Regional Development and Public Works.

The functions and tasks of the Bulgarian National Authority shall be laid down in the Memorandum of Understanding.

6.2.3. Certifying Authority

The Certifying Authority shall be responsible for certifying statements of expenditure and applications for payment before being sent to the Commission. In this context, the certifying authority shall carry out the functions envisaged in article 61 of Regulation (EC) 1083/2006, and in particular shall be responsible for:

- (i) drawing up and submitting in electronic form to the Commission certified statements of expenditure and applications for payment as provided for in article 78 of Regulation (EC) No 1083/2006;
- (ii) certifying that:
 - ✓ the statement of expenditure is accurate, results from reliable accounting systems and is based on verifiable supporting documents;
 - ✓ the expenditure declared complies with applicable Community and national rules and has been incurred in respect of operations selected for funding in

accordance with the criteria applicable to the programme and complying with Community and national rules;

- (iii) ensuring, for the purposes of certification, that it has received adequate information from the Managing Authority on the procedures and verifications carried out in relation to expenditure included in statements of expenditure;
- (iv) taking account for certification purposes of the results of all audits carried out by or under the responsibility of the audit authority;
- (v) maintaining accounting records in computerised form of expenditure declared to the Commission;
- (vi) keeping an account of amounts recoverable and of amounts withdrawn following cancellation of all or part of the contribution for an operation. Amounts recovered shall be repaid to the general budget of the European Union, prior to the closure of the Operational Programme, by deducting them from the next statement of expenditure;
- (vii) submitting to the Commission provisional forecasts of likely applications for payment in accordance with article 76(3) of Regulation (EC) No 1083/2006;
- (viii) receiving payments from the Commission and making payments to the lead beneficiary;
- (ix) keeping a check on the transfer of the relevant allocations to beneficiaries and making sure that contributions are received as quickly as possible and in full;
- (x) ensuring that any amounts unduly paid are recovered by the lead beneficiary. Beneficiaries shall return to the lead beneficiary unduly paid amounts, on the basis of the agreement existing between them.

The Certifying Authority, in accordance with article 61 of Regulation (EC) 1083/2006, is the Paying Authority designated for the CSF, the community initiatives and the Cohesion Fund, at the General Secretariat for Investments and Development, Ministry of Economy and Finance, Greece.

6.2.4. Audit Authority

The Audit Authority shall be responsible for verifying the effective functioning of the management and control system of the operational programme. In this context, the Audit Authority shall be responsible for carrying out the functions envisaged in article 62 of Regulation (EC) 1083/2006, and in particular:

- (i) ensuring that audits are carried out to verify the effective functioning of the management and control system of the operational programme,
- (ii) ensuring that audits are carried out on operations, on the basis of an appropriate sample, to verify expenditure declared to the Commission and in that respect determine the appropriate sampling method to be used in accordance with the requirements of Regulation (EC) No 1828/2006
- (iii) presenting to the Commission, in accordance with article 62(c) of Regulation (EC) No 1083/2006, within nine months of the approval of the operational programme, an audit strategy covering the bodies which will perform the audits and the method to be used, the sampling method for audits on operations and the indicative planning of audits, to ensure that the main bodies are audited and that audits are spread evenly throughout the programming period
- (iv) By 31 December each year from 2008 to 2015, submitting to the Commission:
 - an annual control report setting out the findings of the audits (systems and operations) carried out during the previous 12 month-period ending on 30 June of the year concerned, in accordance with the audit strategy of the operational programme, and reporting any shortcomings found in the systems for the management and control of the programme. The first report to be submitted, at the latest by 31 December 2008, shall cover the period from 1 January 2007 to 30 June 2008. The information concerning the audits carried out after 1 July 2015 shall be included in the final control report supporting the closure declaration;
 - issuing an opinion, on the basis of the controls and audits that have been carried out under its responsibility, as to whether the management and control system functions effectively, so as to provide a reasonable assurance that statements of expenditure presented to the Commission are correct and as a consequence reasonable assurance that the underlying transactions are legal and regular;

- a declaration for partial closure, as the case may be, in accordance with article 88(2) (b), assessing the legality and regularity of the relevant expenditure.

Where there is a single system that applies to more than one operational programmes, the annual report, the opinion and the declaration for partial closure referred to above may cover all operational programmes referred to.

- (v) submitting to the Commission, at the latest by 31 March 2017, a closure declaration assessing the validity of the application for payment of the final balance and the legality and regularity of the underlying transactions covered by the final statement of expenditure, which shall be supported by a final control report,
- (vi) reporting to the Commission any irregularities which have been the subject of administrative and judicial investigations, in accordance with the requirements of articles 27 to 36 of Regulation (EC) 1828/2006.

The Audit Authority shall ensure that the audit work takes account of internationally accepted audit standards.

In the course of carrying out its functions, the Audit Authority shall ensure that personal data and confidential information, received by it and/or audit bodies operating under its control, are protected.

The Audit Authority of this Operational Programme is the Financial Control Committee (EDEL), set up following the decision of the Minister for Economy and Finance, at the Ministry of Economy and Finance – Secretariat General for Fiscal Policy (General Accounts of the State), Greece. The Financial Control Committee consists of seven members and is independent of the Managing and Certifying Authorities.

6.2.5. Group of Auditors

The Audit Authority of the operational programme shall be assisted by a group of auditors comprising a representative from each Member State participating in the operational programme, carrying out the duties provided for in article 62 of Regulation (EC) No 1083/2006. The group of auditors shall be set up within three months of the decision approving the operational programme. The group shall draw up its own rules of

procedure. The group of auditors shall be chaired by the Audit Authority of the operational programme (Article 14(2) of Regulation 1080/2006).

Audits carried out by the Audit Authority

In carrying out its functions, the audit authority shall ensure that audits on systems, managing authorities and intermediate bodies are carried out and assess their reliability.

Audits on operations shall be carried out on-the-spot, on the basis of documentation and records held by the beneficiary. Audits shall verify that the following conditions are fulfilled:

- a. the operation meets the selection criteria for the operational programme, has been implemented in accordance with the approval decision and fulfils any applicable conditions concerning its functionality and use or the objectives to be attained;
- b. the expenditure declared corresponds to the accounting records and supporting documents held by the beneficiary;
- c. the expenditure declared by the beneficiary is in compliance with Community and national rules;
- d. the public contribution has been paid to the beneficiary in accordance with article 80 of the Regulation (EC) No 1083/2006

In the framework of an audit strategy, audits shall be carried out on the basis of an annual plan approved by the audit authority. Additional audits, not included in the plan, shall also be carried out, whenever required.

When problems detected appear to be systemic in nature and therefore entail a risk for other operations under the operational programme, the Financial Control Committee shall ensure that further examination is carried out, including additional audits where necessary, to establish the scale of such problems.

6.3. Joint Technical Secretariat

The Managing Authority, after consultation with the Member States represented in the programme area, shall set up a Joint Technical Secretariat to be located near its registered office (Article 14, Regulation (EC) 1080/2006).

The Joint Technical Secretariat shall assist the Managing Authority, the Joint Monitoring Committee and the Joint Steering Committee in carrying out their respective duties. Moreover, it may assist the Audit Authority in organising the meetings of the group of auditors.

In particular, the JTS shall have the following responsibilities:

1. Assist the MA in organising the meetings of the Joint Monitoring Committee and the Joint Steering Committee and provide all necessary documents to ensure the quality of the implementation of the OP in the context of its specific goals by:
 - organising the meetings of the Joint Monitoring Committee and the Joint Steering Committee;
 - preparing all necessary documents and the minutes of the meetings;
 - forwarding to the beneficiaries the decisions made by the Joint Monitoring Committee and the Joint Steering Committee;
 - making arrangements for various tasks and services such as interpreting and translation services;
2. Draw up the criteria for selecting the operations and submit them to the Managing Authority. The Managing Authority examines the criteria and when accepted, submits them to the Joint Monitoring Committee for approval;
3. Prepare the material concerning the call for proposals and submit it to the Managing Authority. The Managing Authority examines the material and when accepted submits it to the Joint Monitoring Committee for approval;
4. Provide support to potential beneficiaries during the preparation of proposals. The JTS shall organise information seminars, promote the cooperation and the partnership of bodies from both sides of the border etc. Furthermore, it may cooperate with the Information Office in Bulgaria for the organisation of seminars and promotion activities in Bulgaria;

5. Assist the Managing Authority and the Joint Steering Committee in order to ensure that operations are selected for funding in accordance with the approved criteria applicable to the operational programme and that they comply with applicable Community and national rules governing the implementation of the OP (more specifically its role is described in Section 6.8.2: Submission of proposals and selection of operations);
6. Provide technical support to beneficiaries throughout the implementation period of the operations;
7. Assist the MA in collecting and recording in computerised form accounting records for all operations. Moreover, assist the MA in collecting implementation data required for financial management, monitoring, verification, audit and evaluation;
8. Assist the MA in collecting and keeping all documents relating to expenditure and audits, in order to ensure an effective audit trail in accordance with the requirements of article 90 of Regulation (EC) 1083/2006 by:
 - collecting progress reports from beneficiaries;
 - assessing the implementation of operations and submitting the respecting progress reports to the MA;
 - drafting progress reports concerning the implementation of the OP;
9. Prepare annual reports, as well as the final report on the OP, and submit them to the MA for comments/corrections. The MA examines the reports and, when accepted, submits them to the Joint Monitoring Committee for approval. After approval by the Joint Monitoring Committee, the MA submits the reports to the Commission;
10. Support the MA to ensure that information and publicity requirements referred to in article 69 of the General Regulation are complied with, by:
 - preparing a Communication Plan and supporting its implementation;
 - creating and regularly updating the programme's website;
 - organising seminars to promote the OP;
 - creating a partner search webpage for the benefit of potential beneficiaries;
11. Prepare the Technical Assistance annual plan and forward it to the MA. The MA examines it and, when accepted, submits it to the Joint Monitoring Committee for approval;

The functions and the role of the JTS shall be determined, in agreement with the MA and the Member States participating in the Programme, in its rules of procedure. The JTS shall be composed of a balanced number of staff members from the participating Member States.

6.4. Intermediate Body

In order to simplify and speed up the Programme implementation as well as to overcome administrative complexities and ensure efficiency, the Managing Authority may propose to the Monitoring Committee the designation of an intermediate body, according to Article 59 of the General Regulation (EC No 1083/2006). If this will be the case, the intermediate body will be responsible exclusively for the management of the Operational Programme's Technical Assistance budget.

6.5. Info Point

An Information Office shall be set up in Smolyan, Bulgaria.

The main responsibilities of the Information Office shall be:

- to provide support to beneficiaries from the Bulgarian side during the preparation of proposals and throughout the period of implementation of operations;
- to implement information and publicity actions at national level, in cooperation with the Joint Technical Secretariat of the OP.

The Information Office shall be financed by the Programme Technical Assistance budget.

6.6. Body Responsible for the Report and Opinion Referred to in art. 71(3)

As stipulated in article 71(2) of Regulation (EC) No 1083/2006, the description of the OP management and control systems to be submitted to the Commission shall be accompanied by a report setting out the results of an assessment of the systems set up

and giving an opinion on their compliance with articles 58-62 of the above mentioned regulation.

The report and the opinion referred to above shall be drawn up by the audit authority or by a private body functionally independent of the Managing and Certifying Authorities, which shall carry out its work taking account of internationally accepted audit standards. With proven experience, after conducting an assessment of the programme's management and control system, if a private body is used, that body shall be selected following a call for competition in accordance with the relevant rules concerning the award of public service contracts (Presidential Decree 59/2007 and Presidential Decree 60/2007, which are a transposition of the Directives 2004/17/EC and 2004/18/EC respectively).

6.7. Body Responsible for Making Payments to Beneficiaries

The body responsible for making payments to beneficiaries shall be the Certifying Authority for the programme. No amount shall be deducted or withheld from payments made to beneficiaries and no subsequent charges shall be levied that would reduce these amounts.

The procedure for making payments to beneficiaries is described in Section 6.11.2 (financial flow of public expenditure).

6.8. Generation and Selection of Operations

6.8.1. Preparation and Publication of Call for Proposals

The Joint Technical Secretariat shall prepare the material concerning the call for proposals and submit it to the Managing Authority. The Managing Authority examines the material and when accepted submits it to the Joint Monitoring Committee for approval. Then, the Managing Authority shall launch the call for proposals, informing potential beneficiaries about financing, the particular conditions and requirements applicable to their eligibility under the call, the selection procedures and criteria, the main obligations

to be undertaken by beneficiaries in case an operation is selected for funding under the OP etc.

6.8.2. Submission of Proposals and Selection of Operations

As illustrated in Diagram 1, potential beneficiaries prepare a proposal in cooperation with the Lead Beneficiary, who submits it to the Joint Technical Secretariat.

The Joint Technical Secretariat shall check the proposals and make certain that:

1. proposals are submitted within the deadline;
2. all standard documents required are completed;
3. beneficiaries are eligible.

It shall then carry out an evaluation of proposals based on the operations selection criteria, approved by the Joint Monitoring Committee and submit all the material to the Managing Authority. After the Managing Authority makes sure that the procedure for evaluating proposals was carried out in accordance with the terms of the call for proposals and the approved operations selection criteria, it submits to the Joint Steering Committee:

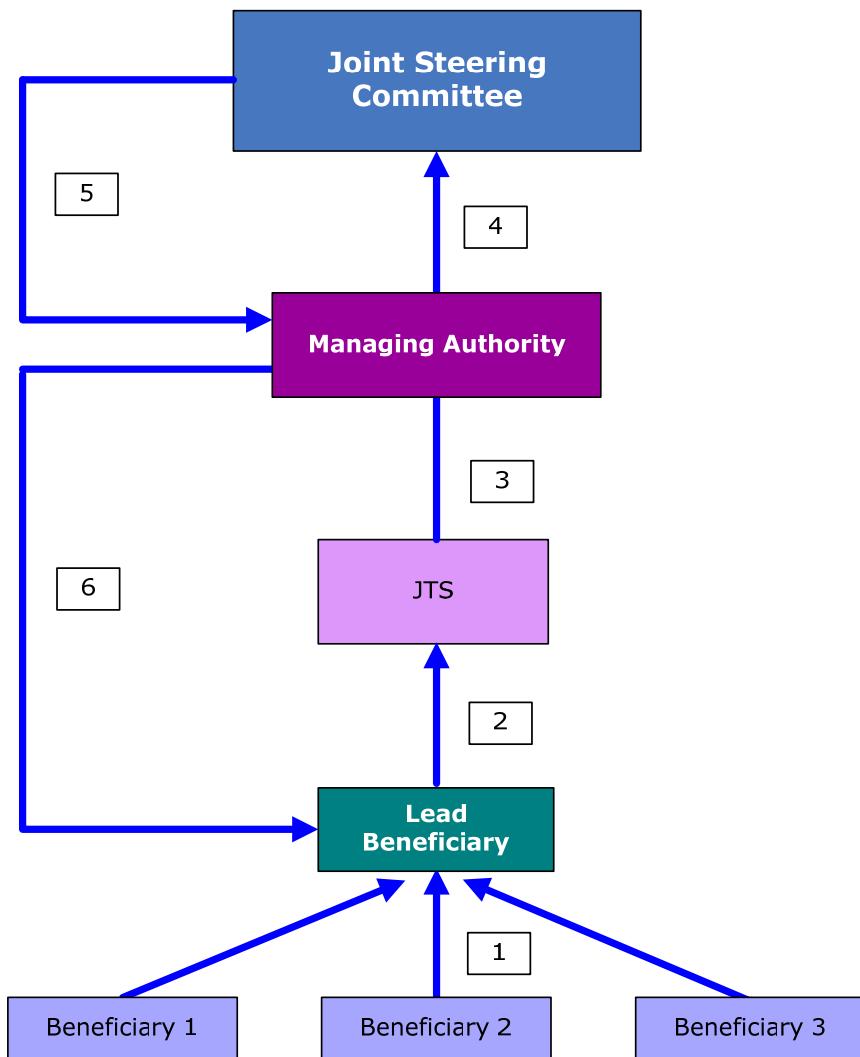
- ✓ the application forms of the submitted project proposals;
- ✓ a ranking list of the evaluated project proposals;
- ✓ all evaluation forms.

In evaluating proposals, the Joint Technical Secretariat may be assisted by external experts, selected in agreement with the participating member states.

The Joint Steering Committee shall select the operations to be funded.

On the basis of the decision of the Joint Steering Committee (selected operations), the Managing Authority shall contract the lead beneficiaries of the selected operations.

DIAGRAM 1: SUBMISSION OF PROPOSALS, EVALUATION, SELECTION, CONTRACTING



Step 1: Beneficiaries prepare the proposal in cooperation with the Lead Beneficiary
 Step 2: The Lead Beneficiary submits the proposal to the Joint Technical Secretariat
 Step 3: The JTS checks proposals for: 1) timely submission, 2) completion of required documents, and 3) eligibility of beneficiaries. It then evaluates the proposals, based on the approved operations' selection criteria and submits all the material to the MA.
 Step 4: The MA ensures that the evaluation procedure was carried out in accordance with the terms of the call for proposals and the approved operations selection criteria and submits to the Joint Steering Committee: i) the application forms of the submitted project proposals, ii) a ranking list of the evaluated project proposals and iii) all evaluation forms
 Step 5: The Joint Steering Committee selects the operations to be funded
 Step 6: On the basis of the Joint Steering Committee decisions (selected operations), the Managing Authority contracts the lead beneficiaries of selected operations.

6.9. Joint Steering Committee

For optimum effectiveness in the exercise of the operations selection role, a Joint Steering Committee shall be set up having the exclusive responsibility for selecting the operations to be funded under the OP. According to Article 19(3) of Regulation (EC) No 1080/2006, the Joint Steering Committee shall report to the Joint Monitoring Committee.

The Joint Steering Committee is co-chaired by designated representatives from the participating Member States or their substitutes. For the Greek side, the designated co-chairperson is the Secretary General for Investments and Development at the Ministry of Economy and Finance. For the Bulgarian side, the designated co-chairperson is the Deputy Minister of Regional Development and Public Works.

The Joint Steering Committee shall consist of a few members, taking into account the principle of proportionality. Its composition shall be decided by the participating Member States, taking into account that Member States are equally represented.

On his/her own initiative or at the request of the Joint Steering Committee, the Commission's representative shall participate in the meetings in an advisory capacity.

The Managing Authority attends the Joint Steering Committee's meetings in an advisory capacity. Moreover, specialists or experts in economic, technical, social, scientific and other matters, depending on the agenda items, may be invited to attend the Joint Steering Committee meetings in an advisory capacity.

The Joint Technical Secretariat undertakes to provide secretarial support to the Joint Steering Committee, mainly by organising the meetings, preparing the agenda and keeping the minutes.

The Joint Steering Committee shall prepare its own rules of procedure under the institutional, legal and financial framework of the Member State, in which the Managing Authority of the Programme is based. At its first meeting, the Joint Steering Committee shall adopt its rules of procedure in agreement with the Managing Authority.

6.10. Responsibilities of the Lead Beneficiary and of Other Beneficiaries

For each operation, a lead beneficiary shall be appointed by the beneficiaries among themselves (article 20 of Regulation (EC) No 1080/2006). The lead beneficiary shall assume the following responsibilities:

- (i) it shall lay down the arrangements for its relations with the beneficiaries participating in the operation in an agreement comprising, *inter alia*, provisions guaranteeing the sound financial management of the funds allocated to the operation, including the arrangements for recovering amounts unduly paid.

Should the lead beneficiary fail to recover the amounts from a beneficiary, the Member State, in whose territory the beneficiary concerned is established, shall return to the Certifying Authority any amounts that were unduly paid to that beneficiary;

- (ii) it shall be responsible for ensuring the implementation of the entire operation;
- (iii) it shall ensure that the expenditure presented by the beneficiaries participating in the operation has been incurred for the purpose of implementing the operation and corresponds to the activities agreed between those beneficiaries;
- (iv) it shall verify that the expenditure presented by the beneficiaries participating in the operation has been validated by the controllers;
- (v) it shall be responsible for transferring the ERDF contribution to the beneficiaries participating in the operation.

Each beneficiary participating in the operation shall assume responsibility in the event of any irregularity in the expenditure which it has declared.

6.11. Certification of Expenditure and Financial Flows

6.11.1. Certification of Expenditure

In order to validate the expenditure, each Member State will set up a control system making it possible to verify the delivery of the products and services co-financed, the soundness of the expenditure declared for operations or parts of operations implemented on its territory, and the compliance of such expenditure and of related operations or parts of those operations with Community rules and its national rules.

For this purpose, each Member State shall designate the controllers responsible for verifying the legality and regularity of the expenditure declared by each beneficiary participating in the operation. The expenditures deriving will be covered by the Technical Assistance budget. Controllers designated by the two Member States shall apply standard control criteria, jointly prepared by the participating member states, agreed by the Managing Authority and approved by the Joint Monitoring Committee.

Verifications shall be carried out by the controllers designated by the Member States respectively and will include the following procedures:

- i. administrative verifications in respect of each application for reimbursement by beneficiaries;
- ii. on-the-spot verifications of individual operations
 - ✓ Where on-the-spot verifications are carried out on a sample basis for an Operational Programme, the Managing Authority shall keep records describing and justifying the sampling method and identify the operations or transactions selected for verification.
 - ✓ The Managing Authority shall determine the size of the sample in order to achieve reasonable assurance as to the legality and regularity of the underlying transactions, having regard to the level of risk identified by the Managing Authority for the type of beneficiaries and operations concerned;
 - ✓ The Managing Authority shall review the sampling method each year;
 - ✓ The Managing Authority shall establish written standards and procedures for the verifications carried out and shall keep records for each one, stating the work

performed, the date and the results of the verification, and the measures taken in respect of irregularities detected.

In the case that delivery of co-financed products or services may be verified only in relation to the entire operation, verification shall be carried out by the Managing Authority.

Where the body designated as Managing Authority is also a beneficiary in the context of operations under the Technical Assistance Priority Axis of the Operational Programme, arrangements for the verifications shall ensure adequate separation of functions in accordance with point (b) of article 58 of Regulation (EC) No 1083/2006.

Verifications shall include procedures to avoid double financing of expenditure under other Community or national programmes and under other programming periods.

As regards the flow of certified expenditure (Diagram 2), the lead beneficiary shall forward all certified expenditure for an operation to the Joint Technical Secretariat which, after conducting a preliminary check (completeness of data and eligibility of declared expenditure) transmits them, together with comments, to the Managing Authority. The Managing Authority shall ensure that all the necessary information is available on the procedures and verifications carried out in relation to expenditure for the purpose of certification. It then transmits it to the Certifying Authority, in order to prepare and submit to the Commission certified statements of expenditure and applications for payment.

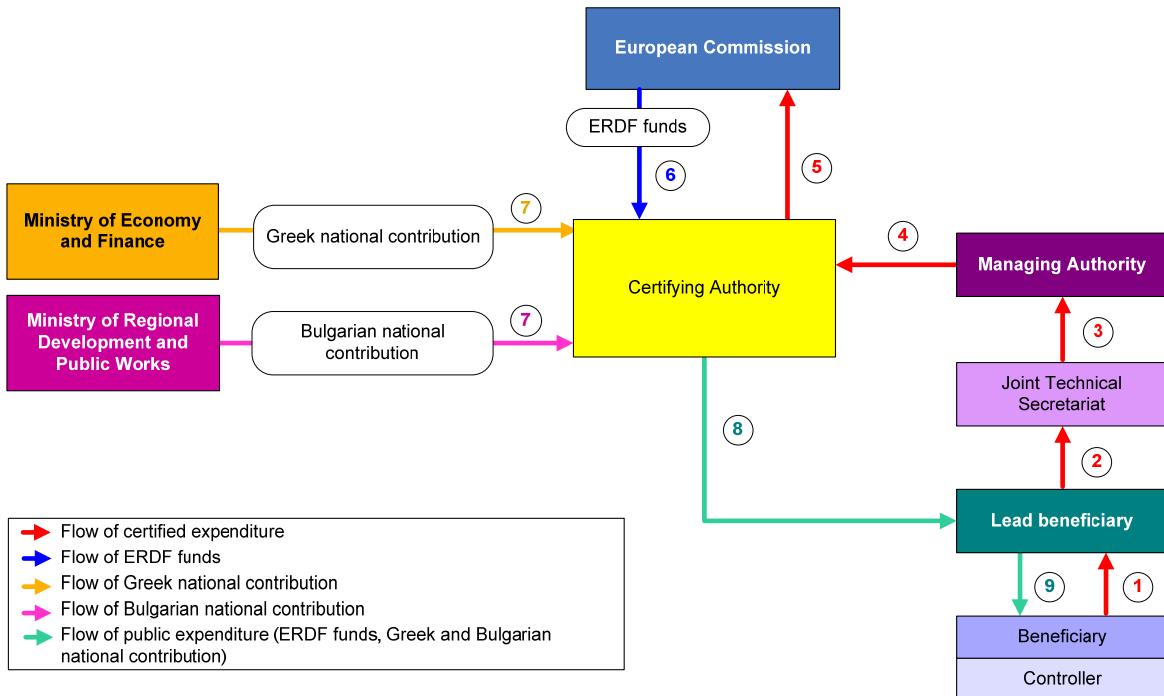
6.11.2. Financial Flow of Public Expenditure

The Certifying Authority receives ERDF contribution payments from the Commission.

The Greek national contribution is transferred from the Ministry of Economy and Finance to the Certifying Authority. The national contribution of Bulgaria is transferred from the Ministry of Regional Development and Public Works to the Certifying Authority.

The Certifying Authority transfers the total public expenditure to the lead beneficiaries of selected operations. The lead beneficiaries are responsible for distributing the total public expenditure to all beneficiaries.

DIAGRAM 2: CERTIFICATION OF EXPENDITURE AND FINANCIAL FLOW OF PUBLIC EXPENDITURE



6.12. Monitoring

6.12.1. Joint Monitoring Committee

The Joint Monitoring Committee of the OP is set up within 3 months from the date of the notification to the Commission of the decision approving the OP.

The composition of the Joint Monitoring Committee of the Operational Programme is decided by the participating Member States, taking into account that Member States shall be equally represented and complying with the partnership principle in managing, monitoring and evaluating the operations in all stages of programme implementation. The representatives of Member States shall come from national, regional and local authorities.

The Joint Monitoring Committee shall be co-chaired by the designated representatives of the participating Member States or their substitutes. For the Greek side, the designated co-chairperson is the Secretary General for Investments and Development at the Ministry of Economy and Finance. For the Bulgarian side, the designated co-chairperson is the Deputy Minister of Regional Development and Public Works.

On his/her own initiative or at the request of the Joint Monitoring Committee, the Commission's representative shall participate in the meetings of the Joint Monitoring Committee in an advisory capacity.

It shall be ensured that men and women are, as much as possible, equally represented on the Joint Monitoring Committee.

The Managing Authority attends the Joint Monitoring Committee meetings in an advisory capacity. Moreover, specialists or experts on economic, technical, social, scientific and other matters, depending on the agenda items, may be invited to attend the Joint Monitoring Committee meetings in an advisory capacity.

The Joint Technical Secretariat undertakes the secretarial support to the Joint Monitoring Committee, mainly by organising the meetings, preparing the agenda and keeping the minutes.

The Joint Monitoring Committee shall draw up its own rules of procedure, within the institutional, legal and financial framework of the Member State where the programme Managing Authority is based, and approve them, in agreement with the Managing Authority, so that it can carry out its functions in accordance with Regulation (EC) No 1083/2006. At its initial meeting, the Committee shall adopt its rules of procedure.

The Joint Monitoring Committee shall be responsible for the functions set out in article 65 of Regulation (EC) 1083/2006, and in particular it shall:

- consider and approve the criteria for selecting the operations to be financed within six months of the approval of the Operational Programme and approve any revision of those criteria in accordance with programming needs;
- periodically review progress made towards achieving the specific targets of the Operational Programme on the basis of documents submitted by the Managing Authority;

- examine the results of implementation, particularly the achieving of the targets set for each priority axis and the evaluations referred to in article 48(3) of Regulation (EC) No 1083/2006 and in section 4;
- consider and approve the annual and final reports on implementation referred to in Article 67 of Regulation (EC) No 1083/2006;
- be informed of the annual control report, or of the part of the report referring to the Operational Programme concerned, and of any relevant comments the Commission may make after examining that report or relating to that part of the report;
- may propose to the Managing Authority any revision or examination of the Operational Programme likely to make possible the attainment of the ERDF's objectives referred to in article 3 or to improve its management, including its financial management;
- consider and approve any proposal to amend the content of the Commission decision on the contribution from the ERDF;
- approve the material of the call for proposals;
- approve the Technical Assistance annual plan

6.12.2. Monitoring Indicators

As stipulated in article 66(2) of Regulation (EC) No 1083/2006, monitoring of the Operational Programme shall be carried out by the Managing Authority and the Joint Monitoring Committee of the programme, mainly by reference to indicators (financial indicators and indicators for output and results) specified for each priority axis in the Operational Programme in accordance with article 37(1) (c) of the above mentioned regulation.

The indicators of the Operational Programme have been developed on the basis of the Commission proposed methodology, developed in the relevant working document for the

programming period 2007-2013 "Indicators for Monitoring and Evaluation: A Practical Guide".

The choice of indicators for monitoring the attainment of the objectives of the Operational Programme shall meet the particular character of the Operational Programme, its objectives and the prevailing socio-economic and environmental conditions of its geographic implementation area.

Data necessary for calculating the indicator values during the implementation of the programme shall be collected at the level of operation and aggregated at priority axis level and finally at programme level.

In the context of regular evaluation of the quality and the effectiveness of the implementation of the OP, the Managing Authority shall send to the Joint Monitoring Committee data derived from the monitoring system, mainly summarised financial data and information pertaining to output and result indicators.

A management information system will be used to record information on all operations financed under the programme and collect reliable financial and statistical date concerning the implementation of the programme.

6.12.3. Annual Report

In the context of monitoring the OP, the Managing Authority shall draw up an annual report on programme implementation and, after approval by the Joint Monitoring Committee, shall send it to the Commission (article 67(1) of Regulation (EC) No 1083/2006). The report shall include all information referred to in paragraph 2 of the same article and shall be drawn up according to the requirements of Regulation (EC) No 1828/2006.

In that context, the Managing Authority shall take steps to continually monitor and improve indicators used for monitoring and evaluating the programme.

6.12.3.1. Annual Examination of the Operational Programme

As stipulated in article 68 of Regulation (EC) No 1083/2006, every year, when the annual report on implementation is submitted, the Managing Authority for the Operational Programme and the Commission shall examine the progress made in implementing the operational programme, the principal results achieved over the previous year, the financial implementation and other factors with a view to achieving the desired outcome. Any aspects of the operation of the management and control system raised in the last annual control report referred to in article 62(1)(d)(i) of Regulation (EC) No 1083/2006 may also be examined.

After the examination of the programme referred to above, the Commission may make comments to the Managing Authority, which shall inform the Joint Monitoring Committee thereof. The Managing Authority shall inform the Commission of the action taken in response to those comments.

6.13. Evaluation

6.13.1. General

In order to ensure the effectiveness of the contribution of the Community and national funds to the cohesion policy, evaluations shall be carried out before, during and after the implementation of the Operational Programme (articles 47-49 of Regulation (EC) 1083/2006).

These strategic or operational evaluations shall take account of the objective of sustainable development and of the relevant Community legislation concerning environmental impact and strategic environmental assessment. Evaluations shall be carried out under the responsibility of the Managing Authority or the Commission by experts or bodies, functionally independent from the certifying and the audit authorities designated in the framework of the management and control system of the programme. The results of the evaluations shall be published according to the applicable rules on access to documents.

6.13.2. Operational Evaluations

As stipulated in article 48(3) of Regulation (EC) 1083/2006, the Member States shall carry out evaluations linked to the monitoring of Operational Programmes, in particular where that monitoring reveals a significant departure from the goals initially set or where proposals are made for the revision of these programmes (evaluations of an operational nature).

Evaluations linked to the monitoring of the Programme shall be carried out under the responsibility of the Managing Authority.

One evaluation of the OP, in 2010, is envisaged for the period 2007-2013. However, besides the proposed evaluation, other evaluations may be carried out during the programming period, if deemed necessary as a result of changes to the OP. Modifications to the Operational Programme may require that modifications are made, in respect of the allocation of budgetary resources among priority axes, modifications to the targets and/or the content of the priorities of the OP and, finally, modifications to the implementing provisions. The time frame of the evaluations referred to above cannot be determined at this stage of planning.

The results of these evaluations shall be sent by the Managing Authority to the Joint Monitoring Committee for the programme and the Commission.

6.13.3. Ex-Post Evaluation

As stipulated in article 49(3) of Regulation (EC) 1083/2006, the responsibility for carrying out an ex-post evaluation rests with the Commission. Ex-post evaluation shall examine the extent to which resources were used, the effectiveness and efficiency of ERDF Fund programming and the socio-economic impact and aim to draw conclusions for the policy on economic and social cohesion. Finally, factors contributing to the success or failure of the implementation of the OP and correct practices are identified.

Ex-post evaluation is a strategic evaluation carried out by independent evaluators and shall be completed by 31 December 2015. It is carried out by the Commission in close cooperation with the Managing Authority, with the latter providing all necessary information.

6.14. Information and Publicity

As stipulated in article 69 of Regulation (EC) No 1083/2006, the Member States and the Managing Authority for the Operational Programme shall provide information on and publicise operations and co-financed programme to ensure the required publicity thereof. The information shall be addressed to the European Union citizens and beneficiaries at the aim of highlighting the role of the Community and ensure that assistance from the ERDF is transparent. Implementation of information and publicity requirements is described in articles 2 to 10 of Regulation (EC) No 1828/2006.

For the purposes of providing the information referred to above, information and publicity measures, set out in a structured way in the communication plan for the Operational Programme, shall be taken throughout the period of implementation of the programme. The communication plan shall include the aims and target groups, the strategy and content of the information and publicity measures to be taken in respect of each target group (potential beneficiaries, beneficiaries, the public), the indicative budget for implementation of the plan, the administrative departments or bodies responsible for implementation of the information and publicity measures, an indication of how the information and publicity measures are to be evaluated in terms of visibility and awareness of the Operational Programme and of the role played by the Community.

The information and publicity measures shall make reference to the added value of the Community contribution at national, regional and local levels.

The communication plan and any significant revisions to it shall be drawn up by the Managing Authority of the Operational Programme and submitted to the Commission for examination, in accordance with the procedure referred to in article 3 of Regulation (EC) 1828/2006.

The amounts allocated to information and publicity measures shall be included in the financing of the OP under the Technical Assistance implementing the Funds (article 46(1) of Regulation (EC) 1083/2006).

The Managing Authority shall designate the bodies responsible for information and publicity actions and accordingly inform the Commission.

6.15. Electronic Exchange of Data

For the purposes of Articles 66 and 67 of Regulation (EC) No 1083/2006, the Managing Authority for the Operational Programme shall update the computer system established by the Commission (SFC 2007) for the exchange of all data relating to the Operational Programme, in accordance with the requirements of articles 39, 40, 41 and 42 of Regulation (EC) 1828/2006.

The Managing Authority of the OP shall also ensure that there is a system for recording and storing, in computerised form, accounting records for each operation under the Operational Programme and that the data on implementation necessary for financial management, monitoring, verifications, audits and evaluation are collected in accordance with article 60(c) of Regulation (EC) No 1083/2006. For that purpose, in the context of the description of Management and Control Systems, a description of the system shall be submitted to the Commission, in accordance with article 71(1) of Regulation (EC) No 1083/2006 and similarly in article 21 of Regulation (EC) 1828/2006 and also in par. 6 of Annex XII of Regulation (EC) 1828/2006.

The existing management information system (MIS), set up for the requirements of the 3rd programming period at the Ministry of Economy and Finance, shall be appropriately customised for that purpose. The MIS (OPS) is fully compatible with the SFC.

The management information system may also cover the needs of collecting and recording data relating to the functions of the audit authority and the certifying authority of the programme and support the authorities concerned with their obligation of electronic data exchange with the Commission.

6.16. Partnership

Article 11 of Regulation (EC) 1083/2006 lays down that the objectives of the Funds shall be pursued in the framework of close cooperation, hereinafter referred to as partnership, between the Commission and each Member State and between Member States and stakeholders (the competent national, regional and local authorities, the economic and social partners, any other appropriate body representing civil society, environmental partners, non-governmental organisations and bodies responsible for promoting equality between men and women).

The partnership shall be ensured on all levels of implementation of the OP with:

- (i) the application of broad consultation procedures at all levels of planning with a view to shaping a multifaceted approach on alternative solutions to the development of the eligible regions through a productive and effective dialogue with the bodies involved.
- (ii) the active involvement of partners, especially at regional level, at various stages of the OP programming
- (iii) the proportional representation of partners on the composition of the Joint Monitoring Committee of the OP, which is the key mechanism to ensure the quality and the effectiveness of the programme, and on which all bodies with an interest in the targets and actions of the programme, are being represented.

6.17. Promoting Equality between Men and Women and Ensuring the Principle of Non-Discrimination

According to article 16 of Regulation (EC) 1083/2006, the member States participating in the programme and the Commission shall ensure that equality between men and women and the integration of the gender perspective is promoted during the various stages of implementation of the Funds.

The Member States and the Commission shall take appropriate steps to prevent any discrimination based on sex, racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation during the various stages of implementation of the Funds and, in particular, in the access to them. In particular, accessibility for disabled persons shall be one of the criteria to be observed in defining operations co-financed by the Funds and to be taken into account during the various stages of implementation.

Steps to be taken to promote gender equality and prevent discrimination during the various stages of the implementation of the operational programme shall include:

- (i) taking appropriate steps to publicise the programme and the specific operations included in it in order to ensure the best possible and wider access to Community

co-financing. Such measures shall include, inter alia, the sending of calls to all members of the Joint Monitoring Committee of the programme and also to all stakeholders, who can ensure a broader dissemination of funding opportunities and the special conditions and requirements for receiving it

- (ii) The follow up and the provision of relevant information to the Joint Monitoring Committee of the Operational Programme and the Commission through the annual report in respect of the measures taken in support of creating equal opportunities under the OP, their effectiveness and corrective actions required to ensure non-discrimination.

ANNEXES

Annex I: Statistic Data of the Programme Area

TABLE A: Population of the Eligible Area

Indicators	Evros Prefecture	Kavala Prefecture	Xanthi Prefecture	Rhodope Prefecture	Drama Prefecture	Thessaloniki Prefecture	Prefecture Serres	Indicators	Blagoevgrad District	Smolyan District	Kardjali District	Haskovo District
Population	149.243	140.546	105.590	111.306	100.775	1.125.422	190.143	Population	333.577	131.010	158.541	266.073
Age distribution (%)												
0-14	17,2	18,5	23,8	19,6	19,1	18,7	18,1	0-9	9,04	7,6	9,24	8,3
15-65	69	67,8	66,6	68,7	67,4	70,6	67,8	10-19	13,38	12,76	13,68	11,77
65+	13,8	13,7	9,6	11,7	13,5	10,7	14,1	60+	22,05	20,78	20,20	25,18

Sources: National Statistical Service of Greece, 2006 & National Statistics Institute of Bulgaria, 2005

TABLE B: Economic Indicators in the Cross-border Area

Indicators by Region	ELIGIBLE CBC AREA												
	Evros Prefecture	Kavala Prefecture	Xanthi Prefecture	Rodopi Prefecture	Drama Prefecture	Thessaloniki Prefecture	Serres Prefecture	Blagoevgrad District	Smolyan District	Kardjali District	Haskovo District	GR (2004)	BG (2004)
GDP													
Primary sector	21,4	9,9	8,6	19,4	18,2	5,5	11,2	18,3	20,8	30,7	21,2	5,7	11,6
Secondary sector	21	21,7	46,4	31,5	15	26,4	30,5	36,2	21,9	20,8	23,8	21,3	29,7
Tertiary sector	57,6	49,1	45	49,1	66,8	68,1	58,3	45,5	57,3	48,5	55	73	58,7
Labour force distribution													
Primary sector	28,04*				6,5	23,1	2,5	3,2	1,4	3,3	12,6	3,3	
Secondary sector	20,52*				30,6	29,4	57,1	42,3	47,6	43,6	22,48	37,9	
Tertiary sector	51,43*				62,9	47,5	40,4	54,5	51	53,2	64,92	58,8	

*average for the Region East Macedonia – Thrace

Sources: National Statistical Service of Greece, 2006 & National Statistics Institute of Bulgaria, 2005

TABLE C: GDP per Capita in the Cross-border Area (2006)

Indicators by Region	ELIGIBLE CBC AREA												
	Evros Prefecture	Kavala Prefecture	Xanthi Prefecture	Rodopi Prefecture	Drama Prefecture	Thessaloniki Prefecture	Serres Prefecture	Blagoevgr ad District	Smolyan District	Kardjali District	Haskovo District	GR (2006)	BG (2006)
GDP/per Capita in Euro	10.852,8	11.141	10.335,4	9.051,7	8.891,7	13.759,6	7.990,3	2.053	1.935,7	1.815,7	1.820,8	15.221,7	2.518,3

Source: Eurostat, 2006

TABLE D: Accommodation Establishments*in the Eligible Area

Districts	Accommodation Establishments
Smolyan	138
Kardjali	14
Haskovo	24
Blagoevgrad	55
Thessaloniki	128
Drama	15
Kavala	238
Serres	23
Rodopi	21
Xanthi	14
Evros	63

*There are included all type of accommodation establishments i.e. Deluxe to C/D category. Agrotouristic establishments not included

Sources: National Statistics Institute of Bulgaria, 2004 & Hellenic Chamber of Hotels 2006

TABLE E: Unemployment Indicator in the Cross-border Area

Indicators by Region	ELIGIBLE AREA											GR Average (2004)	BG Average (2004)
	Evros Prefecture	Kavala Prefecture	Xanthi Prefecture	Rodopi Prefecture	Drama Prefecture	Thessaloniki Prefecture	Serres Prefecture	Blagoevgrad	Smolyan	Kardjali	Haskovo		
	Unemployment (%)	14,50	8,2	8,4	12,4	10,6	12,4	15,9	8,7	17,3	13,6	13,8	9,6

Sources: National Statistical Service of Greece, 2004 & National Statistics Institute of Bulgaria, 2004

TABLE F : Unemployment per Sex in the Cross-border Area

Unemployment %	ELIGIBLE AREA											GR Average (2004)	BG Average (2004)
	Evros Prefecture	Kavala Prefecture	Xanthi Prefecture	Rodopi Prefecture	Drama Prefecture	Thessaloniki Prefecture	Serres Prefecture	Blagoevgrad	Smolyan	Kardjali	Haskovo		
	MEN	29,15	30,38	38,58	35,98	27,89	32,18	33,89	n.a.*	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
WOMEN	70,85	69,62	61,42	64,02	72,11	67,82	66,02	n.a	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.		

Sources: Hellenic Observatory of Employment and Eurostat

*n.a.: non available

TABLE G : List of Academic Institutions in the Eligible Area

Districts	Independent colleges	Universities and specialized schools located in the area	Faculties of Universities or departments	Tertiary Education Technological Institutes	Art Schools
Blagoevgrad	1	2	1	----	2
Smolyan	1	----	1	----	----
Kardjali	1	----	----	----	----
Haskovo	----	----	1	----	----
Thessaloniki	1	2	----	1	1
Serres	----	----	----	1	----
Kavala	----	----	----	1	----
Drama	----	----	----	----	----
Xanthi	----	1	----	----	----
Rodopi	----	----	1	----	----
Evros	----	----	2	----	----

Source: National Statistics Institute of Bulgaria, 2004 & Ministry of National Education and Religious Affairs Greece, 2007

TABLE H: Educational institutions in 2004/2005 school year in districts of the Eligible Area

Districts	total	General schools	Special schools	Art schools	Vocational gymnasiums	Vocational colleges with reception after secondary education	Vocational training schools	Independent colleges	Universities and specialized schools
Smolyan	92	74	3	2	13	-----	-----	---	-----
Kardjali	112	97	1	----	14	-----	-----	---	-----
Haskovo	120	99	8	----	13	-----	-----	---	-----
Blagoevgrad	169	141	6	----	19	-----	-----	1	2
BG	3 337	2 657	127	19	459	17	5	10	43

Source: National Statistics Institute of Bulgaria, 2004

Annex II: Analysis of the Questionnaires

Referring to the new Programming period 2007-2013 and the operational Cross-Border programme Greece-Bulgaria, TREK Consulting S.A. has prepared, and the INTERREG MA of Greece and MRDPW of Bulgaria have distributed, a Questionnaire, so as to examine the applicability and interest of Greek and Bulgarian potential beneficiaries for submitting proposals for projects on the thematic fields that have been identified by the Joint Task Force of the Programme. The relevant evaluation & feedback collected has been used for the formulation of the strategic framework under which the Priority axes and Areas of Intervention of the new Operational Programme have been identified and analyzed.

The Questionnaire was formulated in such a way so as to collect information as regards the ranking of the respective thematic fields in terms of their interest to the potential beneficiaries (Part A of the Questionnaire) and data on possible joint project proposals that could be submitted under each thematic sector for the cross-border area (Part B). For each of the project ideas recorded, a short description and the identification of the project maturity (in terms of project documentation, partnership, etc.) was requested.

The Questionnaire was sent to both Greek and Bulgarian Potential Beneficiaries of the eligible regions of the Greece-Bulgaria Cross-border Programme.

A great interest was noted by the respective organizations for the new Programming Period in the Operational Programme Greece – Bulgaria 2007 – 2013. In total, 67 questionnaires were collected and another 16 project ideas were recorded on the Bulgarian side via National procedures for the recording and analysis of project ideas. All data and information collected is further analyzed in the tables that follow – what should be noted here, so as to avoid misunderstandings, is that, even though the majority of the questionnaires collected were correctly filled in, a certain number included some deviations as regards the ranking of sectors (not all ranks were used or some ranks were used more than once) and the project proposals (some questionnaires included many more than one project ideas while other did not include any). In any case, all information gathered is thoroughly analyzed below.

(A) INSTITUTIONS PROFILE

After a first evaluation of the submitted questionnaires, the majority of interested Institutions by both countries belong to the classification of "Local/Regional Authority". This is a really positive sign, as it means that the regional authorities are becoming more active in participating in European cross-border programmes and gain experience from their implementation. In addition, there is an interest for participation at the relevant programme by Ministries, NGOs, Universities and Research Institutes as well as other organizations (Chambers of commerce and public equivalent bodies).

The aforementioned highlights are illustrated in the following chart:

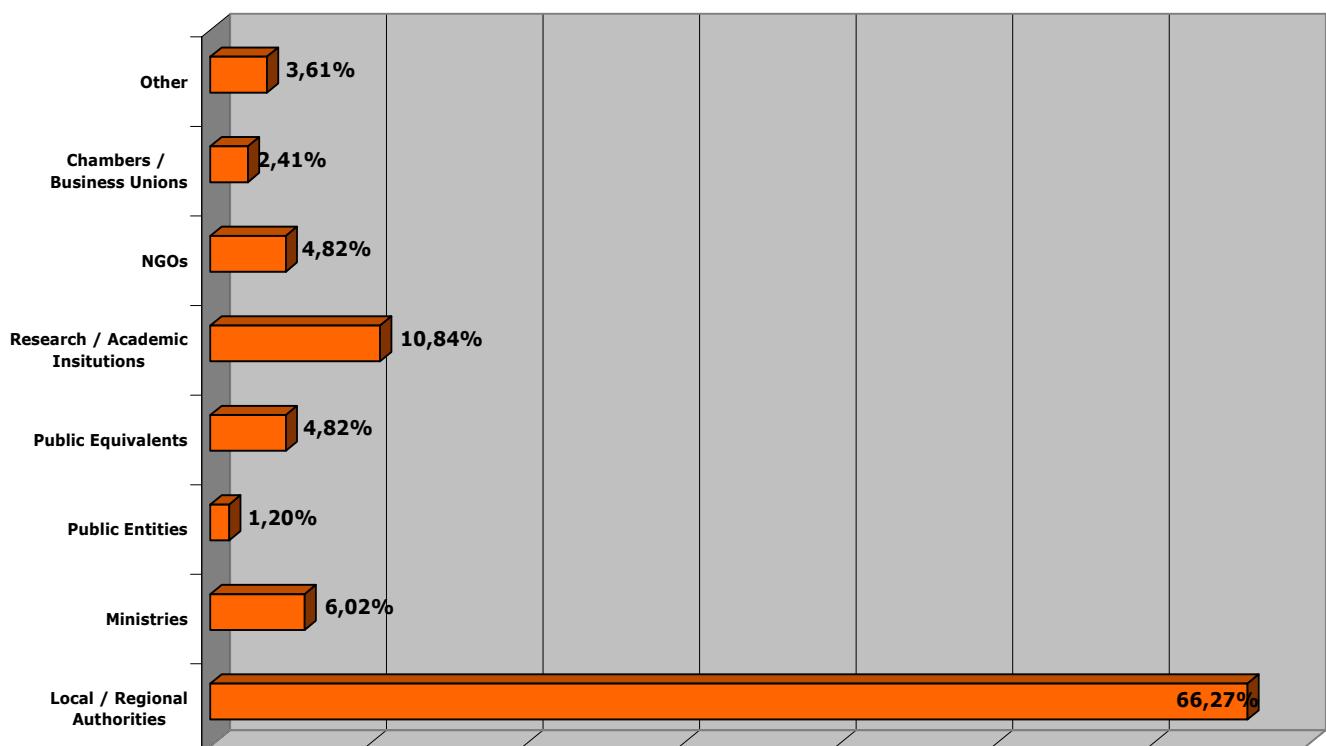


Chart 1- Final Beneficiaries' Organization type

Interest for participation in the New Programme was raised among different organizations, including Local/Regional Authorities, Public Equivalent Bodies, Ministries, NGOs etc. It is noted that the Bulgarian partners that submitted project ideas rather than questionnaires are also included in the analysis given above.

(B) THEMATIC SECTORS OF INTEREST

This section refers to the thematic sectors that each partner highlighted as most interesting for submitting a proposal in the new programming period 2007-2013. According to the methodology described in the relevant field of the questionnaire, each institution had to rank the thematic sectors (on a matrix) using a scale from 1 (for extreme interest in the respective thematic field) to 12 (for relative indifference on the sector).

The results derived from the analysis of the questionnaires are presented in the following matrix:

Ranking Per Thematic Sector	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	N/A
Entrepreneurship/ Competitiveness	11	8	4	8	4	5	5	3	4	2	1	2	9
Environmental protection/ Risk Prevention/Waste management	26	15	8		2	1	2	1	3	2	1	1	5
Improving Accessibility (Transport/Telecommunication)	8	5	2	4	3	6	3	9	5	7	3	4	6
Tourism	16	8	5	5	6	2	5	4	1	3	1	2	6
Culture	16	10	3	8	3	2	5	2	3		6	3	4
Human Resources	10	3	8	4	6	4	3	5	9	4			8
Health	5	8	1	1	5	5	3		7	6	8	8	8
Innovation/ Research &Technology	9	5	9	4	7	3	5	4	6		2	3	8
Education	9	10	5	6	4	4	5	8		6	1	2	5
Small-scale Infrastructure	6	5	6	2	1	5	5	2	2	3	8	14	7
Information Society	4	5	12	3	3	6	3	4	3	6	3	5	10
Urban/Rural Development	10	5	5	6	9	3	2	5	3	1	3	5	7

Table I: Ranking Per Thematic Sector

Table I presents the ranking for each thematic sector according to the submitted questionnaires. The row named as "Scale" presents the ranking from 1 to 12 that each possible beneficiary had to give to each thematic sector. The numbers inside the table show the number of questionnaires that have ranked each of the sectors with the specific scale.

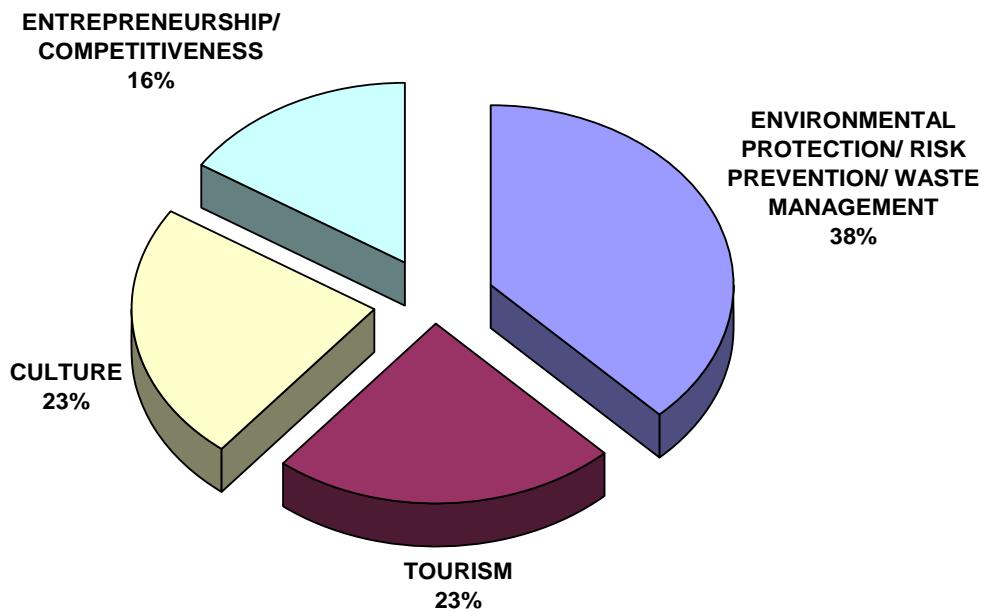


Chart 2- Final Beneficiaries' Organization type

Chart 2 illustrates the first four categories of interest, as classified in the questionnaires of the institutions that participated in the relevant research (ranking: 1). As can be observed through the chart, the thematic sector "Environmental protection/ Risk Prevention/Waste management" gathers the greatest interest according to the submitted tool of quantitative research in both countries. Thematic Sectors "Culture" and "Tourism" stimulates the interest of the entities in both countries; at the same time, the thematic sector "Entrepreneurship/ Competitiveness" also gathers a great percentage of interest from the institutions.

At this point it should be mentioned that, even though there is equity between the interest of institutions for the thematic sectors of Tourism and Culture, while the sector of "Entrepreneurship/ Competitiveness" is classified in fourth position with a percentage of 16%, on the following part of the "Project Proposals per Thematic Sector", there is a difference in this classification; a lot of project proposals have signified interest on Entrepreneurship/ Competitiveness while there is less interest for Tourism and Culture whose classification is at the 3rd and 4th position respectively.

(C) PROJECT PROPOSALS PER THEMATIC SECTOR

This section aims to present the project proposals in each thematic sector according to the submitted questionnaires. The second part of the Questionnaire was formulated so as to support each interested institution on the operational programme for the new programming period suggest project ideas according to the thematic sectors it is interested in.

During the evaluation of the submitted questionnaires it was noticed that there was a great number of proposals classified in multiple thematic sectors; for instance, environment (B) and Small Scale Infrastructure (I) and/or Culture (E). As a result, since it was difficult for the multiplicity to be used in the evaluation report, it was decided that all proposals should refer only to one thematic sector according to the title of the project and its short description. This decision was applied since, when a call of proposals will eventually be launched, all project applications will cover the concept of solely one area of intervention.

The following table (Table II) presents the total number of project ideas (435) submitted per thematic sector after the elimination of the multiplicity among the sectors.

THEMATIC SECTOR	NUMBER OF PROPOSALS
Environmental protection/ Risk Prevention/Waste management	98
Culture	59
Entrepreneurship/ Competitiveness	54
Tourism	49
Improving Accessibility (Transport/Telecommunication)	33
Education	32
Innovation/ Research &Technology	30
Urban/Rural Development	23
Human Resources	20
Health	19
Small-scale Infrastructure	12
Information Society	6
Total	435

Table II: Project Proposals per Thematic Sector

As can be observed on the table presented above, there is a scatter of project ideas. Thematic sector "B: Environmental protection/ Risk Prevention/Waste management"

gathers the majority of project ideas. This is logical due to the fact that both countries have serious problems with their environment and natural resources due to several pollutions or threats; as a result, they would like to implement projects relevant to environmental protection and risk management.

Moreover, a great number of proposals are relevant to the thematic sectors of Entrepreneurship/ Competitiveness, Culture, Tourism and Accessibility; it needs to be underlined here that the thematic sector of Accessibility had gathered a very low number of questionnaires with ranking 1. There is also a great interest on projects for the sectors of Education, Innovation and Research, Health, Human Resources and Small Scale Infrastructure while only 6 of the submitted proposals referred to the sector Information Society (which was classified in ranking 2 in the previous section, as was the case for the sector of Education).

At this point, it should be once again mentioned that while most of data was gathered through the questionnaires, there were project ideas, especially for the Bulgarian partners, which were submitted to the programming period of 2006 (according to the Rules of the Bulgarian authorities). Nevertheless, all available information is included in the aforementioned data.

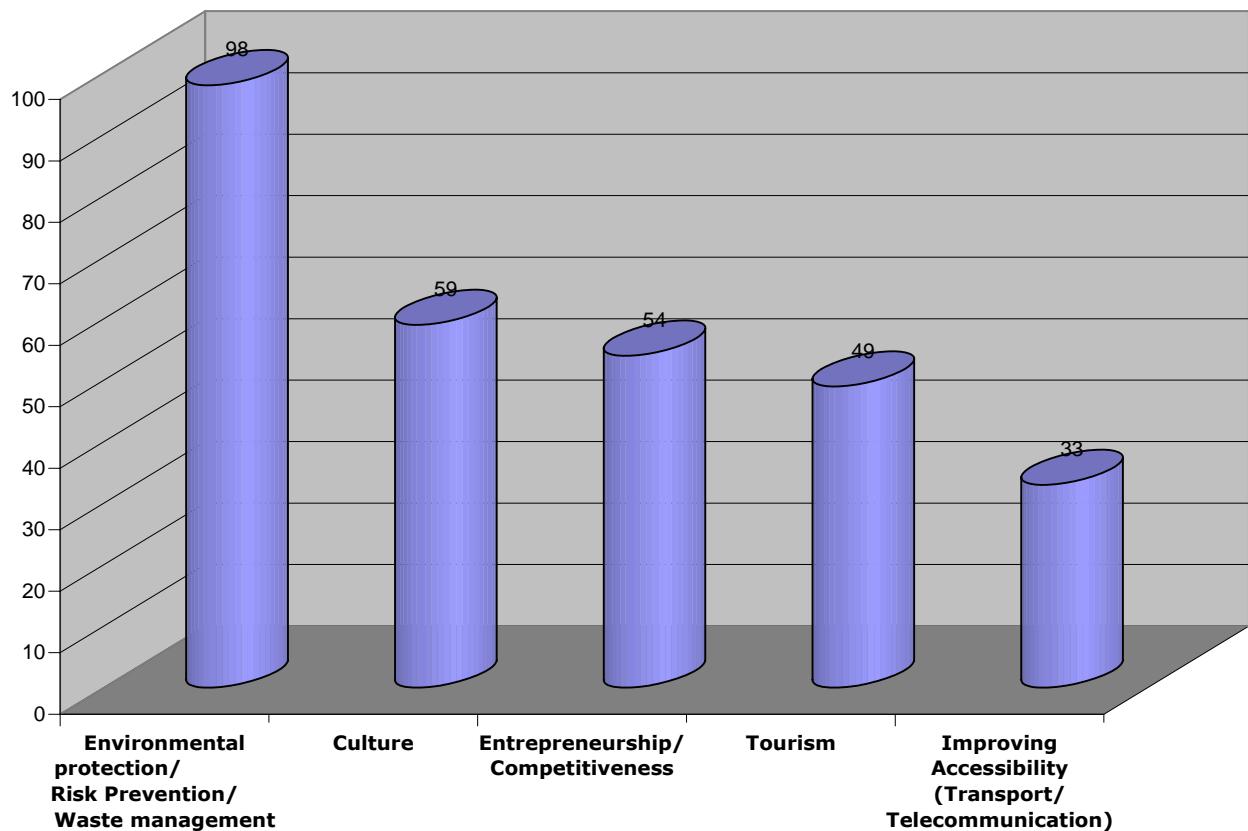


Chart 3- Project Proposals for the Top 5 sectors of Interest

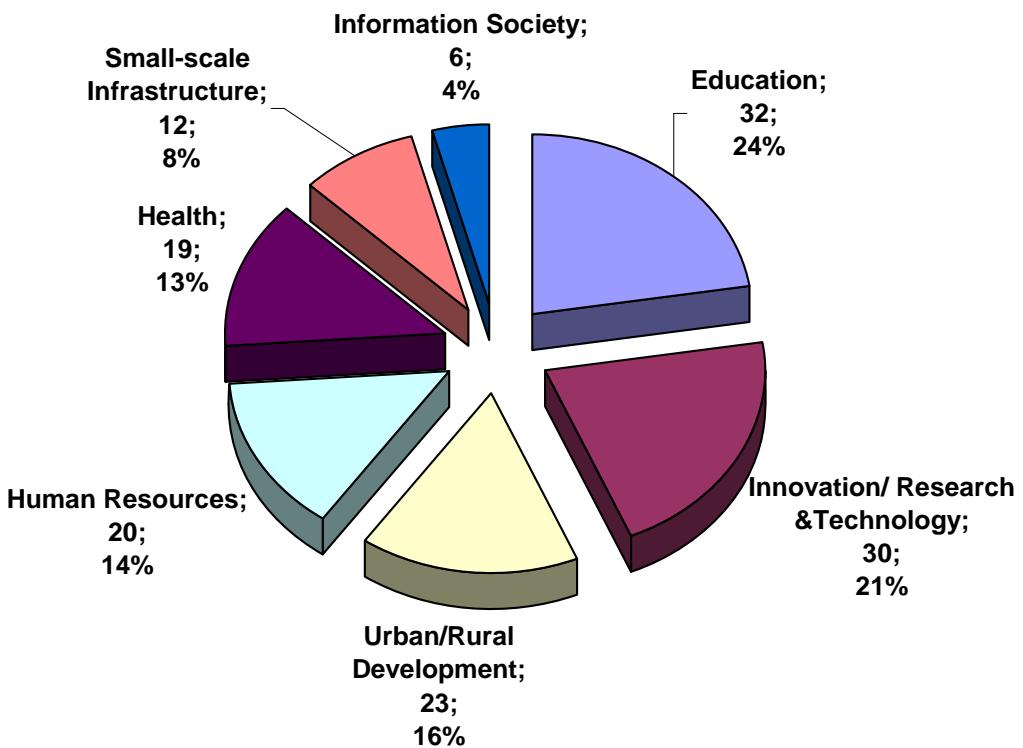


Chart 4 – Project Proposal for the first 7 sectors of interest

According to Chart 4, the project proposals on the first 7 thematic sectors of interest are presented. The aforementioned chart presents the number and the percentage of the project proposals classified per thematic sector of interest.

(D) PROJECT MATURITY

This part of the analysis presents the maturity of the project ideas according to the submitted questionnaires.

A project is “Mature” when it covers all the necessary prerequisites for its implementation, that is, cross-border partners have been identified and specified for each eligible area and all necessary relevant licenses have been included (building, reconstructing etc) etc.

After having assessed 83 submitted questionnaires to the MA (including the Bulgarian Project Proposals), 435 project proposals have been identified.

According to the initial check of the questionnaires, most of the proposals were matured so as to start their implementation just after the approval of the application form by the

MA, while some others were ranked in medium position as far as both Project's maturity and partners' maturity is concerned. Nevertheless, there are a small number of proposals ranked as immature either in what studies or cross-border partners are concerned or, sometimes, on both categories.

Consequently, Table III has derived from the analysis of the questionnaires regarding the "maturity" of the project proposals:

		PARTNERS' MATURITY		
		FULL	MEDIUM	INSUFFICIENT
PROJECT'S MATURITY	FULL	140 (32,2%)	30 (6,9%)	15 (3,4%)
	MEDIUM	60 (13,8%)	100 (23%)	10 (2,3%)
	INSUFFICIENT	40 (9,2%)	30 (6,9%)	10 (2,3%)

Table III: Project Maturity

Table III, entitled "Project Maturity", presents the number of project ideas and the percentage of their maturity according to the total number of the submitted project proposals. "Partners' maturity" refers to whether the consortium of partners on the relevant project proposal is complete, with specified partners on both sides of the eligible area. On the other side, "Project's Maturity" refers to whether the project proposal includes all the necessary information for approved or well-structured reports, studies and licenses in order for the project to be directly initiated after the approval of the submitted application form.

The table has been designed as a "double entry" matrix through which information for the maturity of the project regarding studies, licenses etc., as well as the maturity of partners regarding the consortium of partners in the cross-border areas can be reached.

With reference to the aforementioned table, the majority of project ideas gathered via the questionnaires declared to be fully matured regarding the preparation and implementation. This means that there is about 32,2% percentage of project proposals which can start their implementation after the approval of the project in the framework of a launch for call proposals. The consortium of partners from the cross-border eligible areas has been identified and all the necessary studies (feasibility, environmental etc) have been prepared. Moreover, all relevant licenses (where necessary) have been issued.

Furthermore, it is of equal importance that there is an amount of about 100 proposals which have medium maturity which means that some parts are missing (studies or partners). Nonetheless, this is not considered an obstacle for their immediate start after the final approval of their project.

(E) CONCLUSIONS

From the aforementioned analysis the following conclusions derive:

- » The majority of entities that submitted a questionnaire were Local/Regional Authorities while there is a great scatter of Institutions belonging to other categories as well.
- » Most of the project ideas suggested by the Institutions are classified in thematic sector B: "Environmental Protection / Risk Management / Waste Disposal Management". Nevertheless, there is a strong interest for Culture and Tourism, as well as for Rural / Urban Development and Entrepreneurship/ Competitiveness sector.
- » There is no interest for the thematic sector I "Small Scale Infrastructure" since according to the ranking of the entities it has gained the lowest ranking of "relative indifference".
- » Regarding "Project Maturity", most of the projects (according to the submitted questionnaires) are adequately matured both in terms of the consortium status as well as on what the necessary studies and licenses are concerned. In addition, there are a great number of projects which are fully or medially matured as regards the studies and licenses, but they have low maturity regarding the consortium.
- » Both Greek and Bulgarian organizations responded eagerly to the call for the submission of the questionnaire prepared by the Joint Task Force of the new Programme Greece – Bulgaria 2007 – 2013.

The feedback collected via the questionnaires was used, in line with the European Union regulations and policies and the National Strategic and Operational Frameworks of both countries, for the identification of the Priority Axes and Areas of Intervention of the Programming Document.

Thus, Priority Axis 1, "Quality of Life" could be regarded as a mix of the thematic sectors for: Environment/Risk Management, Culture and Tourism and Health; Priority axis 2 for "Accessibility" could be regarded as a mix of the sectors relevant to: Improving Accessibility, Small Scale Investment and Urban/Rural Development; finally, Priority Axis 3 for "Competitiveness" comprises the following thematic sectors: Innovation/ Research & Technology, Education, Entrepreneurship/Competitiveness, Human Resources and Information Society. A summary of the aforementioned consideration could be summarized in the following table:

PRIORITIES	SECTORS
QUALITY OF LIFE	B,D,E,G
ACCESSIBILITY	C,L,J
COMPETITIVENESS & HUMAN RESOURCES	F,A,I,K,H

Table IV- Programme Priority Axes & Thematic Sectors

Annex III: Good Practices in the framework of INTERREG IIIA & PHARE CBC GREECE – BULGARIA 2000 – 2006

GOOD PRACTICE 1 – INTERREG IIIA	
Priority Axis	2.1: Strengthening of Entrepreneurial Activity
Project Title:	<i>"Cross border training programmes for employees in the Health Sector"</i>
Final Beneficiary:	Institute of Pharmaceutics Research and Technology
Project Description:	Training programmes to Greek and Bulgarian employees of the Health sector in Thessaloniki and Serres.
Total Budget:	475.000,00 €

GOOD PRACTICE 2 - INTERREG IIIA	
Priority Axis	3.2: Protection, Highlight and Management of Natural Environment
Project Title:	<i>"Exchange of Know-how for the promotion of the common planning for the management of areas of special ecologic interest in the Rodopi mountain in the sense of the directive 92/43/EEC."</i>
Final Beneficiary:	Prefectural Authority of Drama – Kavala - Xanthi
Project Description:	<p>The following results of the above-mentioned project have contributed in the exchange of information and know-how.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Existential information for the entire Rodopi has been gathered and presented in both languages. 2. The problems of management have been highlighted from both sides and each partner has used the experience of the other side for the solution of relevant problems 3. The Greek side has transferred to the Bulgarian the experience in the application of EU directives 4. Joint planning for the management of the natural environment in the cross border mountain of Rodopi, has been promoted 5. Strengths and weaknesses of each side regarding the capacities of the employees implicated in the management

GOOD PRACTICE 2 - INTERREG IIIA

	<p>of preserved areas have been identified; the joint coverage of spaces through educational programmes and transfer of know how oriented in the coverage of each side's needs has been discussed, as well as the needs that will result from the Bulgarian accession to the EU. The knowledge acquired from the project "Development of a system for the accreditation and certification of professional capacities in the sector of environment's protection" of the CP EQUAL has also been transferred.</p> <p>6. A dissemination of the studies' results for the development of sustainable tourism in preserved areas in Greece has taken place. The perspective of a sustainable tourism development has also been examined.</p>
Total Budget:	154.120,00 €

GOOD PRACTICE 3 - INTERREG IIIA

Priority Axis	3.2: Protection, Highlight and Management of Natural Environment
Project Title:	<i>"Campaign of sensitization for the mountain ecosystems and the big carnivore animals in the cross border area of Rodopi"</i>
Final Beneficiary:	KALLISTO - Environmental Organization for wild life and Nature
Project Description:	In the past years, increased mobility between Environmental Organizations, the NGOs and the Organizations of the Local Authorities has been observed. The public sensitization and awareness on the issues regarding the carnivore animals and the mountain regions is the main target of the final beneficiary, the Environmental Organization KALLISTO. The campaign of sensitization and raising of public awareness for the mountain ecosystems and the carnivore animals has, for sure, a cross border character. The nature of the project prescribes its cross border dimension as there has been a protocol of cooperation between Environmental Organization and Local Authorities from the Greek and the Bulgarian side

GOOD PRACTICE 3 - INTERREG IIIA

	has been signed.
Total Budget:	180.000,00 €

GOOD PRACTICE 4 – INTERREG IIIA

Priority Axis	3.3: Highlight and Promotion of Cultural and Tourism Resources
Project Title:	<i>"Research – Protection and Highlight of the findings in the Tomb of Mikris Doxiparas – Zone of the Prefecture of Evros"</i>
Final Beneficiary:	Fund for the management of archaeological projects' realization
Project Description:	This project concerned the creation of an exhibition place in the area that the tomb was found. It is a project of mutual scientific importance that will contribute to and upgrade the cultural level of the area of North Evros with direct and indirect economic benefits for the local population. The Greek Ministry of Culture has already established cooperation with the Bulgarian side in Svilengrad, where identical findings of the same period have been found.
Total Budget:	500.000,00 €

GOOD PRACTICE 5 – PHARE CBC

Sector	Public Health/Social Development
Project Title:	<i>"Cross-border co-operation in prevention, surveillance and control of endemic infectious and parasitic diseases"</i>
Location:	Bulgarian – Greek cross-border region
Project Description:	<p><u>Overall Objective:</u> To Improve public health and achieve sustainable strengthening of the prevention, surveillance and Control of the major endemic for the Balkan region emerging and re-emerging vector and blood borne infections and zoonoses of substantial health and social importance.</p> <p><u>Project Purpose:</u> Establish a cross-border system for surveillance based on harmonized laboratory diagnosis and standards, exchange of information in the border and sustainable improvement of the control and prevention of</p>

GOOD PRACTICE 5 – PHARE CBC

	<p>endemic infectious and parasitic diseases.</p> <p>The current project has been prepared as a mirror initiative to the already funded under INTERREG II and INTERREG III Projects, which have been already implemented or are to start Implementation by the Greek counterparts.</p>
Total Budget:	1.700.000,00 €

GOOD PRACTICE 6 – PHARE CBC

Sector	--
Project Title:	<p><i>"Border Crossing Check Points in Southern Bulgaria: Supply of Equipment to the Border Check Points in Novo-Selo and Ilinden. Staff Training for Border Check Points in Novo-Selo, Ilinden and Kulata"</i></p>
Location:	Bulgaria (South Central and South West Region)
Project Description:	<p><u>Overall Objectives:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - to develop the economy of the border regions by enhancing the trade and the economic co-operation - to promote cooperation with the CEEC's regions bordering the European Union, and thus to help these border regions to overcome specific development problems stemming from their relative isolation in the national economy; - to encourage the creation and development of cooperation networks on both sides of the borders and the establishment of links between these networks and wider EC networks; - to facilitate the integration of Bulgaria into the European Union through modernization of the provided services at the Check Points. <p><u>Project Purpose:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To support the work of the several Directorates (border police and custom control, road taxes, standards & metrology, veterinary, phyto-sanitary controls etc) in the Border Crossing Check Points (BCCP), which are involved in the checking procedures by means of extra equipment and furniture - To train the staff of the a.m. Directorates in performing their

GOOD PRACTICE 6 – PHARE CBC

	<p>duties, in order to improve their effectiveness and speed.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To increase quality of border checks and decrease the waiting time at BCCP's of the transit vehicles and goods by streamlining border – border-crossing formalities. <p><u>Cross-Border Impact:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To support faster transport of people and goods in order to foster cross border cooperation at a local and national level - Through these improved links and infrastructure to promote cultural exchanges and the integration of the two border regions - To encourage economic development on both sides of the border in an economically depressed region; - To improve the services providing by the involved Directorates (border police and custom control, road taxes, standards & methodology, veterinary, phyto-sanitary controls etc) within the Border Crossing Check Points according to the EU standards and requirements
Total Budget:	3.400.000,00 €

GOOD PRACTICE 7 – PHARE CBC

Sector	--
Project Title:	<i>"Major Transport Infrastructure Projects: BG0008.01 - Construction of the Access Road (Podkova-Makaza) to the new Border Crossing between Greece and Bulgaria (Makaza - Nimfea)"</i>
Location:	Cross- Border Area
Project Description:	<p>The project includes two main components:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Civil works for construction of the road section Podkova - Makaza from km 367+170 to km 384+840 with estimated costs of 24 million Euros • Works Supervision services (including for operational expenses estimated at 15.000 EURO) with estimated costs of 2 million Euros <p>The PHARE contribution will finance up to 17 million Euros, the rest will be financed by the Bulgarian State Budget. For the</p>

GOOD PRACTICE 7 – PHARE CBC

	Bulgarian contribution an additional contract will be signed with the same awarding company by PHARE procedures. - The section Podkova - Makaza Border Crossing will consist of a single carriage way, approximately 17.8 km long. The cross section of the new road construction generally comprises a 7 m wide carriageway with 2x1.75 m wide shoulders stabilised with crushed stone. The design speed adopted for the road is generally 80 km/h. The road construction also includes surface water drainage works, road markings, new traffic signs, guard rails, kerbs and landscaping. A number of big structures and culverts will be constructed. For the cities of Kardjali and Haskovo the distance to Komotini will be decreased by 228 km and 112 km respectively.
Total Budget:	26.000.000,00 €

GOOD PRACTICE 8 – PHARE CBC

Sector	--
Project Title:	<i>"Environmental Protection Projects : BG0008.02 - Construction of Cut & Cover Tunnel at Gotse Deltsev - Drama Border Crossing for Bears protection"</i>
Location:	Cross- Border Area
Project Description:	The PHARE Cross Border Co-operation Programme will support the construction of a 150 m section of a 550 m long cut and cover tunnel to new Cross Border Crossing between Greece and Bulgaria (Gotse-Deltsev - Drama). The construction of this tunnel is necessary in order to limit the impact of the approach road under construction (and co-financed by Phare CBC 1998) on a population of Brown Bears. Subject to the adoption of the Greek INTERREG III programme, the Greek part of the tunnel (400 m) should be co-financed by INTERREG III. The construction of a new approach road to the new border crossing point was originally promulgated under the Bulgarian 98 programme for road improvement and rehabilitation schemes in the Southern Border Region Roads Project. The

GOOD PRACTICE 8 – PHARE CBC

original scope of works for this project as tendered during November 1998 comprised the construction of a new road from the town of Gotse Deltsev to the border crossing on the Bulgaria/Greece border. The road, some 13km in length, comprised new construction including road intersections, structures, and the construction of utilities. The design speed adopted for the road was generally 80km/h reducing to 50km/h through populated areas and reduced curves. In addition the project covered drainage works, road markings, traffic signs, landscaping, etc.

Subsequent to tendering, special environmental considerations were introduced as the result of additional studies by environmental specialists appointed by the EC, and this has resulted in the need to amend the original scope of work from a surface structure to underground. The underground structure will sit partly in Bulgaria and partly in Greece, between the border crossing checkpoints of Ilinden in Bulgaria and Exohi in Greece. Consequently, the original length of the new road construction will be reduced by approx 1km to allow for the construction of both the tunnel and the Ilinden Border Crossing Check Point.

The project includes three main components:

- Preparation of the project including Detailed Design and construction of the access to the tunnel road with an estimated budget of 1 million Euro which consists of the Bulgarian contribution to the project
- Civil works for construction of the Bulgarian part of the cut and cover tunnel, including supply of all equipment, necessary for the operation of the tunnel, with estimated costs of 2.5 million Euros
- Works Supervision services for the Bulgarian part of the tunnel (including operational costs for the needs of the project: 10.000 EURO) with estimated costs of 0.5 million Euros.

Concerning the construction of the tunnel, it was agreed that each country will launch its own tender procedure for each

GOOD PRACTICE 8 – PHARE CBC

	part of the tunnel.
Total Budget:	4.000.000,00 €

GOOD PRACTICE 9 – PHARE CBC

Sector	Environment
Project Title:	<i>"Integrated Water Management of Struma/Strimon River Basin"</i>
Location:	Trans-boundary Struma/Strimon River Basin - Bulgaria/Greece
Project Description:	<p><u>Overall Objective:</u> The overall objective is to establish trans-boundary, integrated and sustainable management of water resources of Struma/Strimon River Basin, including thermo-mineral waters, with particular emphasis on water quality and quantity, in compliance with the requirements of the EU Water Framework Directive 2000/60/EC and other EU water directives, and bilateral agreements between Bulgaria and Greece in the field of water management and national legislation through joint cross-border initiatives and actions.</p> <p><u>Project Purpose:</u> The project purpose is through technical and institutional support to the Western Aegean:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - to prepare a Draft River Basin Management Plan for the Struma/Strimon River Basin; - to carry out a feasibility study for the sustainable long-term use of thermo-mineral waters accumulated in the differentiated river basin hydrothermal basins; - to support the relevant institutions in charge of integrated water management activities.
Total Budget:	2.200.000,00 €

GOOD PRACTICE 10 – PHARE CBC

Sector	--
Project Title:	<i>"Integrated Management of the Waters of Nestos / Mesta River Basin"</i>
Location:	Bulgaria – South West Region – Blagoevgrad District

GOOD PRACTICE 10 – PHARE CBC

Project Description:	<p><u>Overall Objectives:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To promote co-operation between the EU and the Phare countries; - To promote co-operation between the affected border regions and, thereby, to contribute to the establishing of co-operation networks among counterpart organisations and entities on both sides of the border; - To assist the border regions to overcome specific development problems stemming from their position in the national economy, in the interest of the local population and in a manner compatible with the protection of environment; <p><u>Project Purpose:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Preparation of Study for Integrated Management of the Waters of Nestos / Mesta River Basin. This Study will serve a basis for developing a Draft Master Plan. For both sides B and G, that should involve multi-purpose and multi-objective planning and management principles, in consideration of both structural and non-structural alternatives. The MP should conclude in presenting an Action programme setting the guidelines for the integrated management of Nestos /Mesta river basin, such guidelines should adhere to the following principles: - To assist participating countries / Bulgaria and Greece / in the development, conservation and use of the Nestos/Mesta Basin water resources in an integrated and sustainable manner through basin-wide co-operation for the benefit of all. - After appraisal of the relevant authorities in Bulgaria, the complete (sides B and G) study will be also used as a basis in the process of the preparation of a National Management Plan of the waters of Mesta River Basin
Total Budget:	400.000,00 €