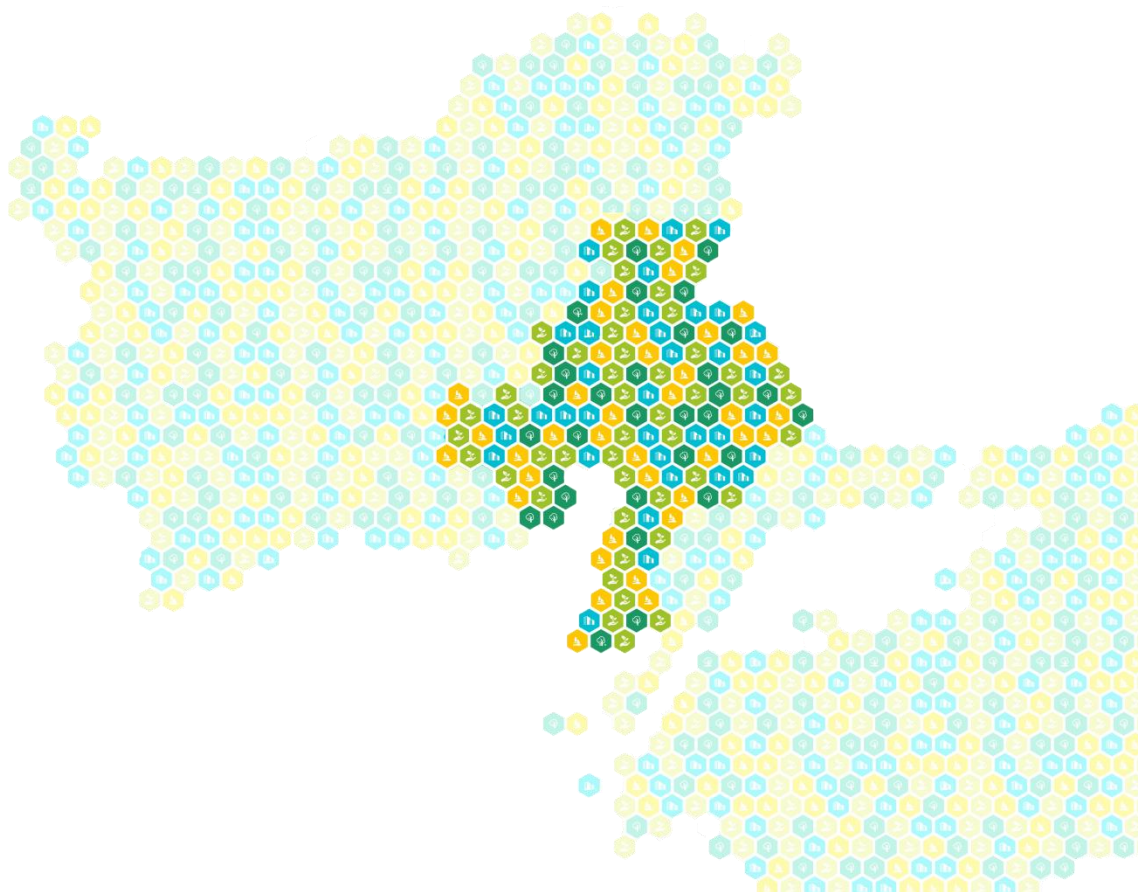




# TERRITORIAL STRATEGY FOR INTEGRATED MEASURES

to be financed under the INTERREG - IPA CBC programme 2021 -2027  
between the Republic of Bulgaria and the Republic of Turkey

# STRATEGY





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## 1. RATIONALE, REQUIREMENTS, METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this territorial strategy is to address the needs of the INTERREG — IPA CBC 2021—2027 Programme between the Republic of Bulgaria and the Republic of Turkey to contribute to the sustainable economic development of the region. The measures of the territorial strategy will be implemented within the framework of PO 5 ‘Europe closer to citizens’.

This document is developed in close coordination with local stakeholders in the CBC region. The Strategy will contain a package of integrated measures, including the identification of functional areas, a methodology for governance, monitoring and evaluation, as well as a list of operations and potential beneficiaries to be financed under the INTERREG — IPA 2021—2027 Programme between the Republic of Bulgaria and the Republic of Turkey. The document will comply with the legal framework and will take into account the specificities of the programme area; it will focus on the cross-border dimension by identifying common challenges and development potentials.

Multi-level governance will be ensured by involving all competent levels (following a bottom-up regional approach, in close cooperation with the programme structures) in line with the principles of partnership, gender equality and non-discrimination.

The Territorial Strategy will be presented at various events and regional consultations.

According to the to the Proposal for a REGULATION OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL<sup>1</sup> laying down provisions on the European funds for the 2021—2027 period, to strengthen the integrated territorial development approach, investments in the form of territorial tools should be based on territorial and local development strategies. Those territorial strategies should be developed and endorsed under the responsibility of relevant authorities or bodies that should be responsible for the selection of operations to be supported, or involved in that selection.

The requirements for territorial strategies are laid down in Article 23 of the Regulation:

1. Territorial strategies implemented pursuant to points (a) or (c) of Article 22 shall contain the following elements:

- (a) the geographical area covered by the strategy;
- (b) an analysis of the development needs and the potential of the area;
- (c) a description of an integrated approach to address the identified development needs and the potential;
- (d) a description of the involvement of partners in accordance with Article 6 in the preparation and in the implementation of the strategy.

They may also contain a list of operations to be supported.

2. Territorial strategies shall be drawn up under the responsibility of the relevant urban, local or other territorial authorities or bodies.

3. Where the list of operations to be supported has not been included in the territorial strategy, the relevant urban, local or other territorial authorities or bodies shall select or shall be involved in the selection of operations.

<sup>1</sup> [https://eur-lex.europa.eu/resource.html?uri=cellar:26b02a36-6376-11e8-ab9c-01aa75ed71a1.0003.02/DOC\\_1&format=PDF](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/resource.html?uri=cellar:26b02a36-6376-11e8-ab9c-01aa75ed71a1.0003.02/DOC_1&format=PDF)



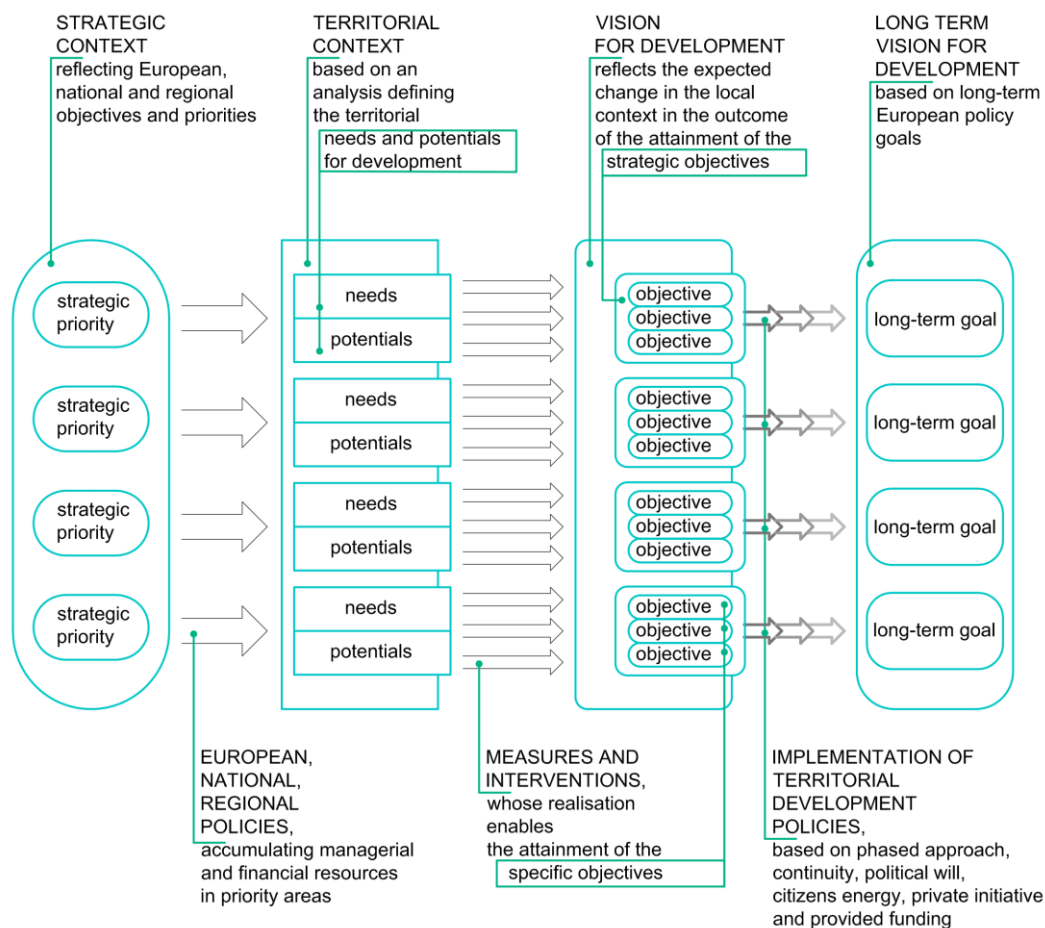
Selected operations shall comply with the Territorial Strategy.

4. Where an urban, local or other territorial authority or body carries out tasks falling under the responsibility of the managing authority other than the selection of operations, the authority shall be identified by the managing authority as an intermediate body.

5. Support may be provided for the preparation and design of territorial strategies

The methodology of elaboration of the Territorial Strategy is closely related to its main objective according to the Technical Specification of the project — to address the needs of the INTERREG — IPA CBC 2021—2027 Programme between the Republic of Bulgaria and the Republic of Turkey to contribute to the sustainable economic development of the territory covered by the Programme. This implies compliance with the requirements set out in the Technical Specification, in good practices and regulations and in the guidelines in this field at European and national level. All activities related to the elaboration, coordination and approval of the strategy are carried out with the active involvement of the Task Force of partners. The rationale of strategy development is based on this foundation and is shown in the following figure:

**Figure 1. Methodology of elaboration of the Territorial Strategy**



The activities will be launched in accordance with the timetable and in the following order:

The first step is to establish a Task Force for the Strategy and is a continuation of the consultations for the development of the Cross-Border Cooperation Programme. The identification of participants in the task force is based on the principle of partnership and the multi-



level approach to governance, and ensures the involvement of civil society and the social partners. The task force actively participates in the coordination, review and approval of all stages of development of the Strategy.

The next step is to define the strategic context and methodology and to determine the geographical scope of the strategy. This activity is carried out through a desk analysis of the existing strategic documents at European, national, regional and local level in accordance with the requirements of the Strategy. The methodology describes the process and the appropriate tools for each strategy development activity. The geographical scope of the Strategy is determined in accordance with the European requirements and guidelines applied in the local context. As a result, an important part of it is the clear and precise argumentation of the choice of the included territory.

All this provides the basis for the preparation of the analysis of the needs and development potentials. The thematic scope of the analysis is oriented to the main objective of the task and includes the following main areas: economic development, tourism, social development, labour market, culture and cultural heritage, infrastructure, environment and others. The development objectives and priorities, as well as the measures for their achievement at a higher level, defined in the strategic context, serve as the basis for the criteria according to which the needs and development potentials are defined on the basis of the regional reality described with the help of the collected information.

The analysis includes a system of principles, rules and procedures and advanced general and specific methods and tools for processing and analysing information and documents, for comparative analysis and assessment. A desk analysis of programmes and strategic documents is carried out, secondary information from conducted research is systematised and processed, content analysis, multifactor geospatial analyses, meta-analyses, comparative analyses and inventory-taking evaluations are carried out, and traditional and specific statistical methods for collecting information are applied.

The main emphasis in doing this has been placed on avoiding an overly descriptive approach to the region and its various characteristics while focusing on the common challenges on both sides of the border that are important for the preparation of the Strategy.

As a result of the identified needs and development potentials of the territory, the key areas of intervention are identified.

The integrated approach to addressing needs and utilising the existing potentials will be implemented through a multi-sectoral package of measures (integrated measures) for attaining the objectives of the Strategy and ensuring the active involvement of partners (stakeholders) at all stages of its development, implementation, monitoring and evaluation.

The vision defines the desired role of the strategy as part of the organised measures for sustainable socioeconomic development of the territory.

The key (priority) areas of intervention identified provide the basis for defining the strategic objectives of the Strategy, which in turn provide basis for its specific objectives.

The strategic objectives are the basis for defining the package of measures in close connection with the specific needs and potentials and the priority measures of a higher level. The integrated



nature of the measures determines the need for keeping track, in the course of the process, of how adding or dropping any given measure would have an impact on the effectiveness and efficiency of the entire package.

The entire process is in line with the specifics of the task and its defining criteria are whether or not it provides opportunities for cross-border cooperation. A system of approaches (integrated, cross-border, ecosystem and location-based approach), principles and methods applied in the development of strategies for integrated territorial development is used. The SMART approach — specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-based — is used in setting the objectives.

A methodology for implementation, monitoring and evaluation is prepared in close connection with the results achieved so far, the technical specification of the proposal, the higher-level guidelines and the best practices.

The next activity includes the preparation of a methodology and a long list of operations. The main criterion for possible interventions is their contribution to achieving the strategic objectives and specific objectives of the programme through cross-border interventions.

Specially defined selection criteria are applied to select priority operations which are included in the short list, which is part of the cooperation programme INTERREG — IPA CBC 2021—2027 between the Republic of Bulgaria and the Republic of Turkey.

The developed Action Plan for the implementation of the respective 7-year strategy includes the deadlines set for the implementation of the envisaged measures for achieving the objectives of the strategy.

The results achieved are related to:

- achieving concrete specific objectives and strategic objectives;
- building the stakeholders' confidence, understanding and willingness to participate in the process of integrated regional planning and in the implementation of measures;
- developing commitment of local communities to regional development, including through the established network of contacts and, specifically for the case, of cross-border contacts.



## 2. DEFINITION OF THE TERRITORIAL SCOPE OF THE STRATEGY

The geographical scope of the strategy is defined in accordance with the Technical Specification for the task and the requirements set out in Article 23 of the Regulation of 29 May 2018.<sup>2</sup>

The analysis carried out for the needs of the Cooperation Programme INTERREG — IPA CBC 2021—2027 between the Republic of Bulgaria and the Republic of Turkey found that the existence of ‘similar economic, social and territorial challenges, needs and potentials’ provides a reason to ‘define the entire cross-border region as a functional area for which to develop a territorial development strategy’. It should be noted that this analysis has been prepared in coordination with local stakeholders who have stated their willingness to ‘actively participate at different stages of the elaboration and implementation of the relevant territorial strategy’. Thus, one of the most important conditions for successful development and implementation of a territorial strategy — reaching a public consensus and achieving commitment of stakeholders to actively participate in its implementation — is met.

In addition, the defined geographical scope must be adequate in terms of achieving the main objective of the strategy itself — ‘to address the needs of the INTERREG — IPA CBC 2021—2027 Programme between the Republic of Bulgaria and the Republic of Turkey to contribute to the sustainable economic development of the respective region’.

It can be said at the outset that, in addition to including common needs and potentials, the territory must create conditions for achieving the objectives defined in the strategy. The territorial nature of the strategy determines the serious impact on it of the priorities of the Territorial Agenda 2030<sup>3</sup>, which have been subsequently included in the national and regional documents relevant to the developed territory. They assign a significant role to a balanced polycentric network of cooperating cities in activating development potentials. Higher-level development centres such as Burgas, Yambol, Haskovo, Edirne, and Kirklareli play a particularly important role in this network for the territories in both countries immediately along the border, and their inclusion in the territorial scope is of great importance. They form the backbone of the polycentric system in the relevant territory, and their relationship with the smaller towns within said polycentric model and with the rest of the territory are characterised by a high degree of interactions and interdependencies. In addition to being related to commutes to work, these large development centres are part of national and regional systems for providing health, education and other services that are ‘alive’ and still functioning. In fact, the strategy will operate on part of a system (in this case two systems) and not on a separate territory, and the proposed geographical scope reflects that fact.

On the other hand, these systems are related to the approach used in both countries for collecting and providing statistics, and taking them into account will largely ensure access to quality statistics needed to analyse the needs and development potentials of the territory, the information tools to measure the set objectives and successful monitoring and evaluation of the implementation of the strategy.

We can add to this that the information from the Annual Reports<sup>4</sup> on the programme shows that the main share of the implemented cross-border projects are connected with the large urban centres on both sides of the border.

<sup>2</sup> [https://eur-lex.europa.eu/resource.html?uri=cellar:26b02a36-6376-11e8-ab9c-01aa75ed71a1.0003.02/DOC\\_1&format=PDF](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/resource.html?uri=cellar:26b02a36-6376-11e8-ab9c-01aa75ed71a1.0003.02/DOC_1&format=PDF)

<sup>3</sup> <https://territorialagenda.eu/home.html>

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.ipacbc-bqtr.eu/annual-reports>





Territorial Agenda 2030 also states that ‘economic prosperity in places depends on *the competitiveness and creativity of their enterprises and start-ups as well as on local assets, characteristics and traditions, cultural, social and human capital and innovation capacities*’.

This is also reflected in the Technical Specification for the project contract, and one of the main activities includes defining the integrated measures required to achieve the development objectives of the territory (‘including a study of *economic development measures, measures directly aimed at businesses and a type of measures relating to the objectives of the policy for a green and social Europe*’).

Therefore, the definition of functional areas as ‘areas with a high degree of interactions and interdependencies, where *simultaneous actions in different sectors (education, employment, transport, healthcare, support for business)* are required in order to achieve future development’, included in the document ‘Political Objective 5 — Bringing Territoriality into Interreg’ of 18 June 2020, is fully applicable to the defined geographical scope of the strategy.

From the findings so far, it can be summarised that the defined territory of the strategy:

- creates an opportunity to provide accessible and quality information for the needs of the strategy (analysis, measurability, monitoring, evaluation);
- provides an adequate territorial basis for the preparation of an integrated response to the needs and development potential of the territory;
- is the result of a consensus of stakeholders committed to participating in the development and implementation of the strategy;
- meets the definition of a functional area set out in Interact documents.

All this gives grounds to argue that the geographical scope of the strategy defined in close coordination with the stakeholders is fully adequate to the related requirements and creates the territorial basis necessary for its successful implementation.

### 3. STRATEGIC CONTEXT

The strategic context in which the current strategy is developed and implemented is composed of development documents related to the geographical scope of the strategy at different levels — European, national and regional. The main objectives and priorities of said documents are presented briefly.

The primary reason for the documents that make up the strategic context in this area is the common European policy. It is based on the objectives and values enshrined in the Treaty of Lisbon and the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union.

The EU values are common to the Member States in a society in which inclusion, tolerance, justice, solidarity and non-discrimination prevail.

The objectives of the European Union considered in this document as long-term strategic objectives are as follows:

- promote peace, its values and the well-being of its citizens;
- offer freedom, security and justice without internal borders;



- sustainable development based on balanced economic growth and price stability, a highly competitive market economy with full employment and social progress, and environmental protection;
- combat social exclusion and discrimination;
- promote scientific and technological progress;
- enhance economic, social and territorial cohesion and solidarity among EU countries;
- respect its rich cultural and linguistic diversity;
- establish an economic and monetary union whose currency is the euro.

### 3.1. EUROPEAN STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES AND PRIORITIES

#### 3.1.1. Political objectives for the 2021—2027 programming period<sup>5</sup>

**1) A smarter Europe — innovative and smart economic transformation**, through innovation, digitalisation, economic change and support to small and medium-sized enterprises.

**2) A greener, low-carbon Europe**, through implementing the Paris Agreement and investing in energy transition, renewable energy sources and combatting climate change.

**3) A more connected Europe — mobility and regional ICT connectivity**, with strategic transport and digital networks.

**4) A more social Europe — implementing the European Pillar of Social Rights** — delivering on the European Pillar of Social Rights and supporting quality employment, education, skills, social inclusion and equal access to healthcare.

**5) a Europe closer to citizens by fostering the sustainable and integrated development of all types of territories and local initiatives** — support for locally-led development strategies and sustainable urban development across the EU.

#### Specific objectives of INTERREG (ISO):

**ISO 1 ‘A better cooperation governance’** — aimed at strengthening the institutional capacity, strengthening legal and administrative cooperation, especially when related to the implementation of the Communication on Border Regions, strengthening cooperation between citizens and institutions and the development and coordination of macro-regional and sea-basin strategies. This objective can be supported by the following actions:

**ISO 2 ‘A safer and more secure Europe’** — addressing specific issues related to external cooperation, such as security, safety, border management and migration.

<sup>5</sup> [https://eur-lex.europa.eu/resource.html?uri=cellar:26b02a36-6376-11e8-ab9c-01aa75ed71a1.0003.02/DOC\\_1&format=PDF](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/resource.html?uri=cellar:26b02a36-6376-11e8-ab9c-01aa75ed71a1.0003.02/DOC_1&format=PDF)



### **3.1.2. Priorities of the European Commission (CP) for 2019—2024<sup>6</sup>**

#### **CP 1 A European Green Deal**

To tackle the challenges of climate change and environmental degradation, the EU is launching a new growth strategy, the European Green Deal. The direction of development is towards transforming the Union into a modern, resource-efficient and competitive economy which generates zero net greenhouse gas emissions by 2050 and in which economic growth is independent of resource use.

#### **CP 2 An economy that works for people**

Work to achieve social justice and prosperity. The EU's unique social market economy allows for economic growth and for reduction of poverty and inequality.

#### **CP 3 A Europe fit for the digital age**

The target of the European digital strategy is for EU strategies for artificial intelligence and for data to encourage businesses to work with and develop new technologies, while ensuring citizens' trust in these technologies. At the same time, this must help achieve the target of a climate-neutral Europe by 2050.

#### **CP 4 Promoting our European way of life**

The rule of law as the legal, political and economic basis of the Union and the guarantee for the protection of its citizens and values.

#### **CP 5 A stronger Europe in the world**

Championing multilateralism and a rules-based global order through a more active role of the EU in the world. An open and fair trade agenda, that makes Europe an attractive place for business, while ensuring compliance with the highest standards of climate and environmental protection and labour protection. Close cooperation with its partners and neighbouring countries, a coordinated approach to external action — from development aid to the Common Foreign and Security Policy.

#### **CP 6 A new push for European democracy**

Promoting, protecting and strengthening European democracy through greater participation of European citizens in the decision-making process and a more active role in setting political priorities.

### **3.1.3. Territorial Agenda 2030 — A future for all places<sup>7</sup>**

#### **Territorial priorities (TP) for Europe:**

#### **TP 1. A Just Europe that offers future perspectives for all places and people**

The priorities for a Just Europe underline the territorial dimension and spatial planning contributions to overarching policy priorities. These priorities include economic, social and territorial cohesion, the European Pillar of Social Rights, a Europe closer to citizens, a more

<sup>6</sup> 6 Commission priorities for 2019—2024, [https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/priorities-2019-2024\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/priorities-2019-2024_en)

<sup>7</sup> Territorial Agenda 2030, <https://www.territorialagenda.eu/home.html>



inclusive, sustainable and integrated development of places, Just Transition and territorial integration in Europe.

## TP 2. A Green Europe that protects common livelihoods and shapes societal transition

Green Europe priorities underline the territorial dimension and spatial planning contributions to overarching policy priorities such as the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. Other relevant priorities concern Europe fit for the digital age, sustainable mobility and a fully integrated European transport network, the transition to a circular economy in Europe and the application of an ecosystem-based approach.

### Turning priorities into actions

The priorities spelled out in the Territorial Agenda 2030 need to be supported by actions from committed players. Only then can Territorial Agenda 2030 priorities and concerns over spatial inequalities and the transition towards a carbon/climate-neutral economy be addressed appropriately. Taken together, the actions should strengthen:

- multi-level governance;
- place-based approaches;
- coordinated sector policy territorial impacts and coherence;
- cooperation between territories;
- territorial cohesion at European level;
- territorial cohesion at cross-border, transnational, inter- and intra-regional level;
- Member State and neighbouring country contributions to territorial cohesion.

### 3.1.4. International Cooperation in the Black Sea

A number of joint organisations and strategic documents of the Black Sea countries have laid the foundation for long-term cooperation in the Black Sea. It is worth noting the Commission on the Protection of the Black Sea Against Pollution and the Black Sea Economic Cooperation Organisation<sup>8</sup>, and in terms of the development strategies — the Common Maritime Agenda in the Black Sea<sup>9</sup>, the Strategic Research and Innovation Agenda for the Black Sea (SRIA)<sup>10</sup>, Blue Growth<sup>11</sup>, and the EU Maritime Security Strategy<sup>12</sup>. Their main objectives, which will be taken into account in the developed strategy, are related to:

- prevention, reduction and control of pollution in the Black Sea in order to protect the marine environment;
- support for and coordination of regional cooperation in a wide range of areas — trade, banking, communications, energy, transport, agriculture, healthcare, environmental protection, fight against organised crime;

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.sme.government.bg/?p=2872>

<sup>9</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/maritimeaffairs/press/common-maritime-agenda-black-sea-motion\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/maritimeaffairs/press/common-maritime-agenda-black-sea-motion_en)

<sup>10</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/info/news/launch-european-black-sea-strategic-research-and-innovation-agenda-2019-may-08\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/info/news/launch-european-black-sea-strategic-research-and-innovation-agenda-2019-may-08_en)

<sup>11</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/maritimeaffairs/policy/blue\\_growth\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/maritimeaffairs/policy/blue_growth_en)

<sup>12</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/maritimeaffairs/policy/maritime-security\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/maritimeaffairs/policy/maritime-security_en)



- support for closer regional cooperation on maritime issues, including transport, environment, research and innovation;
- developing practical solutions for the entire region to address regional and global challenges by promoting a bottom-up approach to project development and identifying and supporting the needs, priorities and objectives of the partners in the region;
- implementation of a long-term strategy to support sustainable growth in the sea and in maritime sectors in general;
- implementation of a security strategy that covers all challenges in the maritime space that may affect people, activities or infrastructures in the EU.

The developed strategy can contribute to the achievement of the objectives set by getting involved in the process of maritime spatial planning according to its capabilities. This process is regulated at EU level through the Maritime Spatial Planning Directive<sup>13</sup>.

The directive lays down EU countries' common approach to the planning of maritime areas. This allows each EU country to plan its own maritime activities while complying with minimum common requirements. The objective is to promote the sustainable growth of maritime economies, known as the EU's Blue Economy, the sustainable development of marine areas, and the sustainable use of marine resources.

The Directive pays particular attention to cross-border cooperation in the field, and according to Article 12 'Member States shall endeavour, where possible, to cooperate with third countries on their actions with regard to maritime spatial planning in the relevant marine regions and in accordance with international law and conventions, such as by using existing international forums or regional institutional cooperation'.

### 3.1.5. Preparation for INTERREG Post 2020<sup>14</sup>

Appropriate measures to achieve long-term strategic objectives in terms of cross-border cooperation are based on:

- lessons learnt from previous periods that demonstrated the need for more pro-active EC approach;
- the orientation papers prepared;
- territorial dimension — PO 5: Europe closer to citizens — an integrated approach tailored to specific needs and challenges of the territory and supported by stakeholders.

#### Suitable thematic areas of interventions:

- Growth, competitiveness, connectivity.
- Greener, low carbon economy.

<sup>13</sup> [https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/HTML/?uri=LEGISSUM:0201\\_2](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/HTML/?uri=LEGISSUM:0201_2)

<sup>14</sup> Preparation for Interreg Post 2020, [https://ec.europa.eu/regional\\_policy/sources/policy/communication/regional\\_offices/reg\\_offices\\_25-09-2019\\_interreg.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/sources/policy/communication/regional_offices/reg_offices_25-09-2019_interreg.pdf)



- Employment, education, health.
- Better cooperation governance.

## **3.2. STRATEGIC GOALS AT NATIONAL AND REGIONAL LEVEL**

### **3.2.1. Strategic documents of the Republic of Bulgaria**

#### **3.2.1.1. National Development Programme Bulgaria 203015**

##### **Strategic goals**

- Accelerated economic development
- Demographic upturn
- Reducing inequalities

It is envisaged to achieve the strategic goals through targeted policies and interventions, grouped in five interconnected and integrated axes of development:

- Innovative and intelligent Bulgaria
- Green and sustainable Bulgaria
- Connected and integrated Bulgaria
- Responsive and fair Bulgaria
- Spiritual and vibrant Bulgaria

#### **3.2.2. National Concept for Spatial Development for the 2013–2025 period. Update 2019 <sup>16</sup>**

##### **Strategic objectives:**

SG 1: Territorial cohesion

Specific objective 1.1. Integration into the European space

Specific objective 1.2. Polycentric territorial development

Specific objective 1.3. Preserved natural and cultural heritage

SG 2: Economic cohesion

Specific objective 2.1. Regional competitiveness promoting growth

Specific objective 2.2. Incentivised development of territories with specific characteristics

SG 3: Social cohesion

Specific objective 3.1. Spatial connectivity and access to services

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<sup>15</sup> <https://www.minfin.bg/en/1394>

<sup>16</sup> <https://www.mrrb.bg/bg/aktualizaciya-na-nacionalnata-koncepciya-za-prostranstveno-razvitie-za-perioda-2013-2025-g/>



Specific objective 3.2. Quality of education, healthcare, social and cultural services

### 3.2.2.1. Integrated territorial development strategy for the South Central Region<sup>17</sup>

Strategic priority 1: Strengthening the competitive position of the South Central Region through investments in growth factors

Strategic priority 2: Improving the social and ecological environment of the South Central Region

Strategic priority 3: More balanced territorial development and reduction of inequalities in the South Central Region

### 3.2.2.2. Integrated territorial development strategy for the Southeastern Region<sup>18</sup>

Priority 1: Support for sustainable and smart economy of the Southeastern Region

Priority 2: Improving the educational level of the population and the quality of life in the Southeastern Region

Priority 3: Territorial cohesion and integrated development of urban, rural and coastal areas

## 3.2.3. Strategic documents of the Republic of Turkey

### 3.2.3.1. Eleventh Development Plan 2019—2023<sup>19</sup>

- **Stable and strong economy** — an export-oriented stable growth model that focuses on productivity and leading role of the industrial sector
- **Competitive production and productivity** — horizontal policy areas — accelerated development, reforms and stability
- **Qualified people, strong society** — through an inclusive approach covering all sections of the society
- **Livable cities, sustainable environment** — settlements that are people-oriented, respecting the nature and historical heritage, with high quality of life
- **Rule of law, democratization and good governance** — adherence of legislative, executive and judiciary to the law, constitutional protection of fundamental rights and freedoms

### 3.2.3.2. Eleventh management plan of the region of Thrace 2014—2023<sup>20</sup>

- **People and society**

Development of entrepreneurial culture and research and development, educational and scientific infrastructure, efficiency and accessibility of public and social services, culture of cooperation and social solidarity, regional employment and fight against poverty

<sup>17</sup> <https://www.mrrb.bg/bg/proekt-na-integrirani-teritorialni-strategii-za-razvitie-na-regionite-za-planirane-ot-nivo-2-za-perioda-2021-2027-q/>

<sup>18</sup> <https://www.mrrb.bg/bg/proekt-na-integrirani-teritorialni-strategii-za-razvitie-na-regionite-za-planirane-ot-nivo-2-za-perioda-2021-2027-q/>

<sup>19</sup> [https://www.sbb.gov.tr/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/Eleventh\\_Development\\_Plan-2019-2023.pdf](https://www.sbb.gov.tr/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/Eleventh_Development_Plan-2019-2023.pdf)

<sup>20</sup> [https://www.trakyaka.org.tr/upload/Node/33264/xfiles/trakya\\_bolge\\_plani\\_2014-2023.pdf](https://www.trakyaka.org.tr/upload/Node/33264/xfiles/trakya_bolge_plani_2014-2023.pdf)



- **Way of life and environment**

Ensuring functional and spatial integration and convergence of the quality of life between the settlements in the region, sustainable management of natural resources, efficiency in the management of the risk of foreseeable natural disasters, and protection and development of the cultural and historical infrastructure

- **Industry and economy**

Promotion of medium- and high-tech production with high added value, measures to improve the institutional and managerial capacity of SMEs, improvement of environmentally sensitive production infrastructure, balance and increase of added value in agriculture, development of logistics in the region, increase of energy efficiency, investment activity, development of sustainable tourism and access of local businesses to international markets

### **3.3. Preparation for INTERREG Post 2020 — guidelines for cross-border cooperation**

The **Border Orientation Papers** for INTERREG IPA CBC cooperation programmes between the Republic of Bulgaria and, respectively, the Republic of North Macedonia, the Republic of Serbia and the Republic of Turkey set out the key characteristics of cross-border territories and outline ideas, opportunities and orientations for the thematic focus of future programmes. These guidelines are useful for the developed strategy given its cross-border orientation.

**The main principles of work include:**

- Principle of the functional area: focusing on areas identified by common characteristics, needs and development potentials in order to achieve tangible results. The structuring of the interventions is not limited to the administrative boundaries of the programme, but is tailored to the actions necessary to achieve the desired effect.
- Principle of thematic concentration: focus on key thematic areas where joint actions can have the greatest impact, thus maximising the effectiveness of funding and results-orientation.

According to the paper, the main guidelines for the cross-border area between Bulgaria and Turkey, which should be considered in the next programming period by both countries, are related to the challenges in view of the proposed objectives of cohesion policy.

## **4. ANALYSIS**

### **CONCLUSIONS**

The analysis of the existing situation outlines a picture dotted with opportunities, needs and potentials for development. Along with the encouraging results, there are difficulties and sometimes lasting negative trends, leading to an imbalance in the development of the territory in both sectoral and territorial aspects.





The accumulation of problems in various areas, especially in remote and depopulated areas, generates a negative cumulative effect, which is crucial for the deepening of more acute problems and has an overall negative impact in all areas of development.

This makes the use of a balanced and territorial needs-oriented integrated approach key to achieving sustainable results.

The dominant position of SMEs in the economic realities of the CBC region largely determines their potential to be a major driving force in the economic recovery after the Covid-19 pandemic and its subsequent long-term development.

It seems absolutely necessary, given the central role of SMEs, to develop a package of mutually influential measures in different areas. In order to be able to achieve an overall cumulative effect, it is necessary to ensure the implementation of the necessary minimum of territorially focused interventions in the various areas.

Their integrated response will be able, through its long-term action, to reverse the trends, leading the territory to socio-economic stability and sustainable development.

## 5. INTEGRATED APPROACH

Integrated territorial development constitutes making progress in achieving certain objectives on the basis of an integrated approach.

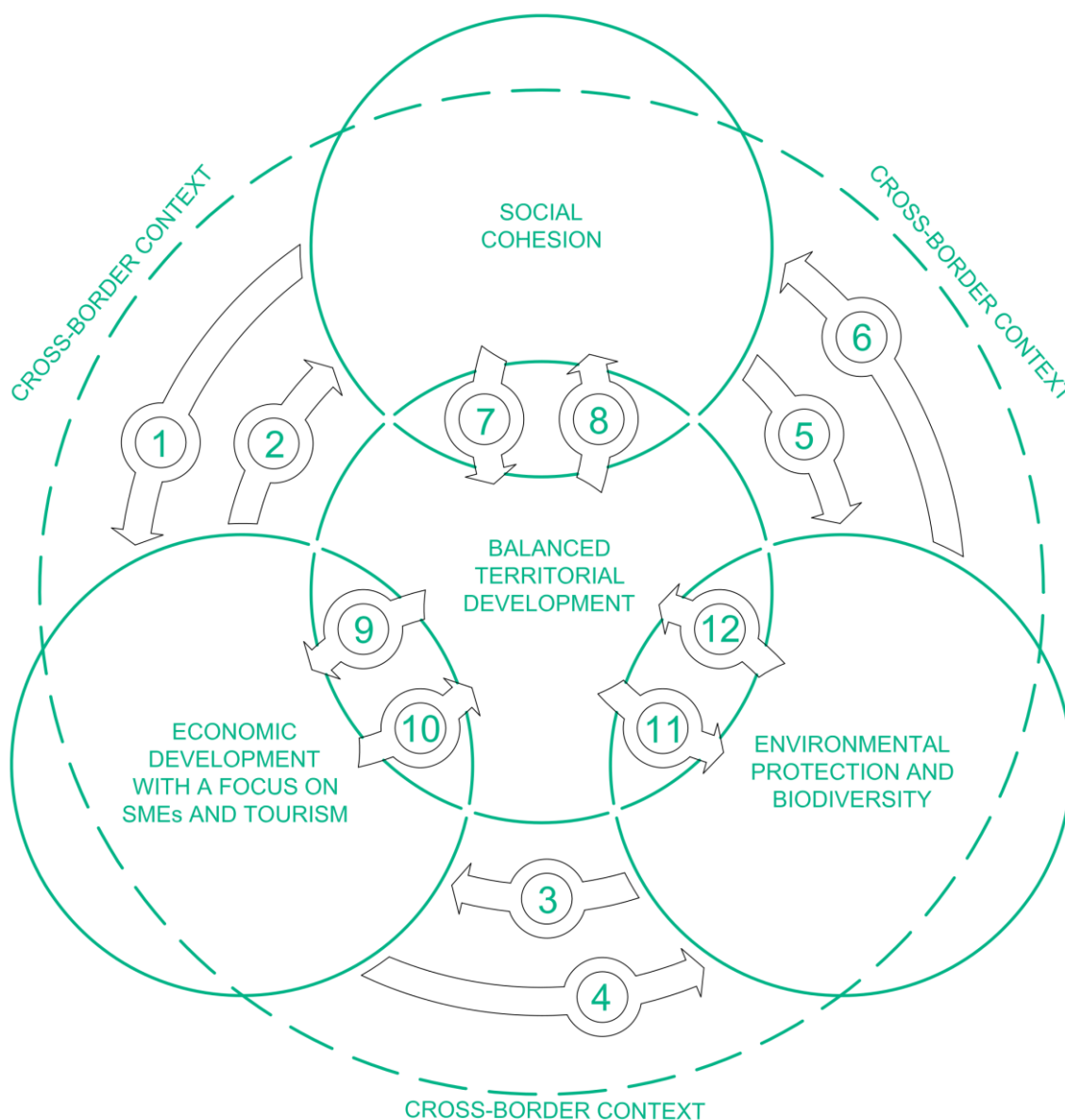
The integrated approach to meeting/addressing the needs and potentials of the territory in the developed strategy is manifested in three main aspects:

- The territory within the scope of the Strategy is defined on the basis of achieving sustainable results in terms of common needs and development potentials, and covers different administrative territories (**2. Definition of the territorial scope of the Strategy**);
- Participation of a wide range of partners — representatives of civil society and the academic community, local authorities, socioeconomic entities and associations — in the entire process of preparation, discussion, adoption and implementation of the strategy according to the partnership principle and the multi-level governance model (**6. Strategic Objectives, Specific Objectives, Measures**);
- A package of interconnected and complementary (integrated) measures based on close coordination of different public policies according to local specifics, meeting local needs and development potentials and bringing common benefits to partners and the region (**5. Integrated approach**).

The **priority areas of intervention** identified through the analysis of needs and potentials are as follows:

- Social cohesion;
- Economic development, with a focus on SMEs and tourism;
- Environmental protection and conservation of biodiversity.

Figure 2. Model of interaction between priority areas of intervention and related objectives and measures



The interaction and mutual influence between the objectives and measures of the different priority areas of intervention is explained by using findings of European institutions, strategic documents and studies that are fundamental to European development policies and relevant to the illustrated model of interaction:

1. “Making sure that EU citizens have the necessary skills to succeed in the labour market is key to improving economic growth and employment in the EU.”

**European Council, Council of the European Union**

<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/policies/education-economic-growth/>



**2. An economy that works for people**

“Individuals and businesses in the EU can only thrive if the economy works for them.

The EU’s unique social market economy allows economies to grow and to reduce poverty and inequality.

Small and medium-sized enterprises are the backbone of the EU’s economy. It is also essential to strengthen them.”

**European Commission, Priorities 2019-2024**

[https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/priorities-2019-2024/economy-works-people\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/priorities-2019-2024/economy-works-people_en)

**3. “Climate change and environmental degradation are an existential threat to Europe and the world.”**

**European Commission, Priorities 2019-2024**

[https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/priorities-2019-2024/european-green-deal\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/priorities-2019-2024/european-green-deal_en)

“Biodiversity is the backbone of life. It is essential for humans as much for environmental as for climate protection reasons.

Biodiversity is vital in terms of protecting people's health and in sustaining our economy.”

**European Council, Council of the European Union**

<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/policies/biodiversity/>

**4. “Climate change and environmental degradation are an existential threat to Europe and the world. To overcome these challenges, Europe needs a new growth strategy that will transform the Union into a modern, resource-efficient and competitive economy.”**

**European Commission, Priorities 2019-2024**

[https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/priorities-2019-2024/european-green-deal\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/priorities-2019-2024/european-green-deal_en)

**5. The longer the respondents remained in education, the more likely they are to have heard of Natura 2000 (38% vs. 17%). The share of those who have heard of Natura 2000 varies between 18% for those who completed their education aged 20+ and up to 3% left by the age of 15.**

**Attitudes of Europeans towards Biodiversity, report**

<https://ec.europa.eu/comfrontoffice/publicopinion/index.cfm/Survey/getSurveyDetail/instruments/SPECIAL/surveyKy/2194>

**6. “Climate change and environmental degradation are an existential threat to Europe and the world.”**

**European Commission, Priorities 2019-2024**

[https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/priorities-2019-2024/european-green-deal\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/priorities-2019-2024/european-green-deal_en)



“Biodiversity is the backbone of life. It is essential for humans as much for environmental as for climate protection reasons.”

**European Council, Council of the European Union**

<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/policies/biodiversity/>

**7.** “The underlying objective of all public policies should be to increase citizens’ well-being and quality of life. These go beyond economic performance, living standards and purely material aspects to include access to quality public services, freedom of movement and healthy, resilient and high quality architecture and built environments. They also have a territorial dimension ranging from disparities between neighbourhoods such as social exclusion and urban poverty, to disparities between regions and countries.”

**Territorial Agenda 2030**

<https://www.territorialagenda.eu/home.html>

**8.** “In rural areas, prosperity will hinge on the capacity to mobilise people and local resources, whilst at the same time developing the locational factors that make living and economic conditions more attractive for people and businesses. The diseconomies and negative externalities of urban agglomeration run counter to the prospect of good quality of life for all.”

“In remote areas which are far from big cities, small and medium-sized towns play a key role in providing access to services, ensuring that these areas remain attractive places to live.”

**European Economic and Social Committee**

<https://www.eesc.europa.eu/en/our-work/opinions-information-reports/opinions/towards-more-balanced-territorial-development>

**9.** “Economic prosperity in places depends on the competitiveness and creativity of their enterprises and start-ups as well as on local assets, characteristics and traditions, cultural, social and human capital and innovation capacities.”

**Territorial Agenda 2030**

<https://www.territorialagenda.eu/home.html>

**10.** “Industrial symbiosis processes in regional value chains are important. The transition of Europe’s economies towards a place-based circular and carbon/climate-neutral model has a territorial dimension and can strengthen functional regions.”

**Territorial Agenda 2030**

<https://www.territorialagenda.eu/home.html>

**11.** “Well-balanced territorial development means more even and sustainable use of natural resources, bringing economic gains from reduced congestion and lower costs.”

**European Economic and Social Committee**

<https://www.eesc.europa.eu/en/our-work/opinions-information-reports/opinions/towards-more-balanced-territorial-development>



12. “Natural and cultural heritage are local and regional development assets that offer unique opportunities for development and highquality living environments. Sustainable and effective use of resources should benefit local communities and promote local business opportunities.”

### Territorial Agenda 2030

<https://www.territorialagenda.eu/home.html>

**Vision:** The territory covered by IPA CBC Bulgaria—Turkey: a place where cross-border cooperation is important and which contributes to the balanced territorial development of the region through an integrated response to local needs and realisation of local potential.

The vision defines the desired role of the strategy as part of the organised implementation of policies for sustainable socioeconomic development of the territory.

The vision will be achieved by using a balanced integrated approach oriented to territorial needs, which is a key to achieving an overall cumulative effect.

The key (priority) areas of intervention identified provide the basis for defining the strategic objectives, which in turn provide the basis for the specific objectives of the Strategy.

The specific objectives are the foundation for defining a multi-sectoral package of measures (integrated measures) that are closely connected with the specific needs and potentials and the priority measures of a higher level. To this end, the implementation of the necessary minimum of territorially focused interventions in the various areas will be ensured.

The goal of meeting the identified needs by strengthening the polycentric model of development and thus reducing spatial imbalances lies at the heart of the territorial cohesion of the measures integrated in a multi-sectoral package. The priorities of the Territorial Agenda 2030, adapted to the context in the national and regional strategic documents, determine the crucial role of the polycentric networks of cities as drivers of economic and social development. The importance of small and medium-sized cities for ‘regional economic development, social well-being and adequate access to services’ at local level is emphasised.

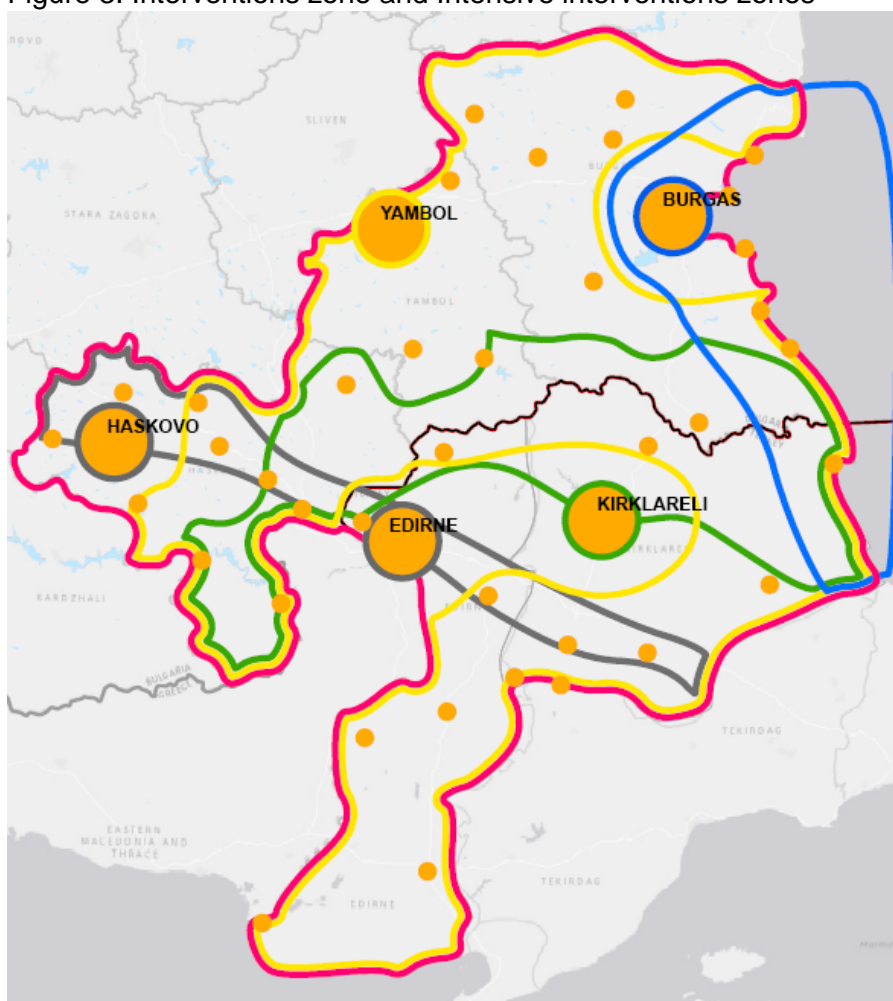
The core of the polycentric network in the developed territory consists of five large urban centres (Burgas, Yambol, Haskovo, Edirne, Kırklareli) and the urban axes connecting them. A network of smaller centres with municipal and supra-municipal functions is developed around this core.

The territory within the geographical scope of the Strategy is characterised by common needs and development potentials and is essentially a functional area, but an approach to interventions that is more thoroughly linked to the specifics of the local context allows to differentiate within it Intensive intervention zones. Within their scope, the more intensive implementation of some of the integrated measures in the overall package is expected to produce a better result and bring more tangible benefits to the entire territory. In this way, the measures envisaged and implemented in the entire functional area for which the Strategy is being developed increase not only their effectiveness, but also the effectiveness of the package of integrated measures as a whole.

The specifics of the local context predetermine the definition of six such areas/zones:

- **The entire functional area** (the entire territory within the scope of the Strategy)
- **Zone of high-level urban centres** (the core of five major cities)
- **Zone of centres at municipal and supra-municipal level** (small and medium-sized towns which counterbalance the development of the large cities of the core)
- **Zone of active transport communication** (the main transport artery across the border)
- **Land-sea interaction zone** (sustainable development in the maritime space)
- **Zone of the European Green Belt** (enhanced role in biodiversity conservation)

Figure 3. Interventions zone and Intensive interventions zones



Each of them also contains at least one higher-level development centre (large city) and is thus connected to the core of the polycentric network. This connection has not only a spatial dimension but also a functional dimension — in larger and more developed cities it is easier to achieve results in the field of new technologies (green, circular, digital) and there it is most likely to take the first steps and give impetus to the development of the entire territory.



The zones overlap/intersect. The different cities and the territories around them fall into several different zones at the same time, which determines their profile in terms of the intensity of the different interventions/measures.

#### SMART approach to formulating specific objectives:

- **Specific:** they are related to needs and development potentials of the territory that are precisely defined in the analysis, and are achieved through specific interventions — cross-border.
- **Measurable:** it is possible to measure them by determining the ratio between the baseline value of the indicator(s), the value of the indicator(s) expected without intervention, and the achieved value of an adequate indicator or indicators.
- **Achievable:** the funding provided and the ongoing process of realisation of the specific objective by developing the current strategy are a necessary, but not sufficient condition for its achievability. The participation of the Task Force composed of stakeholders/partners in the whole process of elaboration, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the Strategy is a proof of their commitment to achieve the defined objectives. The MA of the INTERREG — IPA CB 2021—2027 programme between the Republic of Bulgaria and the Republic of Turkey, for the purposes of which the Strategy is being developed, has significant experience in organising the implementation of cross-border projects. All this in its entirety, together with the absence of unattainably high objectives, guarantees the achievement of good results.
- **Relevant:** they are related to needs and development potentials of the territory that are precisely defined in the analysis. The interdependence of the set objectives, illustrated by the links among the priority areas of intervention, is a guarantee for achieving the desired cumulative effect of the measures integrated in a comprehensive package. The objectives and measures for their achievement are related to specific objectives and priorities at European, national and regional level.
- **Time-based:** they are bound by the deadline for the implementation of the strategy, but the objective is to achieve a sustainable result that will persist even after the end of the interventions.

## 6. STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES (SO), SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES (SpO), MEASURES (M):

### 6.1. SO 1: Achieving sustainable and inclusive economic growth based on increasing the competitiveness of the local economy, digital and green transformation

Increasing the competitiveness of the economy in places is a fundamental EU principle of economic development through fair market competition. This requires a continuous process of creating and developing knowledge, skills and technologies, to which the threat of climate change has added a new focus — the development of a carbon-neutral economy. The measures related to the achievement of the strategic objective are in close coordination with the policies for environmental protection and biodiversity. On the other hand, the envisaged measures contribute to improving the quality of life of the population by providing an opportunity for good professional realisation in the local economy.

### 6.1.1. SpO 1.1: Increase the competitiveness of the local economy and improve the business environment

**M 1.1** Promoting entrepreneurship, joint actions (initiatives, programmes and projects), development of industrial zones, technological renewal, participation in foreign markets, use of various financing opportunities, participation in European and national programmes, development of innovative ideas for products and services and products and services with high added value.

- **Interventions zone:** The entire functional area
- **Intensive interventions zone:** Zone of centres at municipal and supra-municipal level

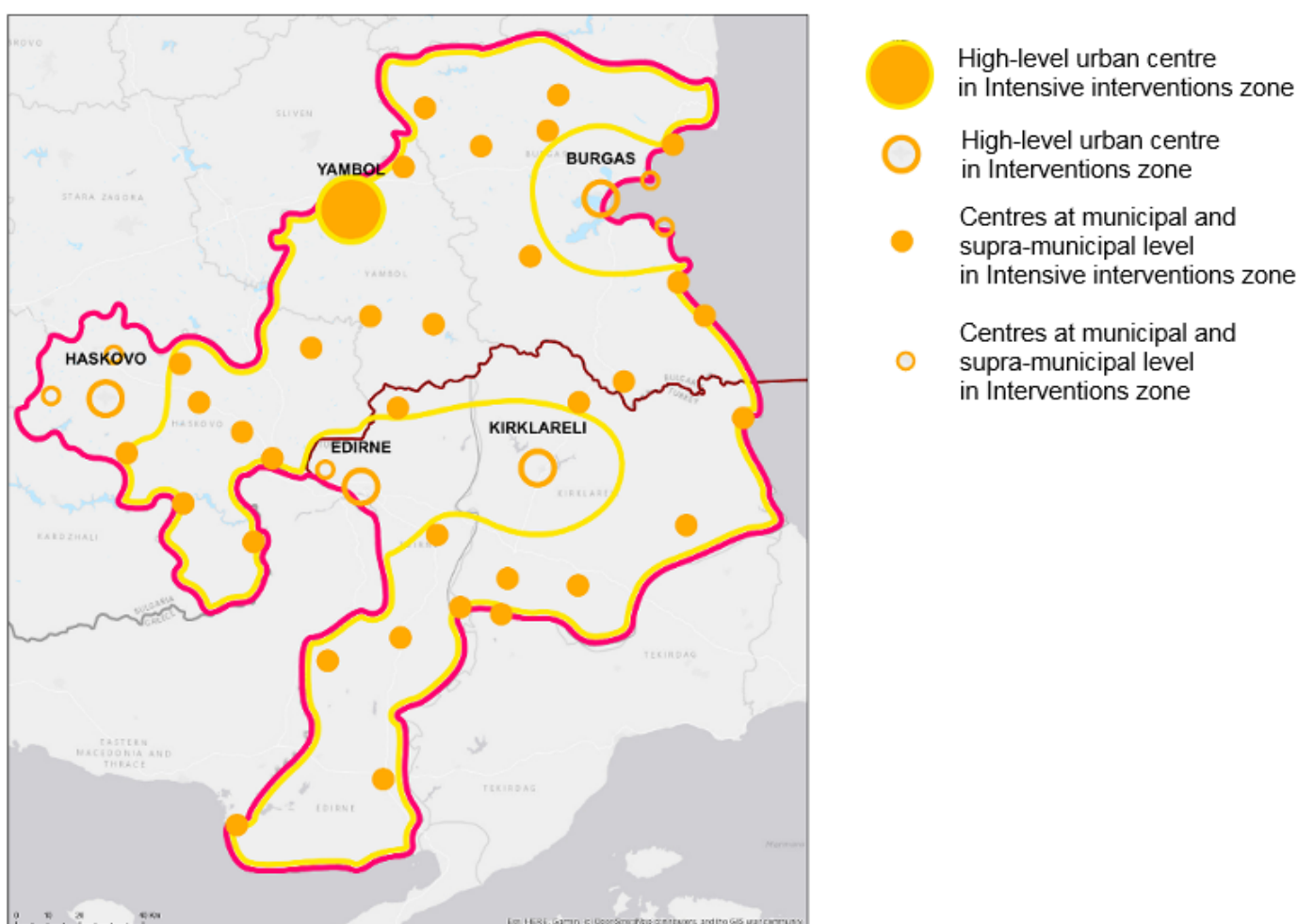


Figure 4. Measure 1.1 - Interventions zone and Intensive interventions zone

- **Relevant needs and development potential:**
  - Promoting the development of the entrepreneurial ecosystem of the region and the entrepreneurship in general, as well as increasing of the attractiveness of the CBC area





for foreign direct investment through appropriate interventions, as imperative long-term policies.

- Improving the culture of cooperation between SMEs, including for participation in programmes and solving common challenges and building a positive attitude towards various financing opportunities, instead of own funding as an important conditions for their successful development in a highly competitive environment;
- Encouraging the emergence and development of new ideas for products and services offered by SMEs as imperative of their development;
- Continuous technological renewal of SMEs, related to new knowledge and skills, machines and software products, required by the market;
- Continuation of the gradual and sustainable development of SMEs in the “Manufacturing” sector;
- Activation of the potential for development of the local handicrafts, through its adaptation to the modern markets;
- The significant contribution to the GDP of SMEs and the large number of employees in them determine the serious potential of the measures, related to the development of SMEs with their wide positive effect on the economy as a whole;
- The development of SMEs in the field of ICT provides an opportunity to create products with high added value;
- The significant number of SMEs and the variety of areas in which they operate, has the potential to increase the competitiveness of SMEs through their participation in joint initiatives, programmes and projects;
- Identification of Bulgaria as a major foreign trade partner of the Province of Edirne creates potential for joint action in cross-border cooperation related to exports and imports, respectively;
- Encouraging entrepreneurs in the SMEs to commit to improving the skills of their employees;
- The well-developed educational infrastructure in the CBC area has the potential to link vocational training and business needs in the long term;
- Support/increase of the competence for participation of SMEs in European and national financing programmes and improvement of the qualification, related to research, planning and export of SMEs;
- Provision of up-to-date information on markets, technologies, raw materials, innovations and financing programs for the needs of SMEs.

### **6.1.2. SpO 1.2: Increase the level of digitalisation and climate neutrality of the local economy**

**M 1.2** Transformation of the local economy through measures for digital and energy transition, and implementation of the circular economy model

- **Interventions zone:** The entire functional area
- **Intensive interventions zone:** Zone of high-level urban centres

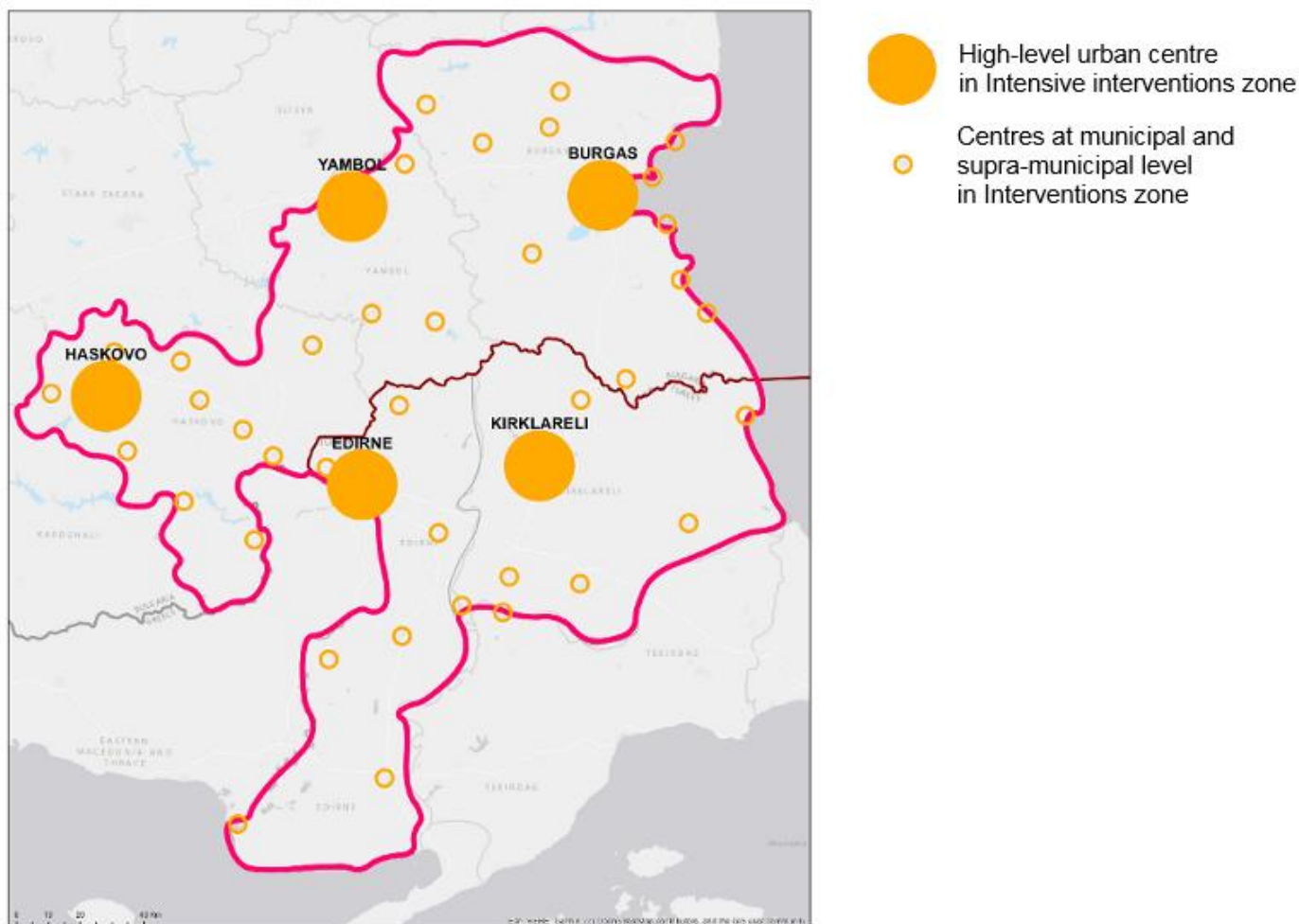


Figure 5. Measure 1.2 - Interventions zone and Intensive interventions zone

- **Relevant needs and development potential:**
  - Specific targeted support for the implementation of digital technologies in SMEs;
  - Support for implementing circular economy models by various economic operators, incl. municipal enterprises;
  - Development of the potential for export of goods and services by maintaining their competitiveness on the international market by orienting part of the investments towards green transition.

### 6.1.3. SpO 1.3: Improving the qualification of local communities for successful integration and realisation in the labour market

**M 1.3** Building and developing knowledge and skills adequate to the modern challenges in the local population

- **Interventions zone:** The entire functional area
- **Intensive interventions zone:** Zone of centres at municipal and supra-municipal level

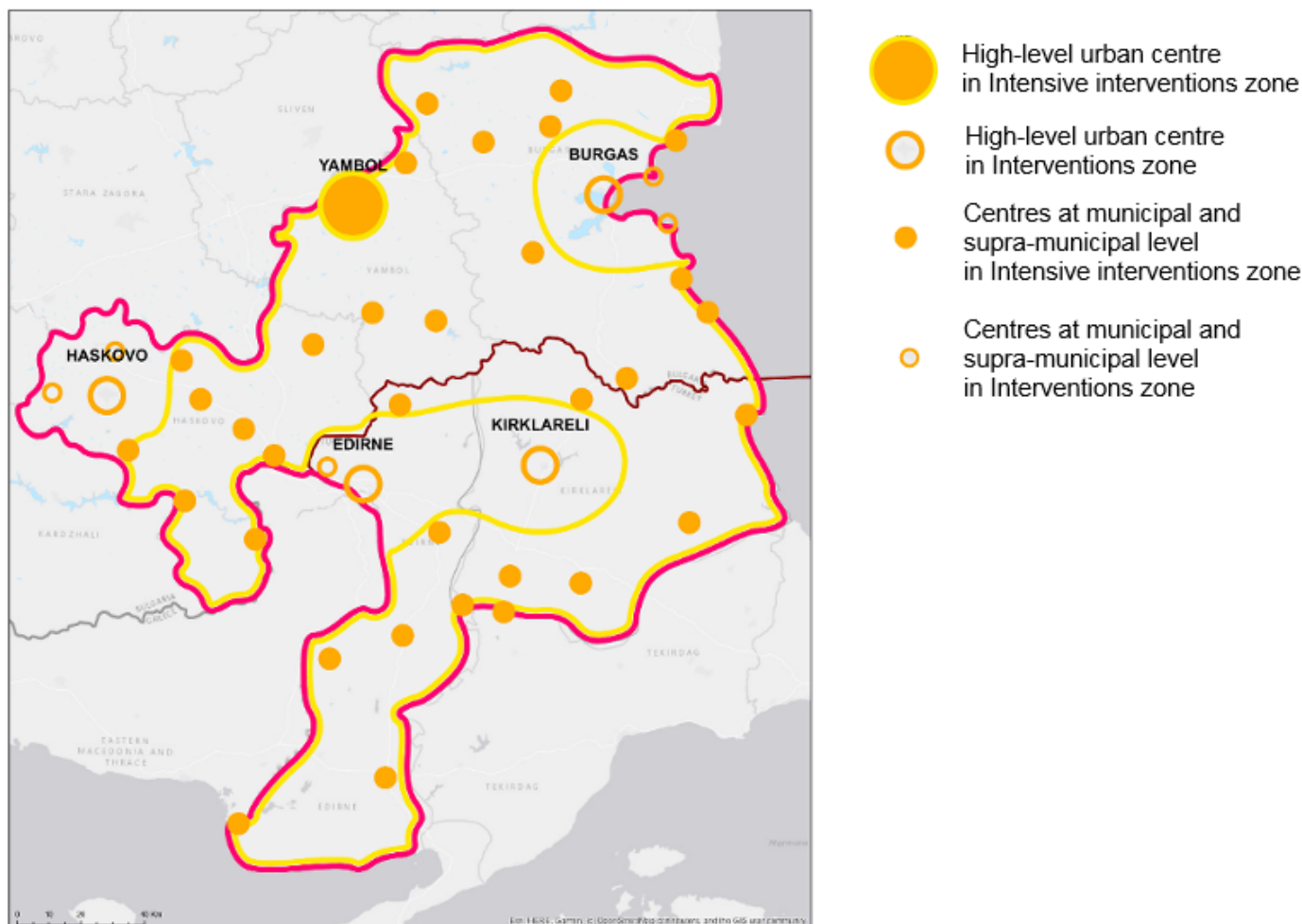


Figure 6. Measure 1.3 - Interventions zone and Intensive interventions zone

- **Relevant needs and development potential:**
  - Improving qualifications by acquiring key skills - leadership, management, marketing, digital and other competencies, as a key condition for increasing the competitiveness of SMEs;
  - Urgent policies and measures to address the shortage of qualified staff, especially in the areas with higher unemployment;

#### 6.1.4. SO 1.4: Tourism development

**M 1.4** Overcoming the seasonality and increasing the occupation rate of the tourist infrastructure through integrated regional tourist products that combine different activities and locations and are based on sustainable development

- **Interventions zone:** The entire functional area
- **Intensive interventions zone:** The entire functional area

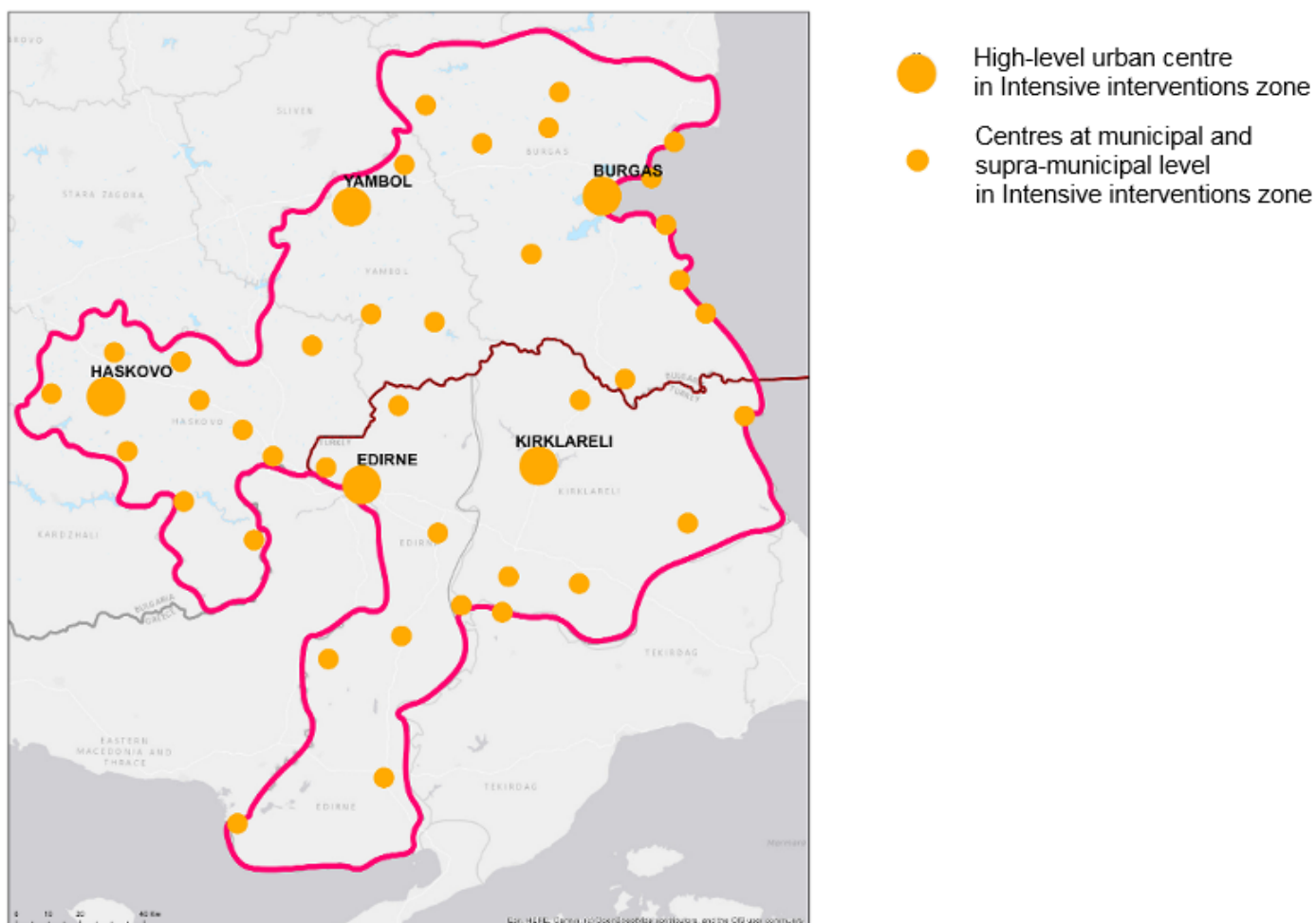


Figure 7. Measure 1.4 - Interventions zone and Intensive interventions zone

- **Relevant needs and development potential:**
  - Improvement and expansion of the existing network of bike lanes through field signalling, involvement of local communities in the initiative and promotion of the provided opportunities.
  - Potential for overcoming the seasonality and increasing the usability of the tourist superstructure, through the possibility to combine different leisure activities in time and space;

- Creating a regional tourist product for the CBC area, based on natural resources, cultural heritage, mineral springs and relatively good tourist infrastructure, and implementation of regional marketing and advertising;
- The realization of the potential of the CBC area, which is directly dependent on the compliance of the implemented tourism policy with the policy priorities in a wider European context, including increasing of competitiveness of the sector and promoting the development of sustainable, responsible and high-quality tourism;
- Use of the untapped potential for development of SMEs from the region in the tourism sector;
- The development of cycling routes in the region has the potential to create conditions for rediscovering and developing unpopular destinations and supporting local communities.

**6.1.5. SpO 1.5: Increasing the contribution of the natural heritage to the balanced sustainable socio-economic development of the region**

**M 1.5** Promoting joint actions for the development of ecosystem practices and services in the management of natural assets with tourism potential

- **Interventions zone:** the entire functional area
- **Intensive interventions zone:** Zone of the European Green Belt, Land-Sea Interaction zone

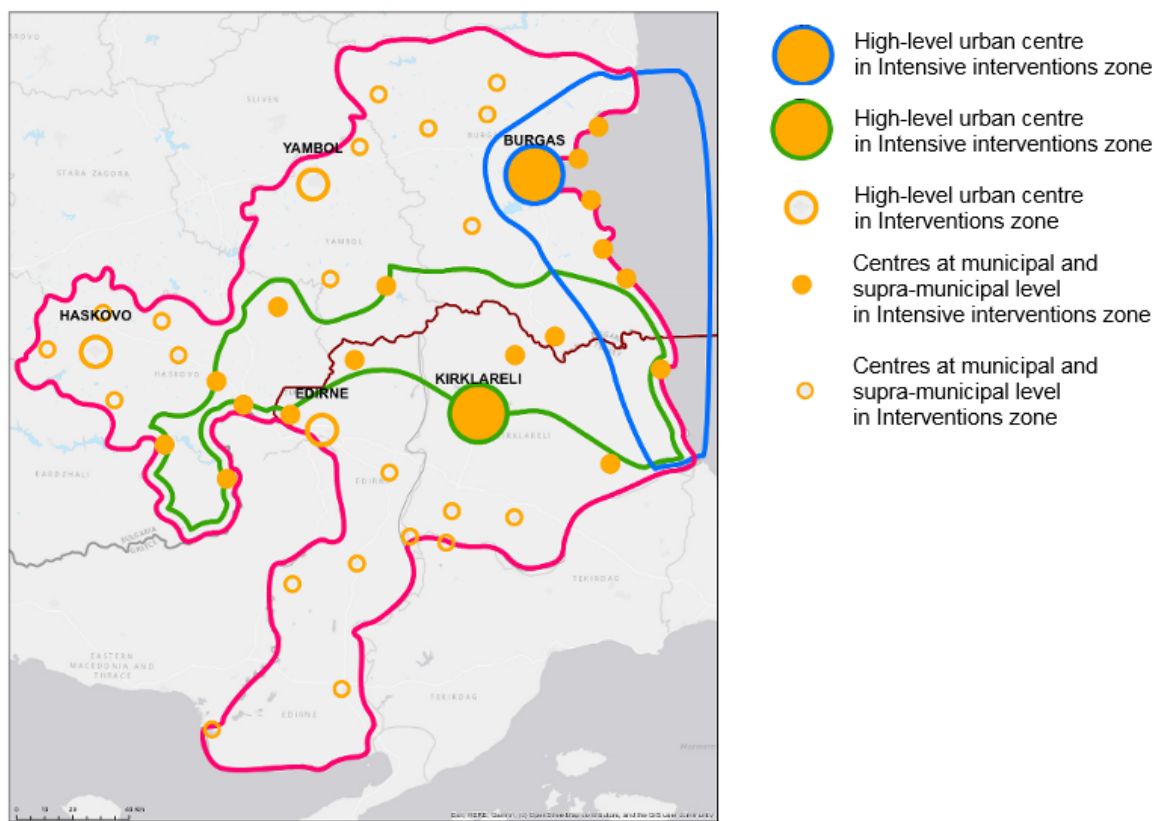


Figure 8. Measure 1.5 - Interventions zone and Intensive interventions zones



- **Relevant needs and development potential:**
  - Development of the potential of the rich natural heritage of the region to contribute to balanced sustainable development through the implementation of nature protection policies, taking into account the ecological, scientific, cultural, economic, social and recreational requirements, as well as regional and local peculiarities;

## **6.2. SO 2: Development of better access to services of general interest (SGI)**

Technological development and the economic prosperity of the EU have increased the opportunities and requirements for the quality of life of the population in every corner of the Union. To take advantage of all this, citizens need to have fast and equal access to consumer-centered services, so as to close the gap between economically advantaged and disadvantaged persons and to raise social cohesion. The need for action in this direction is also recognized by the Territorial Agenda 2030, which prioritizes the reduction of territorial disparities, in all their aspects, through the uptake of digital solutions and technologies, as well as through green transformation. The measures related to the achievement of this strategic objective are in close coordination with the policies for digital and green transformation of the economy, helping to develop the necessary knowledge and skills of the local population.

### **6.2.1. SO 2.1: Creating digital and green solutions for better service to the population in a cross-border environment**

**M 2.1** Support for actions aimed at wide implementation in practice of consumer-oriented approaches in the provision of services of general interest

- **Interventions zone:** The entire functional area
- **Intensive interventions zone:** Zone of centres at municipal and supra-municipal level

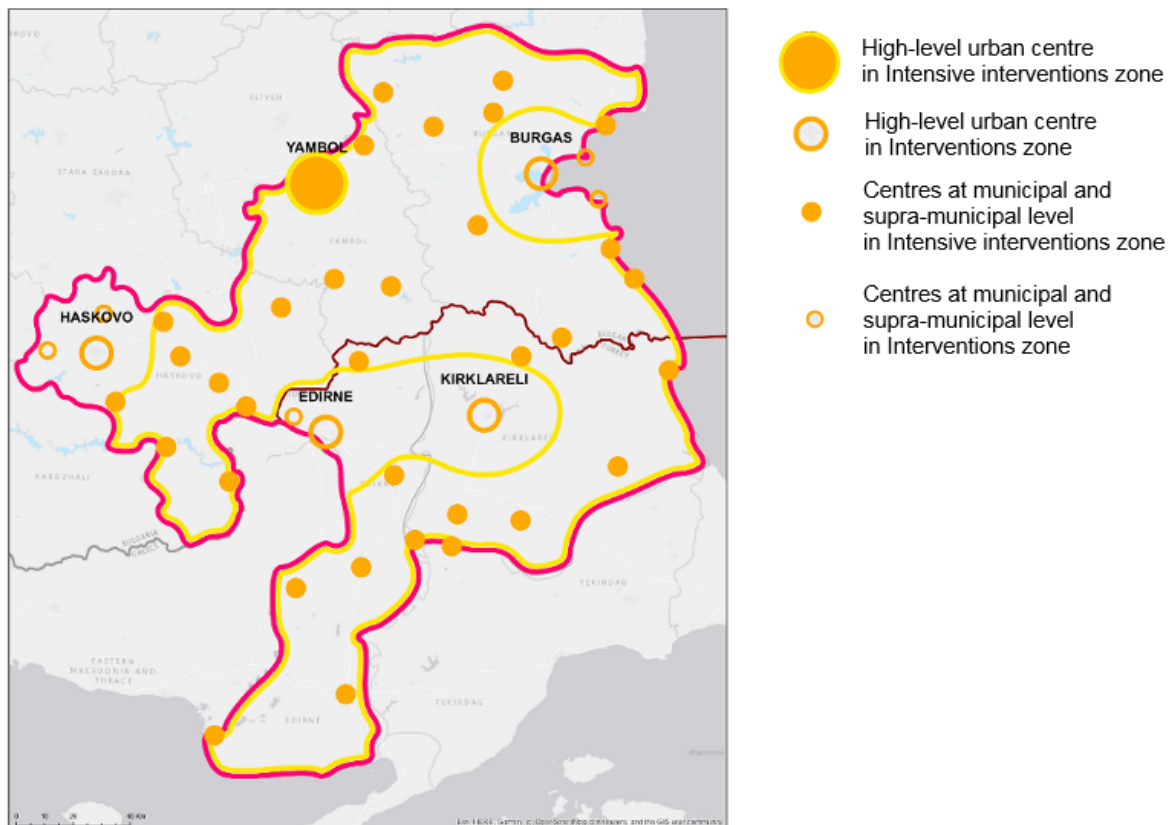


Figure 9. Measure 2.1 - Interventions zone and Intensive interventions zone

- **Relevant needs and development potential:**
  - Observed disparities between the demand and the supply of health services across urban and rural areas and between different income groups; Turkey is more advanced in e-health, while Bulgaria lags behind;
  - Vulnerable and disadvantaged groups of people continue to have limited access to services of general interest, therefore integrated measures for service quality enhancement and active economic inclusion of vulnerable persons should be determined with priority and of ICT perspective allowing for more digital solutions;
  - Growing level of ICT adoption on the Bulgarian part of the CBC area, while Turkish counterpart is less advanced. Yet, both countries operate in a less digitally transformed environment, which opens room for development of more digitalized solutions across various policy domains

### 6.2.2. SO 2.2: Reduce pollution and the negative effects of climate change and foreseeable natural disasters of a transboundary nature

**M 2.2** Implementation of joint actions to reduce pollution and provide clean air, water and food and to mitigate and adapt to climate change

- **Interventions zone:** The entire functional area
- **Intensive interventions zone:** The entire functional area, Land-Sea Interaction zone, Zone of active transport communication

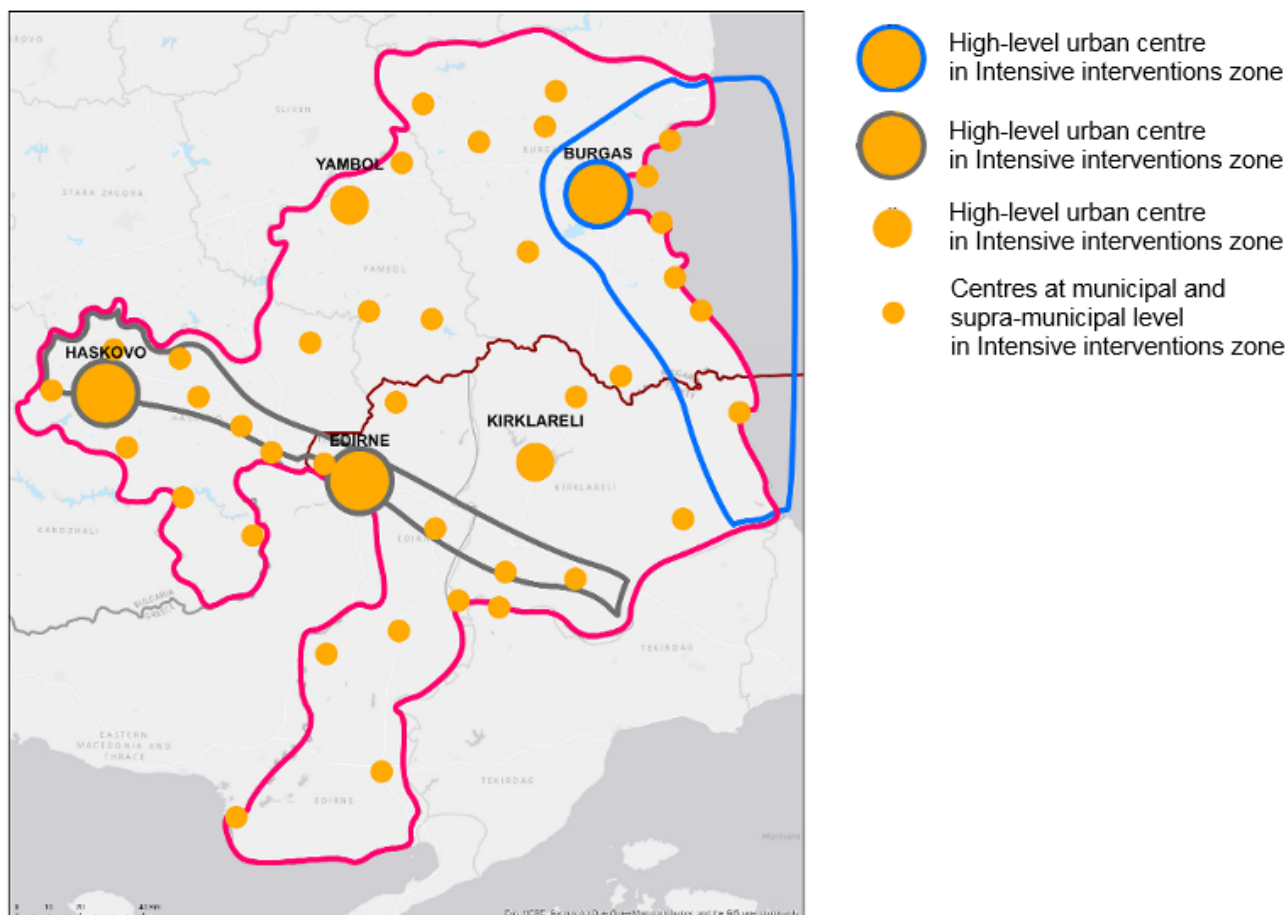


Figure 10. Measure 2.2 - Interventions zone and Intensive interventions zones

- **Relevant needs and development potential:**
  - Reduction of seasonal air pollution with PM<sub>10</sub> by encouraging the abandonment of solid fuels for heating, modernizing road transport and improving the condition of adjacent infrastructure.
  - Joint actions for reduction of transboundary pollution;
  - Implementation of climate change mitigation and adaptation measures, a prerequisite for sustainable development in the CBC area;





**The needs and potentials related to the balanced spatial development of the territory** are addressed by including in the strategy a system of measures, interconnected in thematic and territorial terms and based on the establishment of the polycentric model in the local context.

**Some of the defined needs and development potentials of the territory remain outside the measures envisaged in the strategy due to** addressed in Priority 3 of the Programme

## 7. INVOLVEMENT OF PARTNERS/STAKEHOLDERS IN THE DRAFTING AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE STRATEGY

- **Multi-level governance and partnership**

*Commission Delegated Regulation (EU) No 240/2014 of 7 January 2014 on the European code of conduct on partnership in the framework of the European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF)*<sup>21</sup> published by the European Commission aims to assist and facilitate countries in organising partnerships with regard to partnership agreements and programmes implemented with the support of the ESIFs. Partnership is a long-standing principle in the work of the ESIF and implies close cooperation between public authorities, economic and social partners, and civil society organisations at national, regional and local level throughout the programming cycle consisting of preparation, implementation, monitoring and evaluation. Partners are involved in the preparation and implementation of partnership agreements and programmes. To this end, the basic principles and good practices for conducting a timely, in-depth and transparent process of consultation with partners on the analysis of the challenges and needs to be addressed, of selection of objectives and priorities for overcoming them, as well as with regard to the coordination structures and multi-level governance arrangements needed for effective policy implementation have been established.

The consultation of the partners/stakeholders referred to in Article 5 of the Regulation shall ensure the transparent and effective involvement of relevant partners, shall consult them on the process and timetable of the preparation of the Partnership Agreement and programmes and shall keep them fully informed of the content of said documents and of any changes thereof. As regards the consultation, the following shall be taken into account: the need for timely disclosure of and easy access to relevant information; the need for sufficient time for partners to analyse and comment on key preparatory documents; the need for available channels through which partners may ask questions, may provide contributions and will be informed of the way in which their proposals have been taken into consideration; the need for the dissemination of the outcome of the consultation. Where formal agreements have been established between the different tiers of government below national level, the Member State shall take account of these multi-level governance agreements in accordance with its institutional and legal framework.

According to Articles 7 and 9 of the same Regulation, the information regarding the involvement of partners/stakeholders in the Partnership Agreement and in the preparation of the programmes shall include: the list of partners; the actions taken to ensure the active participation of the partners, including actions taken in terms of accessibility; the role of the partners; the results of the consultation with partners and a description of its added value.

<sup>21</sup> <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/ALL/?uri=CELEX%3A32014R0240>



- **Roles and responsibilities of partners/stakeholders**

The role of the partners is emphasised by the participation of representatives of the civil society, the academic community, local authorities, socioeconomic entities and associations, etc., as members of the working groups which prepare the strategic documents. By participating at an early stage they have the opportunity to influence the preparation of documents.

The Integrated Territorial Strategy for the needs of the INTERREG — IPA CBC 2021—2027 Programme between the Republic of Bulgaria and the Republic of Turkey is developed jointly with the **Task Force (TF)** established on the basis of the above-mentioned considerations, as well as in compliance with Commission Delegated Regulation (EU) No 240/2014 of 7 January 2014. The Task Force, which is widely involved at all stages of the development, coordination, approval and implementation of the strategy, ensures the continuation of the public consultation process for the preparation of the INTERREG — IPA CBC 2021—2027 Programme between the Republic of Bulgaria and the Republic of Turkey.

TF members are nominated according to the relevant institutional and legal framework and in compliance with the partnership principle. The Task Force is composed of a balanced number of representatives from both partner countries, including representatives of public authorities (national, regional and local), economic and social partners, relevant bodies representing civil society, including environmental partners, non-governmental organisations and bodies responsible for promoting social inclusion, gender equality and non-discrimination.

The process of drafting the Integrated Territorial Strategy begins with setting up the Task Force composed of the relevant regional and local authorities and bodies, as well as of other local stakeholders responsible for the preparation of the strategy. The Consultant, together with the Task Force, identifies the geographical coverage of the document and develops the analysis of the needs and development potentials of the covered territory, on the basis of which the key areas of integrated strategic intervention should be addressed. Also together, the Consultant and the Task Force prepare the methodology of the Strategy, determine the involvement of partners/stakeholders in its preparation and implementation taking into account the principle of multi-level governance, and develop the methodology for its implementation, monitoring and evaluation.

The TF discusses and approves the list of operations to be supported, prepared on the basis of mapping of possible interventions for integrated economic and social development, protection of cultural and natural heritage, sustainable tourism, etc., as well as the target groups and potential beneficiaries identified. The operations on the list are grouped, prioritised and time-bound on the basis of transparent and clear methodology and selection criteria. The exact budget to support operations is agreed with the TF.

The Task Force participates actively in the coordination, review and approval of all stages of development of the Integrated Territorial Strategy, ensuring wide publicity by presenting the Strategy at various events (relevant meetings of the Task Force, regional consultations, etc.). The Final Report must reflect the comments and observations received during the consultation and approval procedures, as well as the results of the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA).



The integrated strategy is the tool that shapes and leads to the implementation of Priority Objective 5, i.e. operationalises the support for integrated territorial development. The strategy identifies the needs and proposes the interventions to address them in line with the SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-based) approach. In close cooperation with the Task Force, a list of operations to be supported is prepared based on the localised possible interventions for integrated development of the region, and target groups and potential beneficiaries are identified. The operations on the list are grouped, prioritised and time-bound on the basis of transparent and clear methodology. The Task Force has a role in every stage of the development of the Integrated Territorial Strategy, except in the preparatory one. The responsibilities of the TF for the preparation, monitoring and evaluation of the Strategy are time-bound to the key points for the Conceptual Stage, the Planning Stage and the Final Stage.

The Task Force is chaired by the Ministry of Regional Development and Public Works of the Republic of Bulgaria, more precisely by the Director of the Territorial Cooperation Management Directorate. It comprises representatives of administrations involved in the scope of the Integrated Strategy, as well as stakeholder organisations.

**Table 1. Members of the Task Force from the Republic of Bulgaria and the Republic of Turkey**

Institution	Subject of activity	Web page
<b>Republic of Bulgaria</b>		
Ministry of Regional Development and Public Works (Directorate "Territorial cooperation management")	<u>Chairperson of the Task Force</u> Performs the functions of the Managing Authority of the cross-border cooperation programmes under the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance	<a href="https://www.mrrb.bg/">https://www.mrrb.bg/</a>
MRDPW (General Directorate "Strategic planning and regional development programs", MRDPW South - East Region)	Performs the functions of the Managing Authority of the Operational Program "Development of the Regions" 2021-2027 and all resulting obligations and responsibilities under the regulations of the EU and the Structural and Investment Funds	<a href="https://www.mrrb.bg/">https://www.mrrb.bg/</a>
National Association of Municipalities	Representation and protection of the municipalities in front of the central government bodies: research, analysis, evaluation and development of proposals for change and improvement of the policy regarding local self-government; lobbying	<a href="https://www.namrb.org/">https://www.namrb.org/</a>
District Administration Haskovo	Implements national government in place and ensures consistency between national and local interests in regional policy	<a href="https://www.hs.government.bg/">https://www.hs.government.bg/</a>



Institution	Subject of activity	Web page
District Administration Burgas	Implements national government in place and ensures consistency between national and local interests in regional policy	<a href="https://www.bs.government.bg/">https://www.bs.government.bg/</a>
District Administration Yambol	Implements national government in place and ensures consistency between national and local interests in regional policy	<a href="https://yambol.government.bg/">https://yambol.government.bg/</a>
Road Infrastructure Agency (Regional Division Haskovo)	State road administration	<a href="http://www.api.bg/index.php/bg/">http://www.api.bg/index.php/bg/</a>
Bulgarian Chamber of Commerce (BCC)	Non-governmental organisation. Leading partner of the state in determining economic policy. Representative organisation of employers at national level	<a href="https://www.bia-bg.com/">https://www.bia-bg.com/</a>
BCC, Industrial Business Association – Yambol	Non-profit association. Voluntary economic union of companies, economic and other organisations, regardless of their form of ownership. Employers' organisation, regional representative of the Bulgarian Chamber of Commerce.	<a href="https://www.bia-bg.com/region/view/390/">https://www.bia-bg.com/region/view/390/</a>
Industrial and Logistic Park Burgas	Construction, management and development of industrial zones	<a href="https://www.industrialpark-burgas.bg/bg">https://www.industrialpark-burgas.bg/bg</a>
NGO "Club of European Initiatives - IDEA" – Yambol	Promoting direct citizen participation in the process of regional development. Creating and strengthening favorable conditions for economic and social progress, for regional development, for the development of ecology, tourism, culture, education, information technology, social and cultural activities and business relations, preservation and development of local traditions and others aimed at awareness and evaluation of local cultural identity and its diversity.	<a href="https://www.facebook.com/NGO.IDEA/about/?ref=page_internal">https://www.facebook.com/NGO.IDEA/about/?ref=page_internal</a>
Viapontica Foundation – Burgas	Non-governmental organisation operating in the public interest and established to protect Bulgarian nature – conservation of natural resources,	<a href="https://viapontica.org/bg/">https://viapontica.org/bg/</a>



Institution	Subject of activity	Web page
	change of attitudes towards protected areas and awareness of the opportunities, benefits and responsibilities of the biodiversity in Bulgaria.	
Institute for regional strategies - Burgas	Non-profit legal entity with the idea of carrying out public benefit activities aimed at the development, promotion and implementation of projects in the field of economic and infrastructural integrated development of individual regions and districts.	<a href="http://www.irsburgas.com/">http://www.irsburgas.com/</a>
<b>Republic of Turkey</b>		
Governorship of Edirne	State body responsible for both the national government and the state affairs in the province	<a href="http://www.edirne.gov.tr/">http://www.edirne.gov.tr/</a>
Governorship of Kırklareli (EU and International Relations Office)	State body responsible for both the national government and the state affairs in the province	<a href="http://www.kirklareli.gov.tr/">http://www.kirklareli.gov.tr/</a>
Municipality of Edirne (EU&International Relations Office)	Internationally oriented office at the local administration level	<a href="https://www.edirne.bel.tr/">https://www.edirne.bel.tr/</a>
Back to Nature Association – Kırklareli	Youth organisation offering realistic perspective on the tackling environmental issues and the youth rights, which deals with both environmental, human rights and livelihoods to enable sustainable life for all living beings.	<a href="http://dogayadonusdernegi.org/">http://dogayadonusdernegi.org/</a>
The Association of Promoting Tourism of Edirne	NGO that as an international platform aims to work towards the introduction of Edirne and protection of tourist sites. The goal is to get closer to the standards of accommodation in the tourism industry, services, food and beverage, training, seminars and workshops	<a href="http://ettder.org/about-us/">http://ettder.org/about-us/</a>
Kırklareli Chamber of Commerce and Industry	Main activities: protection of business interests and sharing of business experience and business interests, contact with governments, civil	<a href="https://www.chamber-commerce.net/dir/4342/Kirklareli-Chamber-of-Commerce-and-Industry-in-Kirklareli">https://www.chamber-commerce.net/dir/4342/Kirklareli-Chamber-of-Commerce-and-Industry-in-Kirklareli</a>



Institution	Subject of activity	Web page
	society, local media and the press and organizing trade fairs and events.	
Edirne Chamber of Commerce and Industry (EU and International Relations Office)	Main activities: protection of business interests and sharing of business experience and business interests, contact with governments, civil society, local media and the press and organizing trade fairs and events.	<a href="https://etsso.org.tr/">https://etsso.org.tr/</a>
Trakya University	State University, with institutions and schools located in the region of Thrace. The university manages research activities related to regional development and has international connections, especially within the Balkan network of universities.	<a href="https://www.trakya.edu.tr/">https://www.trakya.edu.tr/</a>
Kirklareli University	Kirklareli University is under the administration of the Rectorate of the University of Thrace. The university is based on extensive experience in the Faculty of Engineering.	<a href="https://www.klu.edu.tr/dil/en">https://www.klu.edu.tr/dil/en</a>
Trakya Development Agency	In order to ensure regional development, the agency carries out planning, programming and coordination operations targeting the public, private sector, universities and civil society organisations. Results-oriented projects are implemented for social and economic development in Trakya.	<a href="https://www.trakyaka.org">https://www.trakyaka.org</a>

- **Sustainability of partnerships**

The multi-level governance model involves the use of existing arrangements or the establishment of structures<sup>22</sup> (such as secretariats, associations of municipalities, etc.) or coordination mechanisms (e.g. working groups, contracts or agreements, etc.). Capacity building in multi-annual multi-level strategic planning and implementation, especially at local level, increases the role of local authorities, other sub-national authorities, economic and social partners, and civil society organisations involved in the management and implementation of ESI Funds, and helps in the long term to strengthen capacity in the field of territorial development. Strengthening cooperation between the authorities, civil society, business organisations, universities and research institutions on the priority topics of the Strategy is essential for maintaining and building capacity.

<sup>22</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/regional\\_policy/sources/docgener/studies/pdf/integrated\\_strategies/integrated\\_strategies\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/sources/docgener/studies/pdf/integrated_strategies/integrated_strategies_en.pdf)



The sustainability of the decisions taken on the basis of the Strategy is directly related to multi-level governance as a principle and driver of innovation and good practices. This requires regular stakeholder forums on topics, whether live or in a virtual environment. This includes the development of formats that address and conceptualise topics through active communication, exchange of experience and practical alliances.

## 8. METHODOLOGY FOR IMPLEMENTATION, MONITORING AND EVALUATION OF THE STRATEGY

The transformation of the measures and projects envisaged in the Strategy into real interventions will be carried out through the realisation of a Plan for the implementation of the Strategy. The Plan establishes the sequence and deadlines for implementation of the envisaged measures.

The implementation of the interventions will be carried out through:

- Selection of a Contractor to further develop and implement a pre-launched project idea (indicative project) through a competition (provide an opportunity for a balanced basis for integrated development, because their relationships and roles in the package of measures are pre-assessed)
- Financing of projects on a competitive basis according to pre-announced requirements, when the nature of the task requires an entrepreneurial initiative to be supported, ie. evaluation criteria have been developed and the ideas come from the entrepreneurs / stakeholders (they provide an opportunity for wide expression and creativity of the local entrepreneurs, whose skills the Strategy aims to develop)

The difference is related to a different level of creative freedom in the process of shaping and implementing project ideas. This will create the necessary flexibility for the Strategy to maintain its connection with the local context throughout the implementation period of the Programme. The successful implementation of the projects, along with the difficulties and challenges overcome during the process will give the necessary confidence and impetus to the development of the entrepreneurial environment in the region and will show the ability of public-private partnerships to solve important problems for local communities.

Selecting projects for the short list and determining requirements for the financing of projects on a competitive basis is a responsibility of the Task Force, which according to the Regulation is responsible for the development and implementation of the Strategy. The negotiation of the projects is in the competence of the Managing Authority of the Programme, which is responsible for the implementation of the Programme itself.

Following the successful completion of its responsibilities for the preparation and approval of the Strategy, the Task Force is transformed into a Monitoring Committee for the Implementation of the Strategy (MCIS) and becomes a part of the Monitoring Committee for the Implementation of the Programme. In this way, the partners, which according to the Regulation have the main responsibility for the development and implementation of the strategy, continue their participation in the process as participants in the MCIS.

The responsibilities of the MCIS and the Managing Authority of the Program (MA) are in line with the Regulation, the Contract for assigning the elaboration of the Strategy and the logic of



elaboration of the Strategy itself. In terms of implementation of the Strategy, MCIS and the MA are charged with the following rights and obligations:

- The MCIS actively participates in the preparation of the Strategy, selection of projects for the short list and definition of requirements for selection of projects on a competitive basis, adopts rules and criteria for monitoring and evaluation of the Strategy, monitors and gives opinions on the monitoring and adopts the periodic evaluations of the implementation of the Strategy, gives recommendations for updating the Action Plan.
- The MCIS addresses all issues affecting the quality of the implementation of the Strategy and the measures for their resolution, the progress in the implementation of the Strategy, the contribution of the Programme to address the needs and development potential of the territory, the progress of evaluations, summaries of evaluations and possible follow-up actions on their findings.
- The MCIS approves the methodology and criteria used for the selection of operations, including amendments thereto, the annual reports on the quality of the implementation of the Strategy, the Evaluation Plan and its amendments.
- The MCIS makes proposals for amendment containing a justification showing how they meet the conditions relevant to the strategy and what their expected contribution is to achieving the objectives of the strategy, according to the circumstances which gave rise to those proposals.

The Managing authority of the Programme has operational / administrative functions in relation to the Strategy:

- In terms of Strategy implementation, the Managing Authority of the Programme is responsible for assigning periodic evaluations of the Strategy implementation, updating the Action Plan, negotiating the shortlisted projects and the projects selected on a competitive basis.
- The MA assesses the amendment and its compliance with the requirements of the Strategy, and reasonably accepts or returns to clarify the proposal made within one month.
- The MA provides the Monitoring Committee in a timely manner with all information necessary for the performance of its tasks, recording and storing in an electronic system the data for each operation necessary for the purposes of monitoring, evaluation, financial management, inspections and audits, and ensuring security, integrity and confidentiality, data and user identity.

**The monitoring** aims to periodically present to the Managing Authority of the Programme and the MCIS the clearest and most accurate picture of the implementation of the Strategy. In this way, the managers of the Strategy will monitor for unforeseen circumstances and obstacles to its implementation and will be able to make adequate decisions for intervention when necessary. A set of appropriate indicators is used for this purpose.

The performance indicators are related to the immediate result / product of the project implementation and are most often measured in quantitative units (number, kilometres, monetary units, etc.)





Outcome indicators are related to the achievement of specific goals. They show the ratio between initial and achieved value and allow to assess the contribution of the Strategy to the development of the region.

The evaluation of the implementation of the Strategy provides information on the degree of achievement of the set goals and how they contribute to the integrated territorial development of the region. Its information provision is carried out through monitoring throughout the implementation of the Strategy.

Periodic evaluations provide important information related to the effectiveness, efficiency and adequacy of the Strategy. On this basis, managers can decide on appropriate change within the pre-set possibility for flexibility of the Strategy. They are implemented through annual reports on the implementation of the Strategy and a final report on the achievement of the objectives of the Strategy.

The progress made by the interventions of the Strategy is assessed on the basis of the change in pre-selected indicators.