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## **I. INTRODUCTION**

Applying a **broad partnership** and multilevel governance principles during the entire programming process provide extensive stakeholder involvement. In different stages (preparatory, drafting, finalisation), levels (Joint Working Group, broad public) and with different forms (on-line survey, Regional Consultative Forums, Joint Working Group, Task Force and other meetings, e-mail communication, web site announcements, information's/documents) of communication, coordination and consultation process was organised and implemented.

In November 2013 the process of preparing the **Bulgaria-Serbia IPA CBC Programme 2014-2020** had been launched with a first meeting of the Joint Working Group. The programming process was a result of building on many inputs, from the situation analysis of a broad array of fields (economy, infrastructure, transport, environment, demography, labour market, education, cultural relations etc.) through the comments and suggestions received from the Task Force, the Joint Working Group and, the stakeholders from the eligible programme area, to the lessons learned from previous co-operation programmes. In line with the EU Cohesion Policy, a greater **thematic concentration** within the Programme was constantly pursued.

An important step in this programming process was to seek views of stakeholders on the shape and content of the future programme. The **wide public consultations** contributed to the programming with experience and know-how. Furthermore, it helped to identify specific demands and expectations towards the new Programme among potential target groups.

In the context of programming the IPA Cross-border Cooperation Programme 2014-2020 between Bulgaria and Serbia a series of public consultations with relevant stakeholders were planned and executed:

- An **online survey** was the first step in this consultative process. It was aimed at collecting perceived needs, suggestions, and strategic addresses directly from a broad group of different relevant stakeholders. Stakeholders were invited to give their input to the development of the future Bulgaria-Serbia IPA CBC Programme 2014-2020 at an early stage of its elaboration. The online consultation was run between 25th January and 14th February 2014, and some 180 stakeholders gave their feedback on the issues raised.
- The **1st Regional Consultative Forum (RCF)** brought together wide range of stakeholders who have expressed their opinion on the results of the situation and SWOT analysis in regards to the challenges and opportunities for cross-border cooperation between Bulgaria and Serbia, as well as on the possible thematic prioritisation of the new bilateral Programme. The Forum was held between 5th and 14th of March 2014, covering all 13 NUTS-III regions in the programme area. The events were hosted by the respective Municipal/District administrations. The regional meetings were attended by 257 participants representing municipalities, regional and national administration/public institutions, regional NGOs, educational and other relevant institutions.
- In the frame of a **2nd Regional Consultative Forum**, public consultations with

stakeholders have been held again in the programme area with the aim: (1) to present the Programme's 'thematic concentration' and proposed options for thematic priorities of the new IPA CBC programme; and (2) to present and discuss with stakeholders the Programme's 'intervention logic' - programme's specific objectives, respective results and future activities. The 2nd RCF was attended by 124 participants representing municipalities, regional and national administration / public institutions, regional NGOs, educational and other relevant institutions, covering all 13 NUTS-III regions in the programme area.

Based on a complete draft of the cooperation Programme, in June 2013 a **public consultation was carried out via the WEB-page** of the Programme. Individuals or organisations interested in the Programme were given the opportunity to express opinions towards the draft Programme resulting in final amendments before the adoption of the final cooperation Programme in August 2014.

## II. Online survey

In the context of programming the IPA CBC Programme 2014-2020 between Bulgaria and the Serbia an on-line survey had been undertaken for exploring the opinion of national and regional stakeholders on the focus of the future Programme. The survey was conducted in the period between 03.02.2014 and 14.02.2014 through the web site of the current EU cooperation programme between two countries. The on-line questionnaire comprises three chapters with 9 questions. First chapter with 3 questions generate general responder information's on the origin, type of institution and its involvement in the current CBC programme. Second chapter with 3 questions deal with cross-border cooperation challenges and opportunities (major problems and barriers, major challenges and opportunities and major threats). Responders provided their preferences through weighting the potential answers depending of their importance. Third chapter with 3 questions provide information's on the cross-border cooperation added value in the perspective 2014-2020 (most value added, thematic priorities and major problems faced at implementing projects funded under IPA CBC Programmes). Here also responder's weight potential answers depending of their importance.

Questionnaire has been completed from numerous institutions and private persons from both countries. A total of 180 respondents gather the stakeholders' expectations related to the scope and content as well as other important aspects of the future programme. (Appendix "A" provides an overview on the on-line survey respondents, and the replies gathered).

The wide public consultations contributed to the programming with experience and know-how and it helped to identify specific demands and expectations towards the new programme among potential target groups. Results from the on-line survey concerning the new programming period 2014-2020 were published on the current CBC Programme web site on 10.03.2014.

## III. The 1st Regional Consultative Forum

The 1st Regional Consultative Forum took place in the beginning of the programming process (4th – 14th March 2014). It was aimed at presenting the main conclusion of the territorial

## Annex 8 Consultations with regional stakeholders

analysis performed, as well as to further discuss the potentials for development of the border region. It was also aimed at building of capacity and the creation of mutual trust within the eligible programme area thus maintaining broad partnership in the programming area.

In the frame of this RCF, a series of public consultations with relevant stakeholders have been held across the programme area. The aim of these consultations was:

- To present the results of the situation and SWOT analysis, which has taken place in the beginning the programming process;
- To match experts' findings with practitioners' reality and needs;
- To define the fields in which cross-border cooperation is needed;
- To discuss the Programme's thematic concentration (selection of thematic priorities).

Table 1: Summary of TP prioritisation by districts in the border area

Thematic Discussion (by district)	TP(a)	TP(b)	TP(c)	TP(d)	TP(e)	TP(f)	TP(g)	TP(h)
Nišavska oblast + Toplička oblast		+			++		+++	++++
Pirotska oblast	+				+++		++++	++
Jablanička oblast		+		++	++++		++	+
Pčinjska oblast		+		++	++++		+++	+
Borska oblast + Zaječarska oblast	+	++	++	+++	++++		+	+++
Pernik oblast				+++	++++		++	+
Kyustendil oblast		+		++++	++		+++	
Sofia-oblast				++++	+++		+++	+
Montana oblast		+		+++	++++		+++	
Vidin oblast		++		+++	++++		++	+
Vratsa oblast	+	+		++++	++++		+++	
Legend: [+] Less preferred .... [++++] Most preferred								

Concluding the results from these discussions, the ranking showed that TP(e) was the most preferred thematic priority for inclusion. On second place (with almost identical rating) were TP(d) and TP(g). On third place could be mentioned TP(h) but with preference mostly by Serbian stakeholders, which in view of the cross-border nature of the Programme might create difficulties in finding partners for joint projects.

The TP(b) seemed to be supported by both BG and RS stakeholders but mostly as concentrated actions for risk prevention.

Summarising the above results, the top 4 TPs which had been identified by the regional stakeholders during the 1st RCF were the following:

**TP(e)** Investing in youth, education and skills

<b>TP(g)</b>	Enhancing competitiveness, the business environment and the development of small and medium-sized enterprises, trade and investment
<b>TP(d)</b>	Encouraging tourism and cultural and natural heritage
<b>TP(b)</b>	Strengthening research, technological development, innovation and ICT

## **IV. The 2nd Regional Consultative Forum**

The 2nd Regional Consultative Forum took place within the process of setting up the programming strategy. It was aimed at presenting the draft strategic framework of the new Bulgaria-Serbia IPA CBC Programme seeking consensus with stakeholders on its actual performance and discussing the possible specific activities to be financed in the period 2014-2020.

In the frame of the 2nd RCF, public consultations with relevant stakeholders have been held in the programme area. The aim of these consultations was:

- To present the Programme's 'thematic concentration' - proposed options for thematic priorities of the new IPA CBC programme;
- To present the Programme's 'intervention logic' - programme's specific objectives, respective results and future activities;
- To discuss the Programme's 'intervention logic'.

The 2nd RCF was attended by 124 participants representing municipalities, regional and national administration / public institutions, regional NGOs, educational and other relevant institutions, covering all 13 NUTS-III regions in the programme area.

During the discussions it was stressed that the strategic orientation of the future programme needs to consider various EU policies and regulatory framework, as well as the specific situation and needs of the programme area. The strategic orientation further needs to reflect budgetary restrictions of the Programme and the CBC relevance of potential interventions. Special attention should also be given on the implementation provisions, so when discussing future Programme's strategy the regional stakeholders need to consider how it will be actually implemented.

Then, the TA programming team has presented the approach for selection of thematic priorities (summary of the proposal is presented in Appendix "B"), i.e. the 'assessment grid' and its 4 major components:

- Lessons learned from the current programme (2007-2013)
- Territorial (situation) and SWOT Analysis
- Regional Consultations
- Cross-border added value

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As a result of that analytical approach, 3 options were proposed for consideration:

- **Option 1 (broad):** applying a broader approach and focussing on the selection of four (4) thematic priorities [TP(d), TP(e), TP(b) and TP(g)], opening up the possibilities of the project applicants and the implementation of projects in different fields;
- **Option 2 (focused):** focussing on the selection of two (2) thematic priorities [TP(d) and TP(e)], thus ensuring a thematic concentration and the efficient use of funds;
- **Option 3 (compromise):** selecting three (3) thematic priorities [TP(d), TP(e) and TP(b)].

In general, the proposed by the TA programming team Programme's 'intervention logic' have been welcomed and widely accepted by the regional stakeholders. The major modification proposed by the stakeholders was the 'merging' of initially proposed specific objectives 1 and 2 under **TP(e) "Youths, Education and Skills"**, namely:

### Provisional proposal for 'intervention logic' of TP(e):

- SO1 - EDUCATION & SKILLS: Improve labour market matching by adapting education and training systems to provide skills and competencies
- SO2 - YOUTH ENTREPRENEURSHIP: To encourage youth entrepreneurship development thus creating prerequisites for improving youth employment opportunities in the border area
- SO3 - 'PEOPLE-TO-PEOPLE' CONNECTIVITY: Promoting young people's active participation in civil society

### Proposed change after the 2nd RCF:

- SO1 - SKILLS & ENTREPRENEURSHIP: To develop skills and encourage youth entrepreneurship thus creating prerequisites for improving youth employment opportunities in the border area
- SO2 - 'PEOPLE-TO-PEOPLE' CONNECTIVITY: Promoting young people's active participation in civil society

Other major issue raised at the Forum was the exclusion of **TP(h) "Research & Innovation"** from the Programme's strategy. However, it was explained that the inclusion of any of the TPs should consider not only individual desires, but mostly the impact such actions should have on the entire CBC area and its concrete needs and challenges. Furthermore, the lessons learned from the current (2007-2013) Programme's implementation clearly demonstrated the actual limitations of the region for implementing projects in such thematic field. This is especially valid for the BG side of the border area, where most of the organizations which both had the capacity and willingness to operate such 'innovation' projects were situated in Sofia-city, which is actually outside the eligible programme area. Finally, it was agreed that the **"innovation" line** could still be present in the strategic framework of the Programme **as a cross-cutting issue** throughout the already proposed TPs.

Another issue raised was the **"environmental"** problematics, and why the Programme is limiting the TP(b) only to a 'strategic' fire-fight project. Finally, a decision was taken this priority to be also included in the Programme's strategic framework, with much wider scope, while th

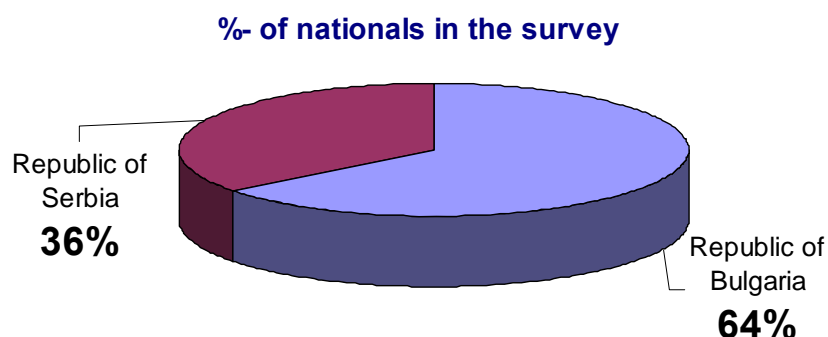
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option of having “strategic projects”wa left for further consideration by the JMC at the stage of Programme implementation.

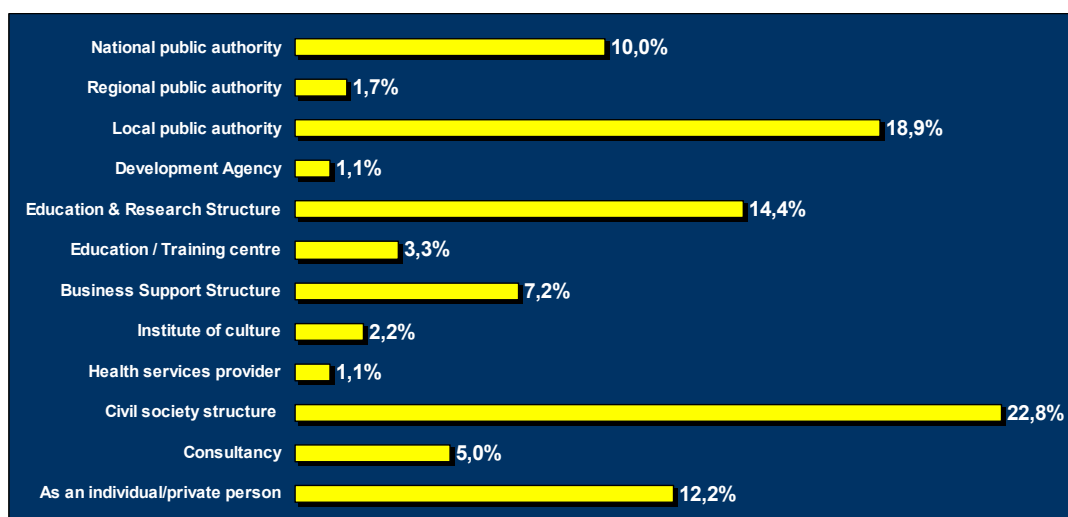
Finally, the regional stakeholders gave their preference to the **proposed 3<sup>rd</sup> option** for selecting **thematic priorities**.

## Appendix “A” – Online survey results

**Q-1:** Please provide your country of residence / establishment:

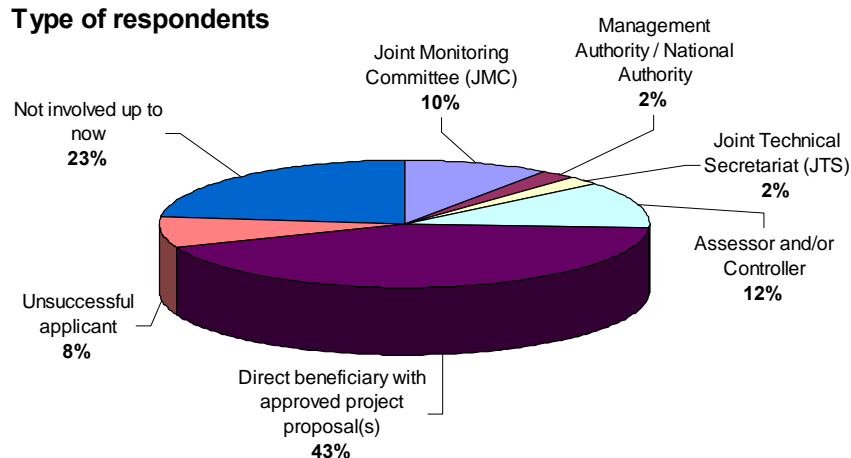


**Q-2:** Please specify in which capacity you are completing this questionnaire:



**Q-3:** Is you/your institution/organisation involved in implementing the current Bulgaria-Serbia IPA CBC Programme (2007-2013)

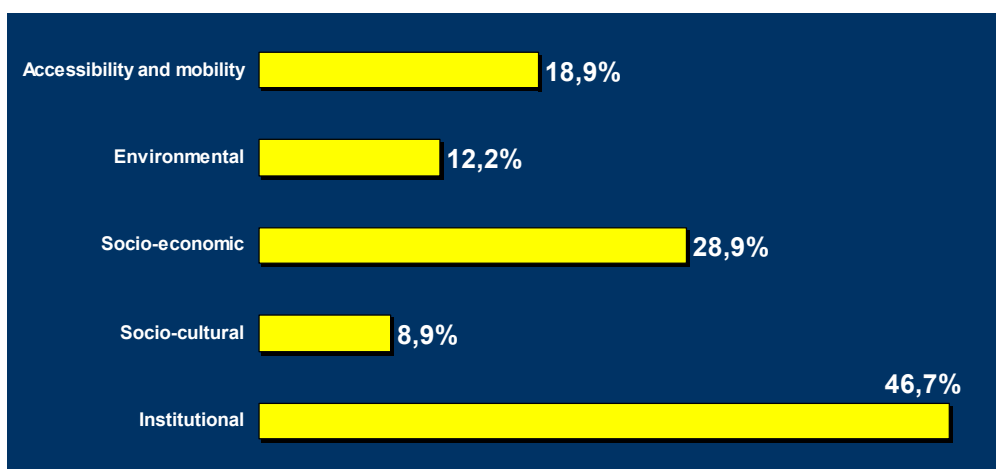
### Type of respondents



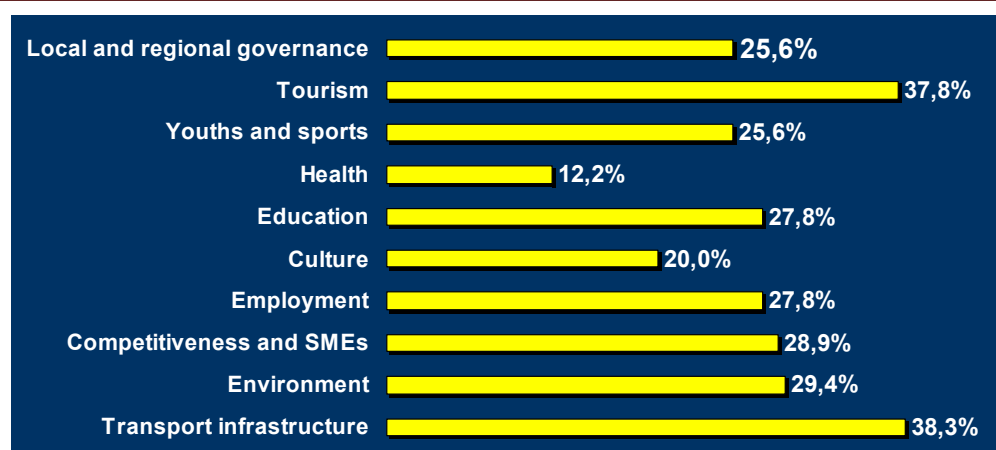


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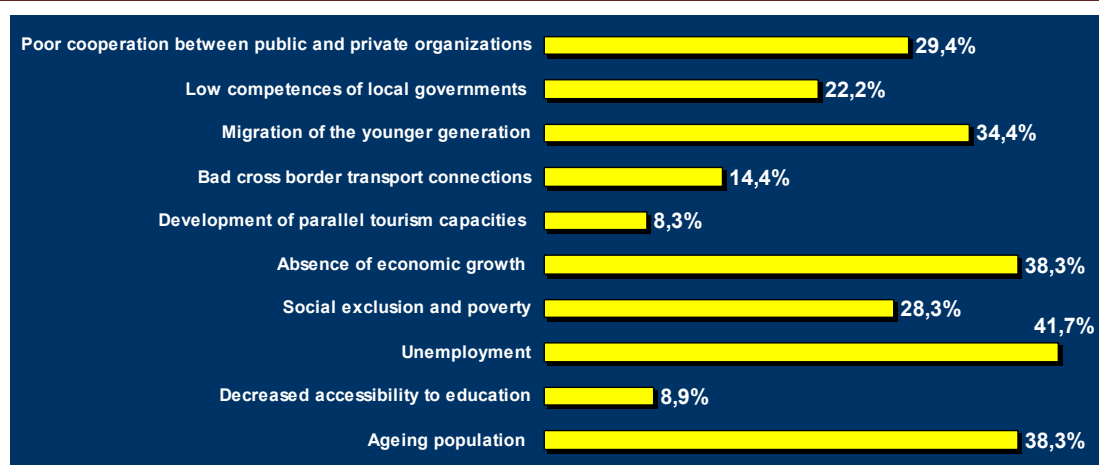
**Q-4:** In which area you see the major problems and barriers for cross-border cooperation between Bulgaria and Serbia?



**Q-5:** In which area you see the major challenges and opportunities for further strengthening cross-border cooperation between Bulgaria and Serbia?

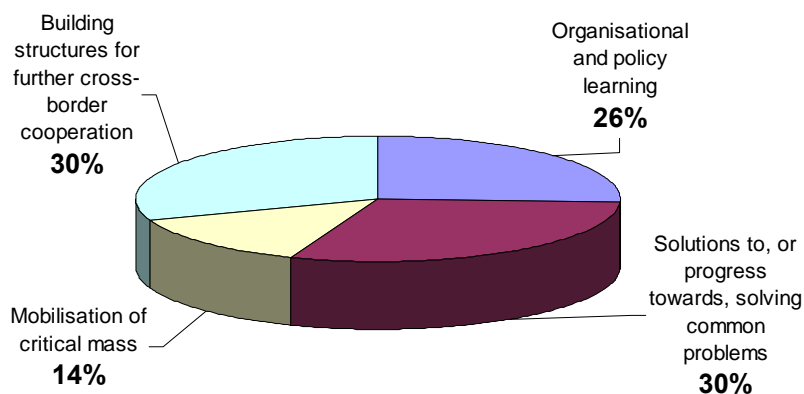


**Q-6:** What would you see as major threats for cross-border cooperation between Bulgaria and Serbia?

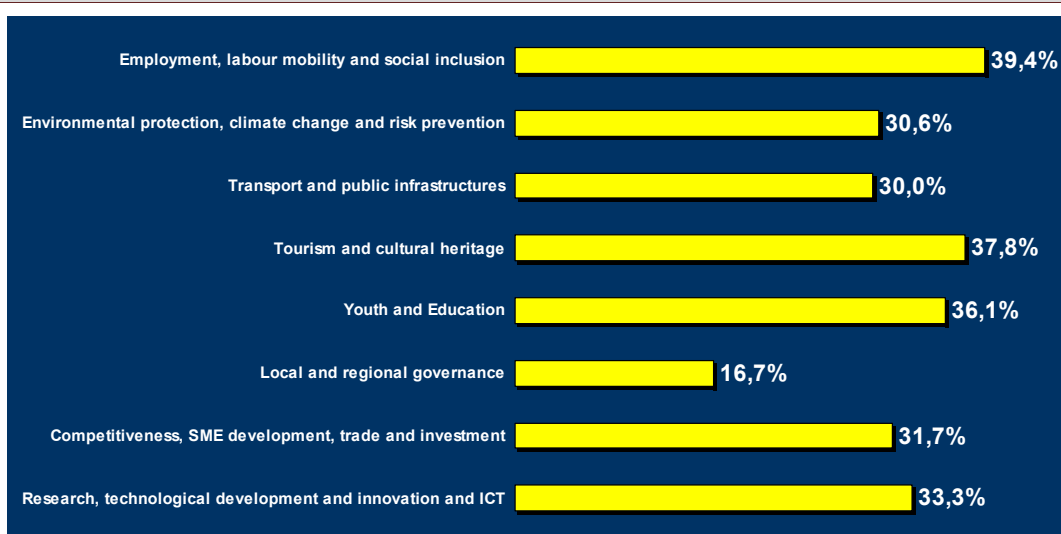


**Q-7:** Where do you see the most value added of the Bulgaria-Serbia IPA CBC Programme (2014-2020)

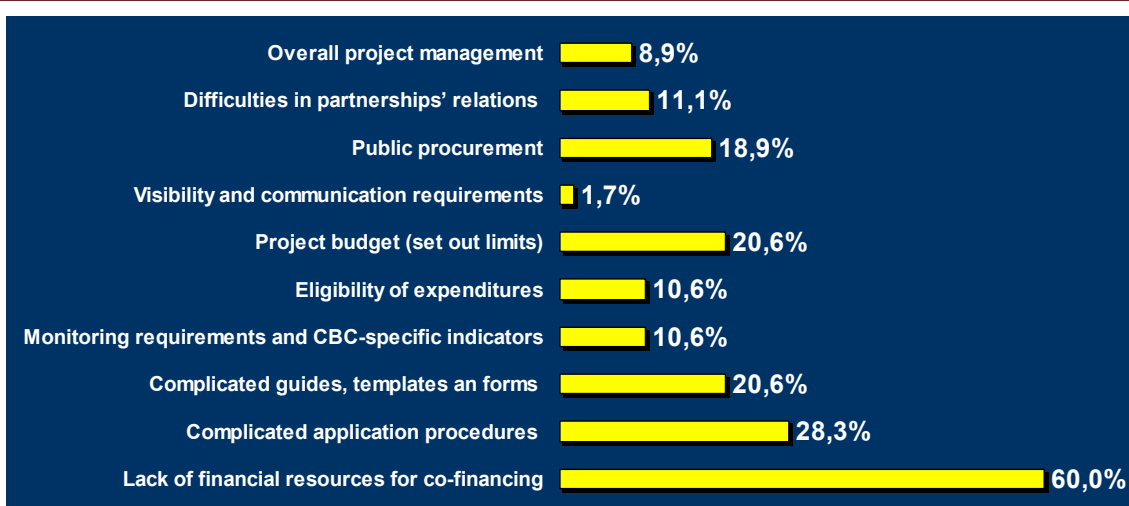
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**Q-8:** Please estimate in which priority area the new Bulgaria-Serbia IPA CBC Programme (2014-2020) should bring community value added?



**Q-9:** In your opinion, which are the major problems faced at implementing projects funded under IPA CBC Programmes?



## Appendix “B” – “Summary of “thematic concentration” proposal

For selection of thematic priorities (in correspondence to the strategic IPA II Programming Framework) should be taken into account the relevance of the topic regarding cross-border cooperation, as well as budget constraints. The guiding question of the assessment was: *“Which ones of the priorities have cross-border relevance and which ones can develop the highest effects in this particular border setting?”*

Below are summarised the major **criteria for thematic concentration** which were taken into consideration:

- **Availability of alternative funding:** Likelihood of other funding sources (national, EU, other donors’) to be available to support the thematic priority in the CBC eligible area.
- **Importance in national strategies:** The importance of the thematic priority in the national strategies.
- **Quality of life for the people living in the CBC area:** Impact of the thematic priority in order to improve the living conditions of the population residing in the CBC area, e.g. access to public services, quality of livelihood/environment, cultural and social aspects, links to urban areas.
- How **relevant** and/or **important** is cross-border cooperation to address this issue?
- **Feasibility of the implementation:** The emphasis rests on technical assumptions such as tender documentation availability, construction permits received, presence of skilful competent applicants in the CBC area and the financial envelope available can have a tangible impact on that area too.
- **Trigger for development of other thematic priorities:** The implementation of actions under the thematic priority would have multiplier effects on other thematic priorities (e.g. infrastructure - economic development, environment - tourism, etc.).
- **Added value of the CBC approach:** To which extent is the CBC types of actions more effective and efficient to address the needs of the CB area under the TP compared to other types of programmes?
- **Integration of the CB area:** How well this thematic priority can improve the interaction, relations and collaboration of people and institutions living in the CBC area?

The Bulgaria-Serbia IPA CBC Programme 2014-2020 should **tackle common challenges** identified jointly in the border region (such as poor accessibility, inappropriate business environment, lack of networks among local and regional administrations, research and innovation and take-up of information and communication technologies, environmental pollution, risk prevention, negative attitudes towards neighbouring country citizens) and **exploit the untapped potentials in the border area** (development of cross-border research and innovation facilities and clusters, cooperation among universities or health centres), while **enhancing the cooperation process for the purpose of the overall harmonious development of the region**.

Hence, **4 major elements** have been taken into consideration when formulating the proposal for “thematic concentration” of the Programme’s strategy:

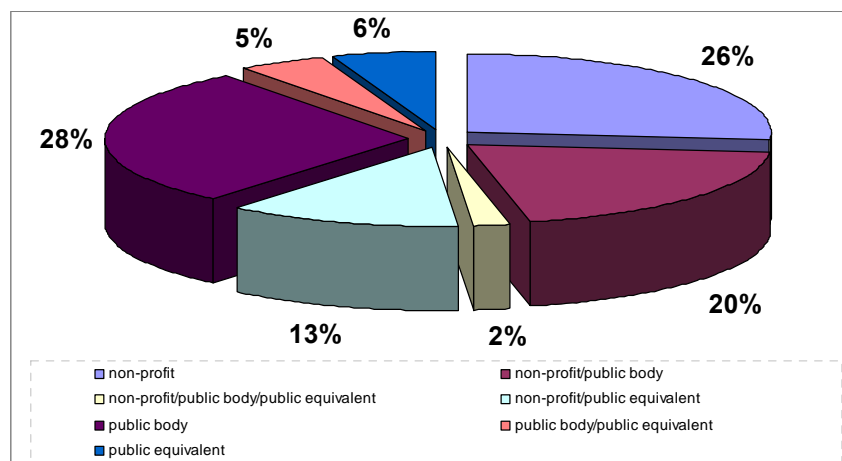
### Lessons learned from the current programme (2007-2013)

The implementation of the current programme so far, shows that the interest towards CBC projects has been substantially increased. Within the two “Call for Proposals” launched (1<sup>st</sup> CfP as of 2009, and the 2<sup>nd</sup> CfP – in 2011), a total of **367 project proposals** have been received, out of which **139 projects have been approved** and received financing through the 2007-2013 IPA CBC Programme between Bulgaria and Serbia.

A **large range of projects** related to small-scale infrastructure, exchange of knowledge and education, innovation, science, cultural exchange, sustainable development, through the development of tourism, ecology and others have been implemented. Up to March 2014, 74 of the approved projects have been successfully completed, and other 65 projects are still in a process of implementation.

Till February 2014, almost half of the Programme’s budget has been spent effectively – i.e. **EUR 15.3 million has been paid**, out of which – **EUR 9.8 million certified** by the EC. It is expected that by April, 2015, the rest of the contracted projects will be completed, thus almost the whole budget of the current programme will be absorbed.

Figure 1: Partnerships created - approved projects (2007-2013)



The great variety of project beneficiaries and partnerships established - municipalities, regional administrations, NGOs, cultural and educational institutions, etc. – demonstrates not only the interest towards the programme, but also the **increased capacity** for participation in projects funded by the EU.

The current programme has been structured around **2 priority axes (typologically formulated)**, in difference to new strategic framework (2014-2020) where stronger thematic concentration will be sought:

- *Priority 1: “Development of small-scale infrastructure” (e.g. the **investment measures**): physical and information infrastructure; infrastructure concerning environmental issues; assistance for project preparation.*
- *Priority 2: “Enhancing capacity for joint planning, problem solving and development” (e.g. the **“soft” measures**): links and networking on institutional,*

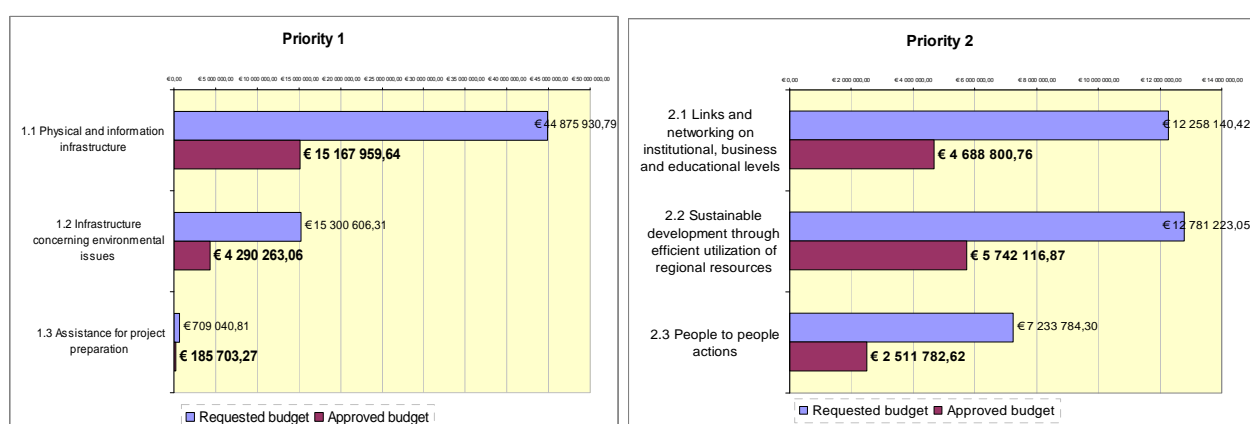
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*business and educational levels; sustainable development through efficient utilization of regional resources; 'people-to-people' actions.*

**Under Priority 1**, 114 project applications have been received, out of which 36 projects obtained financing (total amount: EUR 19 643 925.99). So far, 16 projects have been successfully completed. The Fig. 2 above shows that under this priority axis the major interest has been manifested by the public bodies (local and regional structures).

**Under Priority 2**, 253 project applications has been received, out of which 96 contracts has been signed (total amount: EUR 12 816 118.45). Till March 2014, 58 of the contracts have been successfully completed. The majority of beneficiaries under this priority axis are the representatives of the civil society (NGOs), business and educational institutions.

Figure 2: Contracted amounts by priority axis



Summarising the above monitoring data from the current programme's implementation, the TA programming team have transferred the 'typologically' structured projects into 'thematically' differentiated such (following the TPs, as set out in the IPA II Regulation), the result of which is presented in the Table below:

Theamtic Priorities		Projects		Budget		Average middle (%)	RANKING	
		No.	%	EUR	%			
TP1	Promoting employment, labour mobility and social and cultural inclusion across borders	8	5,8%	€ 1 493 764,78	4,6%	5,2%	2	
TP2	Protecting the environment and promoting climate change adaptation and mitigation, risk prevention and management	12	8,6%	€ 2 428 429,73	7,5%	8,0%	4	
TP3	Promoting sustainable transport and improving public infrastructures	11	7,9%	€ 5 332 683,94	16,4%	12,1%	5	<=
TP4	Encouraging tourism and cultural and natural heritage	33	23,7%	€ 7 605 415,88	23,3%	23,5%	8	<=
TP5	Investing in youth, education and skills	30	21,6%	€ 7 135 642,01	21,9%	21,7%	7	<=
TP6	Promoting local and regional governance	8	5,8%	€ 2 205 062,29	6,8%	6,3%	3	
TP7	Enhancing competitiveness, the business environment and the development of small and medium-sized enterprises, trade and investment	34	24,5%	€ 5 985 898,29	18,4%	21,4%	6	<=
TP8	Strengthening research, technological development, innovation and ICT	3	2,2%	€ 399 729,30	1,2%	1,7%	1	
		139		€ 32 586 626,22				

Ranking Legend: 1...poorly relevant, 8...highly relevant

According to these results the top 4 TPs for inclusion in the new programme should be:

- ❖ TP4: Encouraging tourism and cultural and natural heritage
- ❖ TP5: Investing in youth, education and skills
- ❖ TP7: Enhancing competitiveness, the business environment and the development of small and medium-sized enterprises, trade and investment

❖ TP3: Promoting sustainable transport and improving public infrastructures

**Territorial (situation) and SWOT Analysis**

The information fed into the SWOT analysis was stemming from the analysis of the baseline situation (the 'challenges') and the enquiry of options to address these challenges (the 'needs'), as well as from primary data collection via an online survey and discussions with regional stakeholders (1<sup>st</sup> RCF).

The territorial (situation) and SWOT analysis has produced ten aggregated potentials for the new Bulgaria-Serbia IPA CBC programme (2014-2020) that can be divided into four 'meta' aggregates:

→ **Strengthening existing strengths**

- EP1: Define a common, international market for cross border products and services
- EP2: Sustainable tourism and utilization of cultural natural heritage

→ **Making use of available potentials**

- PP1: Co-operative initiatives and cluster development reducing access and employment deficits in peripheral regions
- PP2: Involvement of youth in development and progress
- PP3: Development of unified cross-border tourism brand

→ **Removing existing barriers**

- EB1: Increasing lagging behind of peripheral, badly accessible regions
- EB2: Managing environmental risks
- EB3: Raising social polarisation due to demographic change and lack of investment in peripheral areas

→ **Averting possible threats**

- PB1: Brain drain occurrences due to disadvantages of shrinking areas
- PB2: Loss of border region attractiveness by reason of environmental quality decline, demographical change and lack of investment

The analysis of all possible scenarios as result of territorial and SWOT analysis are summarised in the Table below:

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	"Maxi-Maxi" Strategy	"Mini-Maxi" Strategy	"Mini-Mini" Strategy	"Maxi-Mini" Strategy
	Existing potential [EP]	Possible potential [PP]	Existing barrier [EB]	Possible barrier [PB]
TP1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>→ To improve cross-border cooperation in the field of employment through joint actions (job fairs, roundtables, etc.) providing basis for dialogue and cooperation.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>→ To stimulate the provision of training and re-training initiatives thus improving labour flexibility in the CBC region;</li> <li>→ To promote the organisation of joint CBC actions (job fairs, roundtables, etc.) thus integrating groups with specific needs, minorities.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>→ To fight poverty and social exclusion of marginalised communities in the CBC region, especially the Roma communities, by giving them opportunities outside their own communities in social, environmental and cultural projects.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>→ N/A for CBC actions</li> </ul>
TP2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>→ To promote the efficient and sustainable use of natural resources;</li> <li>→ To promote the efficient and sustainable use of natural resources through strengthening CBC partnerships in the field of nature protection;</li> <li>→ To enhance the development of protected areas, through strengthening the border nature protection institutions;</li> <li>→ To improve the environmental risk prevention and management systems by utilising the already established good neighbourly relations of the relevant authorities.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>→ To establish joint disaster management systems and enhance emergency preparedness thus institutionalising the common efforts towards nature protection across the border.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>→ To minimise fire risks through establishing joint fire fight management system and enhance the fire emergency preparedness.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>→ To enhance fire fight management and fire prevention measures across the border by utilising the already established good neighbourly relations of the relevant authorities.</li> </ul>
TP3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>→ To promote the development of multimodal transport service thus utilising the variety of basic infrastructure in the border region.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>→ To reduce the isolation and improve local accessibility through improved access to major transport facilities;</li> <li>→ To enhance the level of transport services and traffic safety across the border through promotion of PPPs.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>→ N/A for CBC actions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>→ N/A for CBC actions</li> </ul>
TP4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>→ To promote the development of niche tourism activities (e.g. eco-, ethno-gourmet- tourism) thus valorising the favourable conditions for diversified tourism in the border area;</li> <li>→ To promote the development of economically sustainable cultural products and services based on the demand for new</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>→ To promote the development of tourist clusters thus creating critical mass in providing tourism services;</li> <li>→ To stimulate the utilisation of natural and cultural heritage through improved access to sites of touristic interest;</li> <li>→ To promote the integration of cultural heritage in the tourist product development</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>→ To create a touristic identity and image of the border area thus creating competitive advantages of the local tourist products.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>→ To valorise the favourable conditions for diversified tourism forms thus increasing touristic potential and competitiveness of touristic services providers;</li> <li>→ To exploit the cultural heritage as a potential generator of new products and employment</li> </ul>

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	"Maxi-Maxi" Strategy	"Mini-Maxi" Strategy	"Mini-Mini" Strategy	"Maxi-Mini" Strategy
	Existing potential [EP]	Possible potential [PP]	Existing barrier [EB]	Possible barrier [PB]
	<p>tourist destinations and experience</p> <p>→ To improve the image of the border area as touristic designation through creating common cross-border touristic brand.</p>	<p>through development of cross-border branding;</p> <p>→ To improve the tourism image of the border area through creating of joint promotion activities;</p> <p>→ To enhance the cooperation and networking between local tour operators through development of cross-border regional tourism packages.</p>		<p>possibilities.</p>
TP5	<p>→ Introduction of entrepreneurial themes into primary and secondary schools (as extracurricular modules) thus creating mechanisms for career counselling;</p> <p>→ To improve the training and youth activities' infrastructure thus facilitating the access of population to all levels of education;</p> <p>→ To encourage youth entrepreneurship development thus creating prerequisites for improving youth employment opportunities in the border area;</p> <p>→ To promoting cooperation between educational and training institutions and business companies;</p> <p>→ To promote the EU2020 flagship initiative "Youth on the move" through targeted CBC youth initiatives (e.g. 'people-to-people'-type of actions).</p>	<p>→ To create a better place for youth to develop thus diminishing brain drain occurrences;</p> <p>→ To encourage youth entrepreneurship development thus increasing the perspectives of the youth;</p> <p>→ To improve the connectivity and communication between business and education institutions;</p> <p>→ To enhance the level of youth participation in decision making, entrepreneurship, etc. by promoting the EU2020 flagship initiative "Youth on the move";</p> <p>→ To promote mechanisms for career counselling and guidance for young people thus enhancing the youth employment in the border region.</p>	<p>→ To improve connectivity and communication between business and VET institutions thus creating labour market-oriented curricula.</p>	<p>→ To facilitate the exchange of know-how and curricula innovations, corresponding to the dynamically changing economy and labour market;</p> <p>→ To support the development of labour market-oriented vocational education in the border region.</p>
TP6	<p>→ Valorising the traditionally good neighbourly relations for exchange of best practices in administrative reforms;</p> <p>→ To actively involve civil society in management and planning of the local economic development;</p> <p>→ To develop further well-functioning border-management systems.</p>	<p>→ To improve exchange of know-how, best practice and information between the relevant administrations from both sides of the border.</p>	<p>→ N/A for CBC actions</p>	<p>→ To support the deployment of the European Secure Information Exchange Network Application (SIENA) in Serbia.</p>



## Annex 8 Consultations with regional stakeholders

As a result the “ranking” of TPs as a result of the Situation/SWOT analysis gave the following results:

	Thematic Priorities	"Maxi-Maxi" Strategy Existing potential [EP]	"Mini-Maxi" Strategy Possible potential [PP]	"Mini-Mini" Strategy Existing barrier [EB]	"Maxi-Mini" Strategy Possible barrier [PB]	TOTAL	RANKING	
TP1	Promoting employment, labour mobility and social and cultural inclusion across borders	1	2	1	0	4	2	
TP2	Protecting the environment and promoting climate change adaptation and mitigation, risk prevention and management	4	1	1	1	7	5	<=
TP3	Promoting sustainable transport and improving public infrastructures	1	2	0	0	3	1	
TP4	Encouraging tourism and cultural and natural heritage	3	5	1	2	11	6	<=
TP5	Investing in youth, education and skills	5	5	1	2	13	7	<=
TP6	Promoting local and regional governance	3	1	0	1	5	3	
TP7	Enhancing competitiveness, the business environment and the development of small and medium-sized enterprises, trade and investment	8	6	0	0	14	8	<=
TP8	Strengthening research, technological development, innovation and ICT	1	2	1	2	6	4	

Ranking Legend: 1...poorly relevant, 8...highly relevant

Hence, the following top 4 TPs have been outlined:

- ❖ TP7: Enhancing competitiveness, the business environment and the development of small and medium-sized enterprises, trade and investment
- ❖ 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

### Regional Consultations

The conclusions of the territorial (situation) and SWOT analysis have been confirmed by the results from the online survey. As **major threats** for cross-border cooperation between Bulgaria and Serbia are noticed:

- **Unemployment** (41.7%)
- **Ageing population** and trends for depopulation of the region (38.3%)
- **Absence of economic growth** and diversification of economic activities (38.3%)
- **Migration** of the younger generation (34.4%)

Amongst the major **problems and barriers** for cross-border cooperation between Bulgaria and Serbia, the survey's respondents have indicated:

- **Institutional** – 46.7%
- **Socio-economic** – 28.9%
- Accessibility and mobility – 18.9%
- Environmental – 12.2%
- Socio-cultural – 8.9%

According to online survey, the respondents gave preference to the following top 4 priorities:

- ❖ TP1: Promoting employment, labour mobility and social and cultural inclusion across borders
- ❖ TP4: Encouraging tourism and cultural and natural heritage

- ❖ TP5: Investing in youth, education and skills
- ❖ TP7: Enhancing competitiveness, the business environment and the development of small and medium-sized enterprises, trade and investment

At the 1st RCF, and after having much wider picture of the border area analysis presented, the regional stakeholders have reconsidered their preference and ranked the top TPs as follows:

- ❖ TP5: Investing in youth, education and skills
- ❖ TP7: Enhancing competitiveness, the business environment and the development of small and medium-sized enterprises, trade and investment
- ❖ TP4: Encouraging tourism and cultural and natural heritage
- ❖ TP8: Strengthening research, technological development, innovation and ICT

### Cross-border added value

During the programming process a special emphasis was also given to the fact that the IPA CBC Programme is not just the next programme, but it should be considered as additional one to all other national and EC-funded programmes. Hence, there should be something specific in its strategic approach, and this is its **cross-border added value**, considered as:

- Organisational and policy learning
- Solutions to common problems
- Generating critical mass
- Building structures for future cross-border cooperation

Therefore, each of the eight TP (as per IPA II Regulation) have been “awarded” with an extra **point per ‘value added component’** taking into consideration: the potential for implementing CBC projects in the given thematic field, the programme budget restrictions, the final conclusions from the analysis so far, as well as the expressed interest towards future activities in the respective thematic field.

Summarising all the above considerations, the TA programming team has reached the following **ranking of thematic priorities**:

## Annex 8 Consultations with regional stakeholders

Theamtic Priorities		Current Programme	Online survey	Regional Consultative Forum	Situation & SWOT analysis	Average	Intermediate Ranking	CBC added value					FINAL RANKING
								Organisational and policy learning	Solutions to common problems	Generating critical mass	Building structures		
		[a]	[b]	[c]	[d]	[a+b+c+d]/4							
TP1	Promoting employment, labour mobility and social and cultural inclusion across borders	2	8	3	2	3,75	4	1				5	
TP2	Protecting the environment and promoting climate change adaptation and mitigation, risk prevention and management	4	3	4	5	4,00	5	1	1		1	8	?
TP3	Promoting sustainable transport and improving public infrastructures	5	2	2	1	2,50	2		1		1	4	
TP4	Encouraging tourism and cultural and natural heritage	8	7	6	6	6,75	7	1	1	1	1	11	<=
TP5	Investing in youth, education and skills	7	6	8	7	7,00	8	1	1		1	11	<=
TP6	Promoting local and regional governance	3	1	1	3	2,00	1	1	1		1	4	
TP7	Enhancing competitiveness, the business environment and the development of small and medium-sized enterprises, trade and investment	6	4	7	8	6,25	6			1	1	8	?
TP8	Strengthening research, technological development, innovation and ICT	1	5	5	4	3,75	4	1			1	6	

Ranking Legend: 1...poorly relevant, 8...highly relevant

- ❖ TP4: Encouraging tourism and cultural and natural heritage
- ❖ TP5: Investing in youth, education and skills
- ❖ TP2: Protecting the environment and promoting climate change adaptation and mitigation, risk prevention and management
- ❖ TP7: Enhancing competitiveness, the business environment and the development of small and medium-sized enterprises, trade and investment

The above TPs rating represents a **cumulated result** of the territorial (situation) and SWOT analysis performed, lessons learned from current CBC programme implementation as well as wide regional consultations (online survey and discussions with stakeholders). Based on an assessment grid, where the assumptions as mentioned above are summarised - **three options** for selecting thematic priorities have been suggested:

- **Option 1 (broad):** applying a broader approach and focussing on the selection of four (4) thematic priorities, opening up the possibilities of the project applicants and the
- **Option 2 (focused):** focussing on the selection of two (2) thematic priorities, to ensure a thematic concentration and the efficient use of funds;
- **Option 3 (compromise):** selecting three (3) thematic priorities.

## Appendix “C” - List of consulted stakeholders

Table 1: List of Institutions represented in the Programme’s Joint Working Group

<b>BULGARIA</b>
Ministry of Regional Development (MRD), Directorate General Territorial Cooperation Management (DG TCM)
Council of Ministers’ Administration
Ministry of economy and energy
Ministry of Transport, Information Technologies and Communications
Ministry of Environment and Water
Ministry of Labour and Social Policy
Ministry of Interior
Ministry of Finance
Executive Agency Audit of EU Funds, Ministry of Finance
State Fund Agriculture
MRD, Directorate General Strategic Planning of Regional Development and Administrative Territorial Structure (DG SPRDATS)
MRD, Directorate General Strategic Planning of Regional Development
MRD, DG OPRD
Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Ministry of Culture
National Institute of Statistics
National Association of Municipalities in the Republic of Bulgaria
Regional Development Council of South-West region
Regional Development Council of North-West region
Bulgarian Chamber of Commerce and Industry
Bulgarian Industrial Association - Union of the Bulgarian Business
Association of Industrial Capital in Bulgaria (BICA)
"Confederation of Employers and Industrialists in Bulgaria - KRIB" Association
Confederation of Independent Trade Unions in Bulgaria (CITUB)
Confederation of Labour "Podkrepa"

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Regional ecological center for Central and Eastern Europe
Ecoforum for Sustainable Development Association
Bulgarian association of consultants for european programmes
Association for social integration
Habitat for Humanity Foundation
Commission for Protection against Discrimination
National Council for the Integration of Persons with Disabilities
University of Library Studies and Information Technologies
<b>SERBIA</b>
Serbian European Integration Office
Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Ministry of Regional Development and Local Self-Government
Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Management
NALED
RARIS
SKGO
Center for development of Jablanica and Pcinja Districts
Belgrade Open School
CEKOR
Stara Planina, PIROT
Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development
RRA JUG Regional Development Agency South
Educational centre Leskovac
Evropski pokret

Table 2: Overview on the on-line survey respondents (type of institutions)

Type of institution	Submission number	Share
National public authority	18	10.00%
Regional public authority	3	1.67%

## Annex 8 Consultations with regional stakeholders

Local public authority	34	18.89%
Development Agency	2	1.11%
University, Knowledge / Research Institute, institute for higher education	26	14.44%
Education / Training Centre	6	3.33%
Business support structure - chamber of commerce, business association, business cluster	13	7.22%
Institute of Culture - museum, library, art gallery, community centre, etc.	4	2.22%
Health services provider	2	1.11%
Civil society structure (association/foundation)	41	22.78%
Consultancy	9	5.00%
As an individual/private person	22	12.22%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>180</b>	

Table 3: Overview on the type of institutions participating on the 1st RCF (all 11 sessions)

Type of institution	Number	Share
National public authority		
Regional public authority		
Local public authority		
Development Agency		
University, Knowledge / Research Institute, institute for higher education		
Education / Training Centre		
Business support structure - chamber of commerce, business association, business cluster		
Institute of Culture - museum, library, art gallery, community centre, etc.		
Health services provider		
Civil society structure (association/foundation)		
Consultancy		

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As an individual/private person		
<b>TOTAL</b>		

Table 4: Overview on the type of institutions participating on the 2nd RCF (all 2 sessions)

Type of institution	Number	Share
National public authority		
Regional public authority		
Local public authority		
Development Agency		
University, Knowledge / Research Institute, institute for higher education		
Education / Training Centre		
Business support structure - chamber of commerce, business association, business cluster		
Institute of Culture - museum, library, art gallery, community centre, etc.		
Health services provider		
Civil society structure (association/foundation)		
Consultancy		
As an individual/private person		
<b>TOTAL</b>		

## Annex 8 Consultations with regional stakeholders

Table 5: General overview on the stakeholders participated on the consultation events organised during the preparation Programme period

Type of institution	Online Survey	1 <sup>st</sup> RCF	2 <sup>nd</sup> RCF	Total number	Share
National public authority	18				
Regional public authority	3				
Local public authority	34				
Development Agency	2				
University, Knowledge / Research Institute, institute for higher education	26				
Education / Training Centre	6				
Business support structure - chamber of commerce, business association, business cluster	13				
Institute of Culture - museum, library, art gallery, community centre, etc.	4				
Health services provider	2				
Civil society structure (association/foundation)	41				
Consultancy	9				
As an individual/private person	22				
<b>TOTAL</b>					