



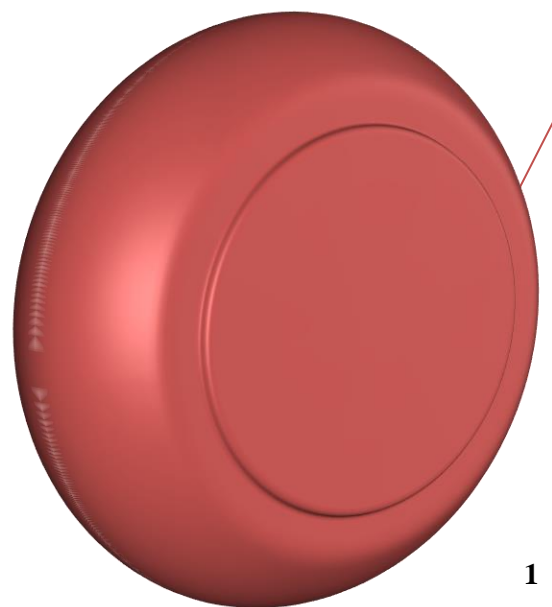
ANNUAL REPORT

ON THE COMPATIBILITY OF THE ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECTS OF THE "INTERREG-IPA CBC BULGARIA- TÜRKIYE" 2014-2020 PROGRAMME UNDER THE INSTRUMENT FOR PRE-ACCESSION ASSISTANCE (IPA II) WITH THE STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT (SEA) REPORT

2023

SUMMARY

in English



I. INTRODUCTION

The Monitoring Report is prepared in accordance with:

SEA Report of the Interreg - IPA CBC Bulgaria – Türkiye Programme 2014 – 2020.

Directive 2001/42/EC on the assessment of the effects of certain plans and programmes on the environment (referred to as the Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive or SEA Directive)

II. GENERAL INFORMATION ON THE PROGRESS OF PROGRAMME IMPLEMENTATION

During the assessment period of the present report - year 2023, one investment project has been in process of implementation, monitoring and control. The project is funded under the Third Restricted Call for Strategic Project Proposals, falling within the scope of Priority Axis 1 "Environment", Specific objective 1.2 " Improving the capacity for nature protection, sustainable use and management of common natural resources through cooperation initiatives in the cross-border area".

The subsidy contract for the implemented Strategic Project was concluded on October 9, 2020 for the total amount of 2,855,246.52 Euro, and the main activities that the project includes are: equipping and infrastructure development for Blue Growth research centers in University "Prof. Dr. Asen Zlatarov – Burgas“ and „Trakya University – Edirne“, development and implementation of common methodologies and pilot studies of water ecosystems in the regions of Burgas and Edirne, local activities for regional capacity building, including holding international conferences, meetings of stakeholders, public events, as well as activities to improve interaction between different levels of regional educational ecosystems in support of education and training for Blue Growth. In 2021, the value of the subsidy contract was changed to 3,342,273 Euro through an Addendum to the contract. The deadline for the implementation of the subsidy contract was 06.11.2023, as a result of two additional agreements concluded in 2022 and suspension of the implementation period for a period of 28 days in 2023.

III. INFORMATION ON THE MEASURES AND REQUIREMENTS FOR PREVENTION, REDUCTION AND ELIMINATION AS FULLY AS POSSIBLE OF POTENTIAL NEGATIVE EFFECTS FROM THE PROGRAMME IMPLEMENTATION

According to item I “Measures and requirements for prevention, reduction and elimination as fully as possible of potential negative effects from the Programme implementation” of the MOEW Environmental Statement №: 9-5/2014 г., the Managing Authority has incorporated within the Guidelines for Applicants under the First, Second and Third calls for proposals the following requirements:

- Each investment proposal envisaging construction works should present as an attachment to the application form (AF) a positive environmental impact assessment (EIA) required by the national legislation or a statement issued by the relevant body clearly stating that Environmental Impact Assessment is not necessary;
- All investment activities have to be in line with the relevant national legislation for the respective type of construction works (including those related to development of tourism);

- Activities as "safari" hiking, "off-routes" tracking for monitoring of rare and endangered species" are included in the lists of ineligible activities for all Priority axes (PA).

During the *application stage*, concerning the interventions planned in the Subsidy contract executed in 2023 under the Restricted Call for Strategic Project Proposal, there have been submitted the necessary documents issued by the relevant competent authorities (according to the applicable national legislation), thus ensuring that the activities within the scope of the project proposal do not require an EIA procedure, as they do not directly affect natural habitats and protected areas, and there is no possibility of a negative effect on the environment and human health.

During the *evaluation process*, the compatibility of the project proposal with the above requirements is duly checked by the assessors before being proposed and approved for funding.

After *contracting*, the project financed under the Third Restricted Call carried out a self-assessment of the expected environmental consequences of the activities envisaged in the projects in relation to the six environmental issues (air and climate; biodiversity, fauna and flora; waters; soils; population and human health; cultural/natural heritage and landscape). For the purposes of the self-assessment, the questionnaire set out in section 10.2 of the EC report was used, and the results were compared with the expected effects for the relevant Specific Objective according to the EC report.

The table below presents summary of the information on the self-assessment carried out at the final stage of implementation of the subsidy contract under the Restricted Call, completed in 2023. The information collected from the beneficiaries is categorized to an ordinal scale from 1 to 10.

SUMMARY
of the expected effects on the six environmental components
based on the answers provided by the Lead partner in the Compatibility Check Sheet

Impact	Air and climate	Biodiversity, Fauna and Flora	Water	Soil	Population and Human Health	Cultural/Natural Heritage and Landscape
	Number of projects					
Neutral (1)					1	1
Very low (2)						
Low (3)						
Distinct (4)	1					
Moderate (5)		1		1		
Considerable (6)						
Significant (7)			1			
Strong (8)						
Very strong (9)						
Extremely Strong (10)						

IV. INFORMATION ON THE MEASURES CONCERNING MONITORING AND CONTROL OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PROGRAMME

The table below provides summarized information on the level of achievement of the SEA indicators under the Programme as presented in section 10.1 of the SEA Report. The values of the indicators are in accordance with the annual implementation reports (AIR) of the INTERREG - IPA Cross-Border Cooperation Program Bulgaria - Türkiye 2014-2020 and the approved final progress reports of the projects completed in the respective years.

ID	Indicator (name of indicator)	Measure- ment unit	Target value (2023)	Annual Value								Source of data
				2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	
OI 1.1.1	Number of interventions related to risk prevention and management of natural and man-made hazards and disasters	number	10	0	0	2	6	0	5	0	0	Annual Implementation Reports

OI 1.1.2	Number of joint strategies / common guidelines, trainings, public awareness campaigns, exchange of experience for risk prevention and management of natural and man-made hazards and disasters	number	20	0	0	3	14	0	11	0	0	Annual Implementation Reports
OI 1.1.3	Population benefiting from flood protection measures (Persons)	number	402749	0	0	200000	202749	0	127625	0	0	Annual Implementation Reports
OI 1.2.1	Number of nature protected areas addressed by interventions	number	17	0	0	10	2	5	3	4	0	Annual Implementation Reports
OI 1.2.2	Number of capacity building / awareness activities related to nature protection, sustainable use and management of common natural resources	number	39	0	0	19	10	13	12	7	0	Annual Implementation Reports
OI 2.1.1	Total length of reconstructed or upgraded access roads to natural, cultural and historic tourism sites	Kilometres	7,84	0	0	0	1,0272	0	1,483	11,013	0	Annual Implementation Reports
OI 2.1.2	Total length of newly built, reconstructed or upgraded cycling routes / walking paths	Kilometres	9,88	0	0	0	0,746	0	2,240	29,742	0	Annual Implementation Reports
OI 2.1.3	Number of newly built / reconstructed facilities in / leading to touristic sites in the eligible cross-border region	number	19	0	0	0	7	0	3	11	0	Annual Implementation Reports
OI 2.1.4	Number of reconstructed / restored cultural and historical touristic sites in the eligible cross-border region	number	15	0	0	0	2	0	3	11	0	Annual Implementation Reports

Note: Reporting of the achieved values of the indicators is done with the final project progress reports. Annual performance is assessed for all completed projects in the respective year with approved final progress reports for each of them.

V. GENERAL CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

All specific measures and requirements for the prevention, reduction and as full as possible elimination of subsequent negative consequences from the implementation of the Program laid down in the Opinion on the environmental assessment of the Ministry of Environment and Waters have been duly fulfilled both during the stages of application, evaluation and selection, and during project implementation. The strategic project which has been ongoing during 2023 envisaged investment activities (supplies and works) for which the beneficiaries have provided the necessary environmental documents, issued by the relevant competent authorities (depending on the applicable national legislation). The submitted documents show that the planned activities will not affect the natural habitats and protected areas, and that there is no possibility of a negative effect on the environment and human health.

The summary and analysis of the results of the self-assessment carried out by the beneficiaries showed that the project had a *positive or neutral impact* on the environmental components. The impact on the various components of the environment is achieved or expected to be achieved as follows:

- The relatively favorable impact on the "**Air and Climate**" component in Year 2023 is achieved through the planned activities under Specific Objective 1.2 related to environmental protection. They have an indirect effect on reducing air pollution, and through the implemented soft activities, responsible behavior of society is promoted, by involving citizens in the fight against climate change.
- Regarding the "**Biodiversity, Fauna and Flora**" component, the project implemented in 2023 had an indirect positive effect, since, although it affected protected natural areas, it did not carry out direct interventions, but mainly built responsible behavior through research activities and training events for the protection and restoration of natural areas and, more specifically, water eco-systems. Through the activities carried out to develop common methodologies and models for the responsible use of natural resources, the implementation of the Strategic Project is expected to have a positive impact on the protection of biodiversity in the Black Sea in the long term.
- Regarding the "**Waters**" component, the implemented project under SO 1.2 had some positive effect. The effect spans over the ecological and chemical status of water bodies in the future, the promotion of sustainable use of water resources and the promotion of responsible public behavior by involving citizens in the sustainable use of water. The project has a strong contribution to compensate for the lack of data and information on the ecological status of aquatic ecosystems in the target region, as well as to provide a basis for the application of the common methodologies and pilot studies of aquatic ecosystems and diffuse pollution created within the framework of its implementation in the regions of Burgas and Edirne. The project also built on existing capacity to research and monitor the ecological status of local ecosystems by providing infrastructure and equipment for scientists and experts.
- Regarding the "**Soils**" component, the project implemented in 2023 has been assessed with a moderately positive effect on preserving the functionality of soil resources, due to the fact that its activities are not

directly aimed at this component, but it is expected to have a favourable effect on the promotion of responsible behavior of society, related to the protection of soil resources.

- The "**Population and Human Health**" component was not represented by the project implemented in 2023, therefore it is considered to have a neutral impact on population and human health.
- A neutral effect was reported by the project implemented in 2023 on the "**Cultural and natural heritage and landscapes**" component. The activities of the Strategic Project are not directly aimed at the considered component.

According to the recommendations provided in the environmental opinion, activities such as "safari" tourism, "off-road" trekking, intended for observation of rare and endangered species are not foreseen in the contracted projects. In addition, the realized investments are in accordance with the national legislation for the planned and implemented types of construction activities (including those related to the development of tourism, preservation of natural and cultural heritage, waste management, etc.).

All recommendations set out in the opinion on ecological assessment, prepared by the Ministry of Environment and Water of the Republic of Bulgaria, are strictly observed at every stage of application, evaluation and selection of the projects proposed for financing under the Interreg - IPA CBC Programme Bulgaria - Türkiye 2014 - 2020, and the recommendations brought to the attention of the Ministry of Regional development and Public Works with the letters of approval of the annual reports on monitoring and control of the impact on the environment and human health during the implementation of the Programme, have been taken into account in the preparation of subsequent annual reports.

Taking into account the above, a conclusion can be made that at the moment no corrective measures are necessary, since the project financed under the Third Call, which ended its implementation in 2023, is in line with the provisions of the Strategic Environmental Assessment Report and it is not expected to have a negative effect on the environment for any the six environmental issues set.