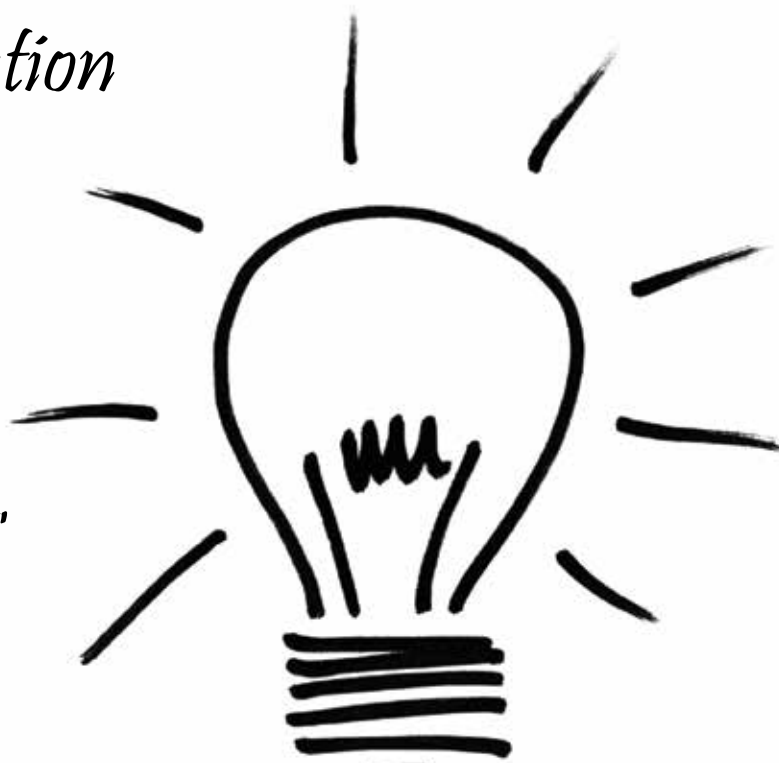


# yellow & blue

CBIB + Newsletter | Issue No 3 | May 2015 | Free edition

*Presentation  
of good  
practice  
project  
examples*

pages 20-35



## DIALOGUE

*The cross-border  
cooperation is the most  
European of all the activities*

pages 12-15

## DIALOGUE

*Joining knowledge,  
experience and actions for  
the better quality of lives*

pages 8-11

## DIALOGUE

*Embracing EU  
goals, standards and  
procedures*

pages 4-7



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Every day,  
around the world,  
ordinary people are  
making a difference.

#NewYearNewWorld

our world  
our dignity  
our future



# Word of editor

Dear Readers,

Procedures, implementing rules, online application form... Scary words!

Financial regulation... A scarier one!

And when you think that you'd start using the documents hiding behind these words and work under their provisions, it gives you the creeps!

I know! Been there, as most of the grant beneficiaries who benefited or are still benefiting from the EU IPA CBC or any other EU-funded grant!

On the other hand, I'm currently facing the same problem with android phones, e-banking, even e-books! I'm an old fashion girl, it's my excuse! While for most of the new technology generation children, it's just a piece of cake!

My kids know more about my phone and its performances than I do. They mainly use on-line information for preparing their homework, but learning letters and reading was really a big problem. My son avoided taking a pen in his hand. He did it for the first time at the age of 4, but now I can modestly say that at the age of 12 he's a real artist.

I've been involved in numerous seminars and training events, meeting a lot of people struggling with procedures and regulations. I'd the chance to watch them study and grow. At the same time, as a parent of two kids, I've been witness of talents and limitations, successes and failures, persistence and capitulations, courage and fears; I've learned that the accomplishment is being built up with the bricks of defeat and it's cemented with tenacity.

The year 2014 was marked as a time to take stock

on the results of previous implementation periods: presentation of good practice project examples and the achievements of their actions, as well as of the entire programmes.

Very many events have been organised in order to acknowledge the impact made by cross-border and transnational cooperation programmes and projects. Irrespective of sometimes the limited funds, they did make a difference for the local communities. These events were designed not only to promote the programmes' achievements, but above all they aimed at praising the merits of cooperation itself: that force that recognises no borders uniting people no matter of their nationalities, languages or culture, bringing them together around the same goal 'a better life for themselves and their communities'.

Last year's European Cooperation Day (2014), under the simple but meaningful slogan 'Sharing borders, growing closer', entailed the organisation of more than 120 events held in more than 30 countries, from project fairs to circus performances, bike rides, film festivals, music concerts, etc. In the end, this annual celebration encompassed 44 territorial cooperation programmes, involving over 100 cities of the European Union and neighbouring countries.

The present Yellow&Blue issue is bringing chronicles about the European Cooperation Day 2014, as well as stories of those that have walked along the path leading from ignorance and fear to knowledge and success.

It is also addressing those who still haven't dared to try or have but haven't made it!

Good luck and take a risk! One day you will do all right!

Yours,  
The Editor



p4, p8, p12

dialogue



p16

spotlights



dialogue

**4 Embracing EU goals, standards and procedures**  
Interview with **Mrs Zara Halilović**, Assistant Director, Directorate for European Integration, the Council of Ministers of Bosnia and Herzegovina

**8 Joining knowledge, experience and actions for the better quality of lives**  
Interview with **Mrs Ivana Petričević**, Director General, Directorate General for Coordination of the EU Assistance Programmes, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and European Integration, Montenegro

**12 The cross border cooperation is the most european of all the activities**  
Interview with **Mrs Sanda Šimić Stambolić**, Assistant Director, European Integration Office, Government of the Republic of Serbia

spotlights

**16 Seeking impact and spin-off effects will govern the implementation of the new IPA II CBC programmes**  
Regional CBC Forum held in Sarajevo

**19 Improve efficiency and effectiveness of programmes**  
Presentation of the CBC related training sessions held in the region

stories from the field

**20 ALBANIA - MONTENEGRO**  
Art, plastics and recycling

**22 BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA - MONTENEGRO**  
Together on paths of our past to european future!

**24 CROATIA - BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA**  
PROGRES protection of nature and globalisation of renewable energy sources

**26 CROATIA - MONTENEGRO**  
T.H.I.N.K. the intellectual nurturing in kindergartens

# Contents

- 28 CROATIA - SERBIA**  
Pannonia organica
- 30 THE FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA - ALBANIA**  
Days of Roma culture
- 32 SERBIA - BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA**  
Development and promotion of health tourism spas in the cross-border area of B&H-Serbia CROSS SPA
- 34 SERBIA - MONTENEGRO**  
Cross-border flood protection and rescue
- 36 ALBANIA - KOSOVO\***  
Programme promotion and visibility
- 37 MONTENEGRO - KOSOVO**  
Programme promotion and visibility
- 38 THE FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA - KOSOVO**  
Programme promotion and visibility

briefing

- 40 European Cooperation Day 2014 – Sharing borders, growing closer**  
Project Fair in Podgorica  
Project Fair in Tirana  
National Conference on CBC in Belgrade

briefing

p40



40



42



43

\*This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244/1999 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence



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# EMBRACING EU GOALS, STANDARDS AND PROCEDURES

Interview with  
Mrs Zara Halilović,  
Assistant Director,  
Directorate  
for European  
Integration,  
the Council  
of Ministers  
of Bosnia and  
Herzegovina

**CBIB+:** Bosnia and Herzegovina has participated in EU-funded cross-border and transnational cooperation programmes since 2007. What do you consider as the major outcomes and benefits of this process in bringing Bosnia and Herzegovina closer to the EU, and, the other way around, the EU closer to the citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina?

**Z.H.:** Since 2007 partners from Bosnia and Herzegovina have participated in the implementation of more than 200 projects under the IPA Component II. As one of the most important values of this process, I would like to highlight the number of partnerships established between BiH partners and those abroad because these partnerships often continue even in the post implementation era. It can be stated that in this period significant know-how and institutional capacity has been built as a bottom-up approach and we have greatly benefited from this.

Also, I would like to underline a remarkable high interest for the EU and EU funds in bordering regions which was achieved mostly by promotion of EU funds available through cross-border and transnational cooperation programmes. From the very beginning, we had first to draw the attention of mainly local communities and non-governmental organisations in the bordering regions and then to wake up their willingness to become applicants in the calls published under these programmes. Today, we can say that dissemination of information through visibility events and campaigns resulted in a very high level of interest for cross-

border and transnational cooperation programmes funded by the EU which constantly grows from one call to another.

By participating in these programmes, the citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina had the opportunity to experience and embrace EU goals, standards and procedures as their own in order to improve life in their communities.

**CBIB+:** Even though the implementation of programmes under the IPA 2007-2013 is not finalised yet, we can say that you are capitalising on their results and impact. What have the major benefits been for the citizens in the bordering regions? And the main lessons learned for the management structures of the programmes?

**Z.H.:** It would be much easier to answer this question after the evaluation of these programmes when we will have more information on results and impacts. However, since BiH has been implementing numerous projects within 6 cross-border and transnational cooperation programmes during the last 8-9 years, most of all, I would like to emphasize that the process of creating and implementing joint projects in this period was found and used as an opportunity to contribute to re-establishing social and economic links between inhabitants at local level in bordering regions that were severely affected by the recent war. Also, for us, it became much easier than before to tackle common environmental issues through these programmes.

And, as regards management structures, I believe that now we fully understand the meaning and importance of the word “cooperation”.

**CBIB+:** The programming phase for the CBC programmes with other Beneficiaries of IPA II concluded during 2014 and the documents were approved by the European Commission at the end of the year. What are your expectations of the next implementation period?

**Z.H.:** Certain innovations regarding the implementation process have been anticipated for the new period. Some of these, in opposition to current or previous practice, are: one single allocation per programme, one contract and a single contracting authority per project etc. Still, we do not expect these



novelties to slow down the preparation phase nor to make the implementation more difficult, but it will be necessary for us to learn again. I have to say that preparation for this new period have started in a timely manner and bilateral meetings with our colleagues from neighbouring countries will soon result in clear arrangements for smooth implementation modes. So, although some innovativeness will be introduced in the new implementation period, good cooperation with partner countries so far, as well as our previous experience in implementation, gives us right to expect even better achievement of results than in the previous period.

**CBIB+:** In addition to the standard bilateral meetings with your partner countries, you are regularly participating at regional meetings and conferences, organised in order to foster exchange of experience and know-how. What do you see as major achievements of these meetings and what changes could be undertaken to boost their effectiveness?

**Z.H.:** Aside from the continuous excellent organization by the CBIB Plus Project, these events always provide an opportunity to meet nice people once again - people you care about but don't have the opportunity to see them very often. That makes these events charming and gives them excitement. Also, as you have mentioned, the exchange of experi-

“ I would like to underline a remarkable high interest for the EU and EU funds in bordering regions which was achieved mostly by promotion of EU funds available through cross-border and transnational cooperation programmes ”

ence and know-how, from my point of view is the essence of these meetings, especially because all involved in implementation of the CBC programmes share the same interests and face similar problems. Therefore, selecting and adopting a common approach in the implementation of programmes as well as in solving the same or similar problems in our countries could be marked as an important result of these events. Moreover, taking into account the number of challenges we encounter and their importance, changes related to the introduction of working groups and electronic forums seem to be of significant benefit, especially because these groups can meet and discuss daily through this e-forum



using it as a meeting point. This idea has our absolute support.

These regional meetings and conferences hosting representatives and

participants from all the countries from the region as well as representatives of the EC make us feel that we belong to the EU family as real members.



By participating in these programmes, the citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina had the opportunity to experience and embrace EU goals, standards and procedures as their own in order to improve life in their communities



**JOINING KNOWLEDGE,  
EXPERIENCE AND  
ACTIONS FOR  
THE BETTER  
QUALITY  
OF LIVES**

**MONTE  
Negro**



Interview with  
Mrs Ivana  
Petričević,  
Director General,  
Directorate  
General for  
Coordination of  
the EU Assistance  
Programmes,  
Ministry of  
Foreign Affairs  
and European  
Integration,  
Montenegro

**CBIB+:** Montenegro has participated in EU-funded cross-border and transnational cooperation programmes since 2007. What do you consider as the major outcomes and benefits of this process in bringing Montenegro closer to the EU, and, the other way around, the EU closer to the citizens of Montenegro?

**I.P.:** During financial perspective 2007-2013 Montenegro benefited from participation in five bilateral cross-border programmes (with Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Kosovo and Serbia), IPA Adriatic Programme and two transnational programmes (MED and South-East Europe).

While development of knowledge and skills of Montenegrin beneficiaries in preparation of quality project proposals and their implementation in line with EU requirements is the first benefit to be identified, it should be noted that these programmes made great impact with respect to perception of the Montenegrin citizens about EU support.

It is not unknown that benefits of transition assistance and institution building projects, incredibly important for the systemic changes, can sometimes be hard to understand by average citizens not directly involved in their implementation.

On the contrary, results achieved in Component II of IPA provided opportunity for the citizens to observe and benefit from the results "at the field" - close to the place where they live and work and having direct impact on their quality of life.

Hand in hand with development of the capacities of potential and actual beneficiaries of bilateral and transnational cross-border programmes, capacities of Montenegrin Operating

Structure were continuously developed. As a result of these processes EU rules, procedures, way of function, but also way of thinking became integral part of daily work on the people composing OS, bringing in this way changes not only for OS members, but also wider changes impacting the way how Montenegrin public administration works in general.

Strengthening of bonds with neighbouring countries, through implementation of bilateral cross-border programmes, proved that people depend on each other, that they have to cooperate with each other and that they cannot and do not want to live without each other. And while this was not easy to imagine some decades ago, the countries of the region represent today "different scenery", confirming to Europe that the Western Balkans are willing to go further, building upon a smooth cooperation experience and leaving behind the disputed of the past.

"Closer look" of EU partners into the potentials that Montenegro has to offer, its possibilities, capacities and willingness to cooperate, enabled tough participation of Montenegrin beneficiaries in transnational programmes, brought Montenegro closer to the EU. All partnerships built, practices exchanged and new joint objectives set, paved the paths for the future cooperation.

While we are aware of the fact that this situation is only one segment of the wider picture of better mutual understanding it does represent great potential on which we should continue to build. Therefore we are looking forward to perspective 2014-2020, making sure that we carefully preserve all the strengths and change all the weaknesses we identified in the years behind us.

**CBIB+:** Even though the implementation of programmes under the IPA 2007-2013 is not finalised yet, we can say that you are capitalising on their results and impact. What have the major benefits been for the citizens in the bordering regions? And the main lessons learned for the management structures of the programmes?

**I.P.:** As we are slowly getting to a closure of IPA I, we are analyzing processes, results and impact made through the implementation of projects in period 2007-2013. Majority of funds are already contracted and concrete results are getting more obvious now.

While evaluation of individual projects and their impact will have to follow, I believe that we can even now say that implementation of these programmes brought people closer across the border, by joining knowledge, experience and actions for the better quality of their lives.

In concrete terms, these programmes supported implementation of number of joint projects in the areas of environmental protection, tourism, transport, education, employment, social inclusion, health care and "people-to-people" actions.

And, while overall aims should always be kept in mind, let me use this opportunity to mention here just a few projects, leaving significant mark on cross-border cooperation in Montenegro.

Project "Olympic Hopes" (implemented within CBC programme Croatia-

Montenegro) reinforced sport links between water polo clubs, making greater impact on mutual understanding and cooperation by bringing together children and youth from Montenegro and Croatia, using healthy/sport activities.

Montenegrin and Albanian partners worked together on improvement of qualitative tourist offer and promotion of local products within "Farmtour" Project, implemented within CBC programme Albania-Montenegro.

**As a result of these processes EU rules, procedures, way of function, but also way of thinking became integral part of daily work on the people composing OS**

In parallel with work in areas of tourism and sports, Montenegrin beneficiaries invested efforts to support inclusion and integration of persons with disabilities. Together with colleagues from Bosnia and Herzegovina Project "Summer School of Inclusion" was implemented, establishing coordination and cooperation between all relevant actors in this field and aimed at inclusion of children with disabilities in social activities such as organization of summer camps by using potentials of cross-border cooperation.

This newsletter is probably the best place to state that it is not always the case that we look forward to use the results or outputs of the projects implemented. While it could sound strange at the first glance, we should use chances like this to state that situations are teaching us the lesson over and over again that prevention is always better, but that we can not always count on it and that our joint efforts are necessary especially when we are facing the force of nature.

One of these examples is the Project "Cross-border Flood Protection and Rescue" implemented through CBC programme Serbia-Montenegro, aimed to reduce the risks of disasters caused by natural hazards, whose results were unfortunately already used during catastrophic floods which affected Serbia last year.

Under IPA 2007-2013 cross-border and transnational cooperation programmes, Montenegrin project partners managed to absorb more than € 30 million of EU funding. This comprises 103 bilateral cooperation projects, 48 within the IPA Adriatic programme and 39 in the framework of SEE and MED programmes.

Finally, in order to make this process success we all learned that results are possible if operating structures cooperate closely and intensively on a daily base.

**CBIB+:** The programming phase for the CBC programmes with other Beneficiaries of IPA II concluded during 2014 and the documents

were approved by the European Commission at the end of the year. What are your expectations of the next implementation period?

**I.P.:** In the upcoming seven years period situation for Montenegro with respect to participation in bilateral cross-border and transnational programmes will change.

Instead of five bilateral cross-border cooperation programmes we had in previous financial perspective, Montenegro will participate in four bilateral programmes. In the same time, we will for the first time benefit from participation in trilateral programmes (one with Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina; and one with Italy and Albania). In addition to this, novelty for Montenegrin beneficiaries will be participation in Adriatic-Ionian and Danube programmes, which will be implemented in addition to already known MED programme.

After preparatory work, which marked 2014 and which resulted in the approval of Programme Documents for Cross-border Cooperation programmes with Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo and Serbia, we are slowly turning to the implementation phase.

Based on past and on-going CBC experience, in which we learned lessons, established partnerships and developed capacities, I believe that new programmes will help us to achieve even better results and increased impact through implementation of concrete actions in the border region.

**CBIB+:** Montenegro is about to start the implementation of CBC programmes under the so called 'indirect management mode' where the national authorities will manage by themselves the EU funds. In your opinion, what are the lessons learned from the accreditation process and the challenges you expect to have ahead?

**I.P.:** After being exposed to accreditation process in the previous period, Montenegro is looking forward to take over the responsibility over the management of EU funds for CBC programmes.

It is important to stress out that great efforts were invested in terms of establishing the appropriate system and structures, as well as in capacity building actions, as required by respective legislation. This process has significantly contributed to strengthening the knowledge and capacities of people working in the OS and institutions involved in implementation of CBC programmes in Montenegro.

Since IPA II brings certain novelties, bringing in the changes in CBC also, in this moment it could be expected that challenge will be faced with respect to the fact that Montenegro will be a contracting authority for the programmes with Albania and Kosovo, since we did not have experience with this way of functioning before.

After being exposed to accreditation process in the previous period, Montenegro is looking forward to take over the responsibility over the management of EU funds for CBC programmes





РЕПУБЛИКА СРБИЈА



САРАДНЈЕ

# THE CROSS BORDER COOPERATION IS THE MOST EUROPEAN OF ALL THE ACTIVITIES

Interview with  
Mrs Sanda  
Šimić Stambolić,  
Assistant Director,  
European  
Integration Office,  
Government of the  
Republic of Serbia

**CBIB+:** Serbia has participated in EU-funded cross-border and transnational cooperation programmes since 2004. In the hindsight of having been involved in this venture from the beginning, what would you regard as the major outcomes and benefits of these programmes for bringing Serbia closer to the EU and, the other way around, the EU also closer to Serbia?

**S.Š.S.:** Yes. Since 2004, in the framework of those programmes, more than € 90 million have been implemented in projects, managed by more than 490 institutions and organisations all around Serbia, in most of the cases, in the bordering regions. We have to bear in mind that most of those beneficiaries are located in less developed and depopulated areas with poor technical and administrative capacity, which really gives a special importance to the outcomes of these programmes, knowing that these institutions and organisations applied, were awarded and implemented projects using very complicated procedures which is giving an even greater importance to these programmes as a learning process. So, these programmes not only contributed to the EU integration process in Serbia, but also they brought European values and standards closer to the Serbian citizens. In addition, the programmes have improved the economic situation in the area. But, given the not very significant amount of funds available under the programmes, I think that their biggest importance lies on this: learning, bringing EU closer to the citizens and networking and cooperating with partners from neighbouring area, which brought also the EU closer to Serbia.

What I also wanted to say is that, since 2004, we have had around 800 contracted projects for all programmes. However, the number of project applications were more than 3,500 and most of them were eligible for funding and were scored rather high. But we didn't have enough funds to finance them. The public interest and the quality of the applications are exceeding the available funding, which also enables us to make more impact on the target region.

**CBIB+:** Even though the implementation of programmes under the IPA 2007-2013 financial cycle is not finalised yet, we can say that you are capitalising on their results and impact. What have the major benefits been for the citizens in the bordering regions? And the main lessons learned for the management structures of the programmes?

**S.Š.S.:** It is very important to mention that CBC and transnational cooperation programmes are very similar to these types of programmes between EU Member States. That means that the logic of the programmes is support to the development effort of border regions and cooperation itself. There is no other way to be included in this privileged process of bringing closer bordering areas between countries than giving an opportunity to the citizens of Serbia to try to resolve and to help resolving joint problems that are really area based. They are linked to their needs and their needs are actually linked to their geographical position. Programmes are targeted to meet the needs of citizens. So, first of all, they benefit from a wide participatory process, because a lot



of people have been involved in the preparation of the programme, a lot of people are involved in implementation of the programme, which really gives a very important message about how Europe functions.

Regarding the lessons learned for the management structures, more or less the message is the same. The management structures have managed to get an insight of how Europe works and how the programmes between Member States work, much before the similar programmes will be available to the Republic of Serbia, which is really giving the management structures an opportunity to build capacity for the future.

**CBIB+:** Serbia is about to start the implementation of CBC programmes under the so called 'indirect management mode' where the national authorities will manage by themselves the EU funds. In your opinion, what are the lessons learned from the accreditation process and the challenges you expect to have ahead?

**S.Š.S.:** As we all know previously for programmes with countries that are not EU Member States, the contracting and paying function in the programmes was done by the EU Delegation in Serbia. Since Serbia has received accreditation for the indirect management system at the beginning of 2014, the European Commission trusts that we are capable of doing it along the way and I am absolutely sure that we are capable to do it. Regarding cross-border cooperation programmes, those programmes will be implemented in indirect management under the new financial perspective, from 2014 on. We are now working on new procedures and systems since the new regulation is much different from the previous one.

**There is no other way to be included in this privileged process of bringing closer bordering areas between countries than giving an opportunity to the citizens of Serbia to try to resolve and to help resolving joint problems that are really area based**

Let me mention an additional challenge in the CBC programmes. Since CBC programmes are never unilateral, so this cooperation aspect is of utmost importance. That is why the regional projects that the EU is funding are supporting this cooperation, like the CBIB+ project itself, and they have an utmost importance in order to establish a platform of common knowledge and shared experiences.

The circumstances in the region were such that Serbia became the first country that was accredited for the management of the previous IPA Component II, or cross-border cooperation programmes. However, we are very much willing to share our experiences of the accreditation process and of the preparation and implementation of procedures with our friends and colleagues in the region. One important aspect of the accreditation process is capacity. It is of utmost importance to have sufficient number of qualified people to implement delicate and complicated procedures on English language so the challenge is to get and to keep the capacities. Because of the complexity of the programmes it is important to put really a big effort in gaining and maintaining that capacity.

**CBIB+:** The programming phase for the CBC programmes with other Beneficiaries of IPA II concluded during 2014 and the documents were approved by the European Commission at the end of the year. What are your expectations of the next implementation period?



**S.Š.S.:** The next implementation period will be a challenge for Serbia, since a completely new system is being introduced implying that the contracting authority of Serbia, the Ministry of Finance, will be the one and only contracting authority for the programmes Serbia - BIH and Serbia - Montenegro. This means that the Government of Serbia will also award contracts to all the lead beneficiaries from Bosnia and Herzegovina and Montenegro. The control system should be set and also the agreement between Republic of Serbia and those neighbouring countries should be elaborated in a way that it enables smooth implementation of the programmes, which in plain words means transfer of funds, payments, control, reimbursements, follow-ups of irregularities, reporting on irregularities, etc. So it will be a big challenge, since Serbia will become a kind of managing authority for these programmes, that means that we will act as Member States were acting under the previous financial perspective, for programmes with Romania, Bulgaria and Hungary. This is an honour that it was entrusted to Serbia, but also a huge responsibility. We will need even bigger support from European Commission structures, also from regional support projects, but above all from citizens and beneficiaries to make this joint endeavour successful. The future programmes will not follow the logic of structural funds in all the aspects. However, this single contracting authority is

the aspect that will be followed and we are cautious, but confident that we will manage to fulfil this responsibility in a proper manner.

We have conducted wide public consultations in the process of preparation of new programmes. The future beneficiaries and the beneficiaries of the current programmes have articulated their needs in a much focused way. What is a small disappointment is that funds dedicated to these programmes are not matching the needs or expectations and are far way of matching the field capacities, because, as I said before, our experience shows that the number of applications is as many as 5 times more than the number of con-

tracted projects or the number of projects for which we had the funds to finance. Unfortunately, we will not be able to meet most expectations because of the allocations for those programmes. But we really believe, that by proving that we can manage the programmes properly, the EC will reconsider the allocations for these programmes, especially given that, and I will now quote a statement of the new Commissioner for European Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations, Mr. Johannes Hahn, given when he was Commissioner for Regional and Urban Policy, underlining that 'the cross-border cooperation is the most European of all the activities'.



*CBC regional events became a regular practice and an exceptionally useful forum for enabling regional discussion, taking stock of implementation challenges, facilitating the overcoming of eventual bottlenecks and, above all, speeding up the programme realisation process. Furthermore, they resulted in the establishment of technical working groups as topic oriented mini-forums for focus on operational issues that made use of on-line tools to economise costs and long distance interaction of their members. This approach is bringing the implementation of CBC programmes to a more advanced level where the results and impact achieved during the process are more important than the simple perception that the process is moving forward.*



# Seeking impact and spin-off effects will govern the implementation of the new IPA II CBC programmes



The Second Regional CBC Consultative Forum took place in Hotel Hollywood, in Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina, on 11 and 12 September 2014. This event was a follow-up of the First Regional CBC Consultative Forum meeting held in Belgrade on 21 and 22 November 2013.

The forum sought to discuss several aspects related to the implementation of the upcoming CBC programmes at intra-Western Balkan borders under IPA II for the period 2014-2020. The new generation of these programmes will be implemented under a substantially different approach, with a single Contracting Authority, a single budget and one contract per operation.

The main objectives of the forum were:

- To ensure a wide understanding of the changes in approach between the implementation provisions applicable to CBC under IPA I and those under IPA II; and

- To foster a network of knowledge and exchange of experience and ideas through the establishment of some technical working groups (TWGs) with a precise agenda under the CBC Regional Consultative Forum, as a standard platform for permanent dialogue amongst IPA CBC stakeholders in the Western Balkans, and between them and the European Commission services.

The Forum gathered more than 80 representatives from the national authorities and the Delegations of the European Union from the WB countries, as well as representatives from the European Commission Headquarters from Brussels.

Ms Nevenka Savić, Director of the Directorate for European Integration of the Council of Ministers of Bosnia and Herzegovina, opened the Forum thanking the EC and the CBIB+ Team for the organisation of the event, which should:

- be a crucial step for the efficient implementation of the new financial perspective;
- become an opportunity for reflecting on the achievement of results, exchanging experience and knowledge;
- focus on the challenges ahead such as the implementation of the priority 'technical assistance' and how to ensure impact and achievement of results; and
- serve to prove that the CBC programmes have been successful and must continue to be so.

Mr Melvin Asin, the Head of Cooperation at the Delegation of the European Union to Bosnia and Herzegovina, addressed the audience afterwards. He also stressed that the Forum is an opportunity to strengthen the personal and professional network amongst CBC stakeholders, for taking stock of the lessons learnt, exchanging of knowledge and experience, becoming aware of the next steps on IPA II CBC programming, and ensuring that citizens receive the benefit of the CBC programmes. He thanked the participants in advance for their active involvement and contribution to make the process of IPA II CBC implementation successful.



Finally, Mr Nicola Bertolini, from the European Commission at headquarters, introduced the unit where he works highlighting its very diversified and complex role in coordination and the time and effort that coordination demands on the unit's human resources. Mr Bertolini pointed out that IPA II requires a change in mentality and appealed to everyone to ask him or herself during regional discussions and programme implementation: did I contribute to improving the situation or did I make things worse?



Long and intense discussions followed the introductory speeches. The implementing modalities of the new IPA II CBC programmes and the role of the specific programme structures were duly considered.

Furthermore, the Forum included three discussion groups in the form of a workshop in order to get practical and workable conclusions out of it. The themes of the discussion groups revolved around to (i) the implementation of the technical assistance priority; (ii) the selection of operations, implementation and monitoring under indirect management; and (iii) spin-off effects, impacts and visibility.

The guiding motto of all discussions highlighted that all the efforts should focus on facilitating development and that all the actors involved must prove that a change would have to take place within a reasonable timeframe. The joint efforts should be put in improving the quality of implementation as well as on decreasing the time of the evaluation of applications under calls for proposals.

Considering that the event took place in September last year, many of the event's conclusions have already been implemented while the next regional meeting is envisaged to happen at the end of spring 2015.



# Improve efficiency and effectiveness of programmes

**Effective communication and presentation skills** – During 2014, in order to improve internal and external communication and visibility of the programmes and their achievements, CBIB+ organised five two-day and one one-day training sessions for 105 representatives from the national authorities and joint technical secretariats/antennae (JTS/A) in the region: 24-25 July – Skopje, 28 July – Zagreb, 30-31 July – Belgrade, 20-21 October – Sarajevo, 28-29 October – Tirana and 30-31 October – Podgorica.



**Project management highlights and EU-funded grant reporting** – This training event took place on 24 and 25 September 2014 in Tirana for 20 representatives of the national authority and joint technical secretariats staff. It was organised by the CBIB+ project in close cooperation with the Ministry for European Integration and the Delegation of the European Union in Tirana in order to improve the management of the CBC programmes.



**Implementation of CBC programmes under IPA I** – This training event was organised on 11-12 November 2014 in Podgorica mainly for the newly employed staff of the national authorities (CBC body and CFCU) and joint technical secretariats (16 participants). On the initiative of the Ministry of Finance and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and European Integration of Montenegro, CBIB+ project organised this event.



**Reporting requirements under CBC grants** – During 2014, upon the initiative of the some operating structures and delegations of the European Union, CBIB + organised four training sessions for the 143 grantees: 16-17 October, Podgorica (AL-MNE programme); 26 November, Skopje (MK-AL programme); 27 November, Skopje (GR-AL programme); and 17 December, Tirana (MK-AL programme).



**Procurement procedures under CBC grants** – These training sessions were focused mainly on providing the necessary assistance to the grant beneficiaries in implementation of procurement procedures. In close cooperation with the Ministry of Local Self Government and the Delegation of the European Union in Skopje, CBIB+ delivered two two-day training sessions in Skopje for 68 grantees: 23-24 February 2015 (MK-AL programme) and 25-26 February 2015 (MK-KSV programme).



**On-the-job mentoring for JTSs staff** – This was provided to staff from two JTSs during November 2014 as direct assistance on how to perform their everyday activities: 13-14/11 in Berane for staff at the JTS of the programme Montenegro – Kosovo and 24-25/11 in Kumanovo for the staff at the JTS of the programme the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia – Kosovo. A new round of on-the-job mentoring is planned for the spring 2015 and, as for all other training sessions, it will be implemented by the CBIB+ experts in close cooperation and agreement with the respective Operating Structures and the Delegations of the European Union.



In times when the entire world is fighting against pollution, getting rid of trash turning it into a product that can be further utilised is seen as a project for the future, that is an action improving the environment and encouraging environmentally-friendly economic activities while stimulating sustainable economic development. This was the guiding idea for the project 'Art, Plastics and Recycling'.

Lake Shkodër/Skadar represents a valuable asset of the natural, historical and cultural heritage of both Montenegro and Albania. As the largest lake in the Balkans, it features an impressive mosaic of mountain peaks, lake surface, river tributaries, wetlands and small islands, huge natural biotopes formed by water, wide variety of fish and water animals, and most importantly still "preserved" ecosystems. In its surroundings, there are ancient monuments testifying to the history of both Albania and Montenegro. The natural and cultural beauty of the area forms an attractive tourist destination, but the increasing need of the people living around the lake for income and employment associated with negligence causes a pressure on the use of the natural resources and it cannot be ignored.

Hence, a very problematic issue in that area is the plastic waste, evident on both sides of the border, but more visible on the Albanian. The impact of such pollution is evident in both sides of the boarder, not only as landscape degradation, but as a source of health problems among the local population, affecting the tourism sector and sustainable development of the area.

Due to Shkodër/Skadar Lake's significant natural heritage and its importance for the economic development of this cross-border area and life of the local population, it was imperative for the project team to reduce the negative environmental effects and encourage environmentally-friendly economic activities, increasing at the same time public awareness about the importance of protection and promotion of the environment and natural heritage. Furthermore, the project actions were tailored also to create a functional environment-art network of artists and other organizations established in the target area that would introduce one of the most innovative actions to overcome the very complex problem of environmental pollution and waste use/recycling as well as to promote the Shkodër/Skadar Lake area ensuring economic prosperity in the long run.

**Vjollca BACKA**, Director Barleti Institute for Research and Development, Marin Barleti University

"With the implementation of this project we have achieved a perfect balance in improving the environment and creating the conditions for a friendly atmosphere on cross-border economic activities in the area of Shkodër/Skadar Lake.

This project had and will have also impact on environmental protection from damages, clean up the area and the use of plastic waste for artistic and economic purposes.

A successful implementation of the project and fruitful partnership cooperation brought a positive impact on tourism development of the area and benefits to the population on both sides of the border and both countries.

It actively involved local communities together with development agencies, SMEs and educational institutions. This is an important factor in the long-term sustainability not only for this project but also for the sustainable socio-economical development of this cross – border area."

Through active involvement of the local stakeholders: municipalities, NGOs, educational institutions, development agencies and tourism organisations, this pilot action initially mapped the waste disposal hot spots of the project area and

## ART,



paved the way for plastic collection with the elaboration of a local strategy in collection and recycling.

This innovative project contributed to environmental protection and promotion of recycled plastic packaging as a material for design of useful decorated spaces. Using their creativity, the artists have made numerous art works and objects of practical value and showed that plastic packaging with 2, 4 and 5 recycling codes should not be considered as waste.

The internationally applied 'Social Plastics concept' was established in Shkoder lake area through the education of artists about special recycling and design processes and their cooperation with environmentalists and tourism workers, as well as through parallel awareness raising activities and wide inclusion of the institutions and citizens in plastic packaging collecting, its recycling and making unique objects.

As a crowning event, two whole day long cross-border promotional fairs in Virpazar and Shkodër were organised during the project implementation period, combining various type of activities: press conferences for presenting the 'Social Plastic concept', exhibition of souvenirs, objects for practical use and an art installation - murals made of recycled plastic, fair of traditional products of the Shkoder Lake area combined with several hours long cleaning actions.

**Svetlana Vujičić, Executive Director, Centre for Sustainable Tourism Initiatives:**

"Communication and coordination among cross-border beneficiaries and all other partners was very intensive. This was essential for fulfilling the main goal of the component "Social Plastics" within 'Art, Plastics & Recycling', – raising awareness of environmental pollution caused by plastic waste and thus affecting a change in behaviour and attitude of the broader public. Moreover, during the project, a bond between artists, environmentalists and tourism workers has been successfully established. This resulted in the creation of artistic murals, designed with the recycled plastic waste by the students of the Faculty of Fine Arts in Cetinje and Shkodër. They were inspired from endangered plant and animal species in Skadar Lake due to insufficient care for environment protection."

The promotion of environmentally-friendly activities and the establishment of links between artists, environmentalists and tourism workers of the entire area has not only had an impact on prevention of the environmental damages and cleaning up of the area but have also substantially improved cross-border cooperation and upgraded the tourist image of Shkoder Lake area.

## PLASTICS AND RECYCLING

### Beneficiaries:

- In *Albania*: University Marin Barleti, Tirana
- In *Montenegro*: CSTI – Centre for Sustainable Tourism Initiatives, Podgorica

### Project partners:

- In *Albania*: Deliart Association
- In *Montenegro*: Culture Zone, Podgorica

### Project budget:

- Overall project budget: € 178.922,50
- IPA contribution: € 151,275.73

### Project start date / end date:

01 June 2012 / 30 November 2013

### Project website:

[www.nature.al](http://www.nature.al)



The aim of the young project team was, building on the positive aspects of the past, to revive the links, cooperation and interaction that existed for decades in the cross-border area between Foča and Žabljak. The youth implementing the action largely contributed with their activities to creating a better future for all the inhabitants of this area.

The main inspiration came from the Partisan's Olympic Games organized for decades until more than twenty years ago in Foča with successful young athletes from all over former Yugoslavia. This project aimed to restore the spirit of sport, cultural and personal cooperation and exchange between the students and teachers of two high schools, as well as the population of Foča and Žabljak in a wider context.

The number of cultural and educational events with cross-border character organised in this area was substantially increased through the joint organization and implementation of project activities: two theatre plays jointly prepared and performed, two quizzes, two museum visits, a basketball course in Foča and a skiing course in Žabljak in which students and teachers from both schools took part.

In addition, the number of cross-border visits among the young population was increased through joint work and six cross-border visits organized for collecting and processing data for designing a map of cultural and historical sites and national parks in this cross-border region.

All the activities implemented had cross-border character and enabled direct contact, communication and interaction among students and teachers. They facilitated the creation of new friendships, tolerance development and understanding of differences. Through joint work and engagement in researches and drama and sport sections, students from both schools improved their knowledge and skills and became more open minded.

The activities and experience of the students engaged within this project attracted other students to be involved in similar actions and increased their awareness on the importance of cross-border cooperation.

During the project, in addition to the promotional items (badges, pens and caps) a lot of information and publicity materials were prepared and printed: leaflets, pamphlets, brochures, posters and maps. They were distributed to students, teachers, parents, journalists, the representatives

'We had established an excellent cooperation already during the application process. But it has evolved during the project implementation into a relationship based on mutual trust and friendship. All project results were successfully achieved even exceeding our initial expectations. Both teachers and students made long lasting friendships and realized that we have a lot more in common than previously thought. This project also had a positive impact on other institutions and schools in this area, that managed to establish cross-border partnerships and apply jointly with their projects under the third call for proposals.'

**Project team from the High School Centre in Foča and the Coeducational Secondary School "17. Septembar" in Žabljak.**

of local communities and institutions. Certificates were awarded to the students for their participation in the project activities. The poster-size maps were printed and distributed to the representatives of local communities, institutions and tourist organisations to be hung in visible places in local communities not only to promote the project but also its funder and the CBC programme itself.

A project Web Page was created and can be visited at the link: <http://togethertoefuture.com>.

## TOGETHER ON

### Beneficiaries:

In *Bosnia and Herzegovina*: High School Centre, Foča  
In *Montenegro*: Coeducational Secondary School "17. Septembar" Žabljak

### Project budget:

- Overall project budget: € 110,646.00
- IPA contribution: € 92,699.00

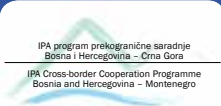
### Project start date / end date:

17 December 2012 / 17 December 2013

### Project website:

[togethertoefuture.com](http://togethertoefuture.com)





Students were engaged in the preparation of all project information and publicity items, but also had meetings with representatives of local governments and journalists where they had a chance to present their project activities and results achieved. The public presentation of project results increased public awareness about natural and cultural resources of the cross-border area targeted by the project. More specifically, the project's visibility raised awareness amongst the youth and the local population about the EU and IPA funds.

The sustainability of the established cross-border contacts is guaranteed by the interest of the students and teachers to continue establishing new joint activities and upgrading the results achieved by this project. What is especially encouraging is the fact that interest comes not only from students already involved in the project but it was also spontaneously generated by the students observing the implementation of the project.

Both schools signed a Memorandum of Understanding agreeing to finance similar projects in the future through joint cultural, educational and sports events. Furthermore, both of them jointly applied also within the third call for proposal in the framework of the same IPA CBC programme which not only demonstrates satisfaction of the schools' management with their participation in the IPA project described in this article, but also proves that their technical capacities have been improved.

This project had influence also on other institutions and schools in this area, that managed to establish cross-border partnerships and apply jointly with their projects under the aforementioned third call for proposals.



# PATHS OF OUR PAST TO EUROPEAN FUTURE!



## The PROGRES project through the use and promotion of Renewable Energy Sources (RES) and its contribution to the environmental protection and the improvement of life conditions in rural cross-border regions of Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina fits into one of the Europe 2020 targets.

The team of the CBC project PROGRES fostered a greater use of renewable energy sources (RES) in rural communities in the targeted cross-border regions of Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina. Moreover, the project contributed to the preservation of natural values of the environment, biodiversity and nature conservation and enhancement of life conditions in the two cross-border areas. And finally all these actions encouraged the independence of local self-governments in rural cross-border areas.

One of the Europe 2020 targets is to increase the proportion of energy obtained from renewables to 20% and since the RES potentials in Vukovar-Srijem County (VSC) and Tuzla Canton (TC) were neither adequately investigated nor exploited, the Municipality of Nijemci (as the administrative centre of the Local Action Group "Bosutski niz") and NERDA – Northeast Regional Development Association, took the initiative and started this project in order to create better life conditions in a healthier and cleaner environment for the entire population of VSC and TC.

To achieve this goal, project partners placed great importance on increasing knowledge and competences of the target group on RES as well as on raising awareness of the overall population in bordering rural communities, public and private actors, about the needs, benefits and possibilities for exploitation of RES.

This research on potentials of using RES in the area of Local Action Group "Bosutski niz" in Croatia and in the two municipalities of Gračanica and Kalesija in Bosnia and Herzegovina was conducted by one of the project partners – the Croatian Energy Institute Hrvoje Požar. Data obtained through this activity were consolidated in two relevant studies on potentials of using RES - one for the target area of "Bosutski niz" (area of 8 municipalities and 1 town, with 40.939 inhabitants on 731 km<sup>2</sup>) in Croatia, and one for the 2 municipalities-Kalesija and Gračanica (total of 91.820 inhabitants on 420 km<sup>2</sup>) in Bosnia and Herzegovina. In this way, different legislative and energetic conditions and policies of both countries were covered alongside with a

**Amra Jaganjac, Development Association "NERDA" and Vedrana Džoić, Development Agency "Hrast"**

"The Project managed to ensure several tangible results and effects, particularly in terms of RES equipment that was provided for the four demonstration facilities. But it also increased in a significant manner the promotion of RES and environment protection. Thanks to the Project, we have all developed strong relations to such a point that we are jointly working on ideas and initiatives that should contribute to the development of cross-border regions. This Project proved the value of cross-border cooperation as we have strengthened our links and created long-term partnership and friendship that will certainly result in more joint actions. In addition, valuable links have been created among the Project target group. This Project has been a learning experience for all of us, while the greatest benefit lies in the fact that we now have reliable and trust-worthy partners for future actions."

common part which refers to the EU policies and common objectives of RES. Both studies were presented during the final conferences marking the end of the project.

## PROGRES



The PROGRES project also contributed to strengthening of human potentials of the target group through a study visit to Slovenia and educational activities that were designed to expand knowledge and develop competences of representatives of public institutions, economic entities as well as farmers in the field of sustainable RES use.

In order to encourage energy independence of local self-governments in cross-border areas by promoting the principles of energy efficiency, production of energy in RES power plants and cogeneration, within this project four demonstration facilities - public buildings were supplied with RES systems: the Mixed Secondary School in Kalesija (solar collectors and photovoltaic panels), the sport centre "Luke" Gračanica (solar collectors and heat pump), the Nijemci Municipality building (solar power plant with the installed capacity of 4.12 kW) and the rotatable solar mini power plant of the capacity of 10 kW at the promenade along the Bosut River with the new LED lamps installed for the street lighting.

In order to reach as wider public possible, the numerous promotional activities have taken place during the project life-time: project website was created [www.projectprogres.net](http://www.projectprogres.net), printed materials about RES in rural areas and project itself have been designed, printed and distributed; TV and radio

shows have been broadcasted, promotional and educational video materials and joint conferences as well as and public tribunes have been organized.

On longer term the increasing of the awareness of the cross-border rural population (private and public sector) on the benefits of RES will have a valuable socio-economic impact since it will positively affect this kind of investments as well as contribute to the environmental sustainability based on conservation and sustainable exploitation of natural resources.

**Marijana Lončar, Project manager, Municipality of Nijemci**

"PROGRES project was not only about implementing the activities jointly for common benefit, but it was also about building a sincere friendship and business confidence among the project partners. That trust and friendship are the basis for continuing cooperation in the future with new project ideas."



## PROTECTION OF NATURE AND GLOBALISATION OF RENEWABLE ENERGY SOURCES

### Beneficiaries:

In *Croatia*: Municipality of Nijemci  
In *Bosnia and Herzegovina*: Development Association NERDA

### Project partners:

In *Croatia*: Energy Institute Hrvoje Požar, Vukovar-Srijem County Development Agency "Hrast", EKO SUSTAV  
In *Bosnia and Herzegovina*: Gračanica Municipality and Kalesija Municipality

### Project budget:

- Overall project budget: € 519,880.28
- IPA contribution: € 413,097.87

### Project start date / end date:

18 May 2013 / 17 January 2015

### Project website:

[www.projectprogres.net](http://www.projectprogres.net)



The interesting name of this project 'T.H.I.N.K.' revolves around the idea of substituting the reproductive learning system with one based on logical thinking, increasing perception capacity already at children's early age and establishing a cross-border network and effective cooperation in sharing experiences and lessons learned.

Using the partnership approach, public preschool institutions from Dubrovnik and Kotor prepared and implemented the "T.H.I.N.K." project with the aim to improve the quality of life in the cross-border area through the development of intellectual skills of preschool children and the reestablishment of good neighbourly relations between the two countries.

Public preschool institutions from Dubrovnik and Kotor specifically introduced a system of exercises in everyday educational activities in kindergartens which proved to stimulate the development of intellectual capabilities, called Mensa NTC (Nurturing of Talented Children) learning system.

**Equipment acquisition:** The adequate equipment for implementation of the Mensa NTC learning system was purchased: a specialized set of toys that are suitable for preschool children and development of different abilities: social, logical, mathematical, constructing, socio-emotional, motoric, etc. This set of toys became regular tools for implementing educational activities in these kindergartens during and after the end of project implementation. Furthermore, the computers and printer necessary for the efficient and effective functioning of these institutions have also been purchased.

**Education of kindergarten teachers:** Two two-day training events for 60 kindergarten teachers were held – one in Dubrovnik on 22 and 23 June 2013 and the other in Kotor on 29 and 30 June 2013. Both training sessions have been delivered by an expert in the Mensa NTC learning system. Thanks to these training events, the kindergarten teachers improved their knowledge and capacities in stimulating reading techniques, music ability, eye accommodation, motor functions, memory, attention span, functional thinking and creativity of kindergarten children.

At the same time, both events had also the cross-border character since the participants were coming from both Croatia and Montenegro. Subsequently, they had an added value since they also served as study trips. These events enabled kindergarten teachers from both countries to get to

**Tatjana Sabolski, Assistant Project Manager and Pedagogue, Kindergartens Radost, Kotor**

"The implementation of this IPA project had high importance and multiple benefits for our institutions and children. Specifically, the 'T.H.I.N.K.' project improved the quality of the educational and pedagogical work with children and introduced new stimulating methods in learning and development in every day practice. The cross-border partnership and improvement of cooperation and collaboration with Dubrovnik's Kindergartens is also very important: exchange of ideas, experience and examples of good practice, and the children indirectly have benefited from important lessons on cooperation, community and tolerance. We are very satisfied with the positive outcomes of our project evaluation and look forward to continue our cooperation through new projects."

know each other and to exchange their experiences. It served to strengthen bonds between project participants; gave insights in partner's cultural and methodological differences and good practice exchange for further work with children.

**Education of parents:** Concerning the important role of the family for the intelligence development and talent stimulation, it was also necessary to engage the entire families in this project and introduce to them the Mensa NTC learning system. These training sessions for parents were delivered by experts of the Mensa NTC learning system, who presented the new system's concept and techniques. The parents had a chance to get familiar with

## T.H.I.N.K.

### Beneficiaries:

- In *Croatia*: Kindergartens Dubrovnik
- In *Montenegro*: Kindergartens Radost, Kotor

### Project partners:

- In *Croatia*: City of Dubrovnik Development Agency  
DURA, City of Dubrovnik
- In *Montenegro*: Municipality of Kotor

### Project budget:

- Overall project budget: € 102,866.60
- IPA contribution: € 84,456.81

### Project start date / end date:

1 April 2013 / 31 March 2014

this, see the programme in practice and get answers to their specific questions. More than 150 parents from both Kotor and Dubrovnik were briefed on how to practice the Mensa NTC learning system with their children at home.

#### **Implementation of the Mensa NTC learning system –**

The Mensa NTC learning system is an innovative method for stimulation of functional knowledge and intellectual capacities amongst the youngest children. Following the implementation of the Mensa NTC learning system by kindergarten teachers, children improved their general perception and abilities, and gained knowledge about their neighbour. Methods that are integral part of the Mensa NTC learning system consist of stimulation of eye muscles, movement coordination and motor skills development, speed of thinking and deduction, functional knowledge (abstract symbols, music and logic). The Mensa NTC experts carried out the supervision of implementation of the learning system and the results achieved, after the initial 3 months of implementation. They were also available for regular consultation with teachers and parents through on-line services, such as an internet forum, and in direct communication. The Mensa NTC learning system was implemented for 9 months during the course of the action and continued being carried out after the end of the action.

**Creation of the children cross-border network:** By the signature of a declaration, a children cross-border network as a long-term partnership was established. The signature took place in Kotor during the 'Kotor Festival of Children's Theatre'. This act made the kindergartens cooperation publicly visible

#### **Boja Milan Mustać, Project Manager and Director of Dubrovnik Kindergartens**

"I would like to share my impressions on a few matters. First of all the most important thing in this project was that we have achieved our goals; we have realized better conditions of working, playing and living to our children and have given them better opportunities to grow up. Second thing, I have to highlight that it was great to meet our colleagues from Montenegro, know about their work activities and visit their kindergarten from Kotor. The whole project was one wonderful experience which enriched our everyday life. We have shown our satisfaction with the achieved results developing a new venture under the new call of Cross Border Programme HR-MNE, and we are still waiting for positive results!"

and confirmed the willingness and commitment of the project partners to work together towards regular exchange, improvement of preschool children education conditions, as well as to better understanding and neighbourly relations. The representatives of the institutions that were involved in the project implementation, consisting of local decision makers, a total of 5 people, were the signatories of the declaration.

Raising awareness of the general public on the Mensa NTC learning system, as well as promotion of the project and its achievements were important project activities, thus numerous articles and reportages were published in printed and electronic media in both Croatia and Montenegro.

## THE INTELLECTUAL NURTURING IN KINDERGARTENS



The constant need to increase outputs with decreasing production costs has led the modern societies to several serious problems that cannot be easily overcome, e.g.: environment pollution, low quality of products and closure of small businesses. The “Pannonia Organica” team slightly contributed with their project to solving these problems in their cross-border area.

Even though there are many small farmers in Osijek-Baranja County and Bačka who produce organic food, they were not sufficiently organized and cross-border cooperation in this field was underdeveloped. The regional market and trade were not sufficiently exploited.

The first step in addressing these issues was development of comprehensive and rather informative databases on all participants in the value chain of organic food production in Osijek-Baranja County and Bačka. The databases developed consist of 119 relevant stakeholders from Bačka and 273 relevant stakeholders from Osijek-Baranja County. They were used for the development of regional maps that provide information on all participants in the value chain of organic food production, to wit: small farmers, food producers, organic food retailers and local research and development institutions. The maps were not only printed and disseminated but they became also available to everybody on the project web-site [www.pannonia-organica.net](http://www.pannonia-organica.net).

The second step was to promote organic food and organic food products in the region. Hence, the project organised two large cross-border organic food fairs, one in Bilje and another one in Novi Sad, with the intention of making them regular after the project implementation period. The project team provided the necessary help and encouraged local organic food farmers and producers to participate in other local fairs, ensuring their continuous visibility in regional market.

In order to ensure that the stakeholders in the value chain of organic food production have maximum benefit from mapping and promotion activities, the project team organised workshops of three modules of 7 days on each side of the border. All of these workshops were opened to participants from both countries thus ensuring good environment for cross-border networking of the project stakeholders. During these workshops more than 800 people received training.

This project brought me personally very valuable experiences. The first one is linked to the management of a large financial budget and a numerous personnel team. It was not easy to handle, but we put together a team that managed to implement the project successfully from its beginning until the end. The cooperation with Croatian partners was extraordinary and has created a solid base for future collaboration.

The second important experience is related to procurement procedures. As a non-governmental organisation, we didn't have much experience in tender procedures. Eleven tenders means eleven folders and a lot of kilograms of accurately arranged documentation. The third experience is actually the most precious one. The usefulness of the developed database containing all the resources in the organic production in Bačka region demonstrated the need to expand it in order to cover the whole territory of Vojvodina. Without valid data it is not possible to organise the market.

**Olivera Radovanović, President of the Managing Board, Green Network of Vojvodina**

Local marketing strategies were developed for each side of the border providing better guidance to organic food

### **Beneficiaries:**

In *Croatia*: Municipality of Bilje

In *Serbia*: Green Network of Vojvodina, Novi Sad

### **Partners:**

In *Croatia*: Centre for Entrepreneurship Osijek, EcoRural Net, Osijek and Tržnica d.o.o., Osijek

In *Serbia*: Zdravo Organic, Selenča and Inno Focus, Belgrade

### **Project budget:**

■ Overall project budget: € 377,843.27

■ IPA contribution: € 304,823.44

### **Project start date / end date:**

22/30 April 2013 / 21/29 October 2014

### **Project website:**

[www.pannonia-organica.net](http://www.pannonia-organica.net)

producers. The strategies were presented at project events and were also published on the project's website. The numerous TV reportages and two promotional videos produced greatly contributed to a better awareness of the general public on organic production, its benefits for the environment and human lives, as well as to higher visibility of the project activities and its achievements. Through the joint efforts of all the actors involved, the necessary equipment was purchased, the local organic food producers increased their knowledge and strengthened their capacities, the cross-border links between all the participants in the value chain of organic production were established with a view to enhancing effective cross-border economic cooperation among the organic food producers.

The organic food products are considered to be a value-added product that can get higher prices on the market. Because of this, small farmers in the region can have a sustainable income, even though their production is not industrialized. Both sides of the border face serious economic challenges. Focus on improved organic farming contributes to revival of agricultural production with better market prospects, preventing the decrease of population numbers, promoting equal opportunities for all and helping unemployed women to find profitable market niches.

The "Pannonia Organica" project built upon the results of a successful project from the first call for proposals under the same CBC programme. The former project was titled "Tradition for future".

Encouraged by the achieved results and by the interest of the stakeholders, we realised that our ideas made sense as to develop the "Pannonia Organica" project.

This project represents a good practice example and a success story due to several factors. It demonstrated that local government units (the Municipality of Bilje) and the non-profit sector (EcoRural Net association) can very successfully play the role of lead partner in the sense of cooperation and project implementation. Through this cooperation, the Municipality of Bilje, as a lead beneficiary, enhanced their project implementation capacities and gained valuable experience as a solid reference for future ventures. The EcoRural Net association, that unites the target group, has benefited from the opportunity and support for implementing similar projects, with the same objective: awareness raising on the importance of ecological agricultural production as a fundamental pillar for the development of the Bilje municipality as well as the whole Osijek-Baranja County.

**Milan Peterka, Project Manager, Center for Entrepreneurship, Osijek**

## PANNONIA ORGANICA



In recent years, the situation of Roma has increasingly become the centre of political attention in Europe. It also became the subject of the project titled “Days of Roma Culture”, which aimed at introducing Roma in society through social cohesion, and cultural and traditional values exchange between Roma and others in the cross-border area of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Albania.

Roma – Europe’s largest minority of about 10 to 12 million people – are very often the victims of racism, discrimination and social exclusion and live in deep poverty lacking access to healthcare and decent housing. Many Roma women and children are victims of violence, exploitation and trafficking, including within their own communities. Many Roma children are on the streets instead of going to school. Deficient education and discrimination in labour markets have led to high unemployment and inactivity rates or to low quality, unskilled and poorly paid jobs for Roma. This causes a loss of potential which renders the endeavour to secure social progress even more difficult. Better integration of Roma is therefore both a moral and an economic imperative, which moreover will require a change of mindsets of the majority of the people as well as of members of the Roma communities.

The “Days of Roma Culture” project team wanted to touch some of the key problems of the Roma population in the cross-border area of the former Yugoslav Republic of

“Roma are an ethnic community that requires an affirmative approach in order to address their social needs. This socio-cultural approach aspires to develop capacities in the Roma community and sends a message that it is necessary to eradicate stereotypes and prejudices, and increase information about the similarities and differences in prosperity.

Our cooperation with the partners included in the project, especially Emmanuel Mission, was effective and positive which resulted in the signature of a Memorandum of Regional Cooperation between the CSOs working on the Roma issues. This memorandum will be the basis for future cooperation projects.”

**Samet Skenderi**, Executive Director, InSoC Association

Macedonia and Albania through cross-border actions and contribute to the social and economic inclusion of Roma in both countries.

One of the key concepts for this action was the elimination of stereotypes and prejudices towards Roma in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Albania through the promotion of Roma culture and heritage, building on positive examples among the Roma population.

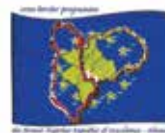
The project team focused its actions in achieving the following objectives:

- Development and implementation of programmes for social integration of socially marginalized groups and youth
- Analysis of the existing systems for educational integration in both countries and designing possible solutions for improving the access of Roma children to schools and ensuring their successful education
- Establishment of a regional NGO network that will foster further enhancing of technical and managerial capacities of local NGOs
- Promotion and protection of Roma cultural and historical heritage

**Enhancing social inclusion** – In order to enable and facilitate faster social inclusion two cross-border workshops for youth were organised. Furthermore, brochures with positive







examples of social cohesion and education of Roma from both countries were prepared, printed and distributed. The brochures were published in Macedonian, Albanian, English and Roma languages.

**Improving access to successful education** – The measures taken in order to ensure access of Roma children to schools, prevent drop-outs and secure the successful completion of their education in both countries was reviewed and the recommendations for further improvement of these measures were drafted and discussed with state representatives and CSOs in both countries.

**Building a regional NGO network for ensuring adequate support** – A regional network of NGOs was established and some efforts have been invested to build up the network and foster its technical and managerial capacities in order to better support the member NGOs in advocating for social integration. Several cross-border workshops were organised for the NGO sector representatives.

In addition, a Memorandum of Cooperation between civil society organizations from Albania and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia was signed to promote and facilitate collaboration in improving the involvement of young Roma in the region.

**Promoting cultural and historical heritage** – The focus of project activities was in presenting and promoting the cultural and historical heritage. With this aim a festival of Roma culture, tradition and folklore, in the form of fair

that also served as a promotion of Roma NGOs work, was organised in Korça. This festival was visited by more than 10,000 guests that were offered the opportunity to discover contemporary Roma artists - painters, musician, dancers, and writers and see the positive image of a minority that is often presented in a negative light.

**Exchange of experiences** – Two study visits were organised in order to ensure exchange between the countries. One study visit for the Albanian representatives was organised in Bitola and Prilep, while the Macedonian representatives had the chance to see Korça and Pogradec.

In both countries a series of local institutions and civil society organizations were visited and positive practices for social integration of Roma were presented.

“The current situation of the Roma community should be addressed by governmental effective policies regarding social inclusion. The development of their knowledge, skills, and their traditional and cultural values cannot be done within one year’s activities. Continuous efforts will be required to meet their social needs and provide solutions, not only by the Roma themselves but also by the interrelated actions of community stakeholders.”

**Mariela Baraku, Executive Director, Emanuel Mission Foundation**

## DAYS OF ROMA CULTURE



### Beneficiaries:

In *The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia*:  
Association – InSoC – Initiative for social change – Skopje

In *Albania*: Emanuel Mission Foundation – Korça

### Project partners:

In *The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia*:  
Bairska Svetlina – Bitola

### Project budget:

- Overall project budget: € 96,324 00
- IPA contribution: € 81,858.00

### Project start date / end date:

1 September 2013 / 1 September 2014

## The project set as objective: fostering sustainable development in the cross-border area through a regionally designed and unified health tourism offer.

It had as target group a series of thermal and airspa centres in the Sarajevo Macro Region ("Reumal" Fojnica, "Akvaterm" Olovo and "Terme" Ilidža) and in Western Serbia ("Čigota" Zlatibor, Zlatar and Priboj spa).

The action encompassed an analysis of the state of play of the healthcare tourism in the programme area, capacity building and the development of an integrated cross-border tourism product as a way to enrich the tourism offer. A better rating of the spa centres of this cross-border area was achieved thanks to the application of new European standards, an increased quality of the services rendered, the promotion of public-private partnerships, the enhancement of human resources' capacities, as well as better institutional and infrastructural possibilities, and the opportunity to share and exchange good practices amongst the action's partners.

The starting point for the targeted healthcare development in the region was the assessment of the situation and potentials for its further strengthening and improvement. The analysis covered the entire programme area and served as an excellent basis for the development of a new joint tourism product, especially because it involved all stakeholders of the project in the analysis development. The resulting paper dealing with the situation and possibilities for improving health tourism in the cross-border area of Serbia-Bosnia and Herzegovina was considered valuable not only by the

"The project was conceived in a good way and had great influence on the development of recreational spa tourism in the cross-border area between Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia. We have established important contacts with the spa centres in Bosnia and Herzegovina and we have been promoted as a regional centre for fighting obesity, as well as for thyroid treatment. We have designed a new joint health product that is already generating more guests, which is a good base for long-lasting cooperation of all those involved in the project. In addition, we managed to fully equip a new gym and, thanks to the great support of the implementing partners of the Cross Spa project, we prepared a new strategy for marketing development of our institutions."

**Željko Stakić**, Director of the Specialised Hospital 'Čigota' Zlatibor

**Dr Edin Kapo**, director of SPA centre "Reumal" in Fojnica

"I consider the establishment of close cooperation between our Spa centre and the Specialised Hospital "Čigota" as one of the most valuable outcomes of our project. I am sure that this cooperation will be long lasting. Our jointly developed product will bring benefit to both institutions. The "Čigota's" program for obesity treatment is the best in the region. On the other hand our institution is dealing with physical medicine, rehabilitation and treatment of the physical deformities of children. Due to inactivity, a lot of children are suffering not only from physical deformities but also from obesity. "Čigota" experts have shared with us their expertise in obesity treatment, while ours have conducted workshops on physical disabilities treatment."

experts of the region but also by international ones after its presentation at a scientific conference in Kyoto, Japan.

Subsequently, the project team considered it necessary to improve the institutional and infrastructure capacities in the target cross-border areas. Employees of the health spas in the cross-border areas (6 spa centres/health resorts) were further trained in the use of contemporary trends in the industry of tourism in order to be able to offer better services and thereby contribute to a stronger market positioning of the spa centres. A department for

## DEVELOPMENT AND PROMOTION OF HEALTH





healthy living and weight loss was established as a separate administrative unit within the spa "Aquaterrm" Olovo based on the experiences and good practice of the centre "Čigota" in Zlatibor so as to develop innovative forms of health tourism.

During the project implementation, 15 joint tourism programmes were proposed and each one of them included natural (Spas), historical and gastronomy components from each country. Additionally, the Specialised Hospital "Čigota" and the "Reumal" Spa in Fojnica created a joint medical programme.

A new and unique joint healthcare tourism product named "Prevention and treatment of postural disorders" was created. The program was designed for preschool and school age children. It consists of a 10-day residence period in the spa centres twice a year, with the provision of kinesitherapy and continuous ambulatory monitoring and consulting. Children that in addition to postural have also obesity disorders are directed to the Special Hospital "Čigota" for treatment. On the other hand, children treated in the "Čigota" that suffer also from the postural disorders are addressed to the "Reumal" Spa in Fojnica for additional treatment. Residence and control procedures, proper nutrition and exercises are mutually harmonized and standardized.

The product was developed along with a marketing plan for its long term promotion. It was jointly promoted at the International Fair of Tourism in Belgrade and Novi Sad and at the International Days of Tourism in Sarajevo. Furthermore,

### Ivanka Tasić, Executive Director of the PanaComp Wonderland Novi Sad

"The Cross Spa study tour pointed out the need for developing a new health tourism product in the cross-border area. This was a unique opportunity for tourism and health care workers to exchange their views on tourism services and their quality, scope and costs that will respond to the tourist needs from emissive markets, as well as to animate other markets and partners that need to be in the focus in future activities. The study tour effectively linked the different partners. The project has facilitated a close dialogue between private and public sector actors which is underdeveloped in the region. Thanks to the appropriate Cross Spa study program, all stakeholders of the tourism market have recognized the benefits of interconnection and determined future steps towards sustainability of jointly planned activities and facilities that will be offered to the tourism market."

the project team organised a study tour for representatives of tour operators and media from Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, Norway, Turkey, Italy, Spain and Russia. During the seven-day programme tour operators and media representatives visited the Sarajevo Macro Region and some tourism sites in Western Serbia, and got familiar with the offer of health institutions and spas, as well as with the cultural and historical context of the cross-border area.

## TOURISM SPAS IN THE CROSS-BORDER AREA OF B&H-SERBIA CROSS SPA

### Beneficiaries:

- In *Bosnia and Herzegovina*: Local Democracy Foundation
- In *Serbia*: Tourism Organization of Western Serbia

### Project partners:

- In *Bosnia and Herzegovina*: Sarajevo Economic Region Development Agency SERDA
- In *Serbia*: Regional Development Agency Zlatibor

### Project budget:

- Overall project budget: € 452,153.22
- IPA contribution: € 384,330.24

### Project start date / end date:

1 April 2013/ 30 September (RS) and 31 October 2014 (BIH)

### Project website:

[www.cross-spa.com](http://www.cross-spa.com)



The importance of this project's achievements was very visible in 2014, the year that would be remembered in the Region's history by severe floods. The project was devoted to reduce the risks of disasters caused by natural hazards in the cross-border area between Serbia and Montenegro.

Thanks to the project's activities, members of the protection and rescue units in six municipalities within the cross-border region were trained in order to rapidly respond in the event of floods. They received instruction in accordance with principles applied in developed countries. Members of the units were introduced to methods, techniques, tools and equipment for emergency response, and as a consequence,

**Tamara Todorović, FORS Montenegro, Project Manager**

"Although before preparing this project we had been somewhat aware of the great need in the field of protection and rescue, it was only after the realisation of this project that we learned some very important things when it comes to coping with natural disasters – you can never be sufficiently prepared in response to the forces of nature and you should never stop doing all you can while carrying out this assignment. The people we met during the implementation of project activities have risked their lives every day in order to save others and protect property and the environment, and are too often deprived of basic assets and working equipment, without the opportunity to test their knowledge and skills or improve them through specialised instruction and training courses.

What we also learned was the importance of networking and cooperation, in the first place of people, and then of institutions that engaged in this activity. Established links, exchange of experiences, advice and practical help when needed – mean a lot.

Whereas nature, increasingly harsh and unforgiving, knows no boundaries and does not ask whether we are ready. It did not ask during the floods in May 2014 and we all know that it shall not ask anyone some other day...

The accomplishments of the project were possible thanks to the smooth functioning of the partnership between, on one side, state and local governments, and, on the other, civil society organisations... It is extremely encouraging to see the willingness of the stakeholders to continue the cooperation beyond the project duration."

43 rescuers received official certificates recognised at the international level. Furthermore, additional training was organised by the Serbian Water Rescue Association for 40 members of other professional and voluntary units from both countries.

Lifeguards, certified to engage in crisis situations caused by floods, were tasked with the transfer of acquired knowledge and skills to other colleagues from their protection and rescue units and to volunteers from the local communities of their jurisdiction. These locally conducted workshops in the spirit of training of trainers have multiplied the positive effects of the project's capacity building, thus a total of 85 rescuers from the cross-border area have been trained to respond in the most difficult situations caused by floods.

Representatives of institutions and organisations responsible for flood protection and rescue had the opportunity to learn through seminars about examples of good practice when reacting to cases of flooding and other natural disasters in EU countries.

Complementary to the capacity building of personnel, the project procured the most modern equipment to meet international standards such as specialised vehicles, special uniforms, "dry" diving suits and other specialised clothing for rescue workers and those vulnerable, ropes and accessories, under-water lighting equipment, first aid packages and stretchers, aluminium and rubber boats, life jackets, etc.

Following the training programmes and familiarised with the new equipment, rescue units and rescue volunteers also performed a joint practical exercises for flood response. The

## CROSS-BORDER



exercises proved these units' full readiness and an increase in safety for citizens and real state in the border area.

The project has paid special attention to raising awareness on the need for prevention and ways to react in crisis situations caused by natural disasters, in particular relating to floods. Children were the main target group of the campaign. Around 4,000 children from six municipalities in the cross-border area learnt a good deal about behaving in crisis situations, how and to whom to turn for help and ways of being useful in order to mitigate the effects on people and property in their habitat. In this regard, a literary contest on the topic "Is Man Helpless in front of Nature?" was organised for elementary school pupils. The authors of the six best literary works received appropriate rewards for their efforts.

An awareness raising campaign was conducted including the publication of printed educational materials with practical guidance on how to react in emergency situations caused by natural disasters, especially floods as well as with the general information on protection and rescue systems of both countries. With other promotional activities, such as radio and television broadcasts and articles in the print media and on the Internet, the campaign largely influenced the level of public awareness on this very important topic.

The project "Cross-Border Flood Protection and Rescue" resulted in the development of the document "Standard Operating Procedures for Cross-Border Operational Units in Case of Emergencies" that was approved by the relevant ministries of both countries.

As an indirect impact of this remarkable example of good

**Bojan Kostić**, Assistant Chief of the Sector for Emergency Management of the Ministry of Interior of the Republic of Serbia

"The Sector for Emergency Management is extremely pleased with the results that have been achieved with the implementation of this project. Among the most important effects of the project is raising awareness about the importance of prevention in coping with the aftermath of floods, as well as training and technical equipping of professional units in Serbia and Montenegro.

The project has also resulted in the establishment of procedures that shall facilitate joint interventions in case of natural disasters.

On this occasion, I would like to thank everyone who participated in the implementation of this project. We have had excellent cooperation with partners from Montenegro and I hope that this cooperation shall continue in the future in order to raise the safety of our citizens to a higher level... not only in the event of floods, but also risks involving forest fires and traffic accident rescues, especially because this is an important travel route between Serbia and Montenegro."

practice in six municipalities of the cross-border area, the Ministries of Interior in both Serbia and Montenegro adopted national plans for education and training of personnel to respond to situations caused by natural disasters.



## FLOOD PROTECTION AND RESCUE



### Beneficiaries:

In *Montenegro*: FORS Montenegro – Foundation for the Development of Northern Montenegro  
In *Serbia*: Ministry of Interior of the Republic of Serbia – Sector for Emergency Management

### Project partners:

In *Montenegro*: Directorate for Emergency Management – Ministry of Interior of Montenegro

### Project budget:

■ Overall project budget: € 372,197.83  
■ IPA contribution: € 316,368.16

### Project start date / end date:

15 August 2012 / 15 April 2014

A very important milestone for the IPA CBC Albania - Kosovo programme was reached on 15 September 2014 when the projects under the first call for proposals were contracted and their implementation commenced, thus the wheels of CBC were set in motion so that the first real results and effects of programme implementation could be yielded.

After launching the first call for proposals staff of the Joint Technical Secretariat (JTS) carried out all the appropriate efforts to ensure that the process go smoothly forward. With the support of and cooperation with the respective national authorities and the Delegation and Representation Office of the European Union, the JTS provided all necessary assistance to the potential programme beneficiaries through targeted information sessions during the application period of the call and a so-called implementation workshop when the contracts of the selected projects were signed. The JTS team in its main office in Kukës and antenna in Prizren will continue to be the info point and the main address for both potential applicants and grant beneficiaries.

In order to facilitate the project implementation for the first programme beneficiaries, a two-day training event on implementation of CBC grants was organised by JTS in close coordination with the Delegation of the European Union to Albania and the European Union Office in Kosovo, as well as the Ministry of European Integration in Albania and the Ministry of Local Government Administration in Kosovo. The event was held on 5 and 6 November 2014 in Kukës, Albania. During this event, the grant beneficiaries had an opportunity to learn more about general implementation rules for grants. More specifically, it became an excellent opportunity for all the participants to learn more about financial and procurement procedures and reporting requirements under the CBC grant contract.

The beginning of the implementation of these newly contracted projects marks an important moment for Kosovo, not only because those are the first projects that will be implemented in the framework of the programme Albania – Kosovo, but also because they symbolise the setting in motion of CBC in the country, since the contracts finance the first CBC projects in which Kosovo beneficiaries take part.

The Albania-Kosovo programme offers a variety of opportunities for influencing the sustainable development of the eligible area and the welfare of their inhabitants. There is an under-exploited potential for development in different sectors that could be positively activated.

The currently awarded projects address issues such as new business opportunities for young people, environmental protection through better waste management, development of eco-tourism with accent on traditional agricultural products, as well as social integration and inclusion of vulnerable groups, improvement of non-formal education and youth participation in democratisation of the society.

They are addressing some of the common needs of local communities in this area, tackle common problems and exploit untapped potential. They should make a significant change in the region. These projects will be pioneering the process, serving as a positive example for all other future CBC projects in Kosovo CBC programmes.

More efforts will be made in the future for the further improvement of capacities amongst the programme structures, grant beneficiaries and potential applicants.

The projects which were awarded a grant represent the best scored ones out of the 62 applications that met the administrative requirements so as to be evaluated out of a total of 77 registered applications within the first call for proposals.

Project name	Beneficiary Albania	Beneficiary Kosovo	Duration	Budget
Promote eco-tourism through fostering 'Quality Logo products' of Albanian traditional agricultural products and touristic sites	EKO-Partners for sustainable development, Kukës	Kosovo Alternative Tourism Association "SHTAK/KATA", Prizren	18 months	€ 181,875.35
Green Business	Euro Partners Development, Tirana	Community and Business Development Center, Gjakova/Đakovica	18 months	€ 180,079.36
Environmental protection and waste management	Urban Research Institute – URI, Tirana	Advocacy Training and Resource Center –ATRC, Prishtinë/Priština	18 months	€ 268,258.78
Youth participation for enhanced democratization of society	Albanian Students Abroad Network Alumni, Tirana	Institute for Sustainability and Development of Youth, Prizren	12 months	€ 102,718.22
Social integration through non-formal education	Women Centre "Light Steps", Shkodër	Agency for socio educative services "Shpresa e Jetes", Prishtinë/Priština	18 months	€ 110,287.31
Social inclusion to vulnerable groups	Hope and Homes, Tirana	Kosovo Rehabilitation Centre for Torture and Victims, Prishtinë/Priština	15 months	€ 133,403.90



The evaluation process of applications, submitted under the first call for proposals for the IPA CBC Programme Montenegro – Kosovo is under way. Awaiting the final award of grants, substantial efforts have been made in enhancing the technical and administrative capacity of the Joint Technical Secretariat (JTS) staff and the Programme visibility.

The IPA CBC Programme Montenegro – Kosovo was the last one to be prepared and launched out of the 11 IPA CBC Programmes in the financial cycle 2007-2013 within the Western Balkans. The evaluation process started in spring 2014, short after the closure of the first call.

In parallel, the JTS staff have intensively worked on improving the Programme visual identity designing and publishing a series of Programme promotional and information tools. For instance, a programme website was created ([www.cbcmne-ks.org](http://www.cbcmne-ks.org)) with the relevant content which is regularly updated.

The staff of the JTS consists of three people, to wit: Fisnik Mula (Head of JTS) and Mehmed Kujević (Task Manager) located in the main office in Peja/Peć, and Emil Kočan (Task Manager) situated in the antenna office in Berane.

Tasks managers from the Operating structures of the two participating countries and the JTS staff consider that they have managed to establish great cooperation and that even though dislocated in four different places, they have managed to function as one team. All of them continuously improve their capacities through targeted workshops, training sessions and on-the-job mentoring sessions organised by regional and national technical assistance projects in line with their respective needs and requirements.

In addition, staff of the managerial and administrative structures of the Programme regularly participate in regional meetings and the regional CBC Forums. They are actively involved in the regional platform and have a chance to benefit from the experience of other colleagues and lessons learned from other programmes.

“The regional exchange is very important for me. I have a chance to discuss and exchange views with colleagues from other JTSs. We benefit from experience of others, and subsequently avoid possible mistakes and we progress much faster. There is also an added value in these events, since representatives from all the Programmes can participate in a forum, discuss all the outstanding issues and their voice will be heard even in Brussels”, Fisnik Mula, Head of the JTS, pointed out. He also added that overall the CBC process is complex and that sometimes it is hard for the citizens to understand its meaning and main idea, particularly when preparing project applications. “We would like to use the experience from other Programmes and be more oriented to the potential applicants and citizens from the eligibility area in order to help them better understand where the benefit of these programmes is for them. Yes, we are fully committed to the idea of being impact oriented”, he stressed.

The JTS staff have to satisfy the demand for services from different stakeholders such as the Operating Structures (Ministries of the two participating countries) and the Delegation or Office of the European Union in each of the countries; but most importantly the JTS staff are fully dedicated to working with potential programme beneficiaries. They had implemented a series of information meetings and round tables before the launch of the first call for proposals and seven information sessions after the publication of the call. Above all, they see the biggest charm of this process in supporting the beneficiaries and making the programme happen.

“CBC is something more than implementing projects, monitoring and evaluation of the process and measuring the results. CBC is a hand shake of two neighbours from different countries who see each other for the first time after 15 years. CBC recognises common interests and acts jointly for the sake of local communities across the border. CBC is a greeting among shepherds while being with their cattle in the bordering zone...”, this is how Emil Kočan, Task Manager at the Berane antenna office, explained the meaning of CBC for him.



One more IPA CBC programme has managed to mark its most important milestone: during autumn 2014 the first grant contracts were signed between the European Commission and the beneficiaries whose applications were selected for funding under the first call for proposals of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia – Kosovo programme. All of the programme structures: Contracting Authorities, Operating Structures and the Joint Technical Secretariat, together with technical assistance teams, regional and national ones, joined efforts in order to provide the necessary support to the grantees in kicking-off their projects in an effective and efficient manner.

The implementation of this CBC programme from March till October 2014 was marked by the evaluation and selection of the operations to be financed under the first Call for Proposals. Out of 90 applications received, the 6 best scored projects were selected for funding. A promotional ceremony of the first grants under the cross-border programme was organised on 29 January 2015 at the EU Info Centre in Skopje. The speakers at this occasion were Ambassador Aivo Orav, Head of Delegation of the EU to the former Yugoslav

Republic of Macedonia, Mr Lirim Shabani, Minister of Local Self-Government in this country, and Mr Besnik Osmani, General Secretary of the Ministry of Local Government Administration, in Kosovo. Then, the grantees presented their projects. After the ceremony, the Delegation of the European Union in Skopje delivered a workshop aiming to facilitate the project implementation process and explain the contractual rights and obligations to the new grant beneficiaries. The workshop was organised on 29 and 30 January 2015 in Skopje focusing on project implementation, financial rules, visibility, reporting and monitoring.

The capacity building efforts were further reinforced with two more training sessions, the National Technical Assistance project in Kosovo and the regional project CBIB+ organised two separate training events on 5-6 February 2015 in Pristina and on 25-26 of the same month in Skopje, respectively. The first event emphasised financial rules, visibility, reporting and monitoring, while the second one revolved around procurement procedures under the CBC grants. Both events were organised in agreement with the Operating Structures and European Commission Services in the participating countries.

## LIST OF THE AWARDED PROJECTS

Project name	Beneficiary MK	Beneficiary KSV	Duration	Budget EUR
Prevention of HIV transmissions and drugs among resident population in the cross-border area	Civil Association Hops Healthy Options Project Skopje	NGO Labyrinth	24 months	€ 362,307.96
Equality and Gender Mainstreaming Across Borders	AKCIJA ZDRUZHENSKA Association	Kosovo Gender Studies Center	24 months	€ 263,550.88
Tourism - Open Door for CBC	Municipality of Gostivar	Municipality of Dragash/Dragaš	18 months	€ 408,216.75
Valorisation of traditional trade & social economy potentials in municipalities of Cair and Gjilan	Municipality of Cair	Municipality of Gjilan/Gnjilane	18 months	€ 416,435.17
Culture in Action	Municipality of Lipkovo	Municipality of Vitia/Vitina	18 months	€ 438,103.29
Cooperative Transboundary Learning for Ecosystem Management and Sustainable Development in the Sharr Mountain region	State University of Tetovo	University of Prishtinë/Priština - Institute of Biological and Environmental Research	24 months	€ 271,381.93





The first CBC projects implemented in this cross-border area will tackle many common problems linked to environment, trade, tourism, culture, health and gender. Their efficient and effective realisation will lead to some domino effect in that area and will definitely encourage more local organisations and institutions to participate in this type of programmes.

A visibility catalogue describing the selected projects has been designed and will be available soon.

At the same time, the staff of the JTS (main office and antenna) are continuously providing support to both programme beneficiaries and potential applicants. But, since this is the first programme cycle, the JTS staff are also the recipients of capacity building activities to improve their role as administrative body at the service of the Operating Structures and Joint Monitoring Committee of the programme. The team composed of four staff members Kujtim Deari (Head of JTS), Irena Copa (Financial officer), Arsim Maloku and Albertina Binaku (Task Managers) has benefited from several training sessions organised by the above mentioned EU funded projects for technical assistance (regional and national).

Following the establishment of the Technical Working Groups within the Regional CBC Forum and the availability of the e-forums developed by CBIB+, the JTS staff were granted the possibility to take part in the joint discussion among relevant structures within the Western Balkans on issues of common interest. The e-forums have been seen as a great opportunity to share experiences and benefit from the lessons learned of other programmes in which at least two cycles of grant schemes have been completed.

The first monitoring visits to the grantees on the territory of Kosovo were conducted in February 2015 by the JTS staff in coordination with the Operation Structure in that participating country. The grant beneficiaries received guidance in important issues related to the implementation of their projects: financial management, reporting and achievement of cross-border impact of the project.

While providing support to the current beneficiaries, the JTS staff are also working on further promotion of the programme, the contracted projects and possibilities for the future applicants.



# EUROPEAN COOPERATION DAY 2014 – SHARING BORDERS, GROWING CLOSER



The European Cooperation Day 2014 included the organisation of more than 120 events celebrated in more than 30 countries in Europe. The activities covered a wide range of fields - from project fairs to circus performances, bike rides, film festivals, music concerts, etc. In this respect, 44 territorial cooperation programmes have had their celebration in this

year's initiative involving over 100 cities of the European Union and neighbouring countries.

The Western Balkan countries contributed to this celebration with three events: a Project Fair held in Podgorica on 19 September 2014 and in Tirana on 23 September 2014, as well as the Fourth National Conference on CBC in Belgrade on 26 September 2014.

## Project Fair in Podgorica

As a celebration of the European Cooperation Day, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and European Integration of Montenegro organised a Project Fair, which took place on 19 September 2014 in Podgorica at the "Delta City" Shopping Mall.

The aim of the Project Fair was to present results of the projects implemented in Montenegro under the Cross-border and Transnational Cooperation Programmes. Thirty projects were presented by participants at the Fair coming from state institutions, local self-governments, public institutes and non-government organisations, as well as the representatives of the Embassies of EU Member States in Montenegro.

Participants and visitors were addressed by the State Secretary for European Integration and Chief Negotiator for EU accession, Ambassador Aleksandar Andrija Pejović, and the Head of Cooperation at the Delegation of the Eu-



ropean Union to Montenegro, Mr André Lys. Ambassador Pejović welcomed the fact that the commemoration of the European Cooperation Day was taking place for the third time in a row and noted that the objective of European territorial cooperation is to enhance economic and social cohesion within the European Union. Hence, some financial instruments had been developed to provide the legal framework and support initiatives to bring people closer across borders. Reaching standards and achieving set goals is much easier attained through cooperation between states – by joining knowledge, experience, and means, Ambassador Pejović underlined.

The Chief Negotiator also noted that cooperation programmes help implement a number of joint projects in the areas of environmental protection, transport, education, energy, employment, health care, and many others.





He highlighted in particular the notable results achieved over the previous seven-year period within the five bilateral and three transnational cooperation programmes which Montenegro participated in. So far, over 100 projects worth more than €14 million were or have been carried out in Montenegro within the framework of bilateral cooperation, 48 projects worth €13 million under the Adriatic Programme, and 39 projects worth over €4 million under the SEE and MED programmes, Ambassador Pejović recalled.

Ambassador Pejović finally underscore the results of all these action on the ground and noted as particularly important the fact that a great number of programme beneficiaries, including local governments, state institutions, public institutes, and NGOs, have accepted to participate at the Project Fair. In that context, he was hopeful that the previous experience will serve as additional motivation for success in implementing the cross-border cooperation projects, especially having in mind Montenegro's participation in a total of nine cross-border and transnational programmes over the next seven years (2014-2020).

"Today's event is a very nice opportunity to showcase what we have achieved together. The European Integration process of Montenegro has stimulated already a lot of cooperation across its borders. Cooperating across borders is at the core of the whole idea of European integration. The EU was founded on exactly this principle.", Mr André Lys, from the Delegation of the EU, said. He underlined that all 30 beneficiaries of the EU financial assistance were proving Montenegro's great commitment in this area. Some of

these operations included the youth cooperation project in the cross-border programme with Serbia, the ecological preservation of the River Cijevna with Albania, or the project that helped establish and promote a model of tourism cooperation between Shkodra/Skadar and Ulcinj.

"All these initiatives are very significant for the countries involved in the enlargement process. They promote good neighbourly relations and contribute to the improvement of many areas of very high relevance to the region. Indeed, experience shows that the interdependence between countries is such that socio-economic development cannot be conceived in isolation anymore.", Mr Lys has concluded.

## Project Fair in Tirana

The Ministry of European Integration of the Republic of Albania and the Ministry of Local Self Government of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia in the framework of the European Cooperation Day jointly organized a Project Fair in order to promote the results of the implementation of projects contracted under the IPA CBC programme between the two countries and share experience and lessons learned among beneficiaries. The event took place on 23 September 2014 at the Tirana International Hotel with 150 participants. The grant beneficiaries, coming from both countries, for 41 cross-border projects contracted under three calls for proposals under this above mentioned programme were exhibiting their products.



The participants were addressed by the Minister of European Integration of the Republic of Albania, Ms Klajda Gjoshja, the Minister of Local Self Government of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Mr Lirim Shabani and the Head of Cooperation of the EU Delegation to Albania, Mr Yngve Engström. Minister Gjoshja

emphasised the importance and the specific nature of this CBC programme. She highlighted the programme objective, priorities and measures and the efforts made by both Operating Structures and other stakeholders for its successful implementation. She noted that cooperation between all countries in the region is a gateway to an advanced European integration process.



She added that the common objective of joining the EU leads to the common need to strengthen cooperation, exchange of experience, policy coordination and support one another in order to implement priorities and joint strategic projects more effectively and efficiently.

Minister Shabani noted that the event dedicated to the European Cooperation Day should serve to verify the progress done, as well as be a solid base for tailoring the assistance in the next financial period 2014-2020. The Minister highlighted some major programme achievements. He emphasized that the cooperation was intensive and successful in the past, but that in the



future maximum attention will have to be given to good neighbourly relations with all the countries of the region.

“Good neighbourly relations, as well as regional cooperation, are essential for the well-being of the region and these programmes are an extremely useful tool to strengthen both this type of cooperation and the upgrading of neighbourly relations”, stated Minister Shabani.

Both Ministers expressed the great appreciation for all the support and enormous efforts of the EU and its services.

Mr Yngve Engström confirmed the commitment of the European Union to supporting and promoting the cooperation among all Western Balkan countries, adding that lessons learned from the implementation of the IPA I CBC had been incorporated in the newly designed programmes for the EC financial perspective 2014-2020.

In order to foster the visibility of the programme achievements, a documentary film was presented to all the participants. Furthermore, three parallel round tables per programme priority were moderated as a forum of discussion for exchange of ideas amongst the beneficiaries of the programmes. A summary of the key points discussed during the round tables was presented in a plenary meeting afterwards.



## National Conference on CBC in Belgrade

The Fourth National Conference on cross-border cooperation, organised by the European Integration Office of the Government of the Republic of Serbia, took place on 26 September 2014 in Zvezdara Theatre in Belgrade. The aim of this conference was to present the achievements of the cross-border and transnational cooperation programmes implemented under the EU IPA 2007-2013 funds in Serbia. The event gathered more than 250 participants from Serbia and its neighbouring countries.



The Minister without Portfolio in charge of EU integration, Ms Jadranka Joksimović, stated that Serbia had the opportunity to become the engine of development in the Western Balkan region.

Minister Joksimović said that the local self-governments would be responsible for 60% of the implementation of EU standards, and therefore their capacities need to be strengthened, especially in terms of cross-border cooperation.

“In order to achieve this goal we have to work on reforms. I believe that we will get good results in the next two years. Cross-border is a good mechanism for cooperation as proved by the experience the country has since 2004”, Joksimović said.

Ms Joksimović pointed out that Serbia had the opportunity to be part of big EU strategies, such as the ones for the development of the Danube region and the Adriatic-Ionian region.

The Head of the EU Delegation to Serbia, Ambassador Michael Davenport, said that cross-border cooperation is very useful for local communities, stressing that he is aware that the application procedures are complex, especially for border municipalities with scarce resources. Davenport said that one can identify as good models the municipalities of Nova Varoš and Užice, which have introduced waste selection practice in schools and other public facilities, thus teaching children about the importance of environmental protection.

Ambassador Davenport stressed that equipment for emergency situations and rescue on the river Lim was purchased through a cross-border project and that this form of cooperation can contribute to saving human lives as proven by the recent floods in the region.

Mr Davenport reminded the participants that after the floods the EU set in motion different initiatives for fostering cooperation, highlighting the important role of Serbia since it is in the centre of Western Balkans.

Konstantinos Mousouroulis of the Directorate General for Regional and Urban Policy of the European Commission said that the priority in terms of territorial cooperation is that borders should not represent barriers and problems should be solved in cooperation. “Cooperation, social networking, civil engagement, tolerance and solidarity can bring people closer, and cooperation among countries has to be visible and lasting. This is not easy and requires firm commitment”, Mr Mousouroulis said.

During the conference, representatives from 13 projects implemented during 2012 and 2013 received an award as examples of best practices.



TEXT PREPARATION AND EDITING

**CBIB Team**

GRAPHIC DESIGN AND PHOTO EDITING

**CBIB Team**

CONTRIBUTORS

***Representatives of the national authorities of Western Balkan countries:***

Ministry of European Integration, Albania  
Directorate for European Integration, Bosnia and Herzegovina  
Ministry of Regional Development and EU Funds, Croatia  
Agency for Regional Development, Croatia  
Ministry of Local Self-Government, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia  
Ministry of Foreign Affairs and European Integration, Montenegro  
European Integration Office, Serbia  
Ministry of Local Government Administration, Kosovo

***Representative of the Joint Technical Secretariats and Antennae:***

IPA CBC Albania-Montenegro  
IPA CBC Albania - Kosovo  
IPA CBC Bosnia and Herzegovina – Montenegro  
IPA CBC Croatia – Bosnia and Herzegovina  
IPA CBC Croatia – Montenegro  
IPA CBC Croatia – Serbia  
IPA CBC the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia – Albania  
IPA CBC the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia –Kosovo  
IPA CBC Montenegro – Kosovo  
IPA CBC Serbia – Bosnia and Herzegovina  
IPA CBC Serbia – Montenegro

***Institutions/Organisations implementing the following projects:***

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Pannonia Organica  
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Development and Promotion of Health Tourism Spas in Cross-border Area of B&H-Serbia - CROSS SPA  
Cross-border Flood Protection and Rescue

***Representatives of the Delegations of the European Union to the Western Balkan countries and European Commission, Directorate-General for European Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations***

PUBLISHER

**Cross Border Institution Building Plus**  
An EU-funded project  
Kralja Milana 17/II, 11000 Belgrade, Serbia  
[www.cbibplus.eu](http://www.cbibplus.eu)

PRINTING HOUSE

**Alta nova d.o.o.**  
Printed in 1000 copies

Disclaimer:

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Cross Border Institution Building – CBIB+  
The IPA Multi-beneficiary Programme

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