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Republic of Bulgaria
Ministry of Regional Development – DG Territorial
Cooperation Management
**EX-ANTE EVALUATION AND SEA OF THE BULGARIA –
REPUBLIC OF SERBIA IPA CBC PROGRAMME 2014-2020**
EX ANTE EVALUATION FINAL REPORT



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Executive Summary

According to Art. 55 of the Regulation (EU), No 1303/2013 laying down common provisions, ex-ante **evaluations shall be carried out to improve the quality of the design of each programme**, under the responsibility of the authorities in charge of the preparation of the programme. Ex-ante evaluations shall be submitted to the Commission at the same time as the programme, together with an executive summary.

The purpose of this section is therefore to highlight the **main findings of the Ex-ante evaluation on the Bulgaria-Serbia IPA Cross-border Draft Programme 2014-2020** for each **evaluation component**, namely:

- Programme Strategy;
- Indicators, monitoring and evaluation;
- Administrative capacity, data collection procedures and evaluation;
- Consistency of financial allocation;
- Contribution to the Europe 2020 Strategy.

The Ex-ante Evaluator also assessed the **programming process itself**, analysing how **lessons learned** during the 2007-2013 programming period were taken into account in the elaboration of the new Operational Programme as well as the modalities adopted for **involving relevant stakeholders** in the programme design.

The following Tables aim to give evidence to **the main outcomes and recommendations drawn on the Bulgaria-Serbia IPA CBC Draft OP (version 2.0 – 8 July 2014)** as well as to **related changes in the OP** implemented by the programmer following previous Ex-ante Evaluator's suggestions¹.

The following table shows the main findings of the Draft Ex-ante evaluation.

Ex-ante Evaluation Component	Main outcomes
Involvement of stakeholders	
<i>Involvement of stakeholders in the programme design</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The MA has been made a great effort for the stakeholders involvement - The provision of different methods of involvement (online survey, Regional Consultative Forum) has been successful in order to involve stakeholders as much as possible - Participative and interactive method as a very effective tool for stakeholders involvement
<i>Continuous involvement of stakeholders throughout the</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Permanent on-line Forum could be useful for collecting input and for needs assessment throughout the Programme - As a lesson learned from experience, a mix of methods could be effective for the stakeholders involvement

¹ See "Ex-ante evaluation and SEA of the Bulgaria-Serbia IPA CBC Cross-border Programme 2014-2020"- DRAFT, June 2014

Ex-ante Evaluation Component	Main outcomes
<i>programme implementation</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Needs assessment and customer satisfaction as evaluating tools to be provided by the evaluators “during the Programme”
Programme strategy	
<i>External coherence</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The assessment of direct and indirect relation shows that the strategy proposed by the Bulgaria-Serbia IPA Cross-border Programme is compliant to the main strategic frameworks at European, national and regional level - The specific objectives – i.e. the Programme strategy – are in line with the territorial needs and challenges as the evaluation conducted stressed - The envisaged interventions and actions are coherent with the 2014-2020 priorities fixed in the main strategic documents at national and territorial level - Lessons learned from the past programming period with reference to the cooperation added value in terms of networking and critical mass - Strict relation with the EU strategy for the Danube region (EUSDR) has been stressed
<i>Internal coherence</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Positive influence of the majority of SOs - Cross-cutting SOs (People to people networking) - SOs related to Youth strategic for the achievement of the global aim of the IPA CBC Programme i.e. fostering the cross-border area - Actions could be grouped in categories following the lessons learned from the 2007-13 experience of other CBC Programmes in order to facilitate the management and monitoring - Distinction between actions and output indicators has been strengthened
<i>Horizontal principles</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - For equal opportunities and non-discrimination has been followed the example of sustainable development with specific provision in the project's application forms - Sustainable development is strictly related to SOs and the Draft Programme correctly stressed this influence - Annual Implementation report as well as evaluations' reporting are an opportunity of demonstrating the contribution of the Programme to the horizontal principles to be disseminated and shared
Indicators, monitoring and evaluation	
<i>Relevance and clarity of proposed indicators</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Survey for result indicators has been considered - Clear distinction between IL elements is provided - Reducing the number of indicators is absolutely in line with the requirements of the European Commission and with the practice followed by other Programmes reformulation/simplification of result and output indicators is appropriate - distinction between the level of IL issues (objectives, results etc.) and the corresponding indicators is generally clear - It is quite sharable the approach of one specific objective-one expected result-one result indicator - avoid indicators that were been particularly difficult to be monitored, especially in terms of source of data - logical and valuable link between possible actions and output indicators has been implemented - An important contribution to the gathering and organization of additional data might come from both effective and potential beneficiaries - output indicators could be divided into four “thematic groups”

Ex-ante Evaluation Component	Main outcomes
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Data sources and frequency of reporting are specified for each indicator, giving evidence to the methodology to be used and the degree of availability of the data themselves - Some results indicators (Tourism and Environment) could be added and some others replaced with particular reference to their relevance and need to be monitored
<i>Quantified baseline and target value</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - If statistical data are available, in some specific cases it could be possible to calculate baseline and target - Fix the level of increasing for result indicators (20-30% of increasing) - For output indicators provide the method of calculation in order to make the assessment possible - Carefully consider the strategic projects while calculating targets
Programme delivery mechanisms and structure	
Composition and functions of the Joint Monitoring Committee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The indicative list of members of the JMC shall identify more precisely which are the institutions and organizations which will take part in the work of the body. - The number of members of the JMC is rather high, and this can affect the efficiency of its functioning in general and of decision making process in particular. It could be considered a selection of the most relevant types of organizations, simplifying the structure of the JMC, ensuring in the meanwhile that all relevant institutions and organizations are represented. - The Programme may use the possibility of involving more bodies and/or individual experts in the work of the JMC with advisory role, since they can provide valuable input for the programme coordination.
Description of the functions of the bodies responsible for the management and of the programme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The set up and functionality of the management and control system should be better described. Programme specific information is needed in relation to the functions of the institutions involved - More details are advisable related to the procedure of setting up the Joint Secretariat. - The tasks of the JS should be better outlined, explained and clarified. - The role of the JS in coordinating the work of the controllers is questionable - The role of the antennae in Nis (Serbia) shall be better described - The role and tasks of the National Authority should be described and explained
Compliance with the principle of separation of tasks between the management bodies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A brief description of the organization of the most important programme management procedures shall be included in order to have an overview of the system.
Efficiency and functionality of the management and control system	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The description of the management and control system is missing.
Consistency of financial allocation	
<i>Consistency</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - financial allocation is the result of an interactive process that, starting from the resources' available, tried to identify the financial commitment connected to the challenges and needs as well as the expected results - It is recommended to justify in the 1.2. Section "Justification of the financial allocation" the financial breakdown with particular reference to the choice of commit the 40% to the Tourism TP.

Ex-ante Evaluation Component	Main outcomes
Contribution to Europe 2020	
<i>Contribution</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - direct linkages between Programme's expected results and Europe 2020 Strategy's targets - high level of contribution of Programme SOs to the sustainable, inclusive and smart growth - Particularly high contribution of Tourism and Youth to inclusive growth with reference to the provision of target groups (e.g. minorities etc.) - Particularly high contribution of Environment to sustainable growth

The following Table covers the ex ante recommendations dashboard.

Recommendation's dashboard						
Ex ante evaluation component	Recommendation	Date of recommendation delivery				Dashboard
			Accepted	Not accepted	Partially accepted	Measure/MA comments
<i>Stakeholders involvement</i>	Permanent on-line Forum could be useful for collecting input and for needs assessment throughout the Programme	30 June 2014 (Draft Final Report)	☺	-	-	During Programme implementation, the Programme bodies will foster the active participation of stakeholders through both on-line instruments and periodic events aimed at sharing progresses gradually made.
	As a lesson learned from experience, a mix of methods could be effective for the stakeholders involvement		☺	-	-	
	Needs assessment and customer satisfaction as evaluating tools to be provided by the evaluators "during the Programme"		☺	-	-	
<i>Internal coherence</i>	Actions could be grouped in categories following the lessons learned from the 2007-13 experience of other CBC Programmes in order to facilitate the management and monitoring	30 June 2014 (Draft Final Report)	-	-	☹	The recommendations concerning the distinction between actions and output indicators are reflected in the OP. In addition, we consider that the score for internal relevance between SO 1.1. and SO 3.2 , as well as between SO 1.2. and SO 3.2 are underestimated (score 1).
	Distinction between actions and output indicators could be strengthened		-	-	☹	No specific comments
<i>Horizontal principles</i>	For equal opportunities and non-discrimination is suggested to follow the example of sustainable development with specific provision in the project's application forms	30 June 2014 (Draft Final Report)	☺	-	-	No specific comments
	Annual Implementation report as well as evaluations' reporting are	30 June 2014 (Draft Final Report)	☺	-	-	

Recommendation's dashboard						
Ex ante evaluation component	Recommendation	Date of recommendation delivery				Dashboard
			Accepted	Not accepted	Partially accepted	Measure/MA comments
	occasion of demonstrating the contribution of the Programme to the horizontal principles to be disseminated and shared					
Relevance and clarity of proposed indicators	Option of survey for result indicators	30 June 2014 (Draft Final Report)	☺	-	-	Respective sections "The specific objectives of the thematic priority and expected results", "Actions to be supported under the thematic priority" and "Common and programme specific indicators" are further re-formulated in the last OP version in line with the EE comments
	Clear distinction between IL elements is suggested	30 June 2014 (Draft Final Report)	☺	-	-	No specific comments
	Distinction between the level of IL issues (objectives, results etc.) and the corresponding indicators has to be clear	30 June 2014 (Draft Final Report)	☺	-	-	No specific comments
	Avoid indicators that were been particularly difficult to be monitored, especially in terms of source of data	30 June 2014 (Draft Final Report)	☺	-	-	No specific comments
	Logical and valuable link between possible actions and output indicators has to be implemented	30 June 2014 (Draft Final Report)	☺	-	-	No specific comments
	An important contribution to the gathering and organization of additional data might come from both effective and potential beneficiaries	30 June 2014 (Draft Final Report)	☺	-	-	No specific comments
	Output indicators could be divided into four "thematic groups"	30 June 2014 (Draft Final Report)	☺	-	-	No specific comments

Recommendation's dashboard						
Ex ante evaluation component	Recommendation	Date of recommendation delivery				Dashboard
			Accepted	Not accepted	Partially accepted	Measure/MA comments
Quantification of baseline and targets	Some results indicators (Tourism and Environment) could be replaced with particular reference to their relevance and need to be monitored - If statistical data are available, in some specific cases it could be possible to calculate baseline and target	30 June 2014 (Draft Final Report)	☺	-	-	Result Indicators are revised according to ex-ante and MA comments and recommendation.
	If the baseline is the first survey, the baseline year has to be in line with the provision of first survey (probably not before 2015)	30 June 2014 (Draft Final Report)	☺	-	-	No specific comments
	The frequency of survey has to be in line with the baseline year	30 June 2014 (Draft Final Report)	☺	-	-	No specific comments
	Fix the level of increasing for result indicators (20-30% of increasing)	30 July 2014 (Final Report)	-	-	☹	-
	For output indicators provide the method of calculation in order to make the assessment possible	30 July 2014 (Final Report)	-	-	☹	-
	Carefully consider the strategic projects while calculating targets	30 July 2014 (Final Report)	-	-	☹	-
Administrative capacity, data collection procedure and evaluation	It could be considered a selection of the most relevant types of organizations, simplifying the structure of the JMC, ensuring in the meanwhile that all relevant institutions and organizations are represented.	30 July 2014 (Final Report)	-	-	☹	-
	The Programme may use the	30 July 2014	-	-	☹	-

Recommendation's dashboard						
Ex ante evaluation component	Recommendation	Date of recommendation delivery				Dashboard
			Accepted	Not accepted	Partially accepted	Measure/MA comments
	possibility of involving more bodies and/or individual experts in the work of the JMC with advisory role, since they can provide valuable input for the programme coordination	(Final Report)				
	The set up and functionality of the management and control system should be better described	30 July 2014 (Final Report)	-	-	☹	-
	Procedures of establishing, role and tasks of the Secretariat could be stressed	30 July 2014 (Final Report)	-	-	☹	-
	The role and tasks of the National Authority should be described and explained	30 July 2014 (Final Report)	-	-	☹	-
	A brief description of the organization of the most important programme management procedures shall be included in order to have an overview of the system.	30 July 2014 (Final Report)	-	-	☹	-
	The description of the management and control system is missing.	30 July 2014 (Final Report)	-	-	☹	-
<i>Financial allocation consistency</i>	It is recommended to justify in the 1.2. Section "Justification of the financial allocation" the financial breakdown with particular reference to the choice of commit the 40% to the Tourism TP.	30 June 2014 (Draft Final Report)	☺			The justification is provided in the OP

☺ Accepted ☹ Partially accepted ☹ Not yet accepted

1 Foreword

1.1 Objectives of the Ex-ante Evaluation and the Final Report

The Regulatory framework for the period 2014-2020 drives European policies towards **results** in order to contribute to the **Europe 2020 strategy** for a smart, sustainable and inclusive growth. To this end, Regulations increase the importance of well-designed programmes taking into great account European, national and regional needs as well as their expected results.

The **role of ex-ante evaluation is therefore reinforced** as an essential support to programming authorities in designing Programme' s architecture and in outlining **suitable implementing and monitoring devices** to meet evaluation requirements.

As stated in Chapter 2 "Objective, purpose and expected results" of the Terms of Reference², in the framework of the Ex-ante Evaluation and SEA of the forthcoming IPA CBC Bulgaria-Serbia Programme, it is expected that the Evaluator will pay close attention to the following issues:

- **Justification for thematic priorities** selected and **consistency with the Europe 2020 Strategy and the Common Strategic Framework**;
- **Relevance and consistency of proposed result and output indicators**;
- **Plausibility of targets** and explanation of the **contribution of outputs to identified results**;
- **Administrative capacity** for the management and implementation of the programme;
- **Quality of the monitoring system and methods for collecting data**.

The main **expected results** of the evaluation exercise is the **improved quality of Programme design** and its **consistence with relevant regulations, principles and requirements**.

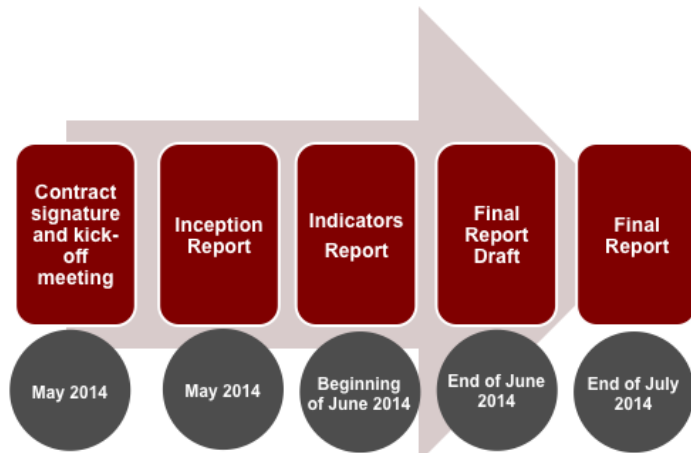
Bearing in mind the concept of **utility of the evaluation** and according to the suggestions stated in the "Guidance document on ex-ante evaluation" drafted by the European Commission³, the Ex-Ante evaluation and SEA of the IPA CBC Bulgaria-Serbia OP will be conceived as an **iterative process** involving the Evaluator, the MA and the experts in charge of drafting the new programme. The Ex-ante Evaluation will be aimed at providing appropriate **judgments and recommendations** to ensure the successful design of both the future strategy and implementing mechanisms.

Following this iterative and participative approach, ex- ante evaluation and SEA tasks and deliverables are set in **tight cooperation with the Contracting Authority and programming authorities** closely following the progresses gradually made by the programming itself and focusing on the specific MA's cognitive needs. To this end, the Evaluator will adopt a **flexible attitude**, open to whatever changes and **new informative needs** may occur during the evaluation exercise.

² Annex II: Terms of reference (including clarification before the deadline for submitting tenders) of the Service Contract

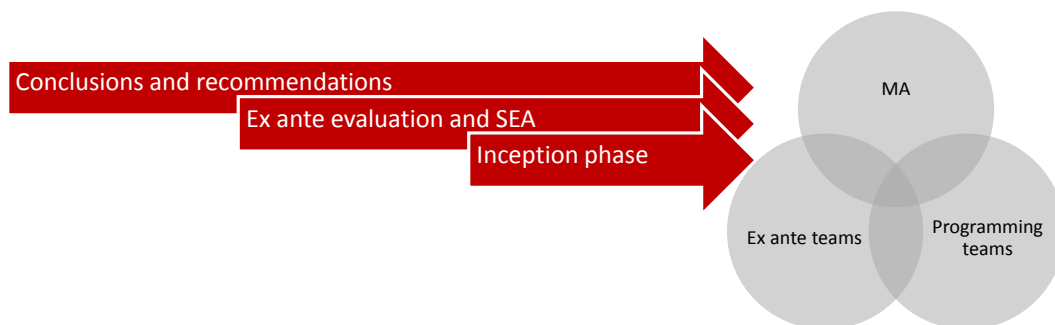
³ See "The programming period 2014-2020 – Monitoring and Evaluation of European Cohesion Policy", January 2013

In this context, the activities developed within the Interim Phase has allowed the Evaluators to give **preliminary responses to Evaluation Questions (EQs)** given in the “Terms of Reference” and to draw **provisional recommendations** addressing proposed Programme’s needs and challenges and enlightening possible bottlenecks. Results of these activities will be included in **the present Final Report**, outlining main findings and first conclusions about main components included in the Draft Operational Programme (July 2014 version 2.0) and providing recommendations for improvement.



1.2 The evaluation process and coordination with the Managing Authority

The process of ex-ante evaluation considered as a whole has been divided into **three main integrated phases strictly linked and characterized by a continuous collaboration and sharing with the MA and programming teams.**



1. **Inception phase** aimed to better outline the structure of the ex-ante evaluation and SEA pathways, taking into account the concrete needs of MA and other relevant stakeholders as well as the **evaluation questions** exemplified in the “Terms of reference” and addressing the whole evaluation exercise. Methods and techniques has been further specified in the **Inception Report** and timing has been detailed in the up-dated time schedule duly shared with the Bulgarian Ministry of Regional Development;
2. **Analysis of the ex-ante evaluation components and SEA** aimed to give **timely feedbacks** throughout the programming process. This phase includes the assessment of the proposed Programme’s strategy, in terms of both external and internal coherence, and the related financial allocation; the efficiency of the

monitoring system envisaged; the adequacy of foreseen human resources and administrative capacity for the management of the Programme. These tasks imply a preliminary **overview of primary and secondary information sources** (the first directly collected by the Evaluator and the second already existing) and the use of a **mix of quantitative and qualitative methods and tools**. To do so, the Tenderer has worked in close cooperation with the experts in charge of drafting the OP and has taken into account evaluation recommendations of past and current programming periods with the aim to **learn from experience and capitalize CBC Bulgaria-Serbia results**. Activities developed within this phase allowed the Tenderer to draw **provisional recommendations** about possible bottlenecks. Results of these activities will be included in **the present Final Report**, outlining main findings and conclusions and providing recommendations for improvement;

3. **Conclusions and recommendations** based on analysis evidence. Bearing in mind the utility of the ex-ante evaluation and in line with the iterative process described, the **final results** of the analysis developed will be summarized by conclusions and will be the basis for **clear recommendations addressing proposed Programme's needs and challenges**. The main objective of this phase is to ensure **full and adequate responses to evaluation questions** to improve and strengthen the quality of the new OP.

Besides the previous described three main phases, the ex-ante evaluation service will also include the **management phase** and **communication** aimed to **disseminate ex-ante evaluation's main findings and results** through modalities duly shared with the Contracting Authority and programming bodies, even by taking advantage of existing informative tools (e.g. CBC Bulgaria-Serbia web-site).

For compiling this Final Report the main source of assessment has been desk analysis and monitoring data coming from secondary sources of information.

2 The Ex-ante Evaluation

2.1 Lessons learned during the 2007-2013 programming period

The following pages aim to show how and to what extent **lessons learnt** in the framework of the Bulgaria-Serbia IPA CBC Programme 2007-2013 have been taken into consideration by the programmer to **capitalize good practices** as well as to **overcome bottlenecks** detected during programme implementation for **improving future Programme's performances**.

To this end, the Ex-ante Evaluator made an **overview of the main recommendations for the forthcoming programming period given in the On-going Evaluation Final Report**⁴ and verified whether they were acknowledged in the Draft Programme.

It is worth highlighting that specific recommendations about the monitoring of progresses in contracting and payments of funds are not verifiable at the ex-ante evaluation stage and need to be assessed during programme implementation. Nonetheless, the Draft Programme includes a **comprehensive description of implementing provisions** for the proper

⁴ Bulgaria-Serbia IPA Cross-border Programme 2007-2013, *On-going Evaluation of Bulgaria-Serbia IPA Cross-border Programme 2007-2013 managed by the Republic of Bulgaria - Revised Final Report*, Sofia, July 2013

management, evaluation and control of the future Programme as well as for the selection of operations.

The Table given below exemplifies the main findings of the evaluation exercise, showing if and to what extent, recommendations, divided per theme handled in the ex-ante evaluation, were taken into consideration in the programme design⁵.

Theme	Main recommendations	Lessons learned			
		Yes	No	Partly	N.V.
<i>Programming</i>	Efforts should be made in order to expand the availability of statistical data concerning the Programme Area	✓			
	Technical Assistance resources could be used to commission extensive socio-economic research	✓			
	European macro-regional strategies relevant to the cross-border area should also be taken into account from the stage of Programming.	✓			
<i>Launching the call for proposals</i>	Schedule sequence and type of calls taking into account the progressive achievement of Programme objectives				✓
	Specific information activities could be considered in order to target Measures / types of beneficiaries / geographical areas that have expressed lower demand in order to foster more extended and balanced participation in the Programme				✓
<i>Assessment and selection</i>	Increased transparency could be pursued by providing applicants the details related to the scoring assigned during the technical and financial assessment as this would also increase the quality of future applications				✓
First level control	Revision of the FLC system may be considered. The choice between centralized and decentralized system should be based on cost-efficiency considerations and a thorough assessment of the following elements which are derived from a review of FLC systems in 19 Member States of the EU				✓
<i>Financial circuit</i>	Consider introducing rules on decommitment in the initial contracting templates				✓
<i>Cross-border added value</i>	The Operational Programme could include a framework for defining the concept of added value	✓			
<i>Horizontal principles</i>	Further consistency should be ensured on the horizontal issues described in the programming and implementation documents	✓			
<i>Danube strategy</i>	Danube Strategy could be further integrated in the Programme Intervention Logic (e.g. dedicated measures), or in terms of implementation arrangements (e.g. selection criteria)	✓			

As far as **relevance, consistency and complementarity of Programme's objectives** are concerned, the Bulgaria-Serbia IPA CBC Programme 2014-2020 **strategy is backed by a sound and well-grounded socio-economic analysis** based on statistical data,

⁵ Recommendations marked by "N.V" are Not Verifiable yet and should be assessed during future programme implementation.

cartographic and tabular information, review of strategy documents and overview of programming documents at European, national and regional level⁶.

With reference to the recommendations concerning **Programme implementation** i.e. financial circuit, first level control, call for proposal launching and assessment operations' it has to be stressed that they concern the management of the Programme and it is not possible to assess their fulfillment during the ex ante phase. Anyway, the preliminary ex ante feedback on these issues is reported in the Par. 2.4.3. Notwithstanding it has to be underlined that the on-going evaluator recommendations regarding the launching of calls, assessment operations' as well as financial circuit are quite shareable while the first level control final decision is not only up to the single MA but it has to be shared at European and national level.

Moreover, **integration and respect of horizontal principles** were duly considered throughout the programming process and will be further developed during the Programme life-cycle (see also Par. 2.2.3 "Horizontal principles"). As stated in the Draft Programme, the quality assessment for projects **selection will be based on criteria aimed to verify the contribution of each project** to the promotion of sustainable development and to the respect of the principles of equal opportunities and non-discrimination as well as to the equality between men and women. This has to be underlined as a very **remarkable practice**.

The On-going Evaluator also highlighted the need to **integrate the Danube Strategy in the Programme**. Within this issue, it has to be stressed the **great effort** made by the MA and the programming team alongside all the Programme building path, with particular reference to the **coherence between the objectives of EUSDR and the specific objectives of the future Programme Bulgaria-Serbia** (see also Par. 2.3.1).

2.2 Involvement of stakeholders in the Bulgaria-Serbia IPA CBC Programme 2014-2020 design

One of the main innovations introduced by the regulatory framework for the 2014-2020 programming period is represented by the identification of **partnership** as the main **instrument for implementing the Europe 2020 strategy** and for executing public policies promoted by the Community Strategic Framework (CSF). In this regard, Article 5 of Regulation (EU) n.1303/2013 laying down common provisions states that each Member State shall organize, for defining the Partnership Agreement and each Programme, a partnership representing institutions, political, economic and social entities working in their territories, with the objective to **develop strategies and propose actions really adhering to the needs and demands of those directly and indirectly involved in the program**, ensuring, at the same time, the **strengthening of a sense of collective ownership of Community policies**.

The involvement of stakeholders also encourages the exchange of knowledge and expertise in the preparation and implementation of strategies, increasing the **effectiveness and transparency of decision-making processes**. Moreover, the same art. 5 gives the Commission "the power to adopt delegated acts in accordance with Article 149, to establish a European code of conduct on the Partnership (the "Code of Conduct ") defining objectives and criteria to support the implementation of partnership and facilitate the exchange of information, experiences, results and good practices between Member States. This code of

⁶ See Preparation of Bulgaria-Serbia IPA CBC Programme 2014-2020, *Situation analysis & SWOT analysis*, March 2014

conduct rules, in particular, the active involvement of stakeholders throughout the life cycle of programs: preparation, implementation, monitoring and evaluation.

2.2.1 Participatory pathway

The programming authorities have undertaken a fruitful **participatory pathway** from the very beginning of the programme design process, involving relevant stakeholders in the cross-border region with the aim **to gather first-hand information** about needs in the cooperation area as well as expectations and operational proposals for the forthcoming Bulgaria-Serbia IPA CBC Programme 20014-2020.

The aforementioned pathway is made of **consecutive steps**, duly promoted on the programme's web-site⁷, and takes advantage of several methods and tools guaranteeing a wide and informed participation of regional stakeholders in the programming. **Target groups** are mainly national and regional institutions, public authorities, private bodies and socio-economic partners, universities, civil society (associations, foundations, etc), NGOs and private citizens, especially beneficiaries of the current programme.

The process of preparing the Bulgaria-Serbia IPA CBC Programme 2014-2020 has been launched in November 2013 with a first meeting of the Joint Working Group. As a first step, an **on-line consultation**⁸ was launched in January-February 2014 to give feedback on specific themes related to the preparation of the new Programme.

A first **Regional Consultative Forum** was developed with the organization of 11 events all around the cross border area with the participation of 257 participants representing the key stakeholders. Besides the prioritisation of thematic priorities for the future Programme, a special emphasis was given to the cross-border added value.

A **second round of the Regional Consultative Forum** was organized in April 2014, with the aim to **share with stakeholders Programme's identified thematic priorities, specific objectives, expected results, target groups and indicative activities**.

All meetings were managed as **plenary sessions** and, in all cases, managing authorities and experts in charge of programming presented the preliminary results of the previous programming stages.

Results of the on-line survey and proposals made by partners within the Regional Consultative Forum were taken into account by the programmer in developing both the "Thematic Concentration", which represented the basis for the draft Intervention Logic, and the following Draft Operational Programme (OP).

Then, in June 2014, an **on-line consultation on the first Draft of the Bulgaria-Serbia IPA CBC Programme 2014-2020** has been launched to gather additional comments and hints to improve the proposed Draft OP (version 1.0 – June 2014). In July 2014 the version 2.0 has been drafted following the consultation on the first Draft and ex ante feedbacks. At the middle of August is scheduling the JWG in order to approve the final version of Programme to be submitted by the 22nd of September.

The following Table provides the an overview of the stakeholders involvement methods applied with the ex ante assessment in terms of weaknesses and strengths.

⁷ <http://www.ipacbc-bgrs.eu/>

⁸ For details on the results of the on-line survey and the Regional Consultative Forum, please see "Preparation of Bulgaria-Serbia IPA CBC Programme 2014-2020 – Online survey - Results", February 2014 and 1st Regional Consultative Forum – Report, March 2014.

Method of stakeholders involvement	Objectives	Output	Assessment	Strengths	Weaknesses
On-line survey (published on the programme's web-site)	Gathering expectations about scope and contents of the forthcoming CBC programme	On-line survey results	H	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Capacity of involving a great number of subjects Mapping actors, needs and different inputs Effective sharing and participative Programme design 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> On-line tools not always accessible for all the actors Possibility of improving the level of actors involved
First Regional Consultative Forum	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Informing regional stakeholders about the on-going programming process and the external experts' findings on regional analysis and identified needs Presenting and discussing a possible prioritisation of themes to be developed by the future cross-border programme Discussing potential actions that may be relevant for addressing the identified needs and challenges in the respective thematic priority areas 	1 st Regional Consultative Forum - Report	H	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Territorial events organized directly in the territories concerned Special emphasis to the cross-border added value Large number of various actors involved Great consideration of the outcomes in selecting the thematic priorities targeted on actors needs Effective sharing and participative Programme design Facilitation by external experts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Less time for collecting data Delay in starting the events (March 2014)
Second Regional Consultative Forum	Presenting the Programme's thematic priorities, specific objectives, results, target groups, beneficiaries, indicative activities	Draft Programme's Intervention Logic	M		
Consultation on the first Draft of the IPA CBC Bulgaria-Serbia Programme 2014-2020	Collecting comments and contributions on the proposed draft OP	Revised draft of OP	M	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Shared intervention logic and Programme as a whole Possibility of collecting inputs on possible actions very close to potential beneficiaries Shared comments with the evidence of the MA's reaction (accepted, partially accepted or not accepted) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Time constraints

Legenda: H/M/L capacity of involvement of stakeholders

2.2.2 Conclusions and recommendations on the involvement of stakeholders

Ex-ante Evaluation Component	Conclusions and recommendations
Involvement of stakeholders	
<i>Involvement of stakeholders in the programme design</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The MA has been made a great effort for the stakeholders involvement - The provision of different methods of involvement (online survey, Regional Consultative Forum) has been successful in order to involve stakeholders as much as possible - Participative and interactive method as a very effective tool for stakeholders involvement
<i>Continuous involvement of stakeholders throughout the programme implementation</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Permanent on-line Forum could be useful for collecting input and for needs assessment throughout the Programme - As a lesson learned from experience, a mix of methods could be effective for the stakeholders involvement - Needs assessment and customer satisfaction as evaluating tools to be provided by the evaluators "during the Programme"

2.3 Programme strategy

Evaluation questions' check list	
Are the identified national or regional challenges and needs in line with the Europe 2020 objectives and targets, the Council recommendations and the National Reform Programmes?	+++
Do the investment priorities and their specific objectives consistently reflect these challenges and needs?	+++
Were the key territorial challenges analysed and taken into accounts in the programme strategy?	+++
Are the identified challenges and needs consistently translated into the objectives of the OP (i.e. the thematic objectives, the investment priorities and corresponding specific objectives)?	+++

+++ Yes ++ Improvable + No

2.3.1 External coherence

Evaluation questions' check list	
Is the programme coherent with other relevant instruments at regional, national and EU level?	+++

+++ Yes ++ Improvable + No

The ex ante evaluator is in charge of assessing the coherence of the Programme with the national or regional challenges and their relation with the specific objectives, as stressed by the European Commission within the "Guidance document on the ex-ante evaluation" of January 2013. The following tables represent the **ex ante evaluation initial outcomes** with reference to the **external coherence assessment**, identifying **direct and indirect link** of Programme specific objectives to the main European, national and regional policy frameworks.

EU Strategic Framework	Bulgaria-Republic Serbia IPA Cross-border Programme 2014-2020 Thematic Priorities and Specific Objectives						
	TP 4 Tourism and cultural and natural heritage			TP 5 Youth, education and skills		TP 2 Environment, climate change, risk prevention and management	
	SO 1.1. Tourist attractiveness	SO 1.2 Cross-border Touristic product	SO 1.3. People to people networking	SO 2.1. Skills and entrepreneurship	SO 2.2 People to people networking	SO 3.1 Joint risk management	SO 3.2 Nature protection
Europe 2020	D	D	D	D	D	D	D
ESIF/CSF	D	D	D	D	D	D	D
ETC	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
EUSDR	D	D	D	D	D	D	D
URBACT	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
INTERREG	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Horizon 2020	✓	✓	✓	D	D	✓	✓
Programme LIFE 2014-2020	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	D	D
Community Mechanism for Civil Protection	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	D	D

Legenda: D=Direct relation; ✓= indirect relation

BG Strategic Framework	Bulgaria-Republic Serbia IPA Cross-border Programme 2014-2020 Thematic Priorities and Specific Objectives						
	TP 4 Tourism and cultural and natural heritage			TP 5 Youth, education and skills		TP 2 Environment, climate change, risk prevention and management	
	SO 1.1. Tourist attractiveness	SO 1.2 Cross-border Touristic product	SO 1.3. People to people networking	SO 2.1. Skills and entrepreneurship	SO 2.2 People to people networking	SO 3.1 Joint risk management	SO 3.2 Nature protection
NDP Bulgaria 2020	D	D	D	D	D	D	D
PA	D	D	D	D	D	D	D
PP	D	D	D	D	D	D	D
OP Human Resources Development	✓	✓	✓	D	D	✓	✓
OP Environment	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	D	D
OP Transport and Transport Infrastructure	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
OP Innovation and Competitiveness	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	D	D
OP Science and Education for Smarth Growth	✓	✓	✓	D	D	✓	✓
OP Regions in Growth	D	D	D	D	D	D	D
OP Good governance	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Rural Development Programme	D	D	D	D	D	D	D
OP for ETC Romania-Bulgaria	✓	✓	D	✓	D	✓	✓

Legenda: D=Direct relation; ✓= indirect relation



RS Strategic Framework	Bulgaria-Republic Serbia IPA Cross-border Programme 2014-2020 Thematic Priorities and Specific Objectives						
	TP 4 Tourism and cultural and natural heritage			TP 5 Youth, education and skills		TP 2 Environment, climate change, risk prevention and management	
	SO 1.1. Tourist attractiveness	SO 1.2 Cross-border Touristic product	SO 1.3. People to people networking	SO 2.1. Skills entrepreneurship and	SO 2.2 People to people networking	SO 3.1 Joint risk management	SO 3.2 Nature protection
NAD	D	D	D	D	D	D	D
SPRDP	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
NES	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
NPEP	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
NSSUNRG	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	D	D
NSP	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	D	D
NSTD	✓	✓	✓	D	D	D	D
SDE	✓	✓	✓	D	D	✓	✓
SDCETT	✓	✓	✓	D	D	✓	✓
NPI	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
SAA	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
NSED	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
NEPS	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
SDCISME	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
TDS	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
SIP	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
SSTD	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
SDIS	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
SDSSIT	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

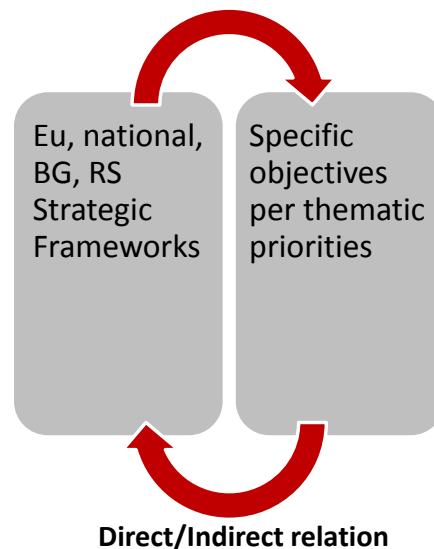
Legenda: D=Direct relation; ✓= indirect relation



Carrying out the exercise, the ex ante Evaluator will mainly use **primary data**, provided by the Managing Authority, i.e. the **Situation and SWOT analysis** as well as the **Thematic Concentration** Discussion Paper of March 2014.

The above mentioned sources of information actually cover a very detailed strategic framework and correlation with the thematic objective, with a clear distinction among EU, BG and RS strategic frameworks by each Thematic Priority.

The assessment presented in the tables below has been based on the **method described in the figure on the side**:



- **direct relation.** The specific objectives of BG-RS Cross border Programme are directly connected with the priorities of strategic documents identified.
- **indirect relation.** Notwithstanding the coherence is acknowledged, an indirect link with the specific objectives and the priorities of strategic documents is supposed to be created.

Some **main conclusions** may be drawn up:

1. The assessment of direct and indirect relation shows that the **strategy** proposed by the Bulgaria-Serbia IPA Cross-border Programme **is compliant to the main strategic frameworks at European, national and regional level**.
2. It has to be underlined the **strict relation between the Programme and the EUSDR** as underlined also in the programming process (see also the table of coherence focused on EUSDR).
3. The specific objectives – i.e. the Programme strategy – are **in line with the territorial needs and challenges** as the evaluation conducted stressed.
4. The **envisaged interventions and actions** are coherent with the 2014-2020 priorities fixed in the main strategic documents at national and territorial level.
5. As clearly shown by the Table below, all the specific objectives are strictly related to **Europe 2020** priorities and contribute to deal with all the three pillars, as it will be stressed further on.

The framework emerging from this first preliminary analysis points out the **potential synergies and correlations** existing between BG-RS IPA CBC Programme 2014-2020 and the strategic frameworks considered in the exercise.

Notwithstanding it has to be underlined the real **added value of the Programme** represented by the capacity of generating networking among different subjects, sustainable networks as well as critical mass. Actually, the on-line survey conducted by the Programming teams shown that this added value is still underestimated by the stakeholders (e.g. “critical mass generation” obtained a very small percentage – 14%). Notwithstanding cooperation programmes are concretely able to create networks, common solutions and good practice and learning able to produce a concrete impact on the cross-border area as a whole.

Considering the **importance of introducing the EUSDR coherence into the Programme intervention logic**, as underlined also within the on-going evaluation, the ex ante evaluator provides the following tables addressed to **show the logical and strict relation between the Programme intervention logic and the EUSDR**.

The EUSDR is the macro-regional strategy in which both Bulgaria and Serbia participate. The EUSDR accents on the development of stronger synergic connections between the authorities on all levels aiming the optimization of the impact of activities and financing. The planned interventions in the Programme contribute towards implementing this strategy, within the areas delineated by the EUSDR Action Programme to make the region environmentally sustainable, prosperous, accessible and attractive, as well as safe and secure, and in particular:

→ **Priority axis 1: Sustainable tourism** - corresponds to the pillar: **Connecting the Danube Region** and its priority to **promote culture and tourism, people to people contacts**, as it includes specific objectives related to increase of tourist attractiveness, enhancement of the potential for touristic products development and encourage people-to-people actions;

3) To promote culture and tourism, people to people contacts

The Danube region is characterised by a broad heritage of dense and diverse histories, cultures, ethnicities, religions, markets, societies and states. It can facilitate reconciliation between communities. It can reinforce socioeconomic development by strengthening of regional cooperation and intercultural dialogue while ensuring sustainability and joint action. Related at least in part to culture and heritage, tourism is making an increasingly significant contribution to growth in the region. The areas of developing tourism, tourism infrastructure and improving tourism services, cultural heritage and intercultural dialogue are typically inter-related topics.

In terms of history and culture, people throughout the Danube region have a shared heritage. As appropriate, the strategy should use these ties as levers to promote further cultural and civil society cooperation. The implementation of this priority can also facilitate the tourism development potential in the whole Danube region through the development of joint touristic products and promotional policy.

EUSDR	Contribution of IPA CBC Programme BG-SER 2014-2020 – PA 1 TOURISM		
	SO-1.1. TOURIST ATTRACTIVENESS: Increasing tourist attractiveness of the border area through better utilisation of natural and cultural heritage	SO-1.2. CROSS-BORDER TOURISTIC PRODUCTS: Valorising the favourable conditions for diversified tourism in the border area through creating common cross-border touristic brand	SO-1.3. PEOPLE-TO-PEOPLE NETWORKING:
Action - “To build on cultural diversity as strength of the Danube Region” by:			
Protecting the Danube region's cultural values: cooperation in the protection of values and heritage, joint scientific research, exchange of experiences, courses, conferences, events, traineeships; preservation of military memorial sites;	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Increasing human contacts, promoting inter-cultural dialogue, inter-religious dialogues, language exchanges etc			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Improving conditions for youth exchanges			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Organising joint (cultural) events, festivals, scholarship programmes;			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Establishing a network of 'creative forces' which includes actors in the artistic field. This network can build on the experience of the various festivals in the Danube Region;			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Promoting cultural exchange and exchange in the arts (e.g. films, documentaries, entertainment games/shows referring to the Danube Region) to contribute significantly to awareness-raising for the Danube Region			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Supporting contemporary art in the region;			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Establishing a data-base gathering data on cultural assets and cultural activities.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
Action - “To enhance cooperation and contacts between people of different origins, to encourage creativity, and provide a driving force for cultural innovation and economic development, based on heritage, traditions and tourism” by:			
Cooperation for promotion and publicity;		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
international exhibitions and events		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
exchange in the fields of literature, music and art			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

EUSDR		Contribution of IPA CBC Programme BG-SER 2014-2020 – PA 1 TOURISM	
cooperation in research and innovation on heritage, cultural and touristic themes		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
cooperation in field of the preservation of historical monuments	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
Action - “To develop the Danube region as a European brand”		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Action - “To establish the Danube Region as important European tourist destination” by:			
developing an environmentally-friendly tourism strategy for the whole of the region (including cities and communities, cultural heritage, nature and economy			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
to develop a Danube Region label (building on the “brand” being developed more generally) which could open up the international tourist markets (e.g. in the USA, Asia).		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
managing tourist destinations jointly through joint marketing, joint events and internationally recognised quality certification (especially in ecological terms).	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
It can promote international tourist projects such as cycle and hiking trails from the Black Forest to the Black Sea.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Using modern means of communication such as the Internet can help to make the Danube better known as a tourist destination and to develop it for a new clientele of tourists.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Action - “To promote short-stay weekend tourism and recreation, as well as longer stays”		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Action - “To further develop and intensify Activity Tourism”		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Action - “To further enhance interconnection and cooperation in education and scientific and research activities for tourism” <i>Modernisation of the curricula of occupational and university education for professions in tourism; development of cooperation in the exchange of lecturers, students, pupils and staff in the programs for the education and training in tourism; creating, organising and implementing the programme of lifelong learning for jobs in tourism / tourist industry</i>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Action - “To improve planning and infrastructure for tourism”. <i>Accommodation and hospitality facilities, port tourism infrastructure, walkways and paths, infocentres, cycling routes and their networking in the Danube area including their linkage to the network of routes along the rivers Sava and Drava. It should also emphasise protected areas and locations of natural and cultural heritage as well as theme parks, wine roads, view towers, grounds and equipment for sports and recreation</i>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		

EUSDR		Contribution of IPA CBC Programme BG-SER 2014-2020 – PA 1 TOURISM	
Action - “To support the improvement of the quality of tourism products” <i>Development of regional sustainable tourism strategies and the definition of quality criteria, and by the development of eco-labels and certification schemes. This can also include development of tourism associations and campaigns</i>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Action - “To promote sustainable tourism”		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Action - “To promote wellness tourism in the Region”.		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Action - “To collect existing data on cultural activities and establishing a comprehensive data base giving an overview of cultural activities in the Danube Region”.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Action - “To promote cultural exchange and exchange in the arts”. <i>Cultural activities (e.g. films, documentaries, entertainment games/shows referring to the Danube Region) can contribute significantly to awareness-raising for the Danube Region.</i> <i>Reconstruction, protection, development and promotion of physical and non-physical heritage is needed with a view to developing tourism to promote the spirit of togetherness of the population in the Danube area. A modern cultural map of the area could be prepared.</i>			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

☒ Contribution of IPA CBC BG-RS Programme to EUSDR actions

→ **Priority axis 2: Youth** – is in compliance with the pillar: **Building Prosperity in the Danube Region** and in particular the priority to **invest in people and skills**. Its specific objectives are related to development of skills and encouragement of youth entrepreneurship and promotion of sustainable, long-term and collaborative initiatives for and with young people.

By investing in people and making best use of its human capital, the Danube Region can progress and grow in a smart and inclusive way. To arrive at a knowledge based and inclusive growth it requires empowering people through high levels of employment, investing in skills, fighting poverty and modernising labour markets, training and social protection systems. This analysis calls for actions across a whole range of fields, with emphasis on more coherence. Policies in the fields of education, labour market, integration, research and innovation should be mutually reinforcing. Stronger joint efforts are needed to enhance performance by shared European benchmarks in education and training.

EUSDR	Contribution of IPA CBC Programme BG-SER 2014-2020 – PA 2 YOUTH	
	SO-2.1. SKILLS & ENTREPRENEURSHIP: To develop skills and encourage youth entrepreneurship thus creating prerequisites for improving youth employment opportunities in the border area	SO-2.2. PEOPLE-TO-PEOPLE NETWORKING: Promote sustainable, long-term and collaborative initiatives for and with young people, including enhancing mobility of young people
Action - “To enhance performance of education systems through closer cooperation of education institutions, systems and policies” <i>Fostering efficiency, innovation and good governance in education and training is crucial. This should be done in particular through the exchange of best practices of different education and training systems through transnational cooperation, joint development of programmes and materials, promotion of research on the economics of education, peer learning, and capacity building</i>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Action - “To foster cooperation between key stakeholders of labour market, education and research policies in order to develop learning regions and environments”	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Action - “To support creativity and entrepreneurship”	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Action - “To jointly analyse implementation gaps in lifelong learning (LLL) policies and exchange best practices in implementation”	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	

☒ Contribution of IPA CBC BG-RS Programme to EUSDR actions

→ **Priority axis 3: Environment** corresponds to the pillar: Protecting the Environment in the Danube Region and in particular to priority area 5: To manage environmental risks and priority area 6: To preserve biodiversity, landscapes and the quality of air and soil, together with priority area 4: To restore and maintain the quality of waters, as priority's objectives are to prevent and mitigate the consequences of natural and man-made cross-border disaster and to improve CB cooperation in nature protection.

5) To manage environmental risks

All the countries of the Danube Region expressed their common intention to strengthen cooperation in preventing, preparing for and responding to natural and man-made disasters such as massive floods or industrial accidents. These events have a negative impact on natural landscapes and biodiversity, but also result in loss of life and damage to economic activities and social infrastructures. Flood prevention is of particular importance

6) To preserve biodiversity, landscapes and the quality of air and soils

The natural heritage of the Danube region is of European importance. The region contains a large share of Europe's remaining great wilderness areas, as well as rich cultural landscapes. The Danube and its tributaries are vital to the wildlife ecosystems and indeed provide ecological connections that are essential for overall European environmental health.

EUSDR	Contribution of IPA CBC Programme BG-SER 2014-2020 – PA 3 ENVIRONMENT	
	SO 3.1 JOINT RISK MANAGEMENT	SO-3.2. NATURE PROTECTION: To improve cross-border cooperation in nature protection
<p>Action - “To extend the coverage of the European Floods Alert System (EFAS) system to the whole Danube river basin, to step up preparedness efforts at regional level (including better knowledge of each other's national systems) and to further promote joint responses to natural disasters and to flood events in particular, including early warning systems”</p> <p><i>There is a need to upgrade warning systems and coordinate civil protection from local to transnational/European levels across the area.</i></p>	☑	
<p>Action - “To strengthen operational cooperation among the emergency response authorities in the Danube countries and to improve the interoperability of the available assets”</p> <p><i>It is important to strengthen cross-border cooperation and to ensure that civil protection authorities have a good understanding of each other's systems, available assets and potential gaps, working procedures, and that teams can also function smoothly in case of major emergencies involving bilateral, European, or international response. The development and use of common guidelines/ procedures for risk mapping and assessment, early warning message and emergency response should also be considered. It is also important to address development of capacity for surveillance and response to Public Health Emergencies of International concern as well as to health threats of cross-border relevance.</i></p>	☑	

☑ Contribution of IPA CBC BG-RS Programme to EUSDR actions

EUSDR	Contribution of IPA CBC Programme BG-SER 2014-2020 – PA 3 ENVIRONMENT	
	SO 3.1 JOINT RISK MANAGEMENT	SO-3.2. NATURE PROTECTION: To improve cross-border cooperation in nature protection
Action - “To contribute to the 2050 EU vision and 2020 EU target for biodiversity”		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Action - “To manage Natura 2000 sites and other protected areas effectively”- <i>The action should include exchange of experience and capacity building for protected areas/ Natura 2000 sites administrations; community involvement; visitor management and tourism development; coordinated management planning, implementation and evaluation. It is also indispensable to increase public awareness about Natura 2000 sites and protected areas</i>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Action - “To protect and restore most valuable ecosystems and endangered animal species” <i>Research, inventory, and monitoring of species and habitats of European and national importance is an important part of this action. Conflicts with humans and illegal trade in wild animals should also be addressed.</i>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Action - “To develop green infrastructure in order to connect different bio-geographic regions and habitats”. <i>The action could include scientific research to find new ways for connecting habitats, consultations with relevant communities and stakeholders, careful and integrated spatial planning to develop and apply practices and technologies for economic investments and infrastructural development benefiting biodiversity. Construction of e.g. ecobridges, eco-ducts and ecological "stepping stones" should be part of a planning of infrastructure building.</i>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Action - “To raise awareness about soil protection”.		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Action - “To raise awareness of the general public, by acknowledging and promoting the potentials of natural assets as drivers of sustainable regional development”.		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

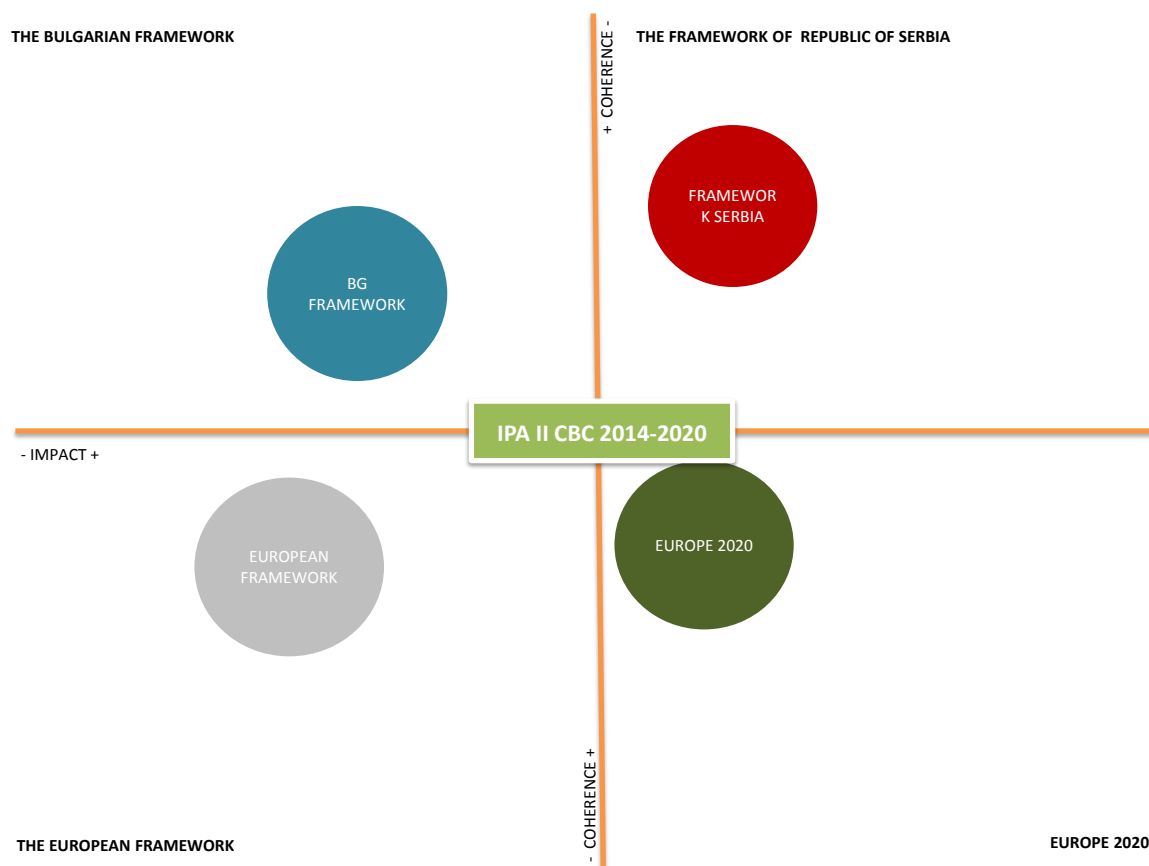
EUSDR	Contribution of IPA CBC Programme BG-SER 2014-2020 – PA 3 ENVIRONMENT	
	SO 3.1 JOINT RISK MANAGEMENT	SO-3.2. NATURE PROTECTION: To improve cross-border cooperation in nature protection
Action - “To educate children and young people”.		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Action - “To build capacities of local authorities in the environment-related matters” <i>Local authorities would be provided with training, an expert group helping regions and cities resolving problems would be established, and networks for exchange of good practices.</i>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

☒ Contribution of IPA CBC BG-RS Programme to EUSDR actions

Starting with the findings of the previous analysis on the Programme's external coherence, the Ex-ante evaluator has also appraised the Bulgaria-Serbia IPA CBC Programme's coherence and impact on the Europe 2020 Strategy, the overall European framework, the Bulgarian as well as the Serbian national frameworks, in order to give a **complete snapshot of the Programme coherence**.

The **method of calculation** of the values covered by the Chart is as follows:

- Europe 2020 impact=Nr of cells with +++ score/Total Nr of cells; Coherence= Nr of cells with +++ score+Nr of cells with ++score/Total Nr of cells
- Bulgaria, Serbia and rest of Europe frameworks; Impact= Nr of cells with "D"/Total Nr of cells; Coherence= Nr of cells with "✓"/Total Nr of cells*0,5+Impact value.



The Graph above shows the Programme's **high degree of coherence** with both European and national most relevant strategy and programming documents, reinforcing ex-ante evaluation results on the Bulgaria-Serbia IPA CBC strategy's external coherence.

It also highlights the **high potential impact** and coherence the Programme will have on the Europe 2020. Impact's middling scores for the National frameworks may be explained by considering the cross-border nature of the Programme involving only part of the national territory of both sides of the Bulgaria-Serbia border.

2.3.2 Internal coherence

Evaluation questions' check list	
Have complementarities and potential synergies been identified between the specific objectives of each priority axis, and between the specific objectives of the different priority axis?	+++
Actions to be supported	
Are the proposed actions to be supported in each priority axis, including the main target groups identified, the specific territories targeted and the types of beneficiaries sufficiently described?	+++
Do the proposed actions take into account the (non-exhaustive) list of key actions provided in the Common Strategic Framework?	+++
Outputs and results	
Will the proposed actions lead to the expected outputs and intended results?	++
Were external factors that could influence the intended results identified (e.g. national policy, economic trend, change in regional competitiveness, etc.)?	+++
Are the policy assumptions underpinning the programme logic backed up by evidence (e.g. from previous experiences, evaluations or studies)?	+++
Do other possible action or outputs exist that would be more conducive to the intended results?	+++
The rationale for the form of support proposed (based on Article 55 (3f))	
Are the proposed forms of support suitable to for the types of beneficiaries and the specific objectives of the programme?	+++

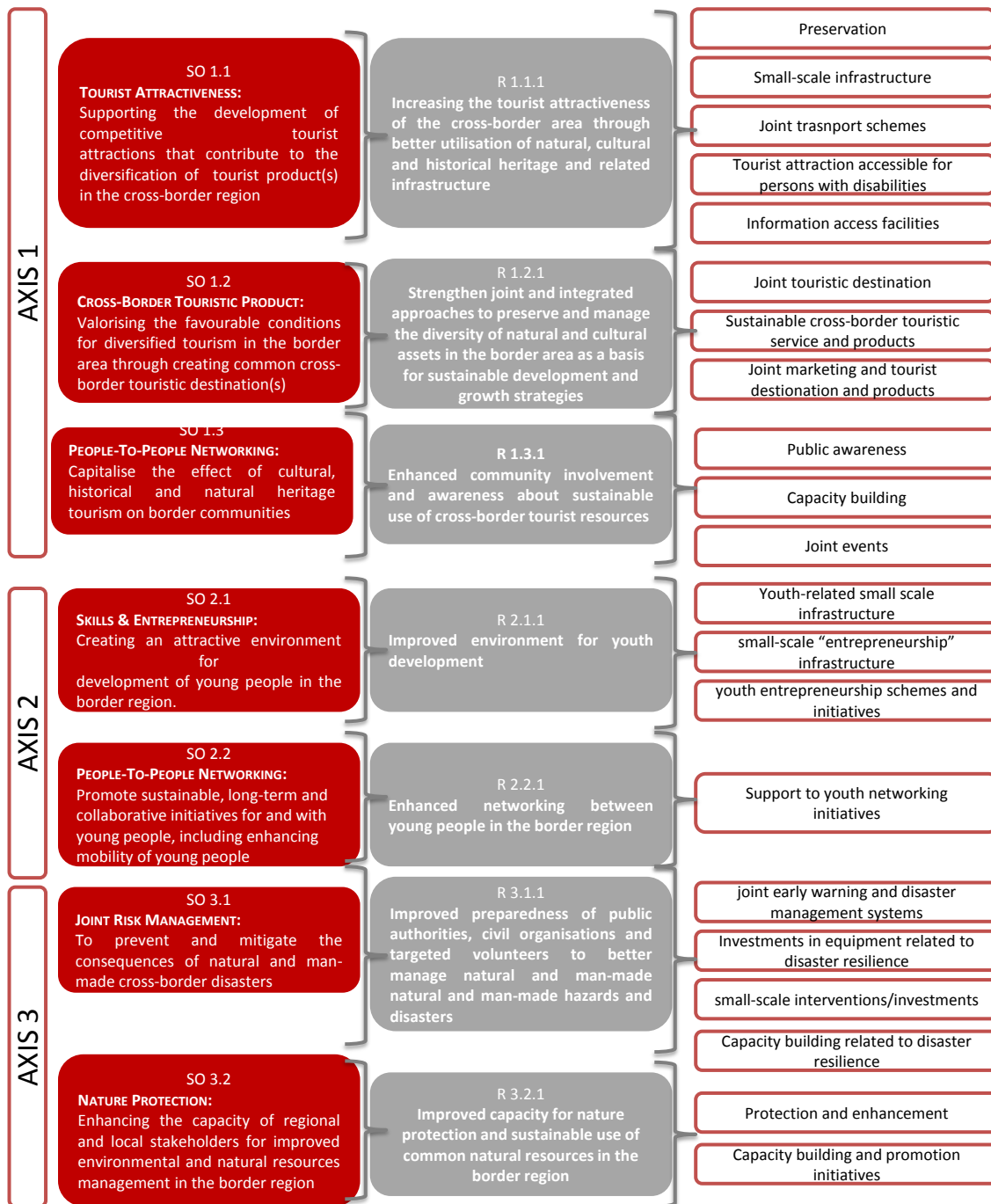
+++ Yes ++ Improvable + No

The evaluation of the internal coherence has the objective to **verify whether the Intervention Logic clearly defines programme's Specific Objectives**, taking advantage of potential synergies between them, and if it plausibly explains by which means they can be reached. At this stage of the analysis, the ex-ante evaluation will aim to:

- assess the **coherence between objectives**;
- demonstrate that the **result chain** is logically structured;
- analyze **to what extent the proposed actions are adequate** to meet programme's objectives and expected results.

It is worth stressing that, as stated in the Draft Programme, the selection of thematic priorities took into account both the **cross-border relevance** of the topics analyzed through the territorial analysis along with the results of the on-line survey, and the available programme budget.

The Picture below summarizes identified Specific Objectives per Priority axis and related expected results as well as the macro-typologies of the examples of actions to be supported, showing the **direct linkages between SOs, expected results and possible actions** to be supported under the Bulgaria-Serbia IPA CBC Programme 2014-2020.



The Draft Programme's internal coherence has been actually assessed, at first, by using a **Cross-objectives Analysis Table** for estimating the **intensity and direction of links between objectives at the same hierarchy** with the aim to determine the degree of influence and sensitivity for each objective, while assuring the absence of contradictions. As a matter of fact, objectives having no influences on the others will be neutral towards their achievement, other objectives might be strategic to each other, while objectives with high degree of influence will be considered as leverage points of the Programme.

The Table below shows **how Specific Objectives (SOs) put in the row influence SOs put in the column**. Scores vary from 0 meaning "no influence at all" to 3 which stands for "strong influence".

Objectives	SO 1.1. Tourist attractiveness	SO 1..2 Cross-border Touristic product	SO 1.3. People to people networking	SO 2.1. Skills and entrepreneurship	SO 2.2 People to people networking	SO 3.1 Joint management risk	SO 3.2 Nature protection
Objectives							
SO 1.1. Tourist attractiveness		3	3	3	3	1	1
SO 1..2 Cross-border Touristic product	3		3	3	3	1	1
SO 1.3. People to people networking	3	3		2	2	2	2
SO 2.1. Skills and entrepreneurship	2	2	3		3	2	2
SO 2.2 People to people networking	2	2	2	3		2	2
SO 3.1 Joint management risk	2	2	2	1	2		3
SO 3.2 Nature protection	2	2	2	2	2	3	

Legenda: 0=no influence at all; 1=low influence; 2=medium influence; 3=strong influence

In general terms, the main outcome stemming from the exercise is that the **Programme** was **conceived as a unique**, avoiding overlapping and, therefore, facilitating the financial resources concentration.

Considering the specificity of the cooperation Programmes, it is natural that there are Specific Objectives - typically those of the "network" - more cross-cutting. These recorded the greatest impact on other SOs. As for, the overall objective of the IPA CBC Programme Bulgaria-Serbia 2014-2020 is to foster territorial cohesion by increasing cross-border relations mainly through the implementation of actual interventions on the territory and its economy and through the support of inter-linkages among the local actors and local communities.

The specific analysis made per each Specific Objective through the Cross-objective Table may be summarized as follows:

- **SO 1.1 Tourist attractiveness** has a very positive influence on the majority of other SOs, reinforcing them. It will only indirectly influence the environment-related SOs that are very tailored on the theme specificities.
- **SO 1.2. Cross-border Touristic product** The same considerations already provided for the SO 1.1. seem to be valid also in this case.
- **SO 1.3 People to people networking.** This SO is cross-cutting and strongly influence other SOs. Actually capitalizing the natural and cultural heritage of the cross-border area is a strategic element, cross-cutting and able to create positive impact for reaching other objectives not necessarily linked to the specific theme.
- **SO 2.1. Skills and entrepreneurship** is a very relevant SO to be considered as a prerequisite for Programme targets' achievement and for concretely contributing to the fostering the cross-border area development.
- **SO 2.2 People to people networking.** The comments reported for SO 1.3. are valid also in this case.
- **SO 3.1 Joint risk management.** This SO will have a positive influence on the improvement of the capacity for nature protection and sustainable use of common natural resources in the CBC area and, as a consequence and in the long-term, it will reinforce the objective of increasing tourist attractiveness of the border area through the better utilization of natural and cultural heritage.
- **SO 3.2 Nature protection** will strongly influence the prevention and mitigation of risks as well as the increase of tourist attractiveness of the border area through the better utilization of natural and cultural heritage. On the contrary, this objective will partially influence the achievement of other SOs considering that it is very specific and tailored on the theme.

In order to examine the coherence between envisaged actions and stated objectives, the ex-ante evaluator took advantage of a **matrix** giving evidence to **actions' contribution** (negative, neutral or positive) to the achievement of the objectives proposed (given in the row). Rating scale goes from -1 "*potentially negative contribution*" to 3 "*very positive contribution*". Scores are given taking into account both **SOs** and related **expected results**.

It has to be underlined that the ex ante evaluator has considered macro-categories of actions reported in the Programme.

TP 4 – Encouraging tourism and cultural and natural heritage – Specific Objective 1.1

Indicative Actions Specific Objectives TP 4	Rehabilitation of access roads to natural cultural historic sites	Public utilities upgrade	Small touristic border crossings and facilities	ICT facilities	Cross-border public transport	Restoration and maintainance of sites	Conservation and protection	Info-centers	Joint GIS platforms	Joint platforms for on-line reservation, payment etc.
SO 1.1. Tourist attractiveness	3	3	3	2	3	3	3	3	3	3

Legenda: 0=no influence at all; 1=low influence; 2=medium influence; 3=strong influence

TP 4 – Encouraging tourism and cultural and natural heritage – Specific Objective 1.2

Indicative Actions Specific Objectives TP 4	Joint research on potential niche tourism	Research activities	Local brands	New and innovative touristic products and services	Knowledge networks	On-line touristic platforms	Visualization of local brands	Best practices	Fairs and related activities
SO 1.2. Cross-border Touristic product	3	3	3	3	3	3	2	3	2

Legenda: 0=no influence at all; 1=low influence; 2=medium influence; 3=strong influence

TP 4 – Encouraging tourism and cultural and natural heritage – Specific Objective 1.3

Indicative Actions Specific Objectives TP 4	Training and consultancy services	Networking events	Surveys	Joint events	Common traditions	Awareness raising campaigns
SO 1.3. People to people networking	3	3	3	3	2	2

Legenda: 0=no influence at all; 1=low influence; 2=medium influence; 3=strong influence

TP 5 Investing in youth, education and skills – Specific Objective 2.1

Indicative Actions Specific Objectives TP 5	Regabilitation and refurbishment of existing youth	Investments to ensure physical accessibility	Investments in ICT facilities	Small-scale working infrastructure	Learning initiatives	CVs and study programme	Student's mini companies	School-entrepreneur/business activities and events	Business skills training	Simulation games	Joint market initiatives
SO 2.1. Improved environment for youth development	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3

Legenda: 0=no influence at all; 1=low influence; 2=medium influence; 3=strong influence

TP 5 Investing in youth, education and skills – Specific Objective 2.1

Indicative Actions Specific Objectives TP 5	Young people participation	Cross-border initiatives for youth poverty and exclusion	Youth volunteering	Youth creativeness and access to culture initiatives	Young people health and well-being initiatives	Translation of competitive skills and future labour market needs into CVs
SO 2.2. Enhanced networking between young people in the border region	3	3	3	3	3	3

Legenda: 0=no influence at all; 1=low influence; 2=medium influence; 3=strong influence

TP 2 Protecting environment and promoting climate change adaptation and mitigation, risk prevention and management Specific Objective 3.1.

Indicative Actions Specific Objectives TP 2	Development of early warning and disaster management systems	Investments in equipment related to disaster resilience	Small-scale investments/interventions	Joint protocols and communication channels	Awareness campaign	Joint theoretical-tactical exercises	Trainings in ICT	Exchange practices and experiences	Joint trainings and raising awareness
SO 3.1 Joint risk management	3	3	3	3	2	2	2	3	3

Legenda: 0=no influence at all; 1=low influence; 2=medium influence; 3=strong influence

TP 2 Protecting environment and promoting climate change adaptation and mitigation, risk prevention and management

Specific Objective 3.2

Indicative Actions Specific Objectives TP 2	Joint initiatives targeting the management of protected areas	Joint initiatives towards the protection and restoration of ecosystems and flora and fauna species	Preservation and improvement of the quality of natural resources	Building capacities of local authorities	Awareness raising on all levels
SO 3.2 Nature protection	3	3	3	3	2

Legenda: 0=no influence at all; 1=low influence; 2=medium influence; 3=strong influence

From the ex ante exercise conducted through the above reported tables the following preliminary inputs could be listed:

- The proposed actions to be supported in each priority axis, including the main target groups identified, the specific territories targeted and the types of beneficiaries are correctly identified and described in the Programme Draft.
- The actions are very related to the Programme Strategy. It has to be underlined the very strong influence of each activity with reference to the specific objective. This is quite important regarding the internal coherence and shows the great effort made by the MA and the Programming team in order to build a coherent, effective and efficient Programme.
- It has to be stressed that in this version 2.0 of the Programme the **mandatory distinction between actions, outputs and output indicators** (see also “Baseline and target values”) has been respected. It has to be underlined that the distinction between the level of IL issues (objectives, results etc.) and the corresponding indicators has to be clear.
- A **logical and valuable link between possible actions and output indicators** has been implemented, after the previous comments and recommendation by the ex ante evaluator (see Indicators Report, Draft Final Report, June 2014).
- The application of the S.M.A.R.T. criteria methodology to **indicators** enabled the ex ante Evaluator to detect the **level of specificity, relevance and availability** of data to be monitored, being them directly linked to specific objectives/expected results (result indicators) and possible actions. With the objective to stress monitored data's heterogeneity and following the experience of other CBC/CTE Programme in 2007-2013 period, actions could be divided into “thematic groups” as for example: joint initiatives; joint actions/platforms; trainings; awareness campaign. Such a division could enable to separately monitor quantitative and qualitative information, facilitating the collection of data at project level and for the Programme as a whole.

2.3.3 Horizontal principles

Evaluation questions' check list	
Has the principle of equality been taken into account? Are the planned measures adequate to promote equal opportunities and non-discrimination?	++
Are the planned measures adequate to promote sustainable development?	+++

+++ Yes ++ Improvable + No

After an in-depth analysis of the Draft Programme, the following conclusions could be preliminary drafted:

- The **planned activities** take into account the horizontal principles and are adequate to promote sustainable development.
- A specific section of the Draft Programme is tailored on horizontal principles. It has to be stressed as a strength **the provision of sustainable development in the application form of projects' proposal** where it is mandatory to show the concrete contribution to the horizontal principle. Actually basing on the aggregate data at project level, the Programme will be able to demonstrate its contribution as a whole.

- **Promoting equal opportunities and non-discrimination** are mentioned as cross-cutting themes. This approach is quite shareable considering the specificities of the Programme. At the same time, it has been suggested in the Draft Final Report to monitor the projects' contribution to this horizontal principle following the example of sustainable development. The MA accepted this ex ante recommendation.
- **Annual Implementation report as well as evaluations' reporting** are an opportunity of demonstrating the contribution of the Programme to the horizontal principles to be disseminated and shared.

2.3.4 Conclusions and recommendations on programme strategy

Ex-ante Evaluation Component	Conclusions and recommendations
Programme strategy	
<i>External coherence</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Programme considered as a “unicum” avoiding overlapping and facilitating concentration of funds - Strategy and intervention logic coherent with the European, national and regional/local main frameworks
<i>Internal coherence</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Positive influence of the majority of SOs - Cross-cutting SOs (People to people networking) - SOs related to Youth strategic for the achievement of the global aim of the IPA CBC Programme i.e. fostering the cross-border area - Actions could be grouped in categories following the lessons learned from the 2007-13 experience of other CBC Programmes in order to facilitate the management and monitoring - Distinction between actions and output indicators has been strengthened
<i>Horizontal principles</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - For equal opportunities and non-discrimination has followed the example of sustainable development with specific provision in the project's application forms - Sustainable development is strictly related to SOs and the Draft Programme correctly stressed this influence - Annual Implementation report as well as evaluations' reporting are an opportunity of demonstrating the contribution of the Programme to the horizontal principles to be disseminated and shared

2.4 Indicators, monitoring and evaluation

2.4.1 Relevance and clarity of proposed programme indicators

Evaluation questions' check list	
<i>Result indicators</i>	
Does each priority axis include at least one result indicator?	+++
Do(es) the result indicator(s) reflect the operations and objectives of the priority axes?	++
Is (Are) the result indicator(s) relevant (e.g. Do they cover the most important intended change? Is their value influenced as directly as possible by the actions funded under the priority axis?)	++
<i>Output indicators</i>	
Are the output indicators relevant to the actions supported?	++
Are the intended outputs likely to contribute to the change in result indicators?	+++
<i>Common indicators</i>	
Are the Common indicators used where relevant to the content of the investment priorities and specific objectives?	++
Do programme-specific indicators have a clear title and an unequivocal and easy to understand definition?	++
Do the indicators have an accepted normative interpretation (e.g. Is there a common understanding that a change in the value of the indicator is positive or negative?)	+++
Are the indicators robust (e.g. Their values cannot unduly be influenced by outliers or extreme values)?	++
Are data source for result indicators identified and available?	++

+++ Yes ++ Improvable + No

Within the Draft Final Report of 30 June 2014 the ex ante evaluator provided the MA with a series of comments (general and per specific theme) according to the analysis based on the version 1st draft of the Programme of 16.06.2014. in light of a very collaborative process, the MA has taken into consideration the ex ante evaluator comments and recommendations as shown in the recommendations' dashboard.

In the following table it is reported a summary of the **main conclusions and recommendations regarding indicators, covered by the Draft Final Report** in order to provide a complete overview of the different steps conducted.



General comments

- Especially as regards result indicators **consider also the option of surveys/evaluation data as an additional source of information for monitoring indicators (especially if they are qualitative and not only quantitative)**
- Distinction between the level of IL issues** (objectives, results etc.) **and the corresponding indicators has to be clear**



Output indicators

- A **logical and valuable link between possible actions and output indicators** has to be implemented. This is not always understandable
- An important contribution to the **gathering and organization of additional data** might come from both effective and potential beneficiaries.



Result indicators

- Avoid indicators that were been particularly difficult to be monitored, especially in terms of source of data (see also Baseline and target value).
- Quite sharable the approach of **one specific objective-one expected result-one result indicator**. It has to be checked the capacity of only one result indicators to monitor and catch the expected results achievements

Elaboration by the ex ante evaluator on the Programme IPA CBC Bulgaria-Serbia, first Draft of 16 June 2014

After the analysis conducted within the first Draft Programme, for this Final Draft the ex ante evaluator has focused his analysis on the observation of the degree of **coherence between objectives and indicators**, following the Project Cycle Management (PCM) approach which states that the role of indicators is *“to describe general and specific objectives and results in operational terms. By specifying indicators as quantifiable measures, they act as instruments aiming to control the objectives’ achievement and represent the base for the monitoring system”*. According to the PCM’s approach, a good indicator has to be **objectively verifiable**, allowing the examination of different levels of objectives in an operational, concise and reliable way⁹.

It is therefore essential for indicators to have an **explanatory power** representing a suitable benchmark for the formulation of an assessment about the degree of effectiveness of the intervention taken into consideration. Given these premises and taking into account the objective of verifying the suitability of the Bulgaria-Serbia IPA CBC Programme 2014-2020’s proposed set of indicators, the Evaluator had recourse to methodological instructions known in scientific literature as the **S.M.A.R.T**¹⁰. indicators. The acronym stands for:

- Specific** for the objectives that the indicator aims to observe;

⁹ European Commission, EuropeAid – Project Cycle Management Guidelines, 2004.

¹⁰ *Ibidem*



- **Measurable** both in quantitative and qualitative terms;
- **Available** at reasonable costs;
- **Relevant** with reference to the informative needs expressed by Programme's joint management structures and significant stakeholders;
- **Time-bound**.

To analyse proposed result and output indicators, the Ex-ante Evaluator took in to account not only indicators' formulation, but also the overall information given in the Draft Programme, such as measurement units, baseline and target values, source of data as well as frequency of reporting. Moreover, to make the analysis more usable, the ex-ante Evaluator found it appropriate to specify the meaning of the S.M.A.R.T. criteria by linking them to objective assessment parameters that were given a specific score (from 1 to 3) as shown in the Table below.

DESCRIPTION OF THE S.M.A.R.T. CRITERIA'S METHODOLOGY




S.M.A.R.T. Criterion	Assessment parameter	Maximum score
Specific Indicator related to the objectives that intends to measure and able to give useful and appropriate information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does the indicator give appropriate information relating to the objectives that it intends to measure? (1 point) Is the indicator significant? (1 point) Is the indicator clear and easily understandable? (1 point) 	3
Measurable Indicator suitable to be quantified, observed and analysed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Can the indicator be observed through a clear measuring method/instrument? (1 point) Can the indicator be numerically quantified? (1 point) Can the indicator be measured through primary or secondary informative sources? (1 point) 	3
Available The information used to quantify the indicator are available at reasonable costs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Can the indicator be measured through available information? (1 point) Are the necessary information available at reasonable costs according to the "saving principle"? (1 point) Are the necessary information easily achievable? (1 point) 	3
Relevant Indicator able to measure the phenomenon for which it has been proposed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does the indicator suitably measure the analysed objectives? (1 point) Does the indicator give information about the characteristics and the added value of the Bulgaria-Turkey IPA CBC Programme? (1 punto) Is the indicator connected to the informative needs of the Programme's joint management structures and relevant stakeholders? (1 point) 	3
Time-bound Indicator duly put into temporal bounds	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Can the indicator be referred to punctual span of time? (1 point) Is the indicator repeatable? (1point) Can the indicator be processed, fastly and easily updated with reference to the objectives analysed? (1point) 	3

Explanatory score list: 1=LOW, 2=MEDIUM, 3=HIGH

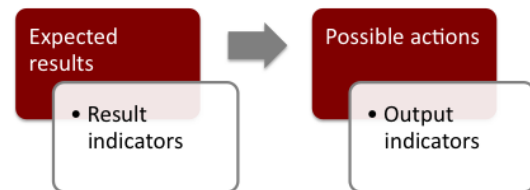
Source: elaboration by the ex-ante Evaluator

The following Tables show the results of the analysis on both result and output indicators per Priority axis, following S.M.A.R.T criteria.

The overall judgment on each indicator's suitability to properly monitor Programme's achievements is expressed through the different following colors:

-  meaning that the indicator is **highly S.M.A.R.T.**;
-  stands for indicators that are **still good**, but might need further fine-tunings;
-  describing indicators, which are **not fully suitable** for assessing expected results.




Before moving on the concrete outcomes of the ex ante exercise it has to be underlined that the evaluator not only verify the indicators set itself but also its **logical connection with the intervention logic** level according to the chart on the side.



Proposed **result indicators are generally highly S.M.A.R.T. and suitable to monitor Priority axis 1 achievements.**

Among them, **RI-1.2-1 reaches a medium score**, since it only indirectly measures the capacity of creating joint and integrated approaches of the cross-border programme. It is therefore suggested to replace RI-1.2-1, making it more suitable to monitor the related expected result.









PRIORITY AXIS 1 – SUSTAINABLE TOURISM: S.M.A.R.T. ANALYSIS ON RESULT INDICATORS




Specific Objective	Expected result	Result Indicator	S	M	A	R	T	Tot
1.1 Tourist Attractiveness	R1.1.1: Increasing the tourist attractiveness of the cross-border area through better utilisation of natural, cultural and historical heritage and related infrastructure	Increased visitors to the cross-border region	H	H	H	H	H	
1.2 Cross-Border Touristic Product	R 1.2.1 Strengthen joint and integrated approaches to preserve and manage the diversity of natural and cultural assets in the border area as a basis for sustainable development and growth strategies	Increased level of valorisation of natural, cultural and historical heritage	H	M	M	M	M	
1.3. People-To-People Networking	R 1.3.1: Enhanced community involvement and awareness about sustainable use of cross-border tourist resources	Increased cross-border networks operating in the field of sustainable tourism	H	H	H	H	H	

Legend Per each criterion: 1=Low, 2=Medium, 3=High

The S.M.A.R.T. analysis revealed the **appropriateness of output indicators to verify Programme's tangible outcomes** and gradual progresses. As a matter of fact, output indicators are specific for the objectives they relate to and guarantee relevant information on the interventions they aim to monitor. Moreover, it has to be stressed the **robust logical connection between actions and output indicators**. This seems to be perfectly in line with the logical framework approach that allows a better programming as well as monitoring and management of the future cross-border Programme. This has to be underlined as a very **good practice**.

PRIORITY AXIS 1 – SUSTAINABLE TOURISM: S.M.A.R.T. ANALYSIS ON OUTPUT INDICATORS



Specific Objective	Indicative actions	Output indicators	S	M	A	R	T	Tot
1.1 Tourist Attractiveness	Preservation of natural and cultural heritage	OI 1.1.1 Total number of reconstructed/restored cultural and historical touristic objects in the eligible border area	H	H	H	H	H	
	■ Development of small-scale support infrastructure to touristic attractions	OI 1.1.2 Total length of reconstructed or upgraded access facilities (roads/cycling routes/walking paths) to natural, cultural and historic tourism sites	H	M	H	H	H	
	■ Development of additional small scale technical infrastructure, encouraging the visits to the tourist attractions	OI 1.1.3 Total number of small scale technical infrastructure, encouraging the visits to the tourist attractiveness	H	M	H	H	H	
	■ Development of joint transport access schemes and adventure routes	OI 1.1.4 Total number of created/reconstructed facilities for disabled people in the supported touristic sites	H	M	H	H	H	
	Development of tourist attraction accessible to persons with disabilities	OI 1.1.5 Total number of information access facilities created/upgraded	H	M	H	H	H	
1.2 Cross-Border Touristic Product	Development of joint cross-border touristic destinations	OI 1.2.1 Number of sustainable tourism strategies/action plans of common tourist destinations	H	H	H	H	H	
	Development of sustainable cross-border touristic products and services	OI 1.2.2 Total number of newly established joint touristic products / services	H	H	H	H	H	
	Joint marketing and promotion of cross-border	OI 1.2.3 Tools developed and/or implemented for	H	H	H	H	H	

Specific Objective	Indicative actions	Output indicators	S	M	A	R	T	Tot
	tourist destinations and products	marketing and promoting tourist products in the eligible border area						
1.3. People-To-People Networking	Support for public awareness activities and information services	OI 1.3.1 Public awareness initiatives promoting sustainable use of natural and cultural heritage and resources	H	M	H	H	H	
	Capacity building activities addressed to local community and business	OI 1.3.2 Capacity building initiatives for capitalisation of the common touristic product/services	H	H	H	H	H	
	Organization of joint events to promote cross-border natural and cultural heritage	OI 1.3.3 Total number of joint events aimed at promotion and cultivation of the common traditions of the borderland areas	H	H	H	H	H	

Legend Per each criterion: 1=Low, 2=Medium, 3=High





As far as result indicators of **Priority axis 2** are concerned, the assessment based on S.M.A.R.T. criteria highlighted the **suitability of proposed indicator to monitor and verify the achievement of expected result 2.2.1**, being notably specific, measurable and relevant considering the phenomena it intends to monitor. At the same time, the ex ante evaluator suggests to reconsider or replace the RI 2.1.1 which is not clear and measurable. As already recommended in the previous ex ante Draft the indicator could be replaced by the following one: **"Percentage of total companies conducted by young people."**

PRIORITY AXIS 2 – YOUTH: S.M.A.R.T. ANALYSIS ON RESULT INDICATORS



Specific Objective	Expected result	Result Indicator	S	M	A	R	T	Tot
2.1. SKILLS & ENTREPRENEURSHIP	R 2.1.1: Improved environment for youth development	RI 2.1.1 Increase of the share of modernized educational institutions in the border area	M	L	L	L	L	
2.2. PEOPLE-TO-PEOPLE NETWORKING	R 2.2.1 Enhanced networking between young people in the border region	RI 2.2.1 Percentage of youth participation in networks across the border (sports clubs, leisure time or youth clubs/associations and cultural organisations)	H	H	M	H	H	

Legend Per each criterion: 1=Low, 2=Medium, 3=High

Concerning output indicators of **Priority axis 2**, the assessment based on S.M.A.R.T. criteria highlighted the **suitability of the set as a whole to monitor and verify the possible actions**, being notably specific, measurable and relevant considering the phenomena it intends to monitor. Even in this case, it is clear the connection between indicative actions and the related output indicators.

Specific Objective	Indicative actions	Output Indicator	S	M	A	R	T	Tot
2.1. SKILLS & ENTREPRENEURSHIP	■ Development of youth-related small-scale infrastructure, and training and information facilities	OI 2.1.1 Total number of supported youth-related small-scale infrastructure, and training and information facilities	H	H	H	H	H	
	■ Development of small-scale "entrepreneurship" infrastructure	OI 2.1.2 Total number of small-scale "entrepreneurship" infrastructure	H	H	H	H	H	
	■ Support to youth entrepreneurship schemes and initiatives	OI 2.1.3 Total number of people involved in the supported youth entrepreneurship schemes and initiatives	H	H	H	H	H	
2.2. PEOPLE-TO-PEOPLE NETWORKING	Support to youth networking initiatives	OI 2.2.1 Total number of youth networking initiatives supported by the Programme	H	H	H	H	H	







PRIORITY AXIS 3 – ENVIRONMENT: S.M.A.R.T. ANALYSIS ON RESULT INDICATORS

Specific Objective	Expected result	Result Indicator	S	M	A	R	T	Tot
3.1. JOINT RISK MANAGEMENT	R 3.1.1: Improved preparedness of public authorities, civil organisations and targeted volunteers to better manage natural and man-made hazards and disasters	RI 3.1.1 Status of preparedness to manage risks of transnational dimension (<i>composite indicator</i>)	H	L	L	H	H	
3.2. NATURE PROTECTION	R 3.2.1 Improved capacity for nature protection and sustainable use of common natural resources in the border region	RI 3.2.1 Joint initiatives related to nature protection and sustainable use of common natural resources	H	H	H	H	H	

Legend Per each criterion: 1=Low, 2=Medium, 3=High

Concerning output indicators of **Priority axis 3**, the assessment based on S.M.A.R.T. criteria highlighted the **suitability of the set as a whole to monitor and verify the possible actions**, being notably specific, measurable and relevant considering the phenomena it intends to monitor. Even in this case, it is clear the **connection between indicative actions and the related output indicators**.

PRIORITY AXIS 3 – ENVIRONMENT: S.M.A.R.T. ANALYSIS ON OUTPUT INDICATORS

Specific Objective	Indicative actions	Outout Indicator	S	M	A	R	T	Tot
3.1. JOINT RISK MANAGEMENT	Establishing joint early warning and disaster management systems	OI 3.1.1 Total number of joint activities aimed at establishing joint early warning and disaster management systems	H	H	H	H	H	
	Investments in equipment related to disaster resilience	OI 3.1.2 Purchased specialized equipment related to disaster management	H	H	H	H	H	
	Support of small-scale interventions/investments	OI 3.1.3 Total number of supported interventions / investments related to risk prevention	H	H	H	H	H	
	Capacity building related to disaster resilience	OI 3.1.4 Total number of people participated in risk prevention and management training activities	H	H	H	H	H	
3.2. NATURE PROTECTION	Protection and enhancement of biodiversity, nature protection and green infrastructure	OI 3.2.1 Total number of interventions, addressing improved nature protected sites and endangered species	H	H	H	H	H	
	Capacity building and promotion initiatives	OI 3.2.2 Capacity building initiatives, trainings, exchange of experience and know-how in the field of sustainable use of natural resources	H	H	H	H	H	

Legend Per each criterion: 1=Low, 2=Medium, 3=High

2.4.2 Quantified baseline and target value

Evaluation questions' check list	
Where a quantified baseline has been set for a programme-specific result indicator: Do the baseline use the latest available data? If not, what is the baseline based on most recent and appropriate data?	++
Where no quantified baseline has been set for a programme-specific result indicator: Is it possible to set a quantified baseline? What is the quantified baseline based on most recent and appropriate data?	+++ (if relevant data are available)
Where a quantified target value has been set for common and	++

programme-specific indicators: Is the targeted value realistic taking into account the actions and forms of support as well as the financial allocation to priority axes and the indicative allocation at the level of categories of interventions/investment priorities?	
---	--

+++ Yes ++ Improvable + No

Calculation of target values is not an easy task. According to other Programmes' experiences, **several methods can be applied**, e.g. comparison between the results of the current programme, including the financial resources invested in similar activities and the financial resources that will be allocated to comparable action within the new programme.

As underlined by the EC ex ante Guidelines, in some cases, with particular reference to "result indicators", *"baselines will not be readily available and data to establish the baseline will need to be collected. When deemed necessary by the programmer, the Commission recommends that the ex ante evaluators advise on the sources and methods for informing indicators. The evaluators may also be asked to carry out research to establish the baselines where not available"*. This is quite applicable to the case of Bulgaria-Serbia IPA Cross-border Programme 2014-2020.

After the ex ante evaluation first analysis some initial considerations have been pointed out:

- regarding **baseline and target values**, in general terms, the approach to use as a baseline the data extracted from the AIR 2013 is shareable and represents a given starting point useful for the financial projection to be applied for the calculation of the target. Source of information for the method of calculation of baseline and target are the **2013 achievements** of the CBC Programme (see mainly Annual Implementation Report, On-going evaluation Final Reports).
- The work on the target and baseline values may help to select the final list, with particular reference to the **need of avoiding unrealistic targets or indicators designed not clearly for the projects partner, as underlined within the on-going evaluation**.
- It has been taken into particular consideration what has been stated in the on-going evaluation for the current programming period *"For both output and result indicators there are numerous cases of substantial **overachievement of the target value** presented in the Operational Programme, attributable on one side to the possible misunderstanding of some of the applicants about the essence on the other hand, as a result of gaps in programming process resulted in lower target values and absence of clear baseline values"*.
- For facilitating the calculation of target values and, more in general the indicators' assessment as a whole, it has been established and visualized **the logical link between results and result indicators**.

Alongside the above mentioned issues, in the following tables it is reported **the ex ante evaluators' feedback on the result indicators with particular reference to baseline and target values' comments**. It is unavoidable that the analysis of target and baseline values bring to provide inputs and further specific comments on the indicators set itself.

The approach followed is based on reporting, for each Priority, the table stemming from the Draft Programme, version 2.0, July 2014, with the Evaluator comments, inputs and new indicators' proposals, if necessary.

In general terms, it is suggested to fill the result indicators' tables with a **fixed percentage of increasing target** (20-30% could be suitable according to the experience carried out by the Evaluator in other similar context) and not simply "increasing".

Regarding the **output indicators**, according to the EC ex ante Guidelines “*the evaluator should assess if the targets are based on the computation of unit costs from same or similar past operations supported under Structural Funds or other national/regional schemes or from an analysis, e.g. of pilot projects*”. It has to be stressed that the Programme covers target values for output indicators. Actually, they seem to be in line with the financial allocation and with similar past interventions/actions. It is suggested to provide the ex ante evaluator with the **method of calculation of targets** in order to proceed with a more specific assessment of the targets. Last but not least **it is recommended to carefully consider the strategic projects** within the calculation of targets.

Table 1 – Priority axis: sustainable tourism. Programme specific result indicators

Expected Results	Result Indicators	Measurement unit	Baseline value	Baseline year	Target value (2023)	Source of data	Frequency of reporting	Comments
R-1.1 Increasing the tourist attractiveness of the cross-border area through better utilisation of natural, cultural and historical heritage and related infrastructure	RI-1.1.1 Increased visitors to the cross-border region	Percentage	TBD	2014	Increasing (<i>quantitative target</i>)	Survey National Statistics (BG&RS)	2019 2023	<p>The indicator "Percentage of tourist attractions accessible to people with disabilities and / or participating in approved programs in terms of accessibility" could be added. This indicator aims to analyze the issue of equal access for people with disabilities. The baseline data should be available via national agencies that deal with tourism. The target is related to the number of initiatives that will be developed on. If the data are available, the Evaluator can proceed with the calculation of the related baseline and target value.</p> <p>The target of the proposed indicator is quantitative and it is quite shareable to collect the nr of networks at the beginning of the Programme (baseline 2014). It has to be defined a % of growth (e.g. 20-30%).</p>
R-1.2 Strengthen joint and integrated approaches to preserve and manage the diversity of natural and cultural assets in the border area as a basis for sustainable development and growth strategies	RI-1.2.1 Increased level of valorisation of natural, cultural and historical heritage	Ordinal scale (e.g. 1-10)	TBD	2014	Increasing (<i>qualitative target</i>)	Survey Annual Implementation Reports	2019 2023	<p>The indicator is quality-based. There should be a short survey (2014) to identify the baseline and, consequently, specify a target. The ordinal scale could be difficult to be monitored. It could be replaced the previous indicators or added a further indicator "Percentage of tourist attractions adopting a policy or plan of protection of cultural heritage." In this case, the baseline data should be readily</p>

								available via national agencies that deal with the cultural heritage. The target is related to the number of initiatives that will be developed on the subject.
R-1.3 Enhanced community involvement and awareness about sustainable use of cross-border tourist resources	RI-1.3.1 Increased cross-border networks operating in the field of sustainable tourism	Percentage	TBD	2014	Increasing (quantitative target)	Survey Annual Implementation Reports	2019 2023	The target is quantitative and it is quite shareable to collect the nr of networks at the beginning of the Programme (baseline 2014). It has to be defined a % of growth (e.g. 20-30%).

Elaboration of ex ante evaluator on Bulgaria-Serbia IPA Cross-border Draft Programme 2014-2010, Version 2.0, July 2014

Table 2 – Priority axis: Youth. Programme specific result indicators

Expected Results	Result Indicators	Measurement unit	Baseline value	Baseline year	Target value (2023)	Source of data	Frequency of reporting	Comments
R-2.1 Improved environment for youth development	RI-2.1.1 Increase of the share of modernized educational institutions in the border area	Percentage	TBD	2014	Increasing (quantitative target)	Survey Annual Implementation Reports	2019 2023	<p>The indicator is not very tailored (see SMART assessment).</p> <p>Baseline and target are quantitative and it is quite shareable to collect the data at the beginning of the Programme (baseline 2014). It has to be defined a % of growth (e.g. 20-30%).</p> <p>It could be added the indicator "Percentage of total companies conducted by young people." The baseline should be readily available if there are national databases on companies. Based on the baseline it can assume a % growth, especially if is possible to have available time series of data that show the evolution of the indicator.</p>

R-2.2 Enhanced networking between young people in the border region	RI-2.2.1 Percentage of youth participation in networks across the border (sports clubs, leisure time or youth clubs/associations and cultural organisations)	Percentage	TBD	2014	Increasing (<i>quantitative target</i>)	Survey Annual Implementation Reports	2019 2023	<p>The indicator is suitable.</p> <p>It has to provide a short survey to identify the baseline. Even on the basis of the baseline, it can specify a target.</p> <p>The target is quantitative and it is quite shareable to collect the data at the beginning of the Programme (baseline 2014). It has to be defined a % of growth (e.g. 20-30%).</p> <p>The elements in brackets are qualitative-based. They can be monitored during the programme implementation thanks to survey (e.g. evaluation during the programme).</p>
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Elaboration of ex ante evaluator on Bulgaria-Serbia IPA Cross-border Draft Programme 2014-2010, Version 2.0, July 2014

Table 2 – Priority axis: environment. Programme specific result indicators: original table

Expected Results	Result Indicators	Measurement unit	Baseline value	Baseline year	Target value (2023)	Source of data	Frequency of reporting	Comments
R-3.1.1 Improved preparedness of public authorities, civil organizations and targeted volunteers to better manage natural and man-made hazards and disasters	RI-3.1.1 Status of preparedness to manage risks of transnational dimension (<i>composite indicator</i>)	Ordinal scale (e.g. 1-10)	TBD	2014	Increasing (qualitative target)	Survey	2019 2023	<p>The indicator is too generic and maybe difficult to be monitored (see also SMART assessment).</p> <p>The target value is quality-based. There should be a short survey (2014) to identify the baseline and, consequently, specify a target. The ordinal scale could be difficult to be monitored. It could be replaced/added with "surface area affected by the actions of environmental prevention / Total area with environmental risk (seismic, geological, etc.)." The baseline should be available by organizations that deal with environmental protection. The target will be calculated from the baseline and the number of actions to be implemented.</p>

Expected Results	Result Indicators	Measurement unit	Baseline value	Baseline year	Target value (2023)	Source of data	Frequency of reporting	Comments
R-3.2 Improved capacity for nature protection and sustainable use of common natural resources in the border region	RI 3.2.1 Joint initiatives related to nature protection and sustainable use of common natural resources	Percentage	TBD	2014	Increasing (quantitative target)	Survey Annual Implementation Reports	2019 2023	<p>The indicator is suitable. It has to provide a short survey to identify the baseline. Even on the basis of the baseline, it can specify a target.</p> <p>The target is quantitative and it is quite shareable to collect the data at the beginning of the Programme (baseline 2014). It has to be defined a % of growth (e.g. 20-30%).</p>

Elaboration of ex ante evaluator on Bulgaria-Serbia IPA Cross-border Draft Programme 2014-2010, Version 2.0, July 2014

2.4.3 Administrative capacity, data collection procedure and evaluation

This section is intended to analyze the **organization of the management system of the Bulgaria-Serbia IPA CBC Programme**. The ex-ante evaluation examines the conformity with the relevant regulatory provisions in force, and the functionality and efficiency of the envisioned programme management system. The analysis is containing comments and proposals, mostly based on the experiences of the previous programming period.

Ex-ante evaluation component	Compliance with the regulatory provisions	Functionality of the programme delivery mechanism and structure	Comments
Composition of the Joint Monitoring Committee	+++	+	The indicative list of the members of the JMC is composed of a list of categories of institutions and organizations. This is insufficient for the proper identification and assessment of the relevance of the composition.
			The high number and heterogeneity of the categories of institutions and organizations envisioned to take part in the JMC imposes a risk on the efficiency and functionality in general and on the decision making process in particular. It is suggested to envisage specific mechanism for facing it.
Description of the functions and responsibilities of the bodies responsible for the management of the programme	+++	+	In the current version of the Cooperation Programme the description of the management and control system is a compilation of provisions from the relevant European Regulations (with the exception of the Joint Secretariat). Without a more programme specific description the exact functions of the bodies involved in the system cannot be determined.
			The description of the first level control system in Bulgaria is missing for the moment.
Compliance with the principle of separation of tasks between the management bodies	+++	+	Since the programme specific tasks of the bodies involved in the management of the programme is not available, the separation of functions cannot be determined.
Efficiency and functionality of the management and control system	+	+	Due to lack of details, the system cannot be assessed from the point of view of efficiency and functionality

In general, the programme delivery mechanisms and structures are described with reference to the European requirements. Anyway, in many cases they are not tailored on the Programme's specific character. All the relevant institutions and bodies are included in the description, but their specific role in the Programme is not presented. The lack of description

of the programme management and control arrangements under point 5.4 makes it difficult to understand and assess their efficiency and viability.

The clear indication of **the role of the Joint Secretariat** is especially needed, since its role is not precisely determined within the Regulations. Therefore, it is important to have a presentation of its tasks, especially in relation to the organization of the procedure for selection of operations and of concluding the Subsidy Contracts. The present description should be revised and included under point 5.4.

Ex-ante Evaluation Component	Conclusions and recommendations
Programme delivery mechanisms and structure	
Composition and functions of the Joint Monitoring Committee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The indicative list of members of the JMC shall identify more precisely which are the institutions and organizations which will take part in the work of the body. - The number of members of the JMC is rather high, and this can affect the efficiency of its functioning in general and of decision making process in particular. It could be considered a selection of the most relevant types of organizations, simplifying the structure of the JMC, ensuring in the meanwhile that all relevant institutions and organizations are represented. - The Programme may use the possibility of involving more bodies and/or individual experts in the work of the JMC with advisory role, since they can provide valuable input for the programme coordination.
Description of the functions of the bodies responsible for the management and of the programme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The set up and functionality of the management and control system should be better described. Programme specific information is needed in relation to the functions of the institutions involved - More details are advisable related to the procedure of setting up the Joint Secretariat. - The tasks of the JS should be better outlined, explained and clarified. - The role of the JS in coordinating the work of the controllers is questionable - The role of the antennae in Nis (Serbia) shall be better described - The role and tasks of the National Authority should be described and explained
Compliance with the principle of separation of tasks between the management bodies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A brief description of the organization of the most important programme management procedures shall be included in order to have an overview of the system.
Efficiency and functionality of the management and control system	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The description of the management and control system is missing.

Considerations on the Guiding principles for the selection of operations

The selection criteria are logically grouped in Strategic Coherence, Operational Quality and Compliance to horizontal principles. Going further into details, the Strategic Coherence makes general comments on the criteria while it's being given "primacy over the other two criteria", without detailing the degree/strength of the "primacy" (vague formulation).

The "Operational Quality" criteria is very well detailed and gives a clear understanding of the appraising procedures, contributing to selecting well designed projects.

The selection criteria for **Strategic Projects** makes general comments on the effects envisaged by the respective initiatives; **more detailed/clearer criteria should have been selected.**

In addition to the considerations reported in the box below, during the 2007-2013 programming period has been stressed the importance of **strategic projects**, with particular reference to cross-border cooperation Programme.

While carrying out on-going evaluations in the 2007-2013 programming period many evaluators underlined the main characteristics that are considered mandatory for defining projects as "strategic" in order to facilitate the MAs in financing and selecting them.

The following table presents the result of the ex ante evaluator exercise on the main issues a strategic project should cover in order to be complete and valuable. These issues are, at the same time, useful as criteria to be applicable in the **quality assessment for the projects' selection criteria.**

A STRATEGIC PROJECT SHOULD...

Main criteria	Sub-Criteria
Impact on the cooperation area	Have a wide and balanced geographical coverage of the cross-border cooperation area
	Contribute to reduce the unemployment rate in the cooperation area, also in the light of worsening of the socio-economic situation surfacing from the global crisis
	Address the criticism of lack of statistic information and data available mainly for CC of the cooperation area, in order to pave the way for reaching common settlement patterns between MS and CC in identifying and implementing more effective and strategic territorial/spatial development policies
	Be directly useful for Local, Regional and National Authorities/other relevant stakeholders and their results should be of benefit for all the cooperation area, directly or indirectly through a wide dissemination strategy
	Involve Local and Regional authorities as much as possible in the project's strategic life cycle, moreover with the aim to promote a better governance in the area and foster the institutional and administrative capacity as well as the ownership of territorial institutions
Strong and coherent partnership	Take into account the most successful/relevant CBC projects implemented within the framework of ordinary Call for proposal (i.e. through cross-fertilisation activities between common topics; by establishing capitalisation activities in connection with standard projects focused on common topics; by complying missing project types in the portfolio of at present approved projects)
	Rely on the building of large partnership of key actors in the specific field of intervention, involving decision-makers, thematic experts, specialised bodies and end-users As a result, partnership should refer to a multi-level governance model as well as to a multi-

A STRATEGIC PROJECT SHOULD...

	dimensional governance system
	Have strict relation between project's general and specific objectives and institutional and administrative competences/skills of partners
	Involve the most relevant partners able and "politically" committed to achieve the envisaged outputs and results; the project partnership must be competent/committed to develop, implement and disseminate jointly elaborated approaches and tools
	Have representativeness at national level and the linked partnership has to show capacity to mobilise target groups/stakeholders and assure cross-border involvement/role in international networks on the matters addressed by the proposed projects (permanent partnership, beyond specific co-operation projects)
Sustainability of results	Ensure sustainability at institutional level and include statements and activities which will guarantee that the results achieved will be further used and promoted by other Programmes and projects after the end of the project
	Be sustainable in economic terms, being able to mobilise additional private and/or public funds to pursue, if necessary, its activities after the end of the project
Coherence with European, national and regional policies	Be developed in coherence with the EU, national and regional policies and with existing cooperation initiatives in the area
	Be built on the basis of a deep knowledge of existing state of art and taking into account former and current public policies and projects implemented within the area, in order to produce real added value related to existing needs
	Be concretely aimed at supporting specific objectives of mainstream Programmes within the framework of a cross-border dimension (i.e. Regional Operational Programmes, Macro-Regional Strategies)

In addition to the above mentioned issues, an **efficient informative monitoring system** is the backdrop for a sound Programme's management. In light of this, it is mandatory to build the informative system, learning from experience, stemming also from similar contexts.

In light of this, the ex ante evaluator provides the MA with a preliminary list of **hints and suggestions** useful for implementing a sound management and monitoring informative system and, besides, for reducing potential administrative burdens on beneficiaries.

Positive factors for an efficient informative monitoring and management system	Evaluator's hints and suggestions
Single Management and Monitoring System	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Optimization of project lifecycle and of its monitoring in progress: from the creation of the proposal to its physical and financial Monitoring
Project Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Optimization of logging-in timing of potential beneficiaries (unitary User account to send even more than one project proposal/Application Form) System User-friendliness concerning on-line notification after beneficiaries data-entry System User-friendliness concerning the financial tables



	interconnection. They allow crossed checks among different data, automatic calculation in different fields and immediate notification for eventual errors or inconsistencies
Programme Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Granted support to status and Beneficiaries Progress Reports monitoring, related to the developed activities, as well as the inserted financial data ■ logging-in linearity and traceability of expenditure certifications created by final beneficiaries of the approved projects ■ Efficiency in Application for reimbursement by the Lead Beneficiary after Declaration and validation of Expenditures as well as in Payment Order from the MA to the CA ■ Rationalization of the Controls organization on the expenditures (First Level Control and others)

Elaboration by the ex ante evaluator

2.4.4 Conclusions and recommendations on indicators

Ex-ante Evaluation Component	Conclusions and recommendations
Indicators, monitoring and evaluation	
<i>Relevance and clarity of proposed indicators</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Survey for result indicators has been considered - Clear distinction between IL elements is provided - Reducing the number of indicators is absolutely in line with the requirements of the European Commission and with the practice followed by other Programmes reformulation/simplification of result and output indicators is appropriate - distinction between the level of IL issues (objectives, results etc.) and the corresponding indicators is generally clear - It is quite sharable the approach of one specific objective-one expected result-one result indicator - avoid indicators that were been particularly difficult to be monitored, especially in terms of source of data - logical and valuable link between possible actions and output indicators has been implemented - An important contribution to the gathering and organization of additional data might come from both effective and potential beneficiaries - output indicators could be divided into four “thematic groups” - Data sources and frequency of reporting are specified for each indicator, giving evidence to the methodology to be used and the degree of availability of the data themselves - Some results indicators (Tourism and Environment) could be replaced with particular reference to their relevance and need to be monitored
<i>Quantified baseline and target value</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - If statistical data are available, in some specific cases it could be possible to calculate baseline and target - Fix the level of increasing for result indicators (20-30% of increasing) - For output indicators provide the method of calculation in order to make the assessment possible - Carefully consider the strategic projects while calculating targets

2.5 Consistency of financial allocation

According to Article 55 (3)(c) of CPR, the evaluators should assess “the consistency of the allocation of budgetary resources with the objectives of the programme”.

Evaluation questions' check list	
Do the financial allocations concentrate on the most important objectives in line with the identified challenges and needs and with the concentration requirements set out in the Regulations?	++
Are the financial allocations to each priority axis and to categories of interventions consistent looking at the identified challenges and needs that informed the objectives as well as at the planned actions?	++
Do the allocations correspond to the selected forms of support?	+++
Are the resources coming from different Funds adequately combined?	+++

+++ Yes ++ Improvable + No

“The main objective behind the financial allocation to Programme specific objectives/priorities is to effectively achieve the Programme results with the resources available”, as stressed in the Programme Draft, version 2.0, July 2014.

This preliminary assumption is shareable and it is in line with the European recommendations of financial concentration, avoiding funds dispersion.

The Draft Programme presents a financial breakdown as shown in the chart on the side.

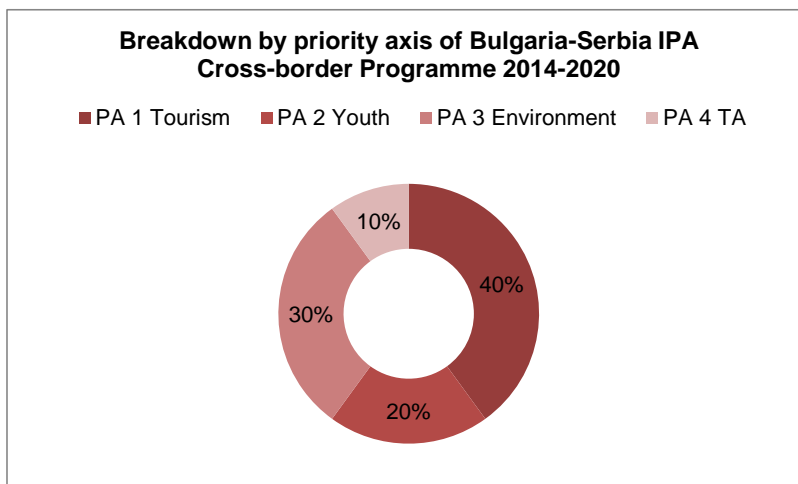
The financial allocation is the result of a interactive process that, starting from the resources' available, tried to identify the financial

commitment connected to the challenges and needs as well as the expected results.

In the Draft ex ante Final Report has been recommended to justify in the 1.2. Section “Justification of the financial allocation” the financial breakdown with particular reference to the choice of commit the 40% to the Tourism TP.

While defining the allocations towards thematic priorities, two aspects were correctly taken into consideration based on the lessons learned from previous Bulgaria-Serbia IPA CBC Programme (2007-2013), namely:

- The estimated relative importance of the thematic priority/priority axis based on the identified needs and the estimated long-term impact on the border region socio-economic situation, and



- The estimated absorption capacity of the potential project holders to develop feasible projects including the magnitude of needs of resources of typical projects.

2.5.1 Conclusions and recommendations on consistency of financial allocation

Ex-ante Evaluation Component	Conclusions and recommendations
Consistency of financial allocation	
- Consistency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - financial allocation is the result of a interactive process that, starting from the resources' available, tried to identify the financial commitment connected to the challenges and needs as well as the expected results - It has been recommended to justify in the 1.2. Section "Justification of the financial allocation" the financial breakdown with particular reference to the choice of commit the 40% to the Toursim TP.

2.6 Contribution to Europe 2020 Strategy

Evaluation questions' check list

Based on the evaluator's knowledge of the national and regional situation and taking into account the size of the programme, what is the potential contribution of the programme to the macro-regional strategy?

+++

+++ Yes ++ Improvable + No

Launched in 2010, the **Europe 2020 Strategy** aims to drive the Union Member States towards a smart, sustainable and inclusive growth, at a time characterized by global challenges, that led to deep economic and social transformations.

The Strategy¹¹ foresees three mutually reinforcing objectives:

- a **smart growth** capable of developing an economy based on knowledge and innovation;
- a **sustainable**



¹¹ Communication of the European Commission "Europe 2020: a strategy for a smart, sustainable and inclusive growth" of the 3rd March 2010.

growth, promoting a "greener" and competitive economy, through a more efficient use of resources;

- an **inclusive growth** aimed at developing an economy characterized by high rates of employment along with social and territorial cohesion.

These objectives are pursued through the promotion of a series of flagship initiatives, developed at EU, national and regional level, and monitored through the observation of specific parameters¹² to be applied to all State Members.

Although directly binding on Member States, the **Europe 2020 Strategy goes beyond Community borders**, representing a development opportunity for neighboring countries, with particular reference to the countries in pre-accession in order to support them in their reform process.

In line with the objectives of the Europe 2020 Strategy, the Bulgaria-Serbia IPA CBC Programme 2014-2020 will develop the following thematic priorities¹³:

- TP5 Investing in Youth, education and skills;
- TP4: Encouraging tourism and cultural and natural heritage.
- TP2: Protecting the environment and promoting climate change adaptation and mitigation, risk prevention and management.

To this end, the Bulgaria-Serbia CBC Programme is divided into three main Priority axis foreseeing the following specific objectives:

Priority axis 1-Tourism

SO 1.1. TOURIST ATTRACTIVENESS: Supporting the development of competitive tourist attractions that contribute to the diversification of tourist product(s) in the cross-border region

SO 1.2 CROSS-BORDER TOURISTIC PRODUCT: Valorising the favourable conditions for diversified tourism in the border area through creating common cross-border touristic destination(s)

SO 1.3 PEOPLE-TO-PEOPLE NETWORKING: Capitalise the effect of cultural, historical and natural heritage tourism on border communities

Priority axis 2-Youth

SO 2.1 SKILLS & ENTREPRENEURSHIP: Creating an attractive environment for development of young people in the border region

SO 2.2 PEOPLE-TO-PEOPLE NETWORKING: Promote sustainable, long-term and collaborative initiatives for and with young people, including enhancing mobility of young people

Priority axis 3-Environment

¹² Parameters for the monitoring of the Europe 2020 Strategy are: increase in the employment rate from 69% to at least 75%; 3% of GDP to be allocated to research and development; reduction of greenhouse gas emissions to 20%; reduction in the rate of early school leavers from 15% to 10%; reducing the poverty rate to 25%.

¹³ Regulation (EU) No 231/2014 of the European parliament and of the Council of 11 March 2014 establishing an Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance (IPA II), Annex III "Thematic priorities for assistance for territorial cooperation"

SO 3.1 JOINT RISK MANAGEMENT: To prevent and mitigate the consequences of natural and man-made cross-border disasters

SO 3.2 NATURE PROTECTION: Enhancing the capacity of regional and local stakeholders for improved environmental and natural resources management in the border region

Given these premises and according to Art. 55 of Reg. (EU) No 1303/2013, **the ex-ante evaluation appraised the contribution to the Europe 2020 Strategy** “*having regard to the selected thematic objectives and priorities, taking into account national and regional needs and potential for development as well as lessons drawn from previous programming periods*”. Given the cross-border nature of the Bulgaria-Serbia IPA CBC Programme, the ex-ante evaluator also took into consideration **possible contributions deriving from cooperation and networking activities** supported by the Programme.

As a preliminary exercise, the coherence of Programme’s specific objectives with the European Strategy has been assessed, identifying direct and indirect contribution to its achievement, as well as potential contributions of Programme’s expected results to national and European targets.

To this end, the following tables show the **direct or indirect contribution** of each Specific Objective **to the Europe 2020 Strategy**.

PRIORITY AXIS 1 – TOURISM: CONTRIBUTION OF SOs TO THE EUROPE 2020 STRATEGY

Specific Objectives \ PA 1	Europe 2020 Strategy		
	Growth		
	Smart	Sustainable	Inclusive
SO 1.1 Tourist Attractiveness	+++	+++	+++
SO 1.2 Cross-Border Touristic Product	+++	+++	+
SO 1.3 People-To-People Networking	+++	+++	+++

High contribution +++ Medium contribution ++ Indirect Contribution +

As underlined in the OP, version 2.0, July 2014, “*this priority axis contributes to all three pillars of the **EU 2020 Strategy** since it aims at encouraging entrepreneurship and networking, through implementation of innovative approaches in the area of tourism, and at the same time at developing and protecting nature and culture heritage*”. With particular reference to the specific Objectives within Priority axis 1 they will directly contribute to an **intelligent and sustainable growth** given the focus on the tourist attractiveness, cross-border touristic product and people-to-people networking. With reference to the inclusive growth, it has to be stressed the development of tourist attraction accessible to persons with disabilities: improving of the accessibility will contribute to their social inclusion. At the same time, the proposed types of actions to achieve Programme’s objectives will also allow the involvement of a large number of local institutions and professionals, contributing to develop know-how transfer and employment opportunities.

PRIORITY AXIS 2 – YOUTH: CONTRIBUTION OF SOS TO THE EUROPE 2020 STRATEGY

Specific Objectives	Europe 2020 Strategy		
	Growth		
	Smart	Sustainable	Inclusive
SO 2.1 Skills & Entrepreneurship	+++	+++	+++
SO 2.2 People-To-People Networking	+++	+++	+++

High contribution +++ Medium contribution ++ Indirect Contribution +

As far as Specific Objectives of Priority axis 2 are concerned, they directly aim at achieving the objectives of the EU 2020 and in particular the following priority: **Inclusive growth: fostering a high-employment economy delivering social and territorial cohesion**, focusing on education and skills, as actually stressed by the Programme itself. In this framework it has to be also stressed the provision by the Draft OP of specific target groups “Marginalised minority communities” and “Marginalised roma communities” which are very related to the inclusive-growth.

PRIORITY AXIS 3 – ENVIRONMENT: CONTRIBUTION OF SOS TO THE EUROPE 2020 STRATEGY

Specific Objectives	Europe 2020 Strategy		
	Growth		
	Smart	Sustainable	Inclusive
SO 3.1 Joint Risk Management	+++	+++	+
SO 3.2 Nature Protection	+++	+++	+

High contribution +++ Medium contribution ++ Indirect Contribution +

This priority axis contributes to the **EU 2020 Strategy**, in particular to “sustainable growth” priority: promoting a more resource efficient, greener and more competitive economy with eligible activities related to environment protection, risk prevention and management.

Following EC suggestions on ex-ante evaluation¹⁴, it has been also appraised **direct linkages between Programme’s expected results and Europe 2020 Strategy’s targets** relating to Programme’s thematic priorities.

It has to be underlined the high contribution within employment, reduction of greenhouse gas emissions and reduction of level of poverty.

LINKAGES BETWEEN BG-RS IPA CBC EXPECTED RESULTS AND EU 2020 TARGETS

EU 2020 targets	Employment rate at 76% for population aged 20-64	3% of GDP to be allocated to R&D	Reduction of greenhouse gas emissions to 20%	Reducing poverty rate to 25%
BG-TR expected results				
R-1.1.1. Increased visitors to the cross-border region	+++	+	+	++
R-1.2.1 Increased level of valorisation of natural, cultural and historical heritage	+++	+	++	++
R-1.3.1 Increased cross-border networks operating in the field of sustainable tourism	+++	+	++	++

¹⁴ EC, “Guidance document on ex-ante evaluation”, January 2013

EU 2020 targets BG-TR expected results	Employment rate at 76% for population aged 20-64	3% of GDP to be allocated to R&D	Reduction of greenhouse gas emissions to 20%	Reducing poverty rate to 25%
R-2.1.1 Increase of the share of modernized educational institutions in the border area	+++	+	+	+++
R-2.2.1 Percentage of youth participation in networks across the border (sports clubs, leisure time or youth clubs/associations and cultural organisations)	+++	+	+	+++
R 3.1.1 Status of preparedness to manage risks of transnational dimension (composite indicator)	+++	+	+++	++
R-3.2.1 Joint initiatives related to nature protection and sustainable use of common natural resources	+++	+	+++	++

High contribution +++ Medium contribution ++ Indirect Contribution +

2.6.1 Conclusions and recommendations on Europe 2020 strategy

Ex-ante Evaluation Component	Conclusions and recommendations
Consistency of financial allocation	
Contribution to the Europe 2020 strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - direct linkages between Programme's expected results and Europe 2020 Strategy's targets - high level of contribution of Programme SOs to the sustainable, inclusive and smart growth - Particularly high contribution of Tourism and Youth to inclusive growth with reference to the provision of target groups (e.g. minorities etc.) - Particularly high contribution of Environment to sustainable growth