



2004-2006 PHARE/CARDS Neighborhood Programme

**PRESENTATION OF THE NEIGHBOURHOOD
PROGRAMME
BETWEEN BULGARIA
AND
THE REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA**

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Introduction to the Programme

The EU Neighbourhood Programme is the key instrument to support cross-border co-operation between Bulgaria and the Republic of Macedonia during the programming years 2004-06.

EC funding for the NP comes from two different funds:

- PHARE for Bulgaria and
- CARDS for the Republic of Macedonia



Introduction to the Programme

CROSS-BORDER REGION

The cross-border region between Bulgaria and the Republic of Macedonia encompasses two districts in the Western part of Bulgaria and three regions in the Republic of Macedonia that have borders with Bulgaria.

- The eligible regions on the Bulgarian side are Kyustendil and Blagoevgrad, covering 23 municipalities
- Eligible on the Macedonian side are the regions of North-East, South East and East Macedonia, covering the 21 municipality



Introduction to the Programme

Overall objective of the Neighborhood Programme (NP):

“The achievement of economic, social, cultural and ecological sustainability in the programme regions, thus ensuring integration into the wider European co-operation”.

The NP has four **Specific** objectives:

- The improvement of the environment and of infrastructure supporting cross-border co-operation;
- The protection of natural and cultural resources, promoting sustainable development;
- The development of complementary economic activities with the aim of creating jobs and generating additional wealth;
- The creation of viable cross-border contacts at different levels and sectors of activities.



Introduction to the Programme

Indicative Spheres of Intervention

The NP includes 3 main spheres of intervention:

- The **Social Sphere** covers interaction, establishment of new networks and strengthening of the old ones in order to overcome peripheral positions and favour social inclusion.
- The **Economic Sphere** covers strengthening of economic competitiveness and related enhancement of employment as a mean of improving living standards, social situation and at diminishing the depopulation of the area.
- The **Environmental Sphere** covers the sustainable exploitation of natural resources and the promotion of preserving activities, intended to be a stimulus to look at the environment as a valuable and effective tool for development and no more consider it as a physical obstacle to profitable economic activities.



Introduction to the Programme

PRIORITIES AND MEASURES

PRIORITY 1 Sustainable development of the cross-border region	PRIORITY 2 Promotion of cross- border co-operation between public institutions and businesses	PRIORITY 3 People-to-people actions
MEASURE 1.1 Management and valorisation of natural and cultural heritage	MEASURE 2.1 Co-operation among public institutions at regional/local level	MEASURE 3.1 People-to-people actions
MEASURE 1.2 Modernisation and extension of the existing small-scale infrastructure	MEASURE 2.2 Co-operation in the field of business activities	
MEASURE 4.1 (Horizontal Measure) Technical Assistance		



Introduction to the Programme

- Priority 1 matches Specific Objectives 1 (Improvement of the environment and of the infrastructure supporting cross-border co-operation) and 2 (Protection of natural and cultural resources, promoting sustainable development) of the NP.
- Priority 2 matches Specific Objectives 3 (Development of complementary economic activities with the aim of creating jobs and generating additional wealth) and 4 (Creation of viable cross-border contacts at different levels and sectors of activities) of the NP.
- Priority 3 matches Specific Objective 4 of the NP (The creation of viable cross-border contacts at different levels and sectors of activities).



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Budget Allocations

	Total (Euro)	BG (Euro)	MKD (Euro)
<i>Annual National Programme 2004</i>	3,000,000	2,000,000	1,000,000
<i>Annual National Programme 2005</i>	4,000,000	3,000,000	1,000,000
<i>Annual National Programme 2006</i>	5,000,000	4,000,000	1,000,000
Total NP 2004-2006	12,000,000	9,000,000	3,000,000



Institutional Framework-1

	<i>Common Bodies</i>	<i>Bulgaria</i>	<i>Republic of Macedonia</i>
<i>Beneficiary Institutions</i>	Joint Technical Secretariat (JTS) in Kyustendil	Ministry of Regional Development and Public Works (MRDPW)	Secretariat for European Affairs (SEA)
<i>Contracting Authorities</i>		Ministry of Regional Development and Public Works (MRDPW)	European Agency for Reconstruction (EAR)
<i>Implementing Agencies (IA)/Programme Co-ordination Units (PCU)</i>		Ministry of Regional Development and Public Works (MRDPW)	Secretariat for European Affairs (SEA)
<i>Paying Agencies</i>		National Fund (NF)	European Agency for Reconstruction (EAR)



Institutional Framework-2 Joint Cross-border Bodies

➤ Joint Co-operation Committee

The **Joint Co-operation Committee (JCC)** is the strategic body responsible for the NP. With members from both countries at national, regional and local level, the JCC ensures a joint management of the programme and thus ensures an overview of policy and financial aspects related to the operation of the NP.

➤ Joint Steering Committee

The **Joint Steering Committee (JSC)** is the operational body of the NP. Its main role is to prepare the project fiches (bottom-up approach), to oversee the programme implementation and to supervise the activities of the Joint Technical Secretariat (JTS).



Institutional Framework-2 Joint Cross-border Bodies

➤ Joint Technical Secretariat

The **Joint Technical Secretariat (JTS)**, composed by a Head, and two members, one from Bulgaria and one from the Republic of Macedonia, is based in Kyustendil and is the main administrative body of the programme. It is responsible for the day-to-day management tasks related to the NP, with due account of the roles and responsibilities of the IA and PCU. In particular, the JTS is responsible for the administrative arrangements of the Programme, and its management from the technical point of view.

➤ Brach Office in the eligible border region in Strumica, RM.



Institutional Framework-3

Local Stakeholders

Local stakeholders participating in the programme are local authorities and legal persons that are non-profit organisations registered or that have a registered branch office in the border region. Indicatively they include:

- Municipalities;
- Associations of Municipalities;
- Chambers of Commerce and Industry;
- Chambers of Crafts;
- Professional associations;
- Trade Unions;
- Schools and Universities;
- NGO's



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WHAT HAPPENED IN 2006

Two Grant Schemes were launched under the budget for the First Programming Year 2004:

➤ *2004 Joint Small Projects Fund (JSPF) Grant Scheme*

- *For the Bulgarian side: 400,000 EUR*
- *For the Macedonian side: 200,000 EUR*

➤ *2004 Grant Scheme Nature Protection, Valorisation of and Cultural Heritage and Co-operation among Public Institutions at Regional/Local Level*

- *For the Bulgarian side: 1,500,000 EUR*
- *For the Macedonian side: 750,000 EUR*



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2004 Joint Small Projects Fund (JSPF)

Grant Scheme

Overall objectives:

- To create viable cross-border contacts at different levels and sectors of activities;
- To support local development activities of a cross-border nature by involving local actors from the border regions;
- To enhance the capability of local communities and NGOs to develop and implement joint projects within the border region.

Specific objective:

- Encourage cross-border contacts and cooperation at regional and local level in the fields of cultural, educational and sports cooperation and local development.



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2004 Grant Scheme Nature Protection,
Valorisation of Cultural Heritage and Co-operation among
Public Institutions at Regional/Local Level

Overall objectives:

- protection and valorisation of the biodiversity and cultural resources with the aim of ensuring sustainable development of the eligible cross-border region;
- Create viable cross-border contacts among public institutions in the eligible cross-border area.

Specific objectives:

- Increase the efficiency of the integrated management and the sustainable use of natural and cultural resources;
- Stimulate regional cooperation and establishment of local capacity and networks.



Evaluation Results

- High interest in applying – 150 applications received, a great portion integrated and complementary projects with activities on both sides of the border which requires and presupposes extensive collaboration between partners.
- First such an opportunity for CB municipalities and NGOs to learn to establish partnerships, articulate their project ideas in English, learn to fill in the rather comprehensive application forms and accompanying annexes and supporting documents, learn to be competitive – all important pre-requirements for IPA
- Surprisingly well developed project ideas
- Fast learning curve (mistakes from first CfP not repeated in the second)



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Evaluation Results

- Contracts with the grantees to be signed until the end of the year, evaluation reports for two calls for proposals adopted by both Contracting authorities
- Grants with a cumulative value of up to 1 mil EUR will be signed
- Main recurring theme: Preservation and promotion of cultural heritage with the aim of promoting cultural tourism and preservation and promotion of natural heritage with the aim of promoting eco tourism – both as means for promoting sustainable socio-economic development.



Evaluation Results

Project Example 1

Undertaking of in-depth policy research allowing to identify and analyze the potential for socio-economic development in the partner municipalities thereby promoting an attractive tourist environment and creating cross-border working groups proposing concrete measures for utilizing the “undiscovered wealth” of municipalities, i.e. its tourist and folkloristic attractions.

Project Example 2

- Development of cultural tourism of applicant region by revitalisation and popularisation of the most important monuments from Palaeolithic, Neolithic, Bronze and Iron Age, collaboration with cross-border museums, preparing and publishing Monographs, adapting tourist attractions, publishing tourist guides of important monuments, preparing exhibitions, digitalization of important artefacts, organization of cultural manifestations, workshops on the topic of protection of cultural and historical heritage, film festivals, art colonies, carnivals, etc.



Evaluation Results

Project Example 3

- creating tourist infrastructure for the route towards a monastery complex, development of a strategy for development of tourism for certain municipalities, establishing and legalizing a tourist cluster that is predicted to be part of future CBC cluster.
- Project Example 4
- reconstruction of access road and related road infrastructure to the site and construction of walking paths, signposting of walking paths, promotion of the site as new tourist place worth to be part of the tourist route which will lead to sustainable eco/cultural tourism development of the region, transfer of know-how and exchange of experience on different levels.



Evaluation Results

Project Example 6

- promoting cultural diversity as a unique feature that the partner municipalities share, establishing cross border cooperation as means of preserving the cultural characteristics of the CBC area and to establish conditions for sustainable development of cultural diversity, organization of cultural events, establishment of CBC Centre for Promotion of Cultural Diversity, design of web pages, training for local folklore artists, etc.

Project Example 7

- preservation and sustainable use of the cultural heritage of the region, restoring of significant monuments, building of an eco road, reconstruction and equipping of a Tourist Information Center, providing various information to the tourists, development of a marketing and communication strategy for promotion of a joint eco/cultural product, trainings, round tables and other events



Future activities

In the next phase, two Grant Schemes will be launched under the budget for the Second Programming Year 2005:

- 2005 Joint Small Projects Fund (JSPF) Grant Scheme will be launched on December 22nd 2006:
 - *For the Bulgarian side: 450,000 EUR*
 - *For the Macedonian side: 200,000 EUR*

- 2005 Grant Scheme for Sustainable Development will be launched in the 1 Q of 2006:
 - *For the Bulgarian side: 2,430,000 EUR*
 - *For the Macedonian side: 750,000 EUR*



Lessons Learned

- Need for both political and operational commitment on both sides
- Need for complete dedication to the process, especially in the highly demanding evaluation phase
- Need for continuous motivation of applicants who often lack the sufficient capacity (human resources, language issues, finances, travel)
- Need for detailed and frequent information and partnership days
- Need for branch office in the territory of the country that doesn't host the JTS
- Need for strict confidentiality and protection of the members of the Evaluation committees
- Need for training in PRAG tendering procedures



2004-2006 PHARE/CARDS Neighborhood Programme Lessons Learned

- Need for flexibility and sufficient room for making swift decisions under extraordinary time-constraints
- Need for proper acknowledgment of the role of Technical Secretariat and its effective collaboration with the relevant bodies as key to the success of the Programme
- need for a continuous contact of MA/PCU with the cross-border partners, in order to timely identify and solve problems and to organize and schedule the issues of the Programme, avoiding further delays
- need for a continuous contact between the MA /PCU and the Final Beneficiaries for the smooth and regular implementation of the Programme
- need for implementation of an Action Plan for Publicity



2004-2006 PHARE/CARDS Neighborhood Programme Lessons Learned

Thank you for your attention!