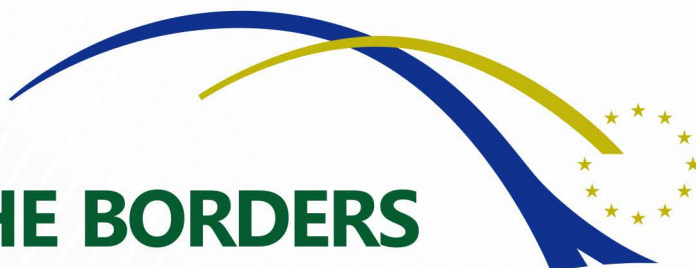


Central European Service for Cross-Border Initiatives
European Institute of Cross-Border Studies



CROSSING THE BORDERS

Studies on cross-border cooperation within the Danube Region

Case Study

Vidin – Zaječar

(Northwest Bulgaria-Eastern Serbia)

Written by

**Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski”
(Bulgaria)**

Assoc. Prof. PhD Kosyo Stoychev (Team leader)

PhD Student Miglena Klisarova (Expert)

PhD Student Vasil Zarkov (Expert)



Contents

1. Introduction – Basic discourse.....	2
2. The cross-border cooperation development Bulgaria-Serbia	3
2.1 Cross-border cooperation Bulgaria - Serbia – Case study district of Vidin and Eastern Serbia /focusing on Zaječar district/	3
2.2 The South East Europe Transnational Cooperation Program - an instrument for CBC between Vidin region and Eastern Serbia	7
3. Determination of geographical confines	12
3.1 The districts of Vidin and Zaječar - geographical confines.....	12
3.2 The districts of Vidin and Zaječar and Bulgaria - Serbia IPA Cross-border program ..	16
3.3 Determination of geographical confines as regards the South East Europe Transnational Cooperation Program	19
4. CBC Bulgaria and Serbia - good practices	21
4.1 Projects under the Priority Axis 1: "Development of small-scale infrastructure"	21
4.2 Projects under the Priority Axis 2: "Enhancing capacity for joint planning, problem solving and development"	29
5. Presentation and analysis of selected projects in their role as "good examples" in CBC establishments between Bulgaria and Serbia	52
5.1 "TRANSDANUBE" project - achieved results and existing opportunities for future cross-border initiatives	52
5.2 The project "Stara Planina" - results and opportunities for future cross-border initiatives.....	66
6. Organisational and institutional structure, operation.....	70
7. Composition of the working organ	75
8. Main activity areas/profile	75
9. Management, budget (incomes/expenses)	75
10. SWOT - analysis.....	76
11. Future plans and goals of the cooperation	80
12. Unique, regionally specific features of the cooperation	84
13. Summary.....	85
14. Bibliography	86

1. Introduction – Basic discourse

The cross-border cooperation in the Danube region is very attractive and fruitful topic. However, when we do research in this region, we have to keep in mind some geographical attributes which determine the region for centuries. In general, the collaboration between both countries in developing border regions is very poor or primitive, which is a result for many reasons.

First of all, we have to know that the particular report concerns two typical Balkan states, namely Bulgaria and Serbia. Both countries are one of the oldest states in Europe, The Bulgarian state is more than 1300 years old, while the Serbian is more than 1150 years old. Both countries have aspects of common history and geography, nevertheless, these aspects are very often presented in a controversial and propagandist way, serving the political regimes in the period of the 20th century. Both countries had a common Ottoman Empire period, consequently, formation of their national identity, and contemporary national territory took place in the last 140 years. This is the reason that ethnic minorities exist in the territories.

Bulgaria and Serbia are very typical examples of states with local political opposition in the Balkan context. After the Ottoman Empire period and the 20th century wars (the Second Balkan Wars, the WW I and the WW II), Bulgaria and Serbia had been always on the opposite parties and they fought against each other.

Even in the “Cold War Era”, when Yugoslavia and Bulgaria were located in the “Soviet part of the Iron Curtain”, cross-border cooperation never developed into an active and cohesive policy. More or less, even closely located territories remain heavily isolated from each other, and now these border regions are the poorest and most depopulated regions in both counties. Consequently, these regions are often called as “regions with structural difficulties”.

Since 1989, there have been very strong political changes in the so called Western Balkans, which have caused the appearance of seven “new” European countries. These processes and the birth of new border regions generated the regional disparities even more visible. Only in the recent 10 years, after the acceptance of Bulgaria and Romania in the EU, the cross-border regions have established initiatives and they have started to orient toward more sophisticated functional changes.

Several projects were approved that designed to “start” the cross-border cooperation between Bulgaria and Serbia in the period 2007-2013. The current project report illustrates that the situation is relatively “static” and dependant on financing and project calls. The initial remark is that the project calls activate both parties, although the regional cohesion sustainability suffer. Because of that, the current project report researches not only the activities implemented in the particular regions and programs, but the research try to discuss the “forward and backward linkages” that are needed to move the cross-border cooperation ahead.

2. The cross-border cooperation development Bulgaria-Serbia

2.1 Cross-border cooperation Bulgaria - Serbia – Case study district of Vidin and Eastern Serbia /focusing on Zaječar district/

2.1.1 Cross-border Cooperation Programs - successful instrument for cross-border partnership establishment

The specific geographic location of Vidin district /Bulgaria/ and Zaječar /Serbia/ respectively in the northwestern part of Bulgaria and in the Eastern part of Serbia determines their involvement in the CBC1 Program between both countries.

Bulgaria - Serbia IPA Cross-border program for the period 2007-2013 was carried out in a way to ensure an adequate development platform for further financial assistance for Bulgarian-Serbian border region. The objective is to support CBC along the new borders of the enlarged European Union after 2007 when Bulgaria and Romania were accepted. The IPA Program was made on the experience and interventions allocated within the “Neighborhood Program” Bulgaria and Serbia in the period 2004-2006.

The Contemporary Bulgaria - Serbia IPA Cross-border programs objective is to define a suitable strategy for a common future development of the border region.

In anticipation of the EU enlarging policy, an External Border Facility Program was allocated in 2003 to prepare new cross-border co-operation programs, starting from 2004 onwards between Bulgaria and Serbia, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Turkey.

In 2003 the “PHARE External Border Initiative” was designed for Bulgaria following bilateral discussions between the Bulgarian and the European Commission authorities. The main objectives defined in this Initiative were the following issues:

Table 1: Objectives of the PHARE External Border Initiative

3 main objectives of the PHARE 2003 External Border Initiative
1. To improve cross-border cooperation at local level between Bulgaria and Serbia, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Turkey
2. To support the further development of the economic potential of the border regions
3. To pave the way for the future /2004-2006/ PHARE CBC/neighborhood programs between Bulgaria and Serbia, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Turkey

Source: Bulgaria - Serbia IPA Cross-border program

1 cross-border cooperation /CBC/

2.1.1.1 CBC between Bulgaria and Serbia - the beginning /2004-2006/

The Neighborhood Program between Bulgaria and Serbia for the period 2004-2006 respected the current situation /the status quo/ in both countries' border regions in the socioeconomic sphere and the establishment of institutional relations. On this basis, the program's overall objective and priority axes aimed to increase the cross-border contacts between Bulgaria and Serbia as regards to sustainable economic development and cohesion in the social, institutional and economic sphere. The key moment in the program was to implement actions which focused on the idea "people to people" interaction, i.e. actions that directly accounted the specific needs and requirements of the local people in the border regions.

Table 2: Objectives of the Neighbourhood Programme between Bulgaria and Serbia for the period 2004-2006

Overall objective of the Neighborhood Program Bulgaria and Serbia 2004-2006
To increase cross-border contacts mainly through interventions addressed to the territory and its economy and through strengthening of institutional relations''
3 Priority Axes of the Program
1. Promotion of sustainable economic development
2. Support to social, institutional and economic cohesion
3. People to person's actions

Source: Bulgaria - Serbia IPA Cross-border program

Within the territory of Bulgaria, the Neighbourhood Program included the territory of 5 districts that correspond to level NUTS 3 /EUROSTAT/: Vidin, Montana, Sofia district /partials - 5 of 22 municipalities/, Pernik and Kyustendil.

The program implementation period 2004-2006 can be characterized by the following kind of pros and cons:

Positive key moments in the Bulgarian-Serbian border region's development:

- Bulgarian-Serbian jointly implemented cross-border initiatives resulted in the successful foundation of cooperation that was established in the period 2004-2006;
- Capacity improvement of the regional and local structures as regards to cross-border partnerships. Intensification of relations between both countries generated by the regional development /Bulgaria and Serbia/, one of the positive moments from the program implementation;
- The idea of continuous cooperation generated many contacts at the local level;
- Border area development and bilateral cooperation structures strengthened as a result of the successful project implementation;
- Improved coordination and cooperation process between the stakeholders.

Neighborhood program implementation - Critical issues and difficulties:

- Exceptionally high demand for cross-border projects was reported on one side and the limited available funds under the program on another side. Therefore, high number of eligible project proposals were applied, but not financed;
- Problems during the program implementation were caused by the lack of experience because the actions and procedures were implemented for the first time;
- Different national regulations were present regarding project financing.

2.1.1.2 CBC between Bulgaria and Serbia programming period 2007-2013 - lessons learned. Best practices.

Bulgaria - Serbia IPA Cross-border program was built on the initial achievements under the CBC-activities supported by the existing bilateral programs up to the end of 2006. In this regard, the Program for CBC Bulgaria and Serbia 2007-2013 continued to support the cross-border regions considering one keyword – cohesion (meaning territorial cohesion). Bulgaria - Serbia IPA Cross-border program 2007-2013 focused on the following key aspects: *competitiveness, results sustainability, quality of life and environmental protection*.

In the process of program development for the period 2007-2013, all the “lessons learned”, acquired during the 1st Neighborhood Program Bulgaria-Serbia 2004-2006, were reflected.

The keywords of the strategic framework for the period 2007-2013 were the following issues: *territorial cohesion of the cross-border region, competitiveness, sustainable development, economic synergy /see Table 3/*.

Table 3: Bulgaria - Serbia IPA Cross-border Program - overall and specific objectives

Overall Objective
To strengthen the territorial cohesion of the Bulgarian - Serbian cross-border region, its competitiveness and sustainability of its development through co-operation in the economic, social and environmental area over the administrative borders
Specific Objectives
1. To bolster the infrastructure enabling social and economic development and improvement of the environment on both sides of the border
2. To increase economic synergy in the region and improve the capacity to jointly make use of common regional potential for improving regional well being
3. To promote the principles of sustainable development of the cross-border region in all matters pertaining to increased mutual understanding and respect

Source: Bulgaria - Serbia IPA Cross-border program

The three Specific Program objectives should be achieved through:

- For Specific objective 1: improving access to transport, information and communication services, and cross-border systems for utilities and environmental protection.
- For Specific objective 2: developing policy and social networks, a sound framework for /cross-border/ business support, collaborations in particular sectors such as culture, tourism, research and development, environmental protection and education, an active exchange of best practices, and joint regional planning and the preparation of the region's economic sector for participation in the joint EU market.
- For Specific objective 3: developing successful models of cooperation, in the business, local stakeholder and policy levels in key priority areas.

Vidin region has a strategic location within the CBC's Programs with Romania and Serbia. In order to achieve the overall and specific objectives that were defined within the Programming document, Bulgaria and Romania jointly agreed the main CBC directions, called Priority Axes. During the period 2007-2013 Bulgaria - Serbia IPA Cross-border program has supported projects in the area of the following 3 Program Priority Axes:

**Priority Axes defined in the Bulgaria - Serbia IPA Cross-border program
2007-2013**

Priority Axis 1. Development of small-scale infrastructure

Key words: physical and information infrastructure, infrastructure concerning environmental issues, assistance for project preparation.

Priority Axis 2. Enhancing capacity for joint planning, problem solving and development

Key words: linking and networking on institutional, business and educational levels; sustainable development through efficient regional resource utilization; people to a person's actions

Priority Axis 3. Technical Assistance

Source: Bulgaria - Serbia IPA Cross-border program

The specific location of Vidin region determines its involvement in another cross-border cooperation program with Romania - Operational Program Romania - Bulgaria 2007-2013. The districts of Vidin and Montana, Bulgarian eligible regions under Bulgaria - Serbia IPA Cross-border program are covered by this CBC Romania - Bulgaria 2007-2013.

The program supports projects under the following priority axes:

Table 4: Overall Strategic Objective and Priority Axes defined Programa-Bulgaria CBC Programme 2007-2013

Overall Strategic Objective
To bring together the people, communities and economies of the Romania - Bulgaria border area to participate in the joint development of a cooperative area, using its human, natural and environmental resources and advantages.
Priority Axes /4/
Priority Axis 1. Accessibility: Improved mobility and access to transport, information and communication infrastructure in the cross border area
Priority Axis 2. Environment: Sustainable use and protection of natural resources and environment and promotion of efficient risk management in the cross border area
Priority Axis 3. Economic and Social Development: Economic development and social cohesion by joint identification and enhancement of the area's comparative advantages
Priority Axis 4. Technical Assistance

Source: <http://www.cbromanialbulgaria.eu/>

The National Authority responsible for coordination between the programs IPA Cross-border Programs Bulgaria - Serbia and Romania - Serbia, Sector for Programming, Management of EU funds and Development Assistance, Ministry of Finance /MoF/ of the Republic of Serbia. Apart from the program structures, both CBC programs in Serbia are covered by a local office of the Ministry of Finance in the town of Bor.

2.2 The South East Europe Transnational Cooperation Program - an instrument for CBC between Vidin region and Eastern Serbia

The South East Europe Transnational Cooperation Program played a key role in the framework of the Regional Policy's Territorial Cooperation Objective, improving the integration and the competitiveness in the area with all the complexity and diversity.

The development opportunities for CBC between Bulgaria and the neighboring countries concerned different development areas. Good results created the project called as "TRANSDANUBE - Sustainable Transport and Tourism along the Danube" which was implemented with the financial support of the South East Europe Transnational Cooperation Program.

The project was implemented within 24 months, in the period between October 2012 - September 2014, and it was divided into six work packages /WP/, which could be separated into two big groups. The first group consisted of WP 1 and WP 2 which were dedicated to project, financial management and internal/external communication. The actions, involved in

these work packages, were concentrated on the need to appropriately coordinate and implement the project, establish partnerships and to fulfil the technical obligations of the project. On the other hand, WP 3 to WP 6 were dedicated to operational working program.

Table 5: Transdanube project timeline in the period 2012-2014

WP 1 Project management
Actions: - ACT 1.1 fulfillment of start-up requirements - ACT 1.2 Project management, including financial management - ACT 1.3 Steering and monitoring of the project implementation
WP 2 Communication and Dissemination
Actions: - ACT 2.1 Communication Plan - ACT 2.2 Media communication / dissemination - ACT 2.3 Non-media communication / web site - ACT 2.4 midterm and final conference - ACT 2.5 Internal communication
WP 3 Transport and Tourism System Analysis
Actions: - ACT 3.1 Development of common methodology - ACT 3.2 State of the Art - Sustainable mobility in tourism - ACT 3.3 Good practice collection
WP 4 Sustainable mobility offers + demonstration
Actions: - ACT 4.1 Sustainable mobility action plans - ACT 4.2 Sustainable transport offers - ACT 4.3 Manuals for development / implementation
WP 5 Mobility and tourism marketing (information / packages)
Actions: - ACT 5.1 Tourism mobility information - ACT 5.2 Soft mobility offers and packages /transnational and regional/ - ACT 5.3 Marketing strategies and measures
WP 6 Stakeholder involvement, evaluation, follow up actions
Actions: - ACT 6.1 Cooperation and evaluation - ACT 6.2 Regional and national stakeholder involvement, training and awareness raising - ACT 6.3 Transnational and EU-Stakeholder involvement - ACT 6.4 Follow-up preparation

Source: <http://transdanube.eu/>

Transdanube project took into consideration the main development trends in the sectors of transport and tourism in Europe. The project could be characterized by the following key moments with negative environmental impact:

- According to the World Tourism Organization /UNWTO/ and the United Nations Environment Program /UNEP/, 75% of the environmental negative impacts of tourism is caused by the traffic. At the same time the public transport is continuously losing its importance and the tourist are travelled by their own cars. Therefore, we can say that *one of the most serious future challenges for Europe will be the management of these upcoming floods of travelling in a sustainable way.*
- In this regard, *reducing the negative impact of the trips and the traffic on the environment is the first step in striving for improving the attractiveness of tourist destinations.* In particular, the individual travelling and the air transport are among the least environmentally friendly means of travelling. On the other hand, the lowest environmental impact is caused by the railway, bus and water transport, as well as by hiking and cycling.
- The *implementation of more environmentally friendly forms of transport and the development of soft mobility offers for tourists* are important measures to maintain a high environmental quality and thus a high quality of vacation and live.

In this regard, the widely accepted project objectives aim to *implement the principle of sustainable mobility in tourism like a conception in the whole region of the Danube*, in their role as a starting point in regional strategy for sustainable mobility in tourism development. These objectives represent a set of measures to overcome the existing gaps in the sustainable mobility system within the regions along the Danube, and reflect the common vision of the project partners for development of sustainable mobility in tourism.

Table 6: Transdanube project common vision

Transdanube project common vision: 3 key moments

- Provides a common understanding of the concept of sustainable mobility
- The **first step** on the way **to implement the concept of sustainable mobility in tourism** in the regions along the Danube
- Relies on the findings of the transnational SoA /State of the Art/ Analysis

Source: <http://transdanube.eu/>

Based on the main key moments defined in a common vision for the region, the following project objectives for development of sustainable mobility in the tourism sector along the Danube were determined:

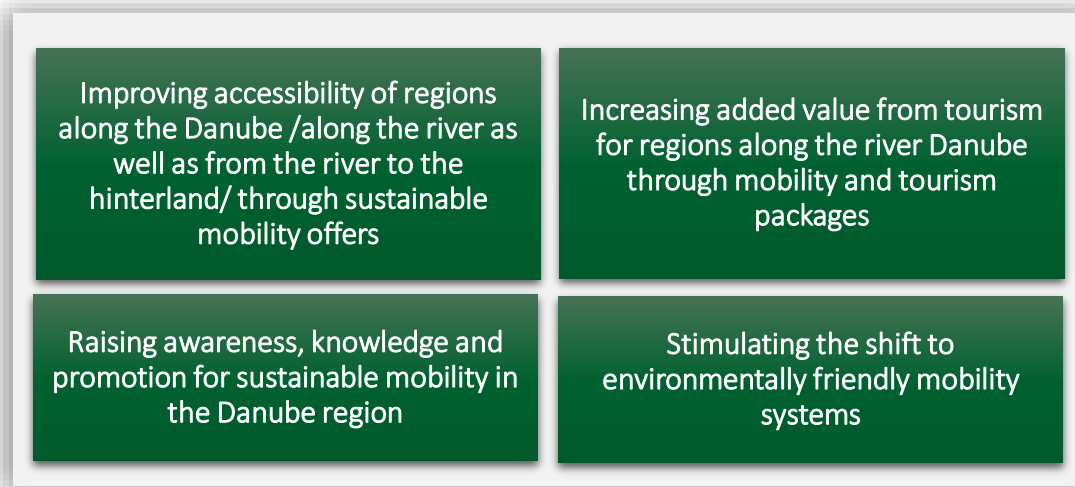


Figure 1: Transdanube project widely accepted objectives

Source: <http://transdanube.eu/>

It becomes clear that the objectives defined are concentrated in the following four topics:

- Transport, mobility - sustainable mobility offers developers;
- Tourism - sustainable tourism products /packages, etc./;
- Information system - provides sufficient quantitative and qualitative information and destination marketing, with aim to promote sustainable mobility in tourism;
- Financial, organizational and legal framework.

Table 7: Main topics of development defined in Transdanube project

Sustainable mobility offers	For each development topic must be defined: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Objectives • Minimum standards to be achieved • Indicators to monitor the progress in achieving the defined objectives
Sustainable tourism products /packages, etc./	
Information and marketing	
Financing options, organizational and legal framework	

Source: <http://transdanube.eu/>

One the most important moments in the implementation of the project was the utilization of a transnational/cross-border approach during all the project activities. Another key moment, defined as paramount for the development of sustainable mobility in the whole Danube region, was the transfer of “know-how”, information in different languages, etc.

The main objects of the project are the principles of sustainable mobility and sustainable tourism taking into account all the three pillars of sustainability, i.e. economy, ecology and social aspects.

Based on the foregoing data, we can mention the important role of each stakeholder in the process of defining objectives and the basic principle application:

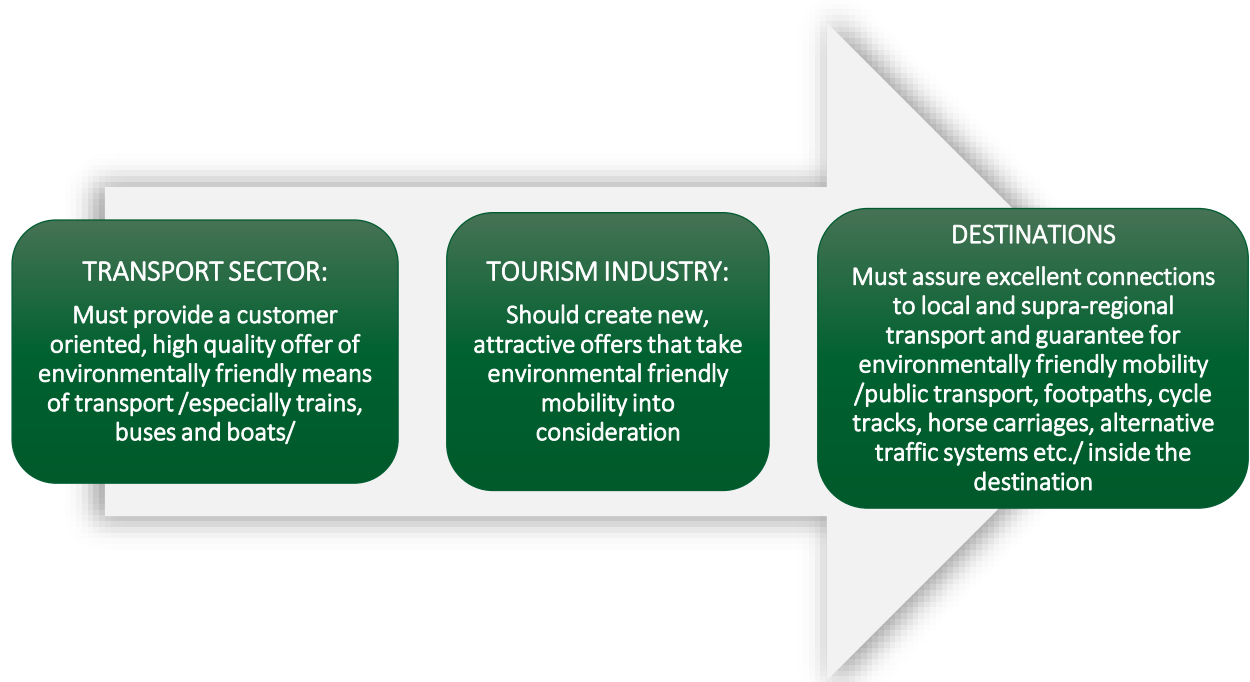


Figure 2: the role of the project stakeholder in defining objectives, achieving intended objectives and basic principles application

Source: <http://transdanube.eu/>

The most serious risks and challenges about the Cross-border region of Vidin- Zaječar are some technical, infrastructural and institutional/organizational issues. The whole area has not enough tourists oriented infrastructures outside of the cities and villages. Underdevelopment of tourist friendly infrastructure caused difficulties in implementation and the real organization of the touristic trip. On one hand, the only one possible sustainable way of transport is the public bus transport. However, most of the tourists make their trip using cars. The reason for this tourist behavior is the lack of appropriate transport connection between the basic settlements in the cross-border region and the poor road infrastructure make cycling extremely dangerous. Beyond these problems, regular cross-border public bus connections, which would connect the towns – Vidin-Kula-Zaječar, do not exist. Consequently, the only one way to travel into the cross-border region is by car. All these conditions make substantial obstacles to economic development of the regions and they hinder tourism.

3. Determination of geographical confines

3.1 The districts of Vidin and Zaječar - geographical confines

The district of Vidin is located in the North-West part of Bulgaria. To the North, the area borders are connected with the Republic of Romania, to the West with the Republic of Serbia, to the South it is bounded by the Balkan Mountains /Stara Planina/ in Bulgaria, and to the East it is bordered by the administrative district of Montana /Bulgaria/. The geographical position of Vidin region has favored its development as a transport, trade, cultural and political center. Strategic importance has the Northern boundary of the region - the Danube River, making opportunities for cooperation with other countries in the Danube region.

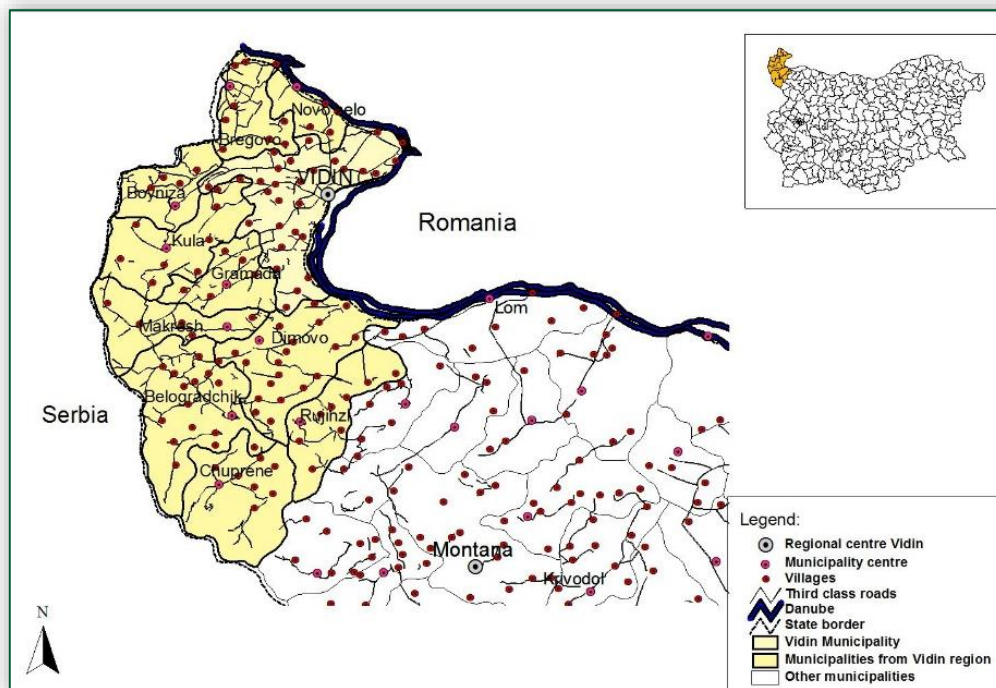


Figure 3: Geographical location of Vidin region

Both rivers, the Danube and the Timok formulate natural, but also political borders with Romania and Serbia. The Danube is the second longest river in Europe. It runs through the territory of Germany, Austria, Slovakia, Hungary, Croatia, Serbia, Romania, Bulgaria, Moldova and Ukraine. The Danube is the major international transportation artery. There are 16 ports in Bulgaria. Six of them, namely Vidin, Lom, Samovit, Svishtov, Ruse and Silistra, have international significance for trade and business.

The Timok River downstream serves as a political border between Bulgaria and Serbia. It is a tributary river of the Danube. The river flows into the Danube between the Bulgarian village of

Baley /Балей/ and the Serbian village of Kobisnica /Кобишница/. Within the Serbian territory, the River passes through the following counties: Pirot, Nishava, Zaječar and Bor.

The town of Vidin is an important transport “Gate” of Bulgaria and it plays a key role in the transportation system of the whole region. Two Trans - European transport corridors pass through Vidin, to be specific №4 Dresden/Nuremberg - Prague - Vienna/Bratislava - Budapest - Craiova /Romania/ - Vidin - Sofia - Kulata - Thessaloniki/Plovdiv - Istanbul, which connects Central with South East Europe. The second one is №7 Rhine - Main - Danube, which connects the Black Sea and the North Sea.

The only one place that can be considered as a multimodal node is the city of Vidin. There will be a future project that will create a multimodal center for transportation of cargo and tourists. /See Figure 4/.

Significant impact on the border region development has the building of the Danube River Bridge connects Vidin and Calafat /Romania/ named “New Europe”. The Bridge was officially opened in June 2013 and it offers a road and railway connection to Romania.



Figure 4: Transport corridors Republic of Bulgaria

http://www.espon-interstrat.eu/admin/attachments/NRDS_2005_-_2015_Bulgaria_summary_En.pdf

The territory of Vidin region is a location of four border checkpoints /BCP/:

- BCP Vrashka Chuka - border location of the Republic of Bulgaria and the Republic of Serbia, connecting Kula /Bulgaria/ and Zaječar /Serbia/;
- BCP Bregovo - Bulgarian-Serbian border, connecting Bregovo /Bulgaria/ and Negotin /Serbia/;
- BCP Vidin - River Station - located in the town of Vidin, and serves the tourist vessels on the Danube.
- BCP Danube Bridge 2 /New Europe/ - connecting the town of Vidin with the Romanian town of Calafat.

The administrative district² of Vidin includes 140 settlements and 11 municipalities³ - Vidin, Boynitsa, Bregovo, Belogradchik, Gramada, Dimovo, Kula, Makresh, Novo Selo, Chuprene and Ruzhintsi /see Table 10/.

Table 8: Administrative-territorial units included in the territorial scope of Vidin and Zaječar Districts

District of Vidin - 11 municipalities	District of Zaječar - 4 municipalities
Municipalities: Belogradchik, Boynitsa, Bregovo, Vidin, Gramada, Dimovo, Kula, Makresh, Novo Selo, Ruzhintsi, Chuprene	Municipalities: Boljevac, Zaječar Knjaževac, Sokobanja

Source: Bulgaria - Serbia IPA Cross-border program

Vidin is the biggest town in the cross-border region with a total number of population 48 071 inhabitants /in 2011⁴. This value is equal to 47,6% of the total population of Vidin district /101 018/ and 0,7% of the population of Bulgaria /7 364 570 in 2011/. The Vidin district has 1,4% of the population in the Republic of Bulgaria.

Table 9: Number of inhabitants and population density in districts of Vidin and Zaječar

Territorial Unit - level NUTS 3	Population		Population Density /per/km ² /
	Number	% of total population in the country	
District of Vidin	101 018	1,4%	33,3
District of Zaječar*	119 967	1,7%	33,1

* District of Zaječar corresponds to the units from level NUTS 3 /EUROSTAT/

Source: National Statistical Institute, <http://www.nsi.bg/>, <http://www.Zaječar.info/>

2 In Bulgaria the administrative district is Oblast, there are 28 districts.

3 The municipality /obshtina/ is the self-government administrative unit in Bulgaria, their total number is 264

4 Population Census in the Republic of Bulgaria 2011

The specific geographical position of Vidin region creates favorable conditions for cross-border cooperation with the Republic of Serbia and Romania. Six of the municipalities, within the Vidin region, are in contact with the Bulgarian-Serbian border - Bregovo, Banitsa, Kula, Makresh, Belogradchik and Chuprene. The primary basis for cooperation between Bulgarian and Serbian border municipalities is to promote economic and social cohesion, tourism sector development, environment protection, etc.

The district⁵ of Zaječar is located in the Eastern part of the Republic of Serbia /see Figures 5 and 6/. The territory includes four municipalities - Boljevac, Zaječar, Knjaževac and Sokobanja. The city of Zaječar is the district center. The territorial scope of the district encompasses 173 settlements /5 towns and 168 villages/.

The total number of inhabitants in the town of Zaječar is 43 860 /2011/ which is 36,6% of the population in Zaječar district /119 967/ and 0,6% of the total population of the Republic of Serbia /7186862 inhabitants, 2011/, /see Table 11/. The district has 119 967 inhabitants, 1,7% of Serbian population in 2011 /data from official Census/.



Figure 5: Geographical location of Zaječar region /left/
 Figure 6: Administrative map of Republic of Serbia /right/

⁵ in Serbian - district is Okrug

The municipality of Zaječar has a border contact with the Republic of Bulgaria, district of Vidin. Both towns Vidin and Zaječar are twinned. The distance between the town of Vidin and Zaječar is around 59 km. Both cities are connected by two-way road.

However, there are no international train connections from the Eastern Serbia region to the neighboring countries. There is an expressed intention by the Public Company “Railroads of Serbia” to connect the railroad system of the Eastern Serbia with the railroad system in Bulgaria /Vidin/. The project is in the phase of thinking. The only one infrastructure project that has been moved ahead in the last five years is the project for new CBP between the Bulgarian village Salash /Belogradchik municipality/ and the Serbian village Novo Korito /Knjazevaz Municipality/. Officially, the final project phase was launched in 2014 and the CBP should start to operate in 2015.

3.2 The districts of Vidin and Zaječar and Bulgaria - Serbia IPA Cross-border program

The Bulgarian territory included in the CBC Bulgaria - Serbia IPA Cross-border program is 20 525 km² or 18,5 % of the national territory /111 001,9 km²/. In turn, the district of Vidin occupies 3 033 km², which is 14,8% of CBC territory under the program.

The total territory of the Republic of Serbia is 88 361 km² and 21,4% /18 909 km²/ of them are included in the program’s scope. The territory of Zaječar district occupies an area of 3 623 km², which is 19,2% of CBC territory in Serbia. /See Table 10/.

Table 10: Serbia Border Region - area of the region object of study

	Area /km ² /	% of the total country / CBC territory
BG CBC area	20 525	18,5% of Bulgaria’s territory
District of Vidin	3 033	14,8% of CBC territory
Serbia CBC area	18 909	21,4% of Serbia’s territory
District of Zaječar	3 623	19,2% of CBC territory

Source: Bulgaria - Serbia IPA Cross-border program

Vidin district /Bulgaria/ is a territorial unit level NUTS 3 /EUROSTAT⁶/. As regards to district of Zaječar as a territorial unit in Bulgaria - Serbia IPA Cross-border program, it corresponds to NUTS 3 level.

6 see <http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/portal/page/portal/eurostat/home/>



Figure 7: Territorial scope of Bulgaria -programPA Cross-border Programme
 Source: Bulgaria - Serbia IPA Cross-border program website

The following cross-border Euro-regions has been already established. They include the district territories of Vidin and Zaječar.

Table 11: Euro-regions established in terms of activities favorable creation of favourable conditions for cross-border activities - on the territory of Northwest Bulgaria /Vidin region/ and Eastern Serbia /regions Zaječar and Bor/

Euro - region	Territorial scope / Territorial units included
<p>“Stara Planina”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Established in 2006 • Spheres of cooperation: cross-border activities aiming economic, cultural and tourism development, environment, etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The region includes 11 municipalities from the region of West Stara Planina /Western Balkan Mountains/ on the territory of Bulgaria and Serbia • Bulgarian municipalities: Belogradchik, Berkovitsa, Varshets, Georgi Damianovo, Godech, Chiprovtsi, Chuprene • Serbian municipalities: Dimitrovgrad, Knjaževac, Pirot, Zaječar
<p>“Middle Danube - Iron Gates”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Established in 2005 • Spheres of cooperation: cross-border activities aiming economic, cultural, tourism development, environment, etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In Bulgaria: the territory of Vidin district • In Serbia: regions Bor and Branichevo • In Romania: municipality of Mehedinti

Source: Bulgaria - Serbia IPA Cross-border program

The Euro-regions aim to exchange information and best practices. These regions do not correspond to any legislative or governmental institutions, they do not have any political power and their work is limited to the competencies of the local and regional authorities which constitute them. They are usually arranged in order to promote the common interests across the border and cooperate for the common benefit of the border populations.

The Euro region “Stara Planina” includes 11 cross-border municipalities within the territory of Bulgaria and Serbia. The second organization which includes cross-border regions between Bulgaria and Serbia is “Middle Danube - Iron Gates”. Its territorial scope is concentrated on the territory of Vidin district in Bulgaria /all the 11 Municipalities/, or region in Serbia and the municipality of Mehedinti in Romania. The areas of cooperation are concentrated in the sphere of economic and cultural development, tourism sector in the border-regions, environmental protection, etc.

3.3 Determination of geographical confines as regards the South East Europe Transnational Cooperation Program

The South East Europe Program Area includes 16 countries. For 14 countries, the eligible area is the whole territory of the country, namely Albania, Austria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Romania, Croatia, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Greece, Hungary, Serbia, Montenegro, Slovakia, Slovenia and Moldova. In case of 2 countries, only certain regions are eligible: in Italy these eligible regions are: Lombardia, Bolzano/Bozen, Trento, Veneto, Friuli-Venezia-Giulia, Emilia Romagna, Umbria, Marche, Abruzzo, Molise, Puglia Basilicata, and in Ukraine: Cjermovestka Oblast, Ivano-Frankiviska Oblast, Zakarpatska Oblast and Odessa Oblast.



Figure 8: Map Program East Europe Programme Area
Source: <http://transdanube.eu/>

The program's slogan is "Jointly for our common future" and it was chosen by all the countries participating in the program during the programming period 2007-2013.

In the "Transdanube - Sustainable transport and Tourism along the Danube" 14 project partners /PP/ participates from the following 10 countries: Austria, Bulgaria, France, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Romania, Slovakia, Croatia and Serbia. The Project Lead Partner is the Environment Agency Austria. The partner consortium is complemented by ten associated strategic partners /ASP/ and 25 observers and stakeholders. Two representatives participate from Bulgaria, these

are Regional Administration of Vidin Region /the target region of the study/ and Club Sustainable Development of Civil Society located in Sofia. Two participants are involved from Serbia, there are the following Danube Competence Center /in Belgrade/ and Regional Agency for development of the Eastern Serbia located in the town of Zaječar /target CBC regions/. The focus of the Transdanube project region in Serbia is situated in the Eastern part of the country. The area considered as the Eastern Serbia in the project consists of the following 10 municipalities: Veliko Gradište, Golubac, Majdanpek, Kladovo and Negotin that are located directly on Danube River, and Bor, Zaječar, Sokobanja, Boljevac and Knjaževac located in the Danube hinterland.

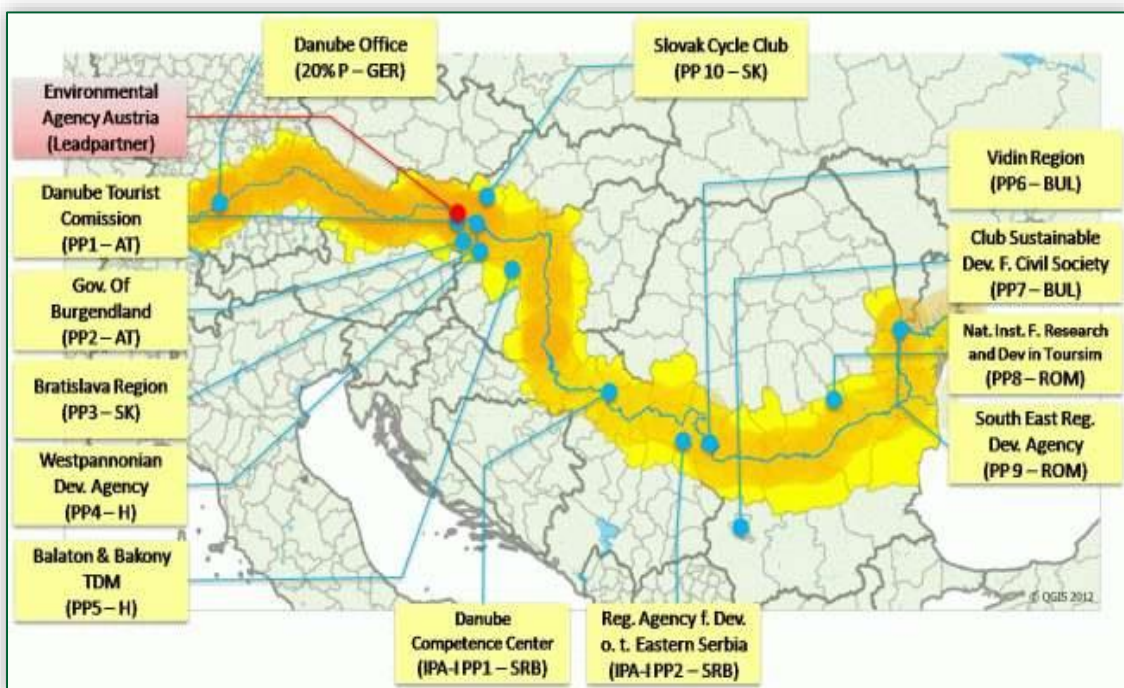


Figure 9: Transdanube project partners geographical confines

Source: <http://transdanube.eu/>

4. CBC Bulgaria and Serbia - good practices

During the programming period 2007-2013, many projects in the cross-border region Bulgaria-Serbia were implemented, under the Bulgaria - Serbia IPA Cross-border Programme. These projects consisted of partnerships in a variety of development spheres: economic and social cohesion, tourism sector development, actions on environment protection, etc. On the base of the study object, we concentrate only on the cross-border projects implemented in the territory of the districts between Vidin and Zaječar. The ongoing discussion of these projects like a “good example” should be considered as Bulgaria - Serbia common achievement.

Some particularly important circumstances in the CBC region:

- 2007-2013, it was the first programming period in the Republic of Bulgaria after its EU membership. In this regard, we should consider the successfully implemented projects for the CBC as a “best practices”, accumulated experience in the field of cooperation between both countries;
- The implemented projects cover a variety of cooperation and partnership spheres at cross-border level.

The projects analyzed below are separated into two groups depending on the Priority Axes defined in the CBC Program. Projects are characterized by their focus/development sphere and supporting under the different Priority axis:

- Priority Axis 1: “Development of small-scale infrastructure”
- Priority Axis 2: “Enhancing capacity for joint planning, problem solving and development”

The CBC Program between Bulgaria and Serbia 2007-2013 included 3 Priority Axes, but in relation to the Priority Axis 3, “Technical assistance”, there is not available public information.

4.1 Projects under the Priority Axis 1: “Development of small-scale infrastructure”

Priority Axis “Development of small-scale infrastructure” supports the implementation of projects focused on the following three priorities:

3 /three/ project priorities:

- Physical and information infrastructure: **3 projects /with status “completed”/**
- Infrastructure concerning environmental issues: **2 projects /with status: “completed”/**
- Assistance for project preparation: **1 project /with status: “completed”/**

These three priorities are focused on the implementation of projects aimed at CBC in the following development areas: cultural heritage and events, sustainable tourism sector development, crime prevention, technical infrastructure, preparation of technical documentation /aimed to future CBC in the area of tourism sector development/.

4.1.1 Projects supported under the Priority “Physical and information infrastructure”

The project named as “Bridge over the mountain” was dedicated to the development of community’s cultural centers in the cross border area. It had a duration of one year and it was finished in April 2015. Another project – “Prevention of crime through improvement of capacities for crime scene investigation and analysis of biological and other traces” must improve the safety level within the CBC region. The project duration is by the end of April 2015.

The Municipality of Chuprene /Vidin district/ plays the role of lead partner in the project implementation aimed to develop a community of cultural centers within the CBC region. The total project value is over 388 thousand euros.

The project is focused on the following activities:

- Collecting data for the cultural heritage within the CBC region;
- Midterm Strategy elaboration;
- Reconstruction of the cultural and community centers located in Chuprene, Gorni Lom in Vidin district /Bulgaria/ and Pirot in Pirot district /Serbia/;
- Elaboration of Cultural event and held within the territories of the project partners.

Project name: “Bridge over the mountain” - development of community cultural centers in the cross border	
Project partners	Project description
<p><u>Lead partner:</u> Municipality of Chuprene /Vidin, Bulgaria/</p>	<p><u>Project area:</u> “Physical and information infrastructure”</p> <p><u>Budget:</u> 388 144,42 Euro</p> <p><u>Project objective:</u> to improve the level of CBC and creation of possibilities for improving people’s quality of life through putting of additional long-lasting value to already implemented projects and putting the beginning for the joint development of the region.</p> <p><u>Duration:</u> 22nd April 2013 – 22nd April 2015</p>

The project, called “Prevention of crime through improvement of capacities for crime scene investigation and analysis of biological and other traces” was a CBC project; it covered the territories of the cross-border districts located on the Bulgarian-Serbian border including the district of Vidin.

The project included the following activities:

- Two media presentations in Sofia and Nis /project beginning/;
- Organization of Tender procedures for equipment supply for the needs of crime scene units in the relevant project area - Police departments and forensic labs;
- Organization of workshops and seminars for the police officers, border Police Department, crime scene investigators and crime scene managers /two workshops will be held in Bulgaria and four in Serbia/.

The seminars were organized according to territorial principle /divided into North and South/. The seminars in the North were held on the territory of 3 northern Serbian districts /Bor, Zaječar and Nis/ with the participation of 45 trainees from Serbia and on the territory of 2 Bulgarian districts /Vidin and Montana/ with 30 trainees. The seminar in the South was organized in 3 Serbian districts /Vranje, Leskovac, Pirot/ and 3 Bulgarian /Sofia, Pernik and Kjustendil/. An interesting moment in the project was that the trainees in the project will play the role of trainers to the other staff of the border police directorates in future.

Project name: Prevention of crime through improvement of capacities for crime scene investigation and analysis of biological and other traces	
Project partners	Project description
Lead partners: Ministry of Interior of the R. Serbia, Police Directorate, Criminalistics Police department, National Criminalistics - Technical Center, Unit in Nis /Nis, Serbia/	Project area: "Physical and information infrastructure" Budget: 989 890,00 Euro Project focus: to improve the safety in the CBC region through supplying the equipment for the needs of crime scene units and organization of training workshops for the police officers. Duration: 21 st January 2013 – 21 st January 2015

The target CBC region has a significant potential for development of different types of tourism, and especially cultural and historical tourism based on the archaeological objects located within the region. In this regard, we should mention that one of the most serious problems in cross-border tourism development is the untapped potential of the region. We can say that this is one of the biggest gaps in the tourism sector /gap between the so-called "status quo" and the "desired development status"/.

On this basis, the overall analysis of the project below shows that the basic objective was to establish good status for the protection of archaeological heritage and sites and conditions for their tourist presentation through investment and promotion activities. The planned investments included the territory of municipalities located in the CBC region - Majdanpek /Bor district, Serbia/ and Dimovo /Vidin district, Bulgaria/. The activities in the Serbian municipalities were aimed to the investments in heating and ventilation system concerning the important Mesolithic archaeological site "Lepenski Vir". The investments within Bulgarian territory were

aimed at equipping the new Visitors Centre for Archaeology and Tourism in Dimovo municipality.

The key idea of the project is to transfer know-how from the famous tourist site like “Lepenski Vir” to the municipality of Dimovo. The Serbian archaeological site is characterized by good experience of visitor’s management which should be transferred and they should prepare the Bulgarian staff to work properly with visitors.

Project name: Archaeological Heritage and Sites Closer to Tourist	
Project partners	Project description
Lead partner: Municipality Majdanpek /Bor, Serbia/	<p><u>Project area:</u> “Physical and information infrastructure”</p> <p><u>Budget:</u> 810 226,21 Euro</p> <p><u>Project objective:</u> to encourage tourism sector development through good conditions creation of protection and tourist presentation of archaeological heritage and sites located in the target region.</p> <p><u>Duration:</u> 1st November 2013 – 1st November 2014</p>

4.1.2 Projects under the Priority “Infrastructure concerning environmental issues”

Completed CBC projects

There are two completed projects within the priority of “Infrastructure concerning environmental issues”. The common sustainable development idea at European level in transport and tourism sector has resulted in the implementation of a project named “Mount a bike - development of mountain bicycle routes in Western Balkans”. The project lead partner was the Agency for Regional Development and Business Centre Vidin in Bulgaria. The project cost was over 425 thousand euros. The main objective is to stimulate joint tourism development within the cross-border region with the following key moment - sustainable tourism mobility.

Project Name: MOUNT A BIKE - development of mountain bicycle routes in Western Balkans	
Project partners	Project description
<p><u>Lead partner:</u> Agency for Regional Development and Business Centre Vidin /Bulgaria/</p> <p><u>Project partner 2:</u> Regional Centre for Sustainable Development and Entrepreneurship Timok Zaječar /Serbia/</p>	<p><u>Project area:</u> “Infrastructure concerning environmental issues”</p> <p><u>Budget:</u> 425 006,25 Euro</p> <p><u>Project overall objective:</u> to contribute to the joint tourism development in the cross-border region</p>

Project Name: MOUNT A BIKE - development of mountain bicycle routes in Western Balkans

Project partner 3: Regional Development Agency and Business Centre 2000 /Bulgaria/

Duration: 19th August 2011 – 19th February 2013

Project web site:
<http://www.mountabike.eu/>

The implemented activities promoted the mountain biking within the involved border regions, in order to create connections between the local representatives from tourism and transport sector, and to increase their common competitiveness. The following districts were included within the project Montana, Vidin and Zaječar. Moreover, the bicycle routes involved regions situated between Chiprovtsi /Montana district/, Belogradchik /Vidin district/ and Magura cave /Belogradchik municipality, Vidin district/ in Bulgaria, and Zaječar, Bolevats and Novo Korito in Serbia.

Subsequently, within Vidin district, there is an opportunity to rent a bike in the village of Stakevti /Belogradchik municipality/, Falkovets /Dimovo municipality/, town of Belogradchik, and Zaječar /Serbia/. The mountain routes are clearly marked and signboards/maps are placed. What is more, places for recreation and shelter are constructed.

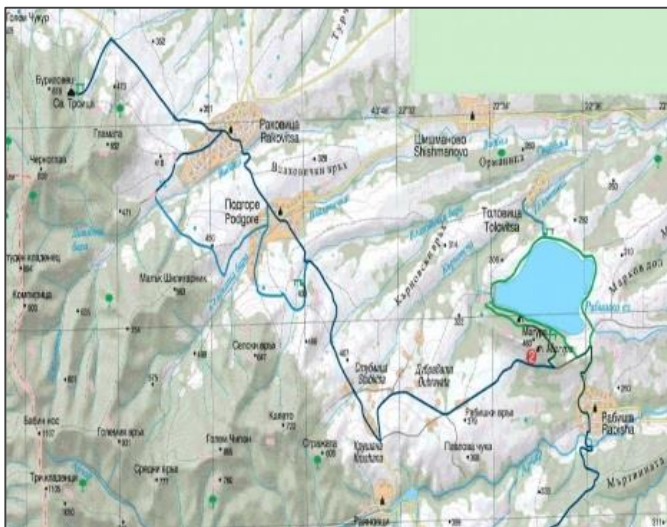


Figure 10: Mount a bike route Rakovishki monastery - Podgore - Rabisha /within Vidin district/
Source: <http://www.mountabike.eu/bg/>

During the project the following main activities were implemented: networking of trails for mountain biking /construction of bicycle paths, recreation areas, mapping, marking and maintaining the trails in good condition for riding - and buying bikes and related equipment - helmets and GPS equipment, tools and spare parts for maintenance of bicycles/, promotional tour organization; promotional materials developed, professional DVD movie captured, website elaboration, presentations advertising mountain biking, two tourist exhibitions in Bulgaria and Serbia, three workshops for development of mountain biking, contracting with

organizations providing rental and repair service, and/or organized training for mountain biking and bicycle repair.

The specific outcomes of the project are: 150 km mountain trails cleaned, 400 km routes marked as bicycle paths - a mountain bike signpost - 275 in Bulgaria and 100 in Serbia are marked routes, depending on their different levels of difficulty with green, blue and red colour signs, respectively, for light, medium and difficult routes placed 28 large plates in the important places in the region and a large map of the routes, purchased 60 aluminium mountain bikes, high-end, which are ready for use at different locations in the region - Chiprovtsi and Kopilovtsi in Montana district, Stakevtsi, Falkovets and Belogradchik in Vidin district and Zaječar in Serbia. All of them can be employed for no big spending for their maintenance. 20 helmets, other important bicycle equipment and GPS navigation were purchased in order to help the riders. Furthermore, 24 picnic areas were mounted /17 in Bulgaria and 7 in Serbia/ together with picnic tables, benches and fire places where cyclists can relax. Moreover, promotion of mountain biking in the Western Balkans was performed by brochures, maps, GPS map software, DVD movie disc and by booklet in English language of 20 pages. Professional movie in Bulgarian, Serbian and English language was produced with the aim to advertise cycling tourism in the region and the touristic fairs in Sofia, Bulgaria, ITB Berlin, Germany.

The grand opening event of the season for mountain biking in the Western Balkans was in May 2013, it was held on May 18 to 19 around Chiprovtsi and Belogradchik. The event included competitors from all over Europe.

Table 12: Mountain biking routes within Vidin territory and Eastern Serbia - project "Mount a bike"

Level	The territory of Bulgaria, Vidin region
D	Route: Chiprovtsi → Gorni Lom /Chuprene municipality/ or Prevala /Chiprovtsi municipality/ /Distance - 32,6 km, level - difficult/
D	Route: Gorni Lom /Chuprene municipality/ → Chuprene → Stakevtsi /Belogradchik municipality/ /Distance - 44,7 km, level - difficult/
E	Route: Falkovets /Dimovo municipality/ → Pleshivets /Rujintsi municipality/ /Distance - 15,2 km, level - easy/
M	Route: Pleshivets /Rujintsi municipality/ → Gyurgich /Distance - 9,1 km, level - medium/
M	Route: Belogradchik → Borovitsa /Belogradchik municipality/ → Falkovets /Dimovo municipality/ /Distance - 16,4 km, level - medium/
M	Route: Belogradchik → cave Lepenitsa /Belogradchik municipality/ → Izvos /Belogradchik municipality/ /Distance - 16,4 km, level - medium/

D	Route: Belogradchik → hut Planinitsa /Belogradchik municipality/ → Yanovets /Dimovo municipality/ → Falkovets /Dimovo municipality/ /Distance - 8,5 km, level - difficult/
D	Route: Falkovets /Dimovo municipality/ → hut Planinitsa → Belogradchik /Distance- 8,5 km, level - difficult/
E	Route: Borovitsa /Belogradchik municipality/ → Borov Stone/Belogradchik municipality/ → Borovitsa /Distance- 4,3 km, level - easy/
M	Route: Falkovets /Dimovo municipality/ → Yanovets /Dimovo municipality/ → Falkovets /Distance - 4,2 km, level - medium/
M	Route: Belogradchik → Way of time → Belogradchik /Distance - 18,7 km, level - medium/
D	Route: Belogradchik → Salash /Belogradchik municipality/ → Prauzda /Belogradchik municipality/ → Belogradchik /Distance - 45,2 km, level - difficult/
M	Route: Rabisha /Belogradchik municipality/ → Podgore /Makresh municipality/ → Rakovitsa /Makresh municipality/ → Rakovitsa monastery /Makresh municipality/ /Distance - 29,4 km, level - medium/
M	Route: Belogradchik → Dabravka /Belogradchik municipality/ → Veshtitsa /Belogradchik municipality/ → Rabisha /Belogradchik municipality/ /Distance - 22,0 km, level - medium/
	The territory of Eastern Serbia:
M	Route: Zajecar → Felix Romuliana /Gamzigrad/ → Zajecar /Distance - 25,5 km, level - medium/
D	Route: Selacka Reka → Kadibogaz /Distance - 26,7 km, level - difficult/
	Route: Boljevac - Zajecar - Novo Korito

Source: <http://www.mountabike.eu/>

What is more, the existing bicycle rental possibilities, along the route, provide good opportunities for the future mountain bike development. It is important to connect the bicycle routes on both sides of the border between Bulgaria and Serbia in order to develop a mountain route.

The most important results arising from project implementation are the several and various possibilities of establishing sustainable cooperation between the regions of Vidin and Zaječar in the area of sustainable tourism mobility development. Consequently, a follow-up of the project should be followed in order to maintain the achieved results and to generate further domains of cooperation. In this regard, it should be emphasized that the Agency for Regional Development and Business Centre Vidin takes an active part in organizing and conducting the bicycle rallies within the Vidin region, as well as at cross-border level - in Zaječar. Good examples are the bike tours /with different durations and various stages/ that have been

conducted in the municipality of Belogradchik, as well as the promotional cycling tour along the route Felix Romuliana - Zaječar. Subsequently, these events have resulted in increasing people's awareness of existing opportunities for sustainable tourism mobility development. The greatest potential for future development in this area is confirmed by the functioning tourist services which are closely related to the project implementation.

Moreover, a web site was developed during the project implementation, <http://www.mountabike.eu/>, and it gives actual and helpful information about the existing rent possibilities and information about accommodation facilities within the region of Vidin.

Dimovo Municipality /district of Vidin/ is a lead partner in the project - "Innovation and rehabilitation of water supply systems municipalities Dimovo and Majdanpek". The project partner is the Majdanpek Municipality /district of Bor/.

The total value of the project was above 580 thousand Euros, with the aim to improve the technical infrastructure conditions. This is one of the most significant projects which were implemented under the CBC Program.

Project name: Innovation and rehabilitation of water supply systems, municipalities Dimovo and Majdanpek

Project partners	Project description
<p>Lead partner: Municipality of Dimovo /Vidin, Bulgaria/</p>	<p><u>Project area:</u> "Infrastructure concerning environmental issues" <u>Budget:</u> 580 441,64 Euro <u>Project focus:</u> investment and modernization of technical infrastructure of water and plumbing in the municipalities of Dimovo and Majdanpek. <u>Duration:</u> 22nd April 2013 – 22nd April 2014</p>

The project activities included elaboration of a joint planning document named, "Program for water management", which covers the territory of both municipalities. The document's main objective is to investigate the current state /the status quo/ of the water sector within the CBC region. Thus, the main aim of the project was to give a clear idea about the existing needs, protection and conservation of natural resources and improving the living conditions in the border region.

In order to achieve project sustainability, regular joint meetings and workshops were organized with the stakeholders from the target region - municipalities of Dimovo and Majdanpek.

4.1.3 Projects under the Priority "Assistance for project preparation"

The third priority of "Development of small-scale infrastructure" includes the part "Assistance for project preparation" which includes project which are dedicated to the development of tourism sector. "Technical documentation for miracle caves" is the project that was

implemented in 2012/2013, between the municipalities of Dimovo /lead partner/ and Majdanpek /Bor district, Serbia/.

Project Name: Technical Documentation for Miracle Caves	
Project partners	Project description
<p>Lead partner: Municipality of Dimovo /Vidin, Bulgaria/ Project partner 2: Municipality of Majdanpek /Serbia/</p>	<p>Project area: "Assistance for project preparation" Budget: 49 789,47 Euro Project objective: elaboration of technical documentation for infrastructure of protected areas of caves Venec /Bulgaria/ and Rajko's Cave /Serbia/. Duration: 18 months, successfully completed in July 2013</p>

The project result was the elaboration of technical documentation for the infrastructure of protected areas of the caves Venets /Dimovo, Bulgaria/ and Rajko's Cave /Majdanpek, Serbia/. In the future, this documentation should be a base for their reconstruction and modernization as natural attraction in the region.

The Technical documentation for both caves, necessary for tourism investments in public infrastructure, was properly developed and a variety of promotional materials were prepared and distributed to the target groups. In addition, a partnership memorandum between both municipalities was signed with the prospects of potential future cooperation.

In other words, the project played an important role, either in the development of tourism sector within the cross - border region, or establishing a future partnership between the municipalities of Dimovo and Majdanpek in different development spheres.

4.2 Projects under the Priority Axis 2: "Enhancing capacity for joint planning, problem solving and development"

This Priority Axis support the implementation of projects focused on the following three /3/ priorities:

3 /three/ project priorities:

- Links and networking on institutional, business and educational levels: **8 projects** /status: "completed"/
- Sustainable development through efficient utilization of regional resources: **11 projects** /status: „completed"/
- People to people actions: **7 projects** /status: "completed"/

The projects' main focus has taken into account the striving improvement of the existing links between institutional, business and educational structures, sustainable use of regional

resources, as well as “people to people” actions in their important role in social integration. The projects that were completed include the following main topics of cooperation: regional integration with social and economic effect, framework for networking between institutions and individuals, education development, tourism sector.

4.2.1 Projects under the Priority “Links and networking on institutional, business and educational levels”

Completed CBC projects

The number of the projects that have been financed under this Priority is 8 and the total value is 1 003 481, 91 Euro.

Striving for cooperation and partnership established in the sphere of social integration occupies an important place in the overall strategic framework in Bulgaria - Serbia IPA Cross-border program. In this context, the project named “Regional integration with social effect” realized by partners from Bulgaria and Serbia took an important place in the achievement of specific objectives of the program.

Project Name: Regional Integration with Social Effect	
Project partners	Project description
<p><u>Lead partner:</u> “Free Youth Centre” Vidin, /Bulgaria/ <u>Project partner 2:</u> Association “Open Club” /Serbia/</p>	<p><u>Project area:</u> “Links and networking on institutional, business and educational levels” <u>Budget:</u> 86 342,76 Euro <u>Project main objective:</u> to contribute to the social cohesion in the Bulgarian-Serbian border area by improving the capacity and potential for cooperation in the social sphere /with a focus on child protection/. <u>Duration:</u> 12 months, successfully completed in July 2012</p>

The project was focused on the following key moments: social cohesion contribution /commonly accepted objective at EU level/ and child protection /main project focus/. This objective was achieved by the implementation of the following activities, improving the capacity and potential for cooperation in the social sphere within the CBC region.

- *Joint database and website project publication* - this database is in the area of social services and providers in the target cross-border region. The database includes 152 records of providers and social services in the border area;
- *A network of social agents*, which is active in the target region /participation in project activities from more than 58 institutions and organizations/;

- *A report elaboration* which is based on the research of 145 beneficiaries concerning the current situation in the social sphere in the whole border region;
- *Achievement of promotion and transparency* / an exposition was presented in both countries.

One of the most important results that were achieved during the project is the secured sustainability of Euro-regional cooperation in the social sphere. This result was achieved through methodical center created for CBC in the social area and a joint consortium.

The Vidin district was represented by the Science and Mathematics Secondary School “Exarch Antim I” in the role of lead project partner - “Unity-Partnership for knowledge and good neighborly unity”.

The project’s main objective was achieved through the activities aimed at continuous building of training practices that integrate research, education, preservation, promotion of cultural and historical heritage and its sustainable use within the region.

Project name: Unity-Partnership for knowledge and good neighborly unity	
Project partners	Project description
Lead partner: Science and Mathematics Secondary School Exarch Antim I /Vidin, Bulgaria/	<p><u>Project area:</u> “Links and networking on institutional, business and educational levels”</p> <p><u>Budget:</u> 123 662,95 Euro</p> <p><u>Project objective:</u> to overcome the problem with the lack of knowledge about the historical and cultural heritage of the CBC region.</p> <p><u>Duration:</u> 22nd April 2013 – 22nd April 2014</p>

In the area of economic cooperation at cross-border level, the project “Linking innovation with SME performance in Eastern Serbia and Northwest Bulgaria”, with a total value of 191 365 Euro had a particular importance. There were three partners involved within the project implementation, specifically two from Zaječar and one from Vidin district.

Project Name: Linking Innovation with SME⁷ Performance in Eastern Serbia and Northwest Bulgaria	
Project partners	Project description
<p>Lead partner: Regional Centre for Sustainable Development and Entrepreneurship Timok Zaječar, Serbia</p> <p>Project partner 2: Regional Chamber of Economy Zaječar, Serbia</p>	<p><u>Project area:</u> “Links and networking on institutional, business and educational levels”</p> <p><u>Budget:</u> 191 356,21 Euro</p> <p><u>Project objective:</u> increasing competitiveness of the SMEs in Eastern</p>

7 SME - Small and Medium Enterprises

Project Name: Linking Innovation with SME⁷ Performance in Eastern Serbia and Northwest Bulgaria

Project partner 3: Agency for Regional Development and Business Centre Vidin, Bulgaria

Serbia and Northwest Bulgaria and increasing the level of cooperation between institutions in the region.

Duration: 12 months, successfully completed in July 2012

The keywords in this project were “competitiveness” and “innovation” because these factors constitute a crucial role in the process of SME’s development. The project focus was on the increasing SME’s competitiveness in the cross-border region of Eastern Serbia and Northwest Bulgaria, as well as, increasing the cooperation between institutions in the region in order to improve services for SME sector in the field of innovation.

The following results were achieved during the project realization:

- 10 trainings on innovation and intellectual property rights /5 in Bulgaria and 5 in Serbia/ were successfully organized. More than 200 participants attended the training seminars;
- A field survey was conducted and innovative profiles for 300 SMEs were produced;
- A study on the innovative potential of SMEs in the region was developed;
- Developed innovative plans for 50 SMEs that participated in the surveys and interviews;
- Three press conferences were held and 3000 promotional leaflets were produced and distributed.

This project had a duration of 12 months and the project was successfully completed in July 2012.

The project has a future effects too. The Future performance of the 50 elaborated innovative plans for SMEs located in the border region, will have a significant positive effect by improving the overall competitiveness of the region and they will create conditions for contacts/undertaking joint activities with business representatives from both sides.

The project “Stara Planina - New Network” played an important role in striving to increase the existing connection between both countries at institutional level. The overall objective of the project focussed on the following aspects: to improve the region’s capacity to deal with key issues through joined resources and exchange of information and experience, as well as, to contribute to territorial integration which will provide a balanced and sustainable development across the border.

Three project partners participated in the project, i.e. Faculty for Management Zaječar and Regional Development Agency Eastern Serbia /RARIS/ in Serbia and Regional Administration - Vidin in Bulgaria. At the end of 2013, three project partners concluded a Memorandum of

Partnership to maintain the “knowledge base” for planning, problem solving and development that was developed as a result from the project realization.

Project name: Stara Planina - New Network /Knowledge base for planning, problem solving and development/	
Project partners	Project description
<p><u>Lead partner:</u> Faculty for Management Zaječar</p>	<p><u>Project area:</u> “Links and networking on institutional, business and educational levels”</p> <p><u>Budget:</u> 151 828,40 Euro</p> <p><u>Project objective:</u> to enhance existing capacities by professionally selecting and providing relevant available information, creating the framework for networking between institutions and individuals</p> <p><u>Duration:</u> 21st January 2013 – 21st January 2014</p>

The Project implementation included the following administrative districts: Bor and Zaječar in Serbia and Vidin in Bulgaria, and four key areas of development was identified within the border region. These areas are the following infrastructure, agriculture, environment and tourism.

In August 2012, the project in educational sphere was successfully completed between two project partners - Regional Chamber of Economy Zaječar in Serbia /lead partner/ and Vidin Chamber of Commerce and Industry in Bulgaria.

Project name: Cross-Border Education Development Action	
Project partners	Project description
<p><u>Lead partner:</u> Regional Chamber of Economy Zaječar /Serbia/</p> <p><u>Project partner 2:</u> Vidin Chamber of Commerce and Industry /Bulgaria/</p>	<p><u>Project area:</u> “Links and networking on institutional, business and educational levels”</p> <p><u>Budget:</u> 33 248,51 Euro</p> <p><u>Project main objective:</u> to strengthen territorial connections between the Bulgarian-Serbian border region, to increase the competitiveness and sustainable development through interaction in education and business along the administrative borders.</p> <p><u>Duration:</u> 12 months, successfully completed in August 2012</p> <p>Project web site: http://www.cbda-rs.com/ http://www.cbda-bg.com/</p>

The project focused on the creation of a system of vocational education of students and adults that should be more compatible with the needs of the local economy and which may eventually positively stimulate the future economic and regional development.

The project implementation included the following activities: two promotion conferences were organized /in Vidin and Zaječar/; a network of shareholders was established in the target region; one hundred local SMEs was contacted with a view to their participation in the project survey; and a forum was organized - “Bridging the gap between the supply and demand of the qualified workforce” /conducted in Serbia/.

The main object of the project was to reflect the key role of education within the issue of competitiveness of the cross-border region. There is also some expected future improvement emanating from the project, namely, understanding the correlation between vocational training on one side and the labor market needs on another side will have an overall positive impact on the development of the regions and their competitiveness on the market structure.

The next project „Tourism Investment, Development and Attraction Initiative” took into consideration the existing potential for tourism sector development within CBC region and the constraints and weaknesses for its utilization. During this term, the key moment of the project was the region’s support in the tourism development process by filling the existing investment gaps. The project and its activities supported and promoted the identified investment projects in the tourism sector.

The already existing 34 investment projects in tourism sector were identified and the current state of readiness for implementation was assessed. On the other hand, project participants were the key stakeholders at a municipal and regional level from both sides of the border which have an important role in tourism sector development. These stakeholders participated in the development of criteria for selection of tourism investment projects which were addressed and assisted through the project.

Project name: Tourism Investment, Development and Attraction Initiative	
Project partners	Project description
Lead partner: Regional Development Agency Eastern Serbia - RARIS /Zaječar, Serbia/	<p><u>Project area:</u> “Links and networking on institutional, business and educational levels”</p> <p><u>Budget:</u> 147 080,21 Euro</p> <p><u>Project focus:</u> to help in filling the existing investment gaps in tourism sector development in CBC region.</p> <p><u>Duration:</u> 21st January 2013 – 21st January 2014</p>

As a result of the applied criteria, the project strategy aimed to improve the development of 10 investment projects, 6 of which within Serbia and 4 in Bulgaria /see Table 13/.

Table 13: Investment projects for tourism sector development within CBC region defined in the project “Tourism Investment Development and Attraction Initiative”

Territory of implementation	Focus /tourism type development/
Within Serbia	
3 investment projects within the Sokobanja, Knjazevac and Zaječar	Greenfield projects related to spas
2 investment projects in Negotin and Majdanpek	In the area of ethno-village tourism
1 visitor center	-
Within Bulgaria /Vidin region/	
4 investment projects within Belogradchik, Chuprene, Vidin and Novo selo	In the area of ethno-village tourism

Source: <http://www.ipacbc-bgrs.eu/>

“New Energy for Old Mountain” project was implemented in the districts of Vidin, Zaječar and Bor. The main objective of the project was achieved through the following activities implemented during the implementation period:

- 15 experts were selected and trained in the CBC region in the domain for building their institutional and technical capacities to perform energy audits, thermal calculations and energy improvements;
- 30 buildings were selected as a relevant sample building in the region and energy efficiency audit was done;
- Technical specialists were trained, energy audits and know-how were shared, thermal calculations and energy improvements were performed. Effective transfer was implemented between Bulgaria and Serbia.

Project name: New Energy for Old Mountain	
Project partners	Project description
Lead partner: PC Directorate for Development, Urban Planning and Construction Knjaževac /Zaječar, Serbia/	<p><u>Project area:</u> “Links and networking on institutional, business and educational levels”</p> <p><u>Budget:</u> 142 602,50 Euro</p> <p><u>Project objective:</u> to identify solutions to constraints and weaknesses in the CBC region through a pilot institution building intervention.</p> <p><u>Duration:</u> 22nd April 2013 – 22nd April 2014</p>

One of the realized projects under the Priority “Links and networking on institutional, business and educational levels” is named “Regional Innovation Strategy for Eastern Serbia and North-West Bulgaria Region” which was implemented by project partners from the regions of Vidin and Zaječar.

This project had an important role in striving for long-term CBC establishment between the regions. Development of this strategy was implemented and the results were based on of the following analyses:

- Social Capital and Innovation Culture;
- Innovation Needs of Enterprises;
- Scientific and Research Potential of Region;
- Innovation Support System /R&D and business connection/.

Therefore, the strategic framework for future development of the cross-border regions is based on this status quo analysis. In this regard, the key word that was identified about the economic development was: “innovative specialization of the economy”. That means the possibilities for future CBC between both regions arise from the increased level of cooperation between institutions and the provision of better service to SME in the area of innovation.

Project name: Regional Innovation Strategy for Eastern Serbia and North-West Bulgaria Region	
Project partners	Project description
<p>Lead partner: Regional Center for Sustainable Development and Entrepreneurship “Timok” Zaječar</p> <p>Project partner: Agency for Regional Development and Business Center - Vidin</p>	<p><u>Project area:</u> “Links and networking on institutional, business and educational levels”</p> <p><u>Budget:</u> 127 360,37 Euro</p> <p><u>Project objective:</u> Elaboration of Regional Innovation Strategy to determine the future development vision of Eastern Serbia and North-West Bulgaria</p> <p><u>Duration:</u> 21st January 2013 – 21st January 2014</p>

One of the most important achievement results was the development of indicative lists of projects in the following four development priority areas: human resources and innovation culture, SMEs, Scientific and research institutions; Education.

Indicative list of projects in topic “Human resources and innovation culture”
<p>Project title: “It’s not too late for knowledge”</p> <p><u>Project general objective:</u> to increase the employment of the people that left the formal education system at the college level</p> <p><u>Project value and duration:</u> 200,000 Euro, 18 months</p>
<p>Project title: “Regional development experts”</p> <p><u>Project general objective:</u> to improve the knowledge, skills and influence the mindset of the local community representatives in the fields that are key for managing of the Timok region development.</p> <p><u>Project value and duration:</u> 80,000 Euro, 18 months</p>

Indicative list of projects in topic “SMEs”

Project title: “Support for development of clusters in the region of Eastern Serbia and North-western Bulgaria”

Project general objective: Increasing competitiveness within the SMEs sector in the region through support of cluster associations.

Project value and duration: 150,000 Euro, 24 months

Project title: “Improvement of work of Business Incubator Centers in the region of Eastern Serbia and North-western Bulgaria”

Project general objective: Improving support to the companies in the initial phase of development through improvement of work and the establishment of a regional network of Business Incubator Centers.

Project value and duration: 200,000 Euro, 24 months

Project title: “Youth Entrepreneurship”

Project general objective: Promotion of entrepreneurship as a model of solving the problem of unemployment with the youth.

Project value and duration: 100,000 Euro, 12 months

Project title: “Startup with mentoring”

Project general objective: Increase the level of entrepreneurial skills and knowledge through a mentoring program by experienced entrepreneurs.

Project value and duration: 200,000 Euro, 18 months

Indicative list of projects in topic “Science and research institutions”

Project title: “Research and development info center”

Project general objective: Increase the level of cooperation between R&D institutions and the SMEs in the region.

Project value and duration: 180,000 Euro, 12 months

Project title: “IP Forum”

Project general objective: Increased competitiveness of the SME sector through the increase of their knowledge in the field of intellectual property.

Project value and duration: 120,000 Euro, 12 months

Project title: “R&D Mentors”

Project general objective: Increase the level of awareness of SME about the need for cooperation with the R&D institutions.

Project value and duration: 150,000 Euro, 18 months

Indicative list of projects in topic “Education”

Project title: “Educational profile adjustment to the needs of the economy in the region of Eastern Serbia”

Project general objective: to decrease the unemployment rate and to increase the productivity of the regional economy by adjusting the education system to the needs of the economy.

Project value and duration: 200,000 Euro, 24 months

Project title: “Good leader for good schools”

Project general objective: capacity building for formal educational institution managers with regards to the new trends in school management, their development and competitiveness.

Project value and duration: 200,000 Euro, 24 months

Project title: “Student Entrepreneurship”

Project general objective: to strengthen the entrepreneurial and innovative way of thinking in the student population of primary schools.

Project value and duration: 200,000 Euro, 12 months

Project title: “Innovation camps”

Project general objective: to strengthen the entrepreneurial and innovative way of thinking in the student population of high schools.

Project value and duration: 200,000 Euro, 12 months

Source: Regional Center for Sustainable Development and Entrepreneurship “Timok”

For more information about the indicative projects, please visit:

http://msp-timok.org/index.php?option=com_frontpage&Itemid=1

Future realization of these indicative projects, defined in the four priority topics, represents a really good opportunity for successful partnership cooperation in the area which is crucial for development, like education. These indicative projects, in the field of education, generate a good perspective, for successful and fruitful cooperation between the region of Vidin and the region of Eastern Serbia. The projects concentrated on key priorities and they will play a significant effect, e.g. improving CBC between different stakeholders /from institutional and business sector/, increasing common competitiveness of the region, as well as improving living conditions of inhabitants within the target CBC region.

4.2.2 Projects under the Priority “Sustainable development through efficient utilization of regional resources” (Completed CBC projects)

The Resource Centre located in Bor /Serbia/ was the Lead partner in the project, which focused on the elaboration of a Scientific Methodology Study and an additional Documentary Study concentrated on the most important environmental objects at local level that need protection and preservation. Pollution and the risk emanating from pollution were the main focus area. One of project activities was the development of Modern design of Awareness Campaign named “Preserve for us!”.

An interesting element during the project implementation was the idea that the young need to be empowered, subsequently, they could be the active players and they could perform a campaign for awareness /the idea corresponds with the words set out in the project title – “Youths teach Adults”/. One of the most important project aim was to achieve long-term results, i.e. the key word was “sustainability of the project” in the future. It is an important issue to be understood by the leading representatives from the business, public and civil sector, and to develop and support a Chart for mitigation of pollution in the area of Danube River located between the districts of Bor and Vidin.

Project name: Preserve for us, Youths teach Adults

Project partners	Project description
<p><u>Lead partner:</u> Resource Centre Bor /Bor, Serbia/</p>	<p><u>Project area:</u> "Sustainable development through efficient utilization of regional resources"</p> <p><u>Budget:</u> 126 857,48 Euro</p> <p><u>Project focus:</u> project key moments are the important local environmental objects and subjects that need protection and preservation, and which are at pollution risks.</p> <p><u>Duration:</u> 18th December 2013 – 18th December 2014</p>

The next project aimed to cultivate knowledge and sensitivity toward unique cultural heritage which can be found within the CBC region. The target group was the young people from the region Vidin - Zaječar. The defined object of the project was achieved through the creation of an interactive tourist multimedia product. This activity included a virtual geographical tourist map /in Bulgarian, Serbian and English language/, movie, tour guide and brochure.

Project Name: Legends as a Tourism Enforcing Instrument in the Region Kula - Zaječar - Vidin

Project partners	Project description
<p><u>Lead partner:</u> Municipality of Kula /Vidin, Bulgaria/</p> <p><u>Project partner 2:</u> Regional Centre for Sustainable Development and Entrepreneurship "Timok" /Serbia/</p> <p><u>Project partner 3:</u> Association "Innovation and Development Centre" /Bulgaria/</p>	<p><u>Project area:</u> "Sustainable development through efficient utilization of regional resources"</p> <p><u>Budget:</u> 119 842,42 Euro</p> <p><u>Project objectives:</u> common touristic product development; enriching touristic services; promotion of the created cultural-historical tourism model.</p> <p><u>Duration:</u> 14 months, successfully completed in October 2012</p> <p>Web site: http://www.toursbgrs.eu/</p>

The following activities were implemented during the project:

- *A common touristic product was developed* - this product for cross-border tourism development included three Roman Fortresses: Castra Martis /Kula municipality/, Gamzigrad - Romuliana /Zaječar municipality/ and Baba Vida /Vidin municipality/. The product was based on the Legend of the three sisters - daughters of the Danubian King - Vida, Kula and Gamza;
- *Touristic services were enriched* - representatives from the small business sector were involved in the project implementation through the organization of many project events such as workshops and press conferences on both sides of the border;
- *Cultural-historical tourism model was promoted* - this activity included a development of an attractive map and plates, elaboration of web-portal, promotional brochure with

map, TV & Radio clip, as well as publications in touristic catalogues, magazines, local and regional editions. The implemented activities were aimed to increase the region's visibility in other parts of Bulgaria and Serbia too.

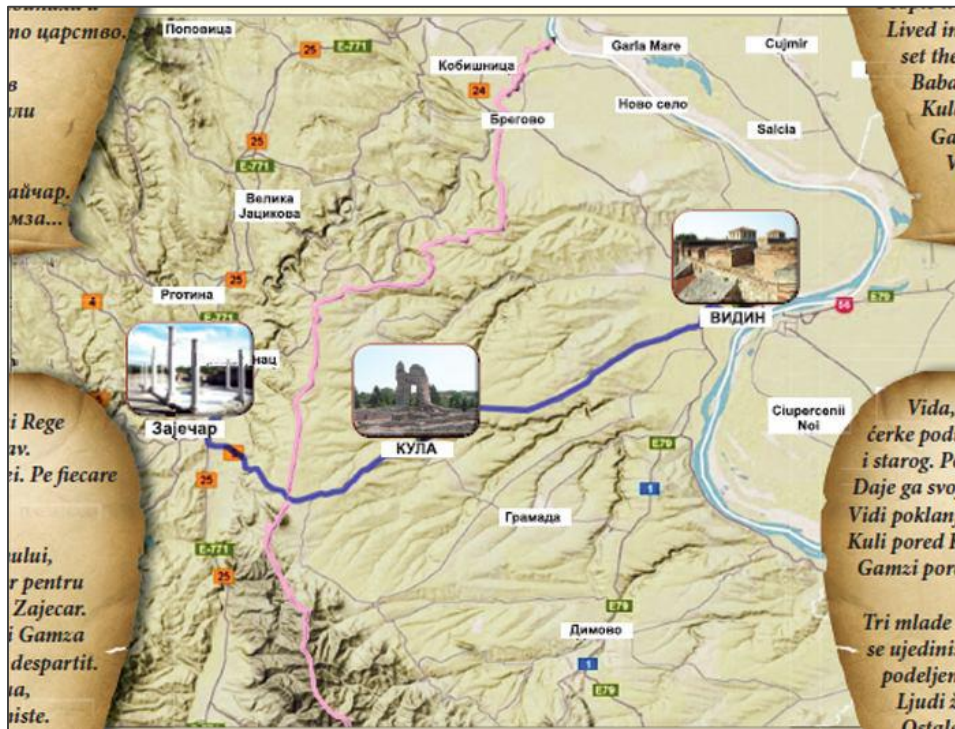


Figure 11: Map of the touristic route Vidin - Kula - Zaječar
Source: <http://www.ipacbc-bgrs.eu/>

The lead partner in this project was Kula municipality /Vidin region, Bulgaria/. The project started in 2009 and it was completed in 2012. The new touristic route that was developed is named “*The path of legends*”.

In the present times, two years after successful implementation of the project, we can evaluate its development “in action”. The website which was developed during project includes different offers for tourist routes based on the idea for cross-border tourism development. These tourist packages cover the territory of Vidin region /fortresses Baba Vida and Castra Martis/ and Zaječar /Felix Romuliana Fortress/. The achieved results encourage further successful partnership development between the representatives of transport and tourism sectors from Vidin and Zaječar. Moreover, the project website includes a database about the existing accommodation facilities within Vidin region and Zaječar, this option allows tourists to combine their stay in the territory of both countries. In conclusion, we can say that the benefits of this project are expected to grow in the future. That means the project developed a list of tourist offers, it gathered tourist information and this information is available to the public, and a willingness of cooperation was explicitly demonstrated between the regions and the interested people. In other words, the long-term effects of the project will increase the

awareness about the existing possibilities of different types of tourism within the CBC region and it will improve the regions' "visibility on the map".

The next project focused on the zones of growth within the districts of Vidin, Zaječar and Bor, it enhanced the competitiveness within the cross-border regions. The lead project partner was from Bulgaria - the Vidin Chamber of Commerce and Industry which has cooperated with the other project partner, namely Regional Development Agency Eastern Serbia /RARIS/.

Project name: Zones of Growth. Investment Promotion of Brown and Green Zones in the Vidin, Zajechar and Bor Regions

Project partners	Project description
<p><u>Lead partner:</u> Vidin Chamber of Commerce and Industry /Bulgaria/ <u>Project partner 2:</u> Regional Development Agency Eastern Serbia - RARIS /Serbia/</p>	<p><u>Project area:</u> "Sustainable development through efficient utilization of regional resources" <u>Budget:</u> 149 774,79 Euro <u>Project overall objective:</u> to enhance competitiveness of the Vidin, Zaječar and Bor regions through the valorisation of their economic assets. <u>Duration:</u> 12 months, successfully completed in July 2012</p>

The Project main objective corresponded to the strategic framework of the Bulgaria-Serbia IPA Cross-Border Program, which was concentrated on the need of cohesion between the cross-border regions /cohesion in different development spheres - territorial, social and economic/.

The project called "Beekeeping without borders" aimed to promote best practice in beekeeping and exchange of "know-how" practices in the area of biological beekeeping between the project partners. The lead project partner was the association located in the Vidin region - "Bulgaria in Europe" which has cooperated with the municipality of the Kladovo / district of Bor, Serbia/.

Project name: Beekeeping Without Borders

Project partners	Project description
<p><u>Lead partner:</u> "Bulgaria in Europe" Association /Vidin, Bulgaria/ <u>Project partner 2:</u> Municipality of Kladovo /Serbia/</p>	<p><u>Project area:</u> "Sustainable development through efficient utilization of regional resources" <u>Budget:</u> 143 740,40 Euro <u>Project objective:</u> to promote best beekeeping practices and exchange biological beekeeping know-how through implementation of the joint workshop for presentation of innovative beekeeping approaches. <u>Duration:</u> 12 months, successfully completed in July 2012</p>

The project undertook the following main activities: implementation of joint workshops /participation of 24 beekeepers/, presentation of innovative beekeeping approaches, as well as, the creation of joint data base which included a list with beekeepers and producers of beekeeping inventory /included 200 representatives/.

The project was important because it attempted to increase public environmental awareness through the implementation of joint information and publicity campaign for nature protection, environmental friendly agricultural behavior and promotion of biological beekeeping products. This aspect was achieved through two beekeeping trade exhibitions that were held in Bulgaria and in Serbia with participation of 63 beekeepers, other related experts and one school campaign with participation of 175 children.

The project “Beekeeping without borders II” was a continuation of the project with the same name that was implemented in 2012. Implemented activities during the project realization were dedicated to the rational use of the regional resources in the domain of environmental agriculture, promotion of sustainable and organic beekeeping and diffusion of good beekeeping practices.

Project name: Beekeeping without borders II	
Project partners	Project description
<p><u>Lead partner:</u> “Bulgaria in Europe” Association /Vidin, Bulgaria/</p>	<p><u>Project area:</u> “Sustainable development through efficient utilization of regional resources”</p> <p><u>Budget:</u> 94 659, 47 Euro</p> <p><u>Project objective:</u> to support sustainable development of the CBC region through applying of environmental friendly agriculture, organic beekeeping and good beekeeping practices</p> <p><u>Duration:</u> 22nd April 2013 – 22nd April 2014</p>

“New information technologies and tourism products for cross border tourism development” was the title of the implemented project in 2013/2014. The main idea was to utilize the existing tourism potential within the CBC region and to perform a tourism sector development within the target region. In other words, the project collected, processed and translated a considerable amount of tourist information and this information was used in elaborating a software product during the project implementation.

The collected information was used for the elaboration of three thematic brochures. These brochures were distributed among the tourists by the local tourist centers, museums, galleries, hotels and restaurants. One of the project activities was the organization of three demo tours with the representatives of the tour operators and tourist agencies from the two neighboring countries. Thus, different stakeholders /tour operators and agents/ were acquainted with the

new tourist product and with the existing potential for different types of tourism development in the region involving the districts of Vidin, Zaječar and Bor.

Project name: New information technologies and tourism products for cross border tourism development	
Project partners	Project description
<p><u>Lead partner:</u> Vidin Chamber of Commerce and Industry - VDCCI /Vidin, Bulgaria/</p>	<p><u>Project area:</u> "Sustainable development through efficient utilization of regional resources"</p> <p><u>Budget:</u> 177 946,95 Euro</p> <p><u>Project objective:</u> to encourage tourism sector development in the CBC region through providing of new informational technologies and elaboration of tourism products at a cross - border level.</p> <p><u>Duration:</u> 22nd April 2013 – 22nd April 2014</p>

Good potential for tourism sector development within CBC region resulted in the implementation of the project increasing the common competitiveness of cross-border regions. The project was implemented under the title, "Network for Cross-border Co-operation between Bulgaria and Serbia in the Tourism Sector", it was successfully realized in 2012 and it included four project partners - two from Bulgaria /representatives from the districts of Vratsa and Vidin/ and two from Serbia /representatives from the districts of Nis and Zaječar/.

Project Name: Network for Cross-border Co-operation between Bulgaria and Serbia In the Tourist Sector	
Project partners	Project description
<p><u>Lead partner:</u> Chamber of Commerce and Industry Vratsa - Berkovitsa Branch, Bulgaria</p> <p><u>Project partner 2:</u> Agency for Regional Development and Business Centre Vidin, Bulgaria</p> <p><u>Project partner 3:</u> Regional Chamber of Economy Nis, Serbia</p> <p><u>Project partner 4:</u> Regional Chamber of Economy Zaječar, Serbia</p>	<p><u>Project area:</u> "Sustainable development through efficient utilization of regional resources"</p> <p><u>Budget:</u> 147 166,32 Euro</p> <p><u>Project overall objective:</u> to support the CBC regional economic development and its competitiveness by realizing its potential in the tourism sector.</p> <p><u>Duration:</u> 12 months, successfully completed in July 2012</p>

The project supported the economic development within the regions through the following activities that were implemented:

- Elaboration of a web site, promoting the target region as a tourist destination; the database of the resources for tourism in the region; analysis of the potential of the region as a tourist destination;
- Cross-border business events organized - /four "Open Info Days" were held/;

- Two Pilot info, tours launched /so called “test drives”/ - indicated in the tourist product presentation;
- A promotional film and a promotional clip produced - presenting the target region as a tourist destination /doubled in English, Bulgarian and Serbian languages/;
- Bilateral meetings and trainings of beneficiaries;
- 2800 promotional materials produced and distributed - promoting the target region as a tourist destination.

The implemented activities during the project implementation will have an important role in the process and state of future tourism sector development and establishment of common initiatives /between different stakeholders/ at cross-border level. The achieved results of the project should be the basis for development of a common cross-border tourist product which includes the territory of all project partners from Bulgaria and Serbia. This product should utilize the region’s tourist potential /available touristic resources/ and it should take into account the tourists' needs. Furthermore, the future development of this common touristic product corresponds to the priority types of tourism development within the CBC region, and it will have a significant role in other cross-border initiatives between different stakeholders in the tourism sector.

Another project for CBC between Bulgaria and Serbia was “Selenium as an essential natural microelement for the human health protection”. This project was realized by Mining and Metallurgical Institute Bor in Serbia /lead partner/ and Vidin Chamber of Commerce and Industry in Bulgaria.

Project Name: Selenium as an Essential Natural Microelement for the Human Health Protection	
Project partners	Project description
<p>Lead partner: Mining and Metallurgical Institute Bor /Serbia/ Project partner 2: Vidin Chamber of Commerce and Industry /Bulgaria/</p>	<p><u>Project area:</u> “Sustainable development through efficient utilization of regional resources” <u>Budget:</u> 138 622,20 Euro <u>Project main objective:</u> to examine chemical characterization of cultivable soil and grains /wheat and corn/ on the selenium content /natural microelement important for the health of people/ in the two cross-border regions - Bor and Vidin. <u>Duration:</u> 12 months, successfully completed in November 2012</p>

The overall objective of the project was achieved through the following activities:

- Investigation of selenium content in the soil and grains in the districts of Bor and Vidin /all the received samples have been investigated/;
- A database was created for districts of Bor and Vidin /this database includes the obtained data about selenium content in soil and grain samples/;

- GPS identification and recorded coordinates of the places where the samples were taken. These data are used for the creating of a topographic map of the target region /electronic and hard copy/. The purpose was to gain a better visibility of the sampling place on the printed map, which was split in 9 partial maps of the target region;
- Report on diseases and the most common causes of mortality in target districts;
- Report created on available agricultural resources on both sides /in English language/.

The project named “Cleaning the villages and tributaries of the Danube from waste” was implemented on the territory of two cross-border municipalities. The lead partner municipality of Majdanpek /Bor district, Serbia/ and Dimovo /Vidin district, Bulgaria/. This project was another example for successful project implementation in the area of environmental protection within the cross-border region.

Project Name: Cleaning of Villages and Tributaries of the Danube from Waste	
Project partners	Project description
<p><u>Lead partner:</u> Municipality of Majdanpek /Serbia/ <u>Project partner 2:</u> Municipality of Dimovo /Bulgaria/ <u>Project partner 3:</u> Public Communal Enterprise Donji Milanovac /Serbia/</p>	<p><u>Project area:</u> “Sustainable development through efficient utilization of regional resources” <u>Budget:</u> 414 327,37 Euro <u>Project overall objective:</u> sustainable protection of the Danube river in the areas of municipalities Majdanpek /Serbia/ and Dimovo /Vidin, Bulgaria/. <u>Duration:</u> 12 months, successfully completed in November 2012</p>

One of the key specific objectives was to keep the settlements /villages and towns/, located on the Danube River and its tributary banks, without waste. Another specific objective was to raise awareness about the environmental issues either through education in elementary schools or through the involvement of the local media and its power of dissemination.

Activities during the project included:

- Elaboration of database about illegal dump sites, household waste and other solid waste;
- Purchasing of investment, equipment - tipper truck and backhoe loader for both partners, municipalities of Majdanpek and Dimovo;
- Cleaning, rehabilitation and re-cultivation of illegal dumpsites;
- Supply of the soil /humus/ for re-cultivation and rehabilitation of the terrain;
- A supply of 200 containers for household waste /50 for glass, 50 for plastic and 100 for other household waste/. All of the containers have been placed in the villages in both municipalities;

- Raising awareness among school children (7-14 years old) about the importance of environmental issues, hiring a lecturer and printing of T-shirts, caps, brochures and posters.

The total budget was 414 327 Euro. Its implementation continued for 12 months and it was successfully completed in November 2012.

The project "Veni, Vino, Vici" is a project of the CBC between Bulgaria and Serbia in the area of tourism sector development at a cross - border level. The focus area was the wine sector as an alternative type of tourism /wine tourism/ and tourism specific activities which are typical for the region. In this term, the project activities were concentrated on the cross-border networking and promotion activities. During the project implementation, the following results were achieved:

- A forum of wine producers in the CBC;
- A network was established between 50 wine producers in Vidin and Timok region and integration of cross-border wines in hotels, restaurants and specialized shops in the CBC region.

The activities aimed at improving the qualification of local wine producers, thus new knowledge was provided to improve their production and marketing capacity. Another important was the promotion of regional/local wines through the training of 50 staff employed in hotels, restaurants and shops.

What is more, the future wine tourism development within the CBC will be encouraged through a cross-border tourist road that has been established during the project implementation. This activity will have a positive effect on the future promotion of the wine cellars in these regions and will have an important role in the process of attracting tourist interest.

Other project activities included promotion of cross-border wine fair, which was held in Negotin, as well as the organization of promotional study tour for tour operators from Serbia and Bulgaria.

Project name: Veni, Vino, Vici	
Project partners	Project description
Lead partner: Country Museum of Knjazevac /Zaječar, Serbia/	<p><u>Project area:</u> "Sustainable development through efficient utilization of regional resources"</p> <p><u>Budget:</u> 121 605,94 Euro</p> <p><u>Project focus:</u> to encourage the future wine sector development as an alternative type of tourism within the CBC region.</p> <p><u>Duration:</u> 4th November 2013 – 4th November 2014</p>

The developed tourist route to the wine cellars in Vidin, Knjazevac and Negotin, called “Wine Road” led to all wineries in the region and it included a detailed map with the location of wine producers. In this regard, we can say that the activities implemented under the project had an important role in future joint development of the wine and tourism sectors in Vidin and Zaječar. One of the most important expected benefits of the project was the created opportunities for partnership relations between the representatives of restaurants, hotels and other businesses at a cross - border level. The common striving of Vidin and Zaječar in wine tourism development will play a crucial role for the increase of their competitiveness in the tourism sector and it will promote the CBC region as a territory which offers alternative types of tourism.

Taking into account the significant potential for development of different types of tourism within the CBC region, the following project was concentrated on the creation of cultural network events. The project focus was on development of document “Study of event tourism” dedicated to the territory of the districts of Vidin, Bor and Zaječar. The existing problems in the sector that were defined in this study will be the future base for training and technical assistance provision. The project key moment was to overcome the existing gaps in the cultural events sphere and utilization of the existing potential for development of cultural tourism at cross-border level.

Project name: Cultural Events Network /Cross-border event’s problem solving and development/	
Project partners	Project description
Lead partner: House of Culture Knjazevac /Zaječar, Serbia/	<p><u>Project area:</u> “Sustainable development through efficient utilization of regional resources”</p> <p><u>Budget:</u> 124 088,79 Euro</p> <p><u>Project objective:</u> to enhance capacities for the development of joint cross-border cultural events through creation of a network of cultural events organized from both sides of the border.</p> <p><u>Duration:</u> 4th November 2013 – 4th November 2014</p>

4.2.3 Projects under the Priority “People to people actions”

The next cluster of implementing project includes those ones which fell into the category of “People to people actions”. This cluster includes seven implemented and completed projects.

Organic farming was the main object of the project with the title, “Organic Farming – a Challenge or Responsibility for Our Nature”. It concentrated on sustainability, improvement of the skills of the farmers and collection of good practices.

Project name: Organic Farming - a Challenge or Responsibility for Our Nature	
Project partners	Project description
Lead partner: Regional Agribusiness Centre - Vidin /Bulgaria/	<p><u>Project area:</u> “People to people actions”</p> <p><u>Budget:</u> 93 801,68 Euro</p>

Project name: Organic Farming - a Challenge or Responsibility for Our Nature

Project partner 2: Agro-project Timok, Zaječar /Serbia/
Project partner 3: Alliance for Regional and Civil Initiatives /Bulgaria/

Project objective: to show the producers why and how they could start work as organic farmers, giving them information about the requirements and examples of good practices in the field.
Duration: 12 months, successfully completed in October 2012

The project implementation was associated with four outdoor seminars that were held within the territory of the following municipalities located in the district of Vidin: Novo Selo, Bregovo, Kula and Belogradchik, where the current state of affairs, concerning organic farming, in Serbia was presented.

Elaboration of a special manual for organic farming was one of the project activities; it explained how agricultural producers can change their production to organic one. An important issue was the creation of a database which includes all the agricultural producers in the districts of Vidin and Zaječar in order to help the farmers in their cross-border cooperation in their future activities.

A result from the project realization was the establishment of the new Euro Agra Club called "Good Neighborhood" which will annually collect farmers from both sides of the border. The Agra club activities are dedicated to exchange information and best practices between farmers in the cross-border regions in the area of organic farming.

"United in the Struggle against Drugs" was a project at cross-border level, implemented by two project partners from Vidin and Zaječar.

Project name: United in the Struggle Against Drugs

Project partners
Lead partner: "East-West" Association /Vidin, Bulgaria/
Project partner 2: NGO "Children's Joy" /Zaječar, Serbia/

Project description
Project area: "People to people actions"
Budget: 93 248,42 Euro
Project general objective: to contribute to the limitation of the abuses with narcotic substances and the unfavorable health and social consequences for the young generation from the Bulgarian-Serbian cross-border region.
Duration: 12 months, successfully completed in July 2012

The project implementation included different activities aimed to achieve the following results: two surveys were conducted about the drug abuse /at schools in Vidin and Zaječar, among the students from the 8th till 12th grade/; 12 reports were prepared about the opportunities for drug-abuse prevention in the cross-border region; 18 events were organized with the topic of prevention /lectures, conferences, and consultations/; 20 information products about

prevention were prepared and distributed in the cross-border region; an extensive publicity and media campaign were organized.

The “Free Youth Centre” from Vidin region was the lead partner in the implementation of projects supported under the Priority “People to people actions”, defined in the strategic framework of the Bulgaria - Serbia IPA Cross-border program 2007-2013. The title of the project was “Bulgarian-Serbian Innovative Teaching Network”. During the project realization, the following activities were implemented which represented “methodically connected steps”:

- Educational systems research /legislative basis, available practices, common problems, challenges/;
- Attraction and motivation for participation;
- Information and communication tools creation;
- Network creation /horizontal structure of educational professionals/;
- An experience shared trough thematic meetings;
- Interactive website;
- Education of a joint pool of experts aimed to development of resources for CBC;
- Strategic document adoption.

Project name: Bulgarian-Serbian Innovative Teaching Network

Project partners	Project description
<p><u>Lead partner: Free Youth Centre /Vidin, Bulgaria/</u></p>	<p><u>Project area: “People to people actions”</u> <u>Budget: 93 583,28 Euro</u> <u>Project focus: implementation of several methodically connected steps which take into account the specific needs and requirements of the defined target groups.</u> <u>Duration: 22nd April 2013 – 22nd April 2014</u></p>

Association „East West” in Vidin /Bulgaria/ was a lead partner in the implementation of the next project “Youth acting united”, which was carried out within the Priority “People to people actions”. The project activities were aimed to motivate the young people in their role as a target group to actively participate in sport activities. An important project activity was the organization of Youth Festival for a mass sport which included different cultural initiatives aimed to attract the young.

The main objective of the project was the promotion of sport development. The shared natural resources, as the Danube and the Timok River, and sports facilities play an important role in the process of national and international competitions in different sports organization.

One of the project activities was a massive promotional campaign that was carried out in the process of beneficiaries and target groups motivation to participate in project activities and to promote the project results. One of the project key issues was the opportunity for sports and

cultural cooperation between the young people from both sides of the border as a result from the project implementation.

The future CBC development in this domain may eventually involve also Romania as a partner on the next project stages.

Project name: Youth acts united	
Project partners	Project description
Lead partner: "EAST WEST" Association /Vidin, Bulgaria/	<p>Project area: "People to people actions"</p> <p>Budget: 97 910,02 Euro</p> <p>Project focus: to encourage the sport development among the young people within the CBC region.</p> <p>Duration: 1st November 2013 – 1st November 2014</p>

The project "Overcoming the limitations of the border through friendly, neighborly relations" was implemented with the participation of the municipalities of Vidin /Bulgaria/ and Knjajevac /district of Zaječar/. Its main focus corresponds to the gaps in the neighborly relations between the both countries as regards the existing similarities in economic, social and cultural area of cooperation. In this regard, the project was aimed at overcoming the negative impact of the distance between the CBC regions in the areas of partnership which were mentioned.

The project activities were concentrated on the convergence between the target regions and another nation, market and culture. The main achievement of the project is the opportunity for a new form of cultural cooperation between the project partners from Bulgarian and Serbian.

This project was characterized by the striving for its sustainability. The activities implemented during the project realization will play a future role as a base in the process of establishment of long-term relations and conditions for cooperation in the cultural area of development.

Project name: Overcoming the limitations of the border through friendly neighborly relations	
Project partners	Project description
Lead partner: Foundation "Phoenix - 21 century" /Vidin, Bulgaria/	<p>Project area: "People to people actions"</p> <p>Budget: 61 445,63 Euro</p> <p>Project objective: to support and intensification of intercultural dialogue and cross-border cultural cooperation based on a thorough understanding between the neighboring countries Bulgaria and Serbia</p> <p>Duration: 1st November 2013 – 1st November 2014</p>

In the area of social cohesion, a next project was implemented. The title of this project was "The Bridge of Friendship and Health of Functionally Disabled Children" which was

implemented by three project partners /two from Serbia and one from Bulgaria/. The project’s main objective was dedicated to cooperation between the two schools and the Sport Federation of Majdanpek in order to engage students, teachers, trainers, parents and children with functional disabilities in cultural and sports activities.

Project name: The Bridge of Friendship and Health of Functionally Disabled Children	
Project partners	Project description
<p><u>Lead partner:</u> Elementary school “Velimir Markicevic” /Serbia/ <u>Project partner 2:</u> High school “Hristo Botev” /Vidin, Bulgaria/ <u>Project partner 3:</u> Sport Federation of Municipality of Majdanpek /Serbia/</p>	<p><u>Project area:</u> “People to people actions” <u>Budget:</u> 93 667,37 Euro <u>Project objective:</u> to ensure that people on both sides of the border become closer and build lasting friendships through joint activities. <u>Duration:</u> 12 months, successfully completed in November 2012</p>

The environment protection issues were reflected in the focus of the next project - “Click - Climate Change Kick-off” which was connected with negative climate change impacts within the territory of Zaječar and Vidin. The key moment in the project was to give information about the vulnerability of the region in the face of climate change impacts, to reflect the level of preparedness of the local civil society, business sector and public authorities in addressing climate change and raising their knowledge and capacities.

Project name: “CLICK” - Climate Change Kick-off	
Project partners	Project description
<p><u>Lead partner:</u> The Timok Club /Zaječar, Serbia/</p>	<p><u>Project area:</u> “People to people actions” <u>Budget:</u> 94 155,61 Euro <u>Project activities:</u> mapping of the current state in the CBC region and producing the first “situation map”; awareness raising campaign and capacity building, program development; “guidelines/recommendations development in response to climate change impacts on local level”. <u>Duration:</u> 21st January 2013 – 21st January 2014</p>

Activities implemented during the project realization represent a good basis for future cooperation between the relevant stakeholders from Vidin and Zaječar regions in the area of climate change issues at local level.

5. Presentation and analysis of selected projects in their role as "good examples" in CBC establishments between Bulgaria and Serbia

In this part of the current case study, two successful and completed projects are presented and analyzed, and their important role in the long-term CBC establishment between the Vidin district and Eastern Serbia is reflected. These two projects are the following: "Transdanube - Sustainable Transport and Tourism along the Danube", implemented under the South East Europe Transnational Cooperation Program; another one is "Stara Planina - New Network" and it was implemented with the financial support of the Bulgaria - Serbia IPA Cross-border program for the period 2007-2013.

Both projects are characterized by their good opportunities for future organization of cross-border cooperation between the countries/regions. These existing possibilities for cross-border cooperation can be found in the area of sustainable transport and tourism sector development /"Transdanube" projects/ and/or in the area of territorial integration, sustainable and balanced development of cross-border level - "Stara Planina" project.

We consider that a deeper analysis of both projects is needed in order to fully understand their context and impact over the Cross border cooperation.

5.1 "TRANSDANUBE" project - achieved results and existing opportunities for future cross-border initiatives

The project activities implemented by the Bulgarian project partner - Regional Administration of Vidin region will be analyzed. The main focus is on those specific activities that are relevant to the CBC development with the Republic of Serbia.

Based on the project common vision, the partners developed or updated Regional action plans /ACT 4.1 from WP 4 Sustainable mobility offers + demonstration/ for sustainable mobility development and implementation. These action plans will play a role of the guideline for action implementation in the project and beyond. The action plans will be based on the results of so-called **SoA analysis** /elaborated in the ACT 3.2 State of the Art - Sustainable mobility in tourism, which is a part of WP 3 Transport and Tourism System Analysis/.

The regional mobility action plans will be the **framework for the development of specific sustainable transport offers** /ACT 4.2 Sustainable transport offers as a part of the mentioned WP 4/.

Four topic objectives of the TRANSDANUBE project, which are directly related to the CBC development

The Transdanube project identified four specific topic objectives and the whole project was built around these objectives. These are the following: sustainable mobility offers; sustainable tourism products; information and marketing; financing options, organizational and legal framework. In the next part, all the objectives will be elaborated and investigated.

The transport system plays a crucial role in the implementation principles of sustainable mobility in tourism. Its main contribution is the provision of user-friendly, high quality offers, containing environmentally-friendly means of transport, mainly involving railway, bus and water transport.

The first topic is called as “Sustainable mobility offers’. Within this topic, the objectives are defined; the minimum standards are set which should be achieved up to 2020 and indicators identified in order to monitor the progress in achieving the defined objective. The measurement instruments and possibilities /information sources/ are also determined.

In topic “Sustainable mobility offers”	
Name of the objective	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The cross-border connections and transport opportunities, improving between Bulgaria and Serbia, Bulgaria and Romania through sustainable means of transport
Minimum standards to be achieved in 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tourists should have at least one public transport opportunity for cross-border travel between Bulgaria and Serbia, Bulgaria and Romania, and that should be inconsistent with the tourism demand.
Definition of indicators to monitor the progress in achieving the defined objectives /including the measurement instruments/	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Share of the cross-border tourist travels by sustainable cross-border mobility offers - at least 25% from all travels. Measurement instruments: information will be collected using field survey, data will be provided by the relevant Regional Statistical Offices of the National Statistical Institutes, data will be collected on the number of the tickets sold by transport operators.

Source: WP 4 Sustainable mobility offers and demonstration - Strategy development and Regional action plan Vidin region, <http://transdanube.eu/downloads/studies-und-papers>

The defined objective corresponds to the first widely accepted objective by the partners for the common vision for sustainable mobility in tourism, specifically, improving the accessibility of the regions along the Danube River through offers for sustainable mobility.

Within the Eastern Serbian region /the region included in the Transdanube project/, the necessity of increasing awareness of sustainable mobility is regarded as one of the factors of success for its development. This objective should be realized with the support of municipalities, regional agencies and the Government activities. In this regard, as a key issue should consider the need for overcoming the problems associated with the financial support and legal issues.

On the other side, CBC with the surrounding regions in Romania and Bulgaria should be increased. The cross-border cooperation has to be resulted in joint projects and joined tourism packages based on sustainable mobility vision.

As regards the second topic, “Sustainable tourism products”, it should be emphasized that the tourist system plays an important role in sustainable mobility in tourism. It can be seen as a regional concept of major importance concerning objectives whose achievement depends on various stakeholders.

Related to the improvement of cross-border cooperation, the following objective was defined:

In topic “Sustainable tourism products /packages, etc./”	
Name of the objective	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improving cross-border cooperation between Bulgaria and Serbia, Bulgaria and Romania in the area of tourist packages, and development of cross-border region for cyclists.
Minimum standards to be achieved in 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Creation of two joint package offers (at least) for cross-border sustainable tourism between Bulgaria and Serbia, Bulgaria and Romania.
Definition of indicators to monitor the progress in achieving the defined objectives /including the measurement instruments/	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Share of tourists which purchase services from the elaborated package offers for sustainable tourism - at least 25%. Measurement instruments: field survey, information from the local representatives from the tourism sector, data from the relevant Regional Statistical Offices, data from the companies providing cross-border tourism packages.

Source: WP 4 Sustainable mobility offers and demonstration - Strategy development and Regional action plan Vidin region, <http://transdanube.eu/downloads/studies-und-papers>

The tourist demand is the top project objective, related measures and implementation activity. This is the way to generate further tourist demand and to develop individual offers, which include high comfort and quality. Other basic direction is to increase the customers’ sensibility to the offered services and packages. The measurement of the sensibility might be entrusted to the nongovernmental sector and other stakeholders. In the communication process, it is necessary to ensure that trips feedback information are received and reflected in order to

harmonize the offers with the tourist demand. Moreover, there is a high need to demonstrate the ecologically sustainable alternatives of tourism.

Moreover, implementation of the principles for sustainable mobility in tourism conceptually depends by the accessible of information, mainly information about public transport services, including at cross-border level. Access to detailed and useful information will profoundly improve the quality of tourist services.

Subsequently, the next topic deals with the question of information and marketing:

In topic "Information and marketing"	
Name of the objective	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creating of information systems that advertise cross-border destinations and tourism packages.
Minimum standards to be achieved in 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The tourists should have information and access to at least one cross-border tourist destination through the sustainable mobility offer.
Definition of indicators to monitor the progress in achieving the defined objectives /including the measurement instruments/	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The tourism supply should include at least one cross-border sustainable mobility offer. • Measurement instruments: field survey, information from local stakeholders in the tourism sector, data from the relevant Regional Statistical Offices, number of tourists that purchase cross-border tourism packages services.

Source: WP 4 Sustainable mobility offers and demonstration - Strategy development and Regional action plan Vidin region, <http://transdanube.eu/downloads/studies-und-papers>

Financing options, organizational and legal framework play a crucial place in tourism and its sustainable mobility. In the area of this topic, the following objective at cross-border level was defined:

In topic "Financing options, organizational and legal framework"	
Name of the objective	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Elaboration of sustainable mobility projects funded by the Territorial Cooperation Programs between Bulgaria and Serbia, Bulgaria and Romania, the Operational Programs in Bulgaria, and the Program for the Rural areas
Minimum standards to be achieved in 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At least 5 sustainable mobility projects (developed and applied) to the Territorial Cooperation Programs between Bulgaria and Serbia, Bulgaria and Romania, the Operational Programs in Bulgaria, and the Program for the Rural areas

<p>Definition of indicators to monitor the progress in achieving the defined objectives /including the measurement instruments/</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At least 5 projects submitted for sustainable mobility through the Territorial Cooperation Programs between Bulgaria and Serbia, Bulgaria and Romania, the Operational Programs in Bulgaria, and the Program for the Rural areas. • Measurement instruments: information provided by the local stakeholders in the border areas within the three countries, data by the local authorities, the number of the project proposals submitted, the number of the project proposals approved and realized.
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As regards this topic, we should mention that the region of Eastern Serbia developed plans at different territorial level /regional and local/, prepared in the last 2-3 years. These plans are characterized by the increasing focus on CBC projects with Serbia, Romania and Bulgaria and on transnational projects too. One of the weaknesses of these plans is the lack of sustainable mobility opportunities and there are no planned initiatives to stimulate tourists to use public transport even at cross-border level.

On the basis of defined objectives and the existing situation in the area of CBC, the following “gap analysis”, which compares the gaps between the defined objectives and current situation, was prepared.

The Status Quo		Objective
In topic “Sustainable mobility offers”		
Low level of cooperation between Bulgaria and Serbia , Bulgaria and Romania as regards the joint sustainable mobility offers supplying “to” and “from” tourist destinations within the border regions.	The gap between the status quo and the desired state of cooperation	Improvement of cross-border connections and transport opportunities between Bulgaria and Serbia , Bulgaria and Romania through sustainable means of transport.

The Status Quo		Objective
In topic “Sustainable tourism products /packages, etc./”		
Weak links between public transport policies and touristic travels at cross-border level. Insufficient connection between travels in the district of Vidin and in the border regions of Serbia and Romania.	The gap between the status quo and the desired state of cooperation	Improving cross-border cooperation between Bulgaria and Serbia , Bulgaria and Romania in the area of tourist packages, and development of cross-border region for cyclists.

The Status Quo		Objective
In topic "Information and marketing"		
Lack of effective information systems that promote the package tourism services at a cross - border level.	The gap between the status quo and the desired state of cooperation	Creating information systems that advertise cross-border destinations and tourism packages.

The Status Quo		Objective
In topic "Financing options, organizational and legal framework"		
Untapped potential for joint activities at cross-border level. Insufficient opportunities for tourists to visit Serbia and Romania by purchasing a package service which concerns a destination in Vidin district.	The gap between the status quo and the desired state of cooperation	Elaboration of sustainable mobility projects funded by the Territorial Cooperation Programs between Bulgaria and Serbia , Bulgaria and Romania, the Operational Programs in Bulgaria, and the Program for the Rural areas.

CBC related measures

An important part of the regional action plan is the so-called "Catalogue of development measures". The catalogue of development measures the principles of sustainable mobility in tourism. This catalogue identifies a list of measures which are needed for the achievement of objectives.

Implementation of the defined objectives has to be closely linked to the cross-sectional approach /between the transport and tourism sectors/. At the present times, the principle of cooperation is often lacking or the extent of its application is inadequate.

Relating to the subject of this study, only those measures are analyzed which are directly related to the CBC development between Bulgaria /Vidin district/ and Eastern Serbia.

In topic "Sustainable mobility offers"

Description of measure	<p>Touristic offers for cross-border sustainable transport in tourism between Bulgaria and Romania, <u>Bulgaria and Serbia.</u></p> <p>The measure consists of tourist packages which are in full consent to the tourism demand. In accordance with the Transdanube project, the following bus routes are considered as a reliable transport solution:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vidin → Kalafat → Turnu Severin /Romania/ and back • Vidin → Zaječar → Bor /Eastern Serbia/ and back
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	Implementation of this measure includes procedures for granting of licenses for the transport companies from Vidin region in order to ensure cross-border travel.
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In topic “Sustainable tourism products /packages, etc./”

Description of measure	<p>Connect bicycle paths developed under the project “Mount a bike” on both sides of the border between Bulgaria and Serbia, and carry out feasibility study to connect bicycle route EuroVelo 6 with the existing mountain routes.</p> <p>The measure includes cross-border tourism packages that offer the possibility for mountain cycling within the Vidin region and Eastern Serbia. Two border checkpoint function in the Vidin (connection with the Republic of Serbia) - “Vrashka Chuka” which connects Kula and Zaječar /Serbia/ and “Bregovo” which connects Bregovo with the Serbian City of Negotin.</p> <p>Activities of the measure should provide more possibilities for renting a bike on both sides of the border. The measure carries out a feasibility study.</p>
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Description of measure	<p>Elaboration of cross-border tourist offers for weekend, tourism between Vidin and Zaječar /Serbia/, and web based cross-border public transportation information system creation.</p> <p>The measure consists in cross-border tourist packages for weekend, tourism, taking into account the tourist needs. The access to the actual information about the public bus transport between Vidin and Zaječar will be implemented through a web based information system. The measure also includes active marketing of the CBC regions. The development potential of wine tourism is a successful marketing solution. Depending on the tourism demand, the bus line could be regularly or on demand. The tourist service quality will be increased through the provided opportunity for renting bikes between Vidin and Zaječar.</p>
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In topic “Information and marketing”

<p>Description of measure</p>	<p>Marketing strategy elaboration for cross-border destinations development, based on the sustainable mobility.</p> <p>Cross-border tourist offers development of sustainable public transport, which will have a positive effect on the sustainable mobility in tourism development. Moreover, it will have an indirect positive effect on the other economic sectors.</p>
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In topic “Financing options, organizational and legal framework”

<p>Description of measure</p>	<p>The annual provision of national and <u>cross-border transport and tourism forums</u> promoting the integration of sustainable mobility in the tourism sector.</p> <p>The measure realization includes cooperative civil and institutional forums at local, regional, national and cross-border level, involving a wide range of local stakeholders. These forums are an integral part of the sustainable mobility principles in the region.</p>
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Source: WP 4 Sustainable mobility offers and demonstration - Strategy development and Regional action plan Vidin region, <http://transdanube.eu/downloads/studies-und-papers>

Evaluation of development measures

The process of evaluation of development measures /total 5 in the area of CBC development/ has a crucial role in their successful future implementation. The evaluation process includes the following steps:

- The estimated impact of the measure and contributed to the overall objective for sustainable transport in tourism development /incl.. Tangible outputs/;
- First reliability check /cost estimation and financing options, realization horizon/.

In topic “Sustainable mobility offers”

<p>The estimated impact of the measure and contributed to the overall objective</p>	<p>Touristic offers elaboration for cross-border sustainable transport in tourism demand for cross-border travels, between Bulgaria and Romania, <u>Bulgaria and Serbia.</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The measure realization will increase the added value of tourism within the Vidin region and the border areas within
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	<p>the Republic of Serbia and the Republic of Romania, and it will increase their common competitiveness;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The cross-border cooperation between Bulgaria and Serbia, Bulgaria and Romania will be improved; • The transport accessibility to the main tourist directions at a cross - border level will be improved. <p>Tangible outputs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increasing revenue from the transport and tourism sector in the region - rate of increase 10% on an annual basis for the current level; • Increasing number of tourists from the neighboring countries – the Republic of Romania and the Republic of Serbia - rate of increase 10% on annual basis for the current level; • - Number of realized cross-border projects for the tourism sector development - rate of increase 10% on annual basis from the current level.
<p>First realisability check /cost estimation and financing options, realization horizon/</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Investment costs 50 000,00 Levs • The measure can be realized through financing provided by the municipal budgets /target subsidy/, co-financing under the Cross Border Cooperation Programs, public-private partnership /PPP/ and/or by private investments; • - The measure realization is possible in the short-term: within the lifetime of the Transdanube project /2014/.

In topic “Sustainable tourism products /packages, etc./”

<p>The estimated impact of the measure and contributed to the overall objective</p>	<p>Connect bicycle paths developed under the project “Mount a bike” on both sides of the border between Bulgaria and Serbia, and carry out feasibility study to connect bicycle route EuroVelo 6 with existing mountain routes.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The measure realization will stimulate the shift to environmentally friendly means of tourist mobility; • Implementation of measurable activities will contribute to the cross-border region for its cyclical development /the principle of cooperation - widely accepted by the partners/; • The added value of tourism within the border regions of the three countries will increase and their common competitiveness will rise.
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	<p>Tangible outputs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increasing number of tourists using sustainable means of transport instead of their private car - rate of increase 10% on annual basis from the current level; • Increasing revenue from the tourism sector in the region - rate of increase 10% on an annual basis for the current level; • Increasing number of tourists that have visited tourist sites in the region - rate of increase 15% on annual basis from the current level; • Increasing number of tourists from the neighboring countries – the Republic of Romania and the Republic of Serbia - rate of increase 10% on annual basis for the current level; • - Developed promotional materials - at least 1 for each type of tourism product/package elaborated.
<p>First reliability check /cost estimation and financing options, realization horizon/</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Investment and operation cost 80 000,00 Levs - The measure can be realized through financing provided by the municipality budgets /target subsidy/, by co-financing under the Cross Border Cooperation Programs, the combined efforts of business and public sector /PPP/, and/or private investments; - The measure realization is possible in midterm: within three years after the end of the Transdanube project /2015-2017/.
<p>The estimated impact of the measure and contributed to the overall objective</p>	<p>Elaboration of cross-border tourist offers for weekend, tourism between Vidin and Zaječar /Serbia/, and web based cross-border public transportation information system.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The measure realization will improve the transport accessibility to the main tourist directions at cross-border level; • The tourist awareness and sensibility about the benefits from the sustainable mobility will increase; • The cross-border offers will increase the added value of tourism within the Vidin region. <p>Tangible outputs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increasing revenue from the transport and tourism sector in the region - rate of increase 10% on an annual basis for the current level;

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increasing number of tourists that have visited tourist sites in the region - rate of increase 15% on annual basis from the current level; • Increasing number of tourists from the neighboring countries – the Republic of Romania and the Republic of Serbia - rate of increase 10% on annual basis for the current level.
<p>First reliability check /cost estimation and financing options, realization horizon/</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Investment costs 40 000,00 levs • The measure can be realized through financing provided by the municipality budgets /target subsidy/, under the Cross Border Cooperation Programs, by joint activities of business and public sector /PPP/, private investments; • The measure realization is possible in the short-term: within the lifetime of the Transdanube project /2014/.

In topic “Information and marketing”

<p>The estimated impact of the measure and contributed to the overall objective</p>	<p>Marketing strategy elaboration for cross-border destinations development, based on the sustainable mobility.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implementation will raise awareness of tourists about the benefits of sustainable mobility at cross-border level; • Tourism development in border regions of the three countries will be improved which will increase the added value of the tourism sector; • The common marketing strategy will improve cross-border cooperation between Bulgaria, Serbia and Romania. <p>Tangible outputs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An increasing number of tourists from the neighboring countries – the Republic of Romania and the Republic of Serbia - rate of increase 15% on annual basis from the current level; • Number of realized cross-border projects for tourism development - rate of increase 10% on annual basis for the current level; • Increasing revenue from the tourism sector in the region - rate of increase 10% on an annual basis for the current level; • - Developed promotional materials - at least 1 type of each cross-border destination.
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<p>First reliability check /cost estimation and financing options, realization horizon/</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Investment costs are estimated at 30 000,00 Levs; • The measure can be realized through financing provided by the municipality budgets /target subsidy/, public-private partnership /PPP/, by co-financing under the Operational Programs where this activities implementation is set; • The measure realization is possible in midterm: within three years after the end of the Transdanube project /2015-2017/.
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In topic “Financing options, organizational and legal framework”

<p>The estimated impact of the measure and contributed to the overall objective</p>	<p>The annual provision of national and <u>cross-border transport and tourism forums</u> promoting the integration of sustainable mobility in the tourism sector.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The measure orientation will increase the added value of the tourism sector in the region; • The measure implementation will raise awareness and knowledge about sustainable mobility, and it will encourage its implementation as a concept in the region; • Annual provision of these forums will stimulate environmentally friendly mobility systems in the tourism sector. <p>Tangible outputs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increasing revenue from the tourism sector in the region - rate of increase 10% on an annual basis for the current level; • Increasing investments in the tourism sector - rate of increase 10% on annual basis from the current level; • Increasing the number of tourists that has visited tourist sites in the region - rate of increase 15% on annual basis from the current level; • Implemented annual tourist forums and meetings between stakeholders in the Vidin region, developed mechanisms for coordination between them /e.g. Establishment of Municipal Council of Tourism in the municipalities of the Vidin region and establishment of an effective model for their coordination with the Regional Advisory Council for Tourism;
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develops up to 3 new channels of communication and advertising of tourist sites and the Vidin region as a tourist destination; • - Developed promotional materials encouraging sustainable mobility in tourism.
First reliability check /cost estimation and financing options, realization horizon/	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Investment costs of forums are estimated at 50 000,00 Levs per year. • The measure can be realized through financing provided by the municipality budgets /target subsidy/, by the combined effort of business and public sector /PPP/, private investments; • - The measure realization is possible in the short term: within the lifetime of the Transdanube project 2014/.

Prioritization of measures

The defined measures are characterized by different levels of prioritization, which depend on their importance for CBC development and partnership establishment. 5 measures in the Transdanube project were prioritized in the following way:

Measure in topic "Sustainable mobility offers"	Touristic offers elaboration for cross-border sustainable transport in tourism demand for cross-border travels, between Bulgaria and Romania, Bulgaria and Serbia High priority
Measures in topic "Sustainable tourism products /packages, etc./"	Connect bicycle paths developed under the project "Mount a bike" on both sides of the border between Bulgaria and Serbia, and carry out feasibility study to connect bicycle route EuroVelo 6 with existing mountain routes High priority
	Elaboration of cross-border tourist offers for weekend, tourism between Vidin and Zaječar /Serbia/, and web based cross-border public transportation information system High priority
Measure in topic "Information and marketing"	Marketing strategy elaboration for cross-border destinations development, based on the sustainable mobility High priority
Measure in topic "Financing options, organizational and legal framework"	The annual provision of national and <u>cross-border transport and tourism forums</u> promoting the integration of sustainable mobility in the tourism sector High priority

The tourism sector is a vital for the economic development of each region. That means tourism can be realized through the development of small and medium sized enterprises which positively influence economic diversification of Vidin. The tourism industry has the ability to change the appearance of a region and the living standard.

Tourism is considered as priority area of economic development in the Vidin district. The main prerequisite for the successful development of tourism in the region is a realistic assessment of the factors that are relevant to tourism. Particularly significant is the location of the region. Vidin borders with two European countries - Romania and Serbia, which determines its favorable accessibility, and subsequently important European routes pass through its territory. The area is an entry-exit gate of the Republic of Bulgaria in Europe and worldwide. Beneficial is the fact that the area is bordered by a river that runs through Bulgaria, the Danube, and it provides opportunities for effective cooperation with other countries in Eastern, Central and Western Europe. It offers great opportunities for tourism development and supply routes for European tourists.

Other essential prerequisites can be divided by tangible, intangible, information, human and financial resources. In this direction are essential:

- The presence of natural and anthropogenic tangible and intangible resources - caves, waterfalls, natural and rocky areas and sites, flora and fauna, cultural and historical monuments and sites, local culture, and other tourist attractions, cultural events, reason for visiting the region;
- Funds for housing and accommodation as catering and entertainment, located in the region;
- Means of transport services, transportation options, transfers, rental vehicles, etc. that provide accessibility to the sites in the area;
- Availability of commercial sites, other stores and projects, providing opportunities for tourism and recreation to the tourists /conference and sports facilities, etc./. They are often provided with accommodation;
- Information on tourist sites, transport and sightseeing;
- Programs and strategies for tourism and transport sector development in Vidin, developed at European, national, regional and local level;
- Availability of resources - manpower, including the transport and tourism, and other activities;
- Availability and capacity to provide the financial resources for development and mobility in Vidin.

Vidin has the potential for the development of cultural, historical, religious, Eco and cultural tourism. Besides, water, adventure tourism and other attractive events are also offered. The main tourist centers can be found in Vidin and Belogradchik. They offer cultural, historical and

natural attractions in the area, what is more, the majority of the funds for shelter accommodation, catering and entertainment can also be found there. There are many possibilities for transportation between these cities. Vidin border is a tourist center, located directly on the Danube River, subsequently, the city allows for movement along the Danube and the organization of international tourist routes with countries that have access to the river - Romania, Austria, Hungary, the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Germany.

This project action includes elaboration of 20 soft mobility offers for the following different types of tourism – cultural, historical, natural cognitive and/or religious. According to the objective for CBC development in the tourism sector, sustainable mobility offers were developed in this action. Transport offers, including the territory of our target region - district of Vidin and Eastern Serbia are two in number. One of them is in the area of cultural and historical tourism within the territory of the municipalities of Vidin, Kula and Zaječar - the so called tourist route „... On the road of legends” which includes the visit of the three fortresses “Baba Vida” /Vidin/ and “Kastru Martis” /Kula/ in Bulgaria and “Felix Romuliana” /archaeological site Gamzigrad/ in Serbia.

The famous Fortress “Felix Romuliana” is an archaeological site, spa resort and UNESCO World Heritage Site of Serbia, located south of the Danube River, near the city of Zaječar. It is the location of the ancient Roman complex of palaces and temples Felix Romuliana, built by Emperor Galerius. The main area covers 10 acres /40,000 m²/.

The other one transport offer for sustainable mobility in tourism at cross-border level is in the area of natural and cognitive tourism and includes the territory of the municipalities of Vidin, Novo Selo and Negotin.

5.2 The project “Stara Planina” - results and opportunities for future cross-border initiatives

The project named “Stara Planina - New Network” was realized under the financial support of the CBC Program between Bulgaria and Serbia 2007-2013. It was an important project, thus a deeper analysis should be performed which reflects the future possibilities in terms of establishment and development of successful partnerships in the region. This project is based on a database elaboration which is grounded on four key areas of development within the border region: infrastructure, agriculture, environment and tourism.

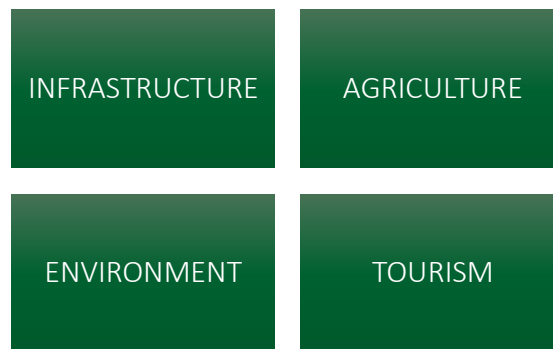


Figure 12: Border region development key areas defined in the project “Stara planina - New network”



Figure 13: End-user Knowledge base of the project “Stara planina - New network” /right/
Source: Regional Development Agency Eastern Serbia, <http://www.raris.org/>

The End-user knowledge base consists of 3 sub-databases which concern:

Planning and development documents at local and regional level:

This sub-database consists of the following documents related to the CBC region - Municipal Plans, Local Environmental Protection Plans, Municipal Spatial Plans, Action Plans, Sector Studies, Master Plans, etc.

Profiles of experts registered in the cross-border region:

This sub-database takes into account the problem with the “visibility” in regards to the experts in different development spheres working in the region. The basic problem is the following: within the target region, there are many regional experts, but the existing lack of available information about them /engagement, expertise, work experience, etc./ results in hiring experts “foreign” to the relevant region.

In order to overcome this problem, the sub-database offers an updated list of the available experts and their expertise is identified in four specific areas /infrastructure, agriculture, environment and tourism/.

The elaborated knowledge base /list of experts/ is available online through a specially designed website, and any experts who wish can participate in other activities of the project, which will enable better networking and partnerships in four key development areas.

To be accepted as part of this database, the experts should meet the following requirements:

- To have an appropriate education - a special list is available that contains relevant professions /classification of experts/;
- To have at least three years' work experience;
- To have at least 3 participations in the preparation of planning documents and research studies or project implementation in the past 10 years.

The elaborated database with experts in the four key development areas is distinguished by its importance, resulting from the following circumstance: *each expert from CBC region who is interested and who meets the stated requirements may be included at any one time to this database.*

- *Regarding to experts in Eastern Serbia:* filling a special form of autobiography and its sending on email address smartstart@fmz.edu.rs /representatives of RARIS - Regional Development Agency Eastern Serbia/.

Completion of this form of CV will be the basis for the involvement of experts in the database, as well as, in other project activities, including exchange of experience with colleagues from Bulgaria, study tours, etc.

- *Regarding to experts in Vidin region:* every expert who wishes to participate and meets the requirements should contact the Regional Administration - Vidin for more information /email address: <http://en.vidin.government.bg/>.

Research studies:

The need to create a sub-database with research studies is associated with the lack of research papers and studies concerning the region. Over the last decade, numerous research and studies, concerning different sectors and areas of development, were done, but they are available only in the places of their issuing - mostly in Sofia and Belgrade. In this regard, one of the project activities was the collection of a substantial part of these research studies and their provision in the Regional database. This action was very important in order to make these research studies available for the public.

Moreover, a website was developed and it contains all the database /information concerning the three sub-databases/ in connection with the implementation of the project. The website address is <http://www.raris.org/bazaznanja/>, and it is available in three languages - English, Bulgarian and Serbian.

The image shows a web interface for searching a knowledge base. It consists of four panels arranged in a 2x2 grid:

- Top-left panel:** Titled "SEARCH THE KNOWLEDGE BASE BY KEYWORD". It features a text input field with the placeholder "Enter a search term" and a red "Search →" button.
- Top-right panel:** Titled "SEARCH THE KNOWLEDGE BASE BY CATEGORY". It features a dropdown menu with the placeholder "Make choose..." and two red buttons: "Filter →" and "Clear →".
- Bottom-left panel:** Titled "SEARCH THE KNOWLEDGE BASE BY CATEGORY". It features three stacked dropdown menus with the following selected values: "Infrastructure", "Serbia", and "Planning and development documents". Below the menus are two red buttons: "Filter →" and "Clear →".
- Bottom-right panel:** Titled "SEARCH THE KNOWLEDGE BASE BY CATEGORY". It features four stacked dropdown menus with the following selected values: "Tourism", "Bulgaria", "Profiles of available experts", and "Project Management in Tourism". Below the menus are two red buttons: "Filter →" and "Clear →".

Figure 14: Exemplary options for filtering the information needed for the project, available at web address <http://www.raris.org/bazaznanja/>
Source: <http://www.raris.org/bazaznanja/>

6. Organisational and institutional structure, operation

Despite of the EU membership, common cross-border organizational and institutional structure or any other legal form has not been created yet. This is the basic reason why the case study does not include data for specific organization dedicated to cross-border cooperation, which are outside the system of the IPA Programs and projects.

The structures that exist in the CBC area can be divided into the following two groups: public administrations and NGOs.

The following structures, at local and at regional level, that have a role in the process of CBC development operate in the Vidin region:

First group for Bulgaria	<p>Public administrations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regional administration Vidin, http://en.vidin.government.bg/ • Local Municipal administrations /11 municipalities in Vidin district/: Vidin, Belogradchik, Kula, Dimovo, Gramada, Bregovo, Chuprene, Makresh, Rujintsi, Novo Selo, Boinitsa
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The following structures play a crucial role in CBC establishment and development in Eastern Serbia:

First group for Serbia	<p>Public administrations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regional Development Agency Eastern Serbia /RARIS/, http://www.raris.org/ • Local Municipal administrations /8 municipalities: Zaječar, Knjaževac, Boljevac, Sokobanja, Bor, Negotin, Majdanpek and Kladovo/
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Regional Development Agency Eastern Serbia has a significant role in the realization of projects related to CBC Bulgaria-Serbia. At this point of view, the table below presents the main key moments in RARIS functioning:

Regional Development Agency Eastern Serbia /RARIS/

Mission: Creating, supporting and encouraging regional development and creation of a stimulating business environment in Eastern Serbia.

Main activities: systematic development of technical expertise, entrepreneurship, partnership between various governmental and nongovernmental actors, and infrastructure at the community level.

Regional Development Agency Eastern Serbia /RARIS/

The role of the organizational unit: improving the capacity and capabilities of the following target groups:

- Local authorities;
- Institutions and public utility companies founded by local authorities and other institutions and organizations under Local authority's responsibility;
- Business support institutions /Regional Chamber of Commerce, Regional Agency for SME, etc./;
- Companies, Local Business Association /General Associations, Sectors association, Clusters, Cooperatives/ and business in general;
- Civil Society - NGO, Community Based Organization, Youth organizations, etc.

Organizational structure:

- Founders: Municipalities of: Majdanpek, Kladovo, Boljevac, Knjaževac, Negotin and Sokobanja; City of Zaječar; Regional Chamber of Commerce Zaječar; AD Vodogradnja /Zaječar/; AD Road Company, Zaječar; NGO Timok club, Knjaževac; Faculty of management Zajecar.
- The Assembly elects the RARIS Council and appoints the RARIS Director. The RARIS Council coordinates and harmonizes the program and developmental interests of its founders.
- Local authorities have the leading role in the decision making process since they are the main contributors to RARIS.

Location: head office located at Zaječar, address: Trg Oslobođenja 1 19000

Leader: Vladan Jeremić /Director/

Institutional form: Limited Liability Company /accredited by the National Agency for Regional Development, decision from May 4th 2011.

On the other hand, in the organizational structures that operates in Bulgaria, Vidin region includes the following units:

Second group in Bulgaria - Universities, NGO

- Agency for Regional Development and Business Center - Vidin /ARDBC/, <http://www.bcvidin.org/>
- Bulgarian Industrial Association Vidin, <http://www.bia-bg.com/member/168>
- Association “Regional partnerships for sustainable development - Vidin”, <http://www.rpsd.ngobg.info/>
- Vidin Chamber of Commerce and Industry, <http://www.vdcci.bg/>

- Free Youth Centre Association - Vidin, <http://www.fyc-vidin.org/>
- Association "Innovation and Development Centre" - Vidin, <http://center-inovacii.alle.bg/>
- "Bulgaria in Europe" Association - Vidin, <http://www.bgeu.biz/>
- Regional Agribusiness Centre - Vidin, <http://www.rabc-vidin.com/>
- "East-West" Association - Vidin,
- Foundation "Phoenix – 21st century"

This group includes many organizations in the non-governmental sector, which have an important role in the process for CBC establishment and development between both countries. In Vidin district, many nongovernmental organizations are registered, aimed at encouraging and stimulating variety of development areas at different territorial levels: at local level /within Vidin region/ and on cross-border level /both sides of the borders/. Current and detailed information about each of these organizations is available at the mentioned web addresses, although, the Vidin chamber of Commerce and Industry is worth to be presented in longer form.

Vidin Chamber of Commerce and Industry as part of the Danube Chambers of Commerce Association /DCCA⁸/

The geographical position of Vidin region determines its involvement in the Danube Chambers of Commerce Association /DCCA/. The other two members from Bulgaria are Chamber of Commerce and Industry Vratsa and Ruse Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

The Bulgarian Chamber of Commerce and Industry /<http://www.bcci.bg/> and the 28 Regional Chambers of Commerce and Industry /one of which is Vidin Chamber of Commerce and Industry/ are united in the Unified System of Bulgarian Chambers of Commerce and Industry which has about 53 000 members - traders, companies, associations, etc.

⁸ More information about DCCA is available on the following website, <http://www.danubechambers.eu/>



Source: <http://www.danubechambers.eu/>

Active participation of the Vidin Chamber of Commerce and Industry in the implementation of CBC projects between the regions of Vidin and Zaječar, demonstrates its important role in the cross-border issue and cooperation.

Vidin Chamber of Commerce and Industry

Main activities: Supports its members to increase their opportunities in international markets, promote European and international integration of the Vidin region.

The role of the organizational unit: the Chamber interacts with state bodies of local self-government, the Bulgarian Chamber of Commerce and other regional chambers of commerce, as well as with foreign and international bodies and organizations with which the Chamber maintains partnerships.

The Chamber plays an important role in the process of CBC development between Vidin region and Eastern Serbia. Its activity is confirmed by its partners from the Republic of Serbia: Regional Chamber of Commerce - Zaječar, Regional Chamber of Commerce - Nis, Regional Chamber of Commerce and Industry - Leskovac, and RARIS.

Organizational structure - management Bodies are: The General Assembly, the Management Board and The Chairman.

Location: Vidin 3700, Tsar Alexander II Str. 19-21

Leader: Krasimir Kirilov /Chairman/

Institutional form: Legal non-profit entity

The second group with organizational units within the region of Eastern Serbia /with a focus on the Zaječar territory/ and ability for cross-border cooperation are is presented below:

<p>Second group for Serbia - Universities, NGO</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regional Chamber of Commerce - Zaječar, http://www.chamber-commerce.net/dir/3768/Regional-Chamber-of-Commerce-Zajecar-in-Zajecar • Faculty of Management in Zaječar, http://www.fmz.edu.rs/index_eng.html • Regional Centre for Sustainable Development and Entrepreneurship "Timok" - Zaječar, http://msp-timok.org/ • PC Directorate for Development, Urban Planning and Construction Knjaževac /Zaječar/ • Resource Centre Bor • Regional Chamber of Commerce Nis • Mining and Metallurgical Institute Bor • Public Communal Enterprise Donji Milanovac • Country Museum of Knjazevac /Zaječar/ • House of Culture Knjazevac /Zaječar/ • Agro-project Timok, Zaječar • NGO "Children's Joy" /Zaječar/ • Sport Federation of Municipality of Majdanpek • The Timok Club /Zaječar/ • Association "Open Club", http://www.oknis.org.rs/en/contact/
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All these organizations exist from a long period of time, many years before the start of the initiatives for CBC in the contemporary sense. They focus their attention to CBC as an opportunity for their own development and for achievement of CBC objectives and priorities. Anyway, there are no common organizations which are able to build/facilitate the special kind of CBC in the region. All of them work in the CBC area in the principle "project call by project call" which makes the results of the CBC unstable.

On the other hand, there is only one organization that can be considered as specific type of organization dedicated to the CBC, namely "The Joint Technical Secretariat" working with Bulgaria-Serbia IPA Cross Border Program. The main office of the JTS is in Sofia and office branch in Nis /outside of the case study territory/ <http://www.ipacbc-bgrs.eu/page.php?c=29&d=156>.

To conclude, there (territory of the case study investigation) does not exist any specific institution/organization which is dedicated to the CBC, to its development which consists of

members from both countries and operate for the common CBC development. All the organizations who participate in CBC activity work on their own responsibilities, management and budget.

7. Composition of the working organ

At the very moment, it is obvious that there does not exist any dedicated organ to CBC and its activity. It could be very positive if the region might establish an EGTC /European Group for Territorial cooperation/, which can be explicitly dedicated to CBC initiatives

8. Main activity areas/profile

The main activities of the EGTC could be the following domains:

- Cross-border co-operation programs along internal EU borders.
- Transnational co-operation programs, larger areas of co-operation Danube and Mediterranean regions.
- The interregional co-operation program (INTERREG IVC) and 3 networking programs (Urbact II, Interact II and ESPON) cover all 27 Member States of the EU. They provide a framework for exchanging experience between regional and local bodies in different countries.

9. Management, budget (incomes/expenses)

All the organizations mentioned above in the case study have their own management and budget.

10. SWOT - analysis

Within the present study the SWOT analysis is carried out in order to evaluate the strength, weaknesses, opportunities and threats for the CBC between the district of Vidin and Eastern Serbia in different areas of development, economic, social and territorial cohesion.

We should mention that the SWOT analysis profoundly reflects the acquired information from the interviews conducted with those who were involved within the CBC. That means the SWOT is a succinct enumeration about the character and orientation of the cross-border cooperation between the districts of Vidin and Zaječar.

Interior features	
POSITIVE Strengths	NEGATIVE Weaknesses
<p>IN THE AREA OF ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION ACTIONS:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Successfully realized many projects for CBC between the district of Vidin and Eastern Serbia in the area of different development spheres; • Successfully established partnerships at a cross - border level in the area of economic cooperation, environmental protection, technical documentation for public significance projects, regional integration with social effect, technical infrastructure, cross-border education development, organic farming, etc.; 	<p>IN THE AREA OF ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION ACTIONS:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Untapped potential for CBC development and partnerships established between the two neighboring regions of Vidin and Eastern Serbia; • Lack of sufficient financial resources for project financing - 85% of the funding is in the form of grants from the EU funds.

Interior features	
POSITIVE Strengths	NEGATIVE Weaknesses
<p>IN THE TRANSPORT SECTOR:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategic cross Geo-economic position - regions of the Danube; • Availability of capacity /length and density/ of the transport system beyond the volumes of the current freight and passenger traffic; • Presence of priority national projects for development of the transport system in the region; • Developed maintenance and control systems for traffic of international importance; • Increasing sales revenue from international traffic; • The development of bicycle routes as part of EuroVelo 6 passing through the territory of Serbia and Bulgaria /Vidin region/. 	<p>IN THE TRANSPORT SECTOR:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Insufficient provision of services related to transportation, travel and road safety at cross-border level /to the Republic of Serbia/; • The road infrastructure in urban and non-urban areas are not consistent with the green method of transportation /cycling/ - valid in the CBC regions within the two countries; • Insufficient links between the opportunities for cross-border transportation between Vidin and Eastern Serbia /road information/ and tourist calendar in the CBC region; • No information web portals at cross-border level.
<p>IN THE TOURISM SECTOR:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rich intangible and tangible heritage within the CBC region; • Availability of good accommodation base in both target cities Vidin in Bulgaria and Zaječar in Serbia; • Willingness to develop tourism sector as a priority in the CBC area; • Developing a system for publicizing and promoting tourist destinations at cross-border level; • Increasing sales revenue from tourism and the number of people employed in tourism within the target CBC region. 	<p>IN THE TOURISM SECTOR:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No cross-border packages between Bulgaria and Serbia; • Insufficient supply of services connected with tourist experiences and animations within CBC region; • Lack of links between the tourist calendar and routes of the region, on one side, and the international tourist agencies, on the other; • Undrawn potential of cultural and historical tourism within the CBC region.

Appearance	
POSTIVE Opportunities	NEGATIVE Threats
<p>IN THE AREA OF ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION ACTIONS:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strengthening of partnerships at cross-border level that were established in 2007-2013 between the district of Vidin and the region of Eastern Serbia in the current programming period 2014-2020. 	<p>IN THE AREA OF ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION ACTIONS:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Risk of temporary and unsustainable over the time effect of CBC projects realized between the two countries; • Insufficient ability to finance public significance projects in the period 2014-2020.
<p>IN THE TRANSPORT SECTOR:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Possibility to rehabilitate railroads within Eastern Serbia and to connect them to the Bulgaria - district of Vidin; • Potential for future development of bicycle routes part of EuroVelo 6 within the target regions; • Opportunities for growth of the road traffic between Bulgaria /district of Vidin/ and Eastern Serbia; • Opportunities for diversification of services arising from the travel and passenger service at a cross - border level. 	<p>IN THE TRANSPORT SECTOR:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Insufficient financial resources for development and reconstruction of the transport modes in the CBC region; • Fragmentation in investment projects and priorities in the two countries; • Insufficient increase in cross-border travel of a different type /tourism, business, cargo/;

Appearance	
POSTIVE Opportunities	NEGATIVE Threats
<p>IN THE TOURISM SECTOR:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opportunities to develop diverse tourism marketing at a cross - border level; • Opportunities to increase travels with tourist orientation at cross-border level; • Opportunities for diversification of tourism services and tourist animations at cross-border level as a combination of different types of tourism /cultural and historical, religious, nature tourism/; • Opportunities for increased revenues from tourism and the number of people employed in the tourism sector within the CBC region. 	<p>IN THE TOURISM SECTOR:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Insufficient funds to develop cross-border tourism infrastructure and tourist destinations; • Lack of a unified approach to the priorities of the tourism product at cross-border level; • Insufficient increase in travel at cross-border level; • The tourism system is not organized, lacks a functional, operational relationship / synergy / between tourism services in the CBC region.

11. Future plans and goals of the cooperation

The analysis of future plans and goals of the CBC between the district of Vidin and the region of Eastern Serbia should be carried out in terms of the financing opportunities that will be provided within the current programming period 2014-2020. In this regard, we should mention the new Bulgaria - Serbia IPA Cross-border program for the period 2014-2020⁹, as the main source of financing projects for CBC development.

On the other side, the specific geographic location of Bulgaria /bordered by the Danube River at north/ determines its inclusion in the geographic scope of the Danube Transnational Program 2014-2020 - a new ETC¹⁰ program.

Danube Transnational Program 2014-2020 is a part of the legislative package for the Cohesion Policy for the current funding period. In the period 2014-2020, the present area of the South East Europe Transnational Cooperation Program covers three transnational progresses' - Danube Transnational Program, South East Gateway /renamed later on Adriatic-Ionian/ and Balkan-Mediterranean.

The areas of CBC topics, defined as priorities in the Danube Program, include many traditional transnational development spheres: innovation, transport, environment, etc. These development areas will be supported under the following four priority axes that were defined in the program:

Table 14: Priority axes of tProgram Transnational Programme 2014-2020

Priority axis 1	Innovative and socially responsible Danube region
Priority axis 2	Environment and culture responsible Danube region
Priority axis 3	Better connected and energy responsible Danube region
Priority axis 4	Well-governed Danube region

Source: <http://www.southeast-europe.net/>

In relation to the territorial scope of this study, we should analyze the possibilities of CBC development, which will arise from the Danube Program action within the target regions including the territory of Bulgaria and Serbia.

⁹ The final draft of the Bulgaria - Serbia IPA CBC Programme 2014 - 2020 was submitted to the European Commission for approval on 19th of September 2014.

¹⁰ ETC - European Territorial Cooperation

In respect of Bulgaria, we should mention that in the Territorial Development Concept of Bulgaria for the period 2013-2025 the following strategic objectives were defined:

- Territorial cohesion;
- European integration, competitiveness and innovation;
- Environmental protection.

In the context of the integration of the European area, projects regarding the connection to the trans-European transport and energy networks /TEN/, the cross-border ecological corridors and protected area creation appear to be viable.

The Danube as a potential space for the exploitation of the transnational development potential is already included in the vision of the spatial plan of Serbia. According to the document, the cross-border and transnational cooperation with the neighboring regions will get a particular emphasis in the future. Considering the expansion of ecological networks and protected areas, the planning material dedicates a great role to the Danube and its tributaries. As regards the striving for CBC development between Serbia and the neighboring regions, we should mention that the strategic objectives for the interconnection of the Danube region and the environmental protection are characterized by their transnational focus.

In regard to opportunities for CBC development, we should mention the EU Strategy for the Danube Region which was adopted in 2011. This Strategy has the same territorial scope as the Danube Transnational Program /also known as the new Danube Program/. However, the fact should be emphasized that the EU Strategy and the Danube Program are two different instruments developed for similar aims but acting on different levels and principles.

Danube Transnational Program	EU Strategy for the Danube Region
Developed for similar aims, but acting on different levels and principles	
Transnational program	Macro-regional strategy
Their matching territory and objectives provide great opportunities for cooperation between the two	
The program will contribute to the Strategy's thematic goals by implementing relevant cooperation projects, and it might also support the institutional cooperation of stakeholders and institutions of the Danube Strategy	

Source: <http://www.southeast-europe.net/>

The Danube region strategy covers the following 4 pillars and 11 priority areas:

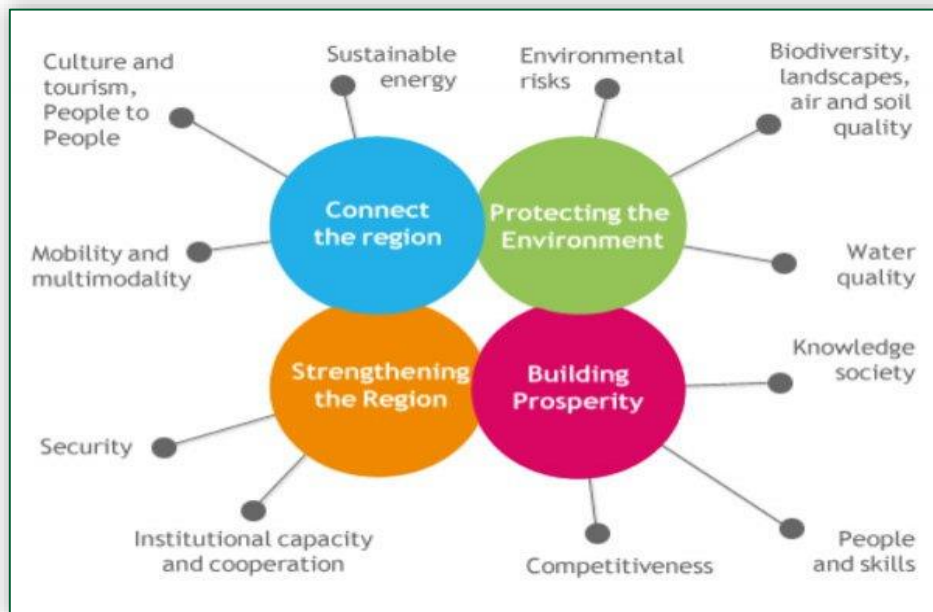


Figure 15: Pillars and priority areas defined in the EU Strategy for the Danube region /EUSDR/
Source: <http://www.danube-region.eu/>

Each one priority area from the 11 priority areas is managed by 2 Priority Area Coordinators /PACs/. With regard to the roles of Bulgaria and Serbia should be noted that:

- Priority Area “To improve mobility and intermodality - rail, road and air” is coordinated by Slovenia and **Serbia**;
- Priority Area “To promote culture and tourism, people to people contacts” is coordinated by **Bulgaria** and Romania;
- Priority Area “To develop the Knowledge Society /research, education and ICT/” is coordinated by Slovakia and **Serbia**;
- Priority Area “To work together to tackle security and organized crime” is coordinated by Germany and **Bulgaria**.

The new Bulgaria - Serbia IPA CBC Program for the period 2014-2020 aims to contribute to the objectives defined in the Strategy “Europa 2020” for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth. The CBC Program also interacts with the EU Strategy for the Danube Region through an integrated approach addressing common territorial challenge. On this base, the following strategic framework was defined in the CBC Program between Bulgaria and Serbia:

Table 15: BuProgramSerbia IPA CBC Programme 2014-2020 strategic framework

Vision for the border region development:

“Well-preserved regional resources - people, land, and heritage - as a guarantee for cross-border identity and sustainable development of the border region”

The Overall objective:

‘To stimulate the balanced and sustainable development of the Bulgaria-Serbia border region integrated in the European space - achieved through smart economic growth, environmental change adaptation and learning culture enhancement”

3 Thematic priority areas:

1. Encouraging the tourism and cultural and natural heritage
2. Investing in youth, education and skills
3. Protecting the environment and promoting climate change adaptation and mitigation, risk prevention and management

Source: Bulgaria - Serbia IPA CBC Program 2014-2020

The strategic framework of the new CBC Program takes into account the need for increasing cross-border network, interactions and connections in different development areas: social, economic, environmental within the CBC region in the period to 2020.

The three thematic priority areas defined in the program framework will provide opportunities for CBC development and partnership established between the two countries in the sphere of tourism sector in its role as a priority sector within the CBC region; social integration - focusing on the need for investments in youth, education and skills; and actions in the area of environmental protection - taking into account the climate change challenge.

As a result of the foregoing, we can conclude that the current programming period 2014-2020 will provide good opportunities for CBC development and partnership established between the territory of Bulgaria and Serbia /including the target regions of this study - district of Vidin and Eastern Serbia/. In this regard, we believe that the future efforts in terms of CBC between the two countries should be aimed at the utilization of the existing good potential for cooperation in different development areas: economic, social, environmental protection.

12. Unique, regionally specific features of the cooperation

The cooperation is quite specific because both territories face common problems. Both territories are underdeveloped, suffer depopulation, lack of basic infrastructure, low incomes and narrow business opportunities. The projects have already understood these difficulties and they have tried to take over the internal potential at maximum extent. However, some negative processes are still in progress, consequently, the challenges remain. The internal potential is very limited and it must be “open” for markets and flows outside the CBC region. The region needs an effective and applied smart specialization strategy, which can transform the underdevelopment into a smooth growth.

Several key projects that should be implemented under the establishment of an EGTC:

Bulgaria:

- Recovery of Vidin airport for cargo/trips/education;
- Sustainable way for usage of the high mineralized thermal waters in Vidin - Slanotran - Koshava;
- Construction of intermodal transport, terminal – Vidin industrial area;
- Renewable energy production - solar, biomass, wind;
- Construction of ski area “Midzhur” Chuprene Municipality.

Serbia:

- Founding of a Regional Collection and Distribution Centre;
- Program for development and capacity building of the interested entities in agriculture;
- Developing a study on the potentials of energy production from renewable sources in the Timok region;
- Green energy production - Improving the capacity of municipalities of the region in order to increase the production and use of energy derived from renewable resources;
- Support for investments focused on tourism development.

13. Summary

The implementation of the projects under the CBC program represents a really good opportunity for successful partnership cooperation between the region of Vidin and Eastern Serbia. These projects often concentrate on key priorities covering both regions, and they will play a significant CBC effect, either institutional or in the business sector. The cooperation increases the common competitiveness of the region, as well as, the living standards.

The CBC region has developed common tourist packages covering the territory of Vidin region /fortresses Baba Vida and Castra Martis/ and Zaječar /Felix Romuliana Fortress/. The results which were achieved, encourage further successful partnership development between the representatives from transport and tourism sectors from Vidin and Zaječar. What is more, an awareness is developed that there are substantial possibilities for practicing different types of tourism within the CBC region. That means the future wine tourism development within the CBC will be encouraged through a cross-border tourist road that has been established during the project implementation. This activity will have a positive effect on the future promotion of the wine cellars in these regions and will have an important role in the process of attracting tourists.

Tourism is considered to be a priority area of economic development in the district of Vidin. The main prerequisite for the successful development of tourism in the region is a realistic assessment of the factors that are relevant to tourism. Vidin is bordered by two European countries - Romania and Serbia, which determines the favorable accessibility, thus important European routes pass through its territory. The area is an entry-exit gate of the Republic of Bulgaria in Europe and worldwide.

On the other side, CBC with the surrounding regions in Serbia, Romania and Bulgaria should be increased and intensified, it has to result in joint projects, with joined tourism packages based on sustainable mobility vision. At the very moment it is obvious that there does not exist any dedicated organ to CBC. Subsequently, establishment of an EGTC /European Group for Territorial cooperation/ which can be dedicated to CBC initiatives may bring positive development in cross-border cooperation.

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