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Work Package 11

*Ex post evaluation of Cohesion Policy programmes
2007-2013, focusing on the European Regional
Development Fund (ERDF) and the Cohesion Fund
(CF)*

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Contact: David Alba

E-mail: David.ALBA@ec.europa.eu

*European Commission
B-1049 Brussels*

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Ex post evaluation of Cohesion Policy programmes
2007-2013, financed by the European Regional
Development Fund (ERDF) and Cohesion Fund (CF)
European Territorial Cooperation (Work Package 11)

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Executive Summary

The Romania-Bulgaria CBC OP has included **environmental protection** under Priority Axis 2 '*Environment- Sustainable use and protection of natural resources and environment and promotion of efficient risk management in the cross-border area*'. To date, it has funded a total of 38 projects under this theme. Its importance within the programme's menu of thematic activities is illustrated by the fact that it accounts for a 30% share of that menu (only transport is ranked higher at 38%).

The **main achievements** of the CBC programme regarding environmental protection have predominantly included development of joint strategies and procedures, purchase and use of specialised equipment to deal with environmental risks and emergency situations, training and awareness raising for various stakeholders (governmental and other public institutions, SMEs, NGOs and the general public) on specific environmental issues and emergency situations such as earthquakes and water pollution incidents that require joint, cross-border responses beyond the scope of domestic funding programmes.

The programme's **results and impacts** in terms of environmental protection have largely been indirect in that it has helped establish conditions through which environmental protection can be enhanced over time. This has been done through investments in infrastructure development in cross-border regional emergency preparedness; purchasing common equipment for measuring/monitoring environmental parameters; institutional cooperation to harmonize activities; and establishing common structures for unexpected situations, emergencies requiring rapid response/intervention programme area (e.g. transport accidents, floods, fires, disasters, etc.).

In a number of instances, project participants in our case-study indicated that there was either very little or no history of co-operation between stakeholders in their regions and that the programme acted as a **catalyst to facilitate co-operation** through project activity. Therefore, the fact that many of the supported projects exist at all can be taken as a proxy measure for enhanced co-operation within the context of the programme. In turn, the programme's role in helping to establish conditions for enhanced co-operation has been instrumental in delivering project achievements.

The CBC programme has helped alleviate various **barriers to cooperation**. 98% of projects go beyond minimum requirements regarding co-operation and 75% demonstrate all 4 criteria of joint development, implementation, staffing and financing. The programme has been instrumental in helping to facilitate partner identification in some instances, largely because of the relative absence of cross-border co-operation previously. There is now more data sharing across the border following establishment of joint management systems projects as trust has developed between partners. More generally the programme has also helped to reduce the financial constraints of project development as a consequence of its co-financing element and the dominance of centre over periphery in terms of geographical targeting of regional development support. Other barriers to cooperation are more persistent. They include cultural and language differences and legislative and administrative differences resulting in problems of 'asymmetric project implementation' in some instances.

During the 2007-13 programme **enhanced learning** has occurred via awareness raising of natural resources and environmental protection issues via projects. This has included developing and implementing joint technical solutions for specific environmental hazards and environmental protection issues. There has also been a specific learning focus on providing business sectors with knowledge to minimise negative environmental impacts and enhance their capacity for environmental management in support of sustainability. The programme has also generated 'process' learning in terms of enabling stakeholders to work together within the context of an EU funding programme which in some instances is leading to further project development by partners. This helps to embed the cooperation principle still further within the cross-border context.

Direct beneficiaries from programme support are project partners, including: National Government Ministries and Regional Authorities/Agencies (for example, the Ministry of Environment and Forestry and National Environment Agency in Romania, and the Ministry of Environment and Water and Executive Environmental Agency in Bulgaria); National and regional research institutions; Universities; Chambers of Commerce and other regional Business Associations and support centres; Non-Governmental Organisations and Civic Associations; Municipalities and networks of municipalities; County Councils; a primary school and high schools. Other beneficiaries include the target groups of specific projects including: SMEs, users of tourism services; and the general public who benefit from the implementation of joint risk and environmental management strategies in particular in localities within the cross-border area.

For some projects there is a very clear **learning focus** on transferring knowledge and capacity from project partners to specific target groups of beneficiaries; for example in relation to developing pollution control capacity on the part of businesses in the textiles industry through more effective management of wastewater treatment processes. The Priority Axis's focus on developing joint management systems for environmental protection and joint infrastructure and services to prevent the impact of natural and man-made disasters means that much of the knowledge transfer and capacity building occurs between research and practitioner partners (e.g. municipalities) in these project contexts. The scope for inter-project learning through the capitalisation of knowledge transfer and capacity building initiatives and results appears to be relatively unexplored. One notable exception is Danube WATER project which includes capitalisation of results as one of its objectives.

The prospect of **sustaining learning mechanisms and co-operation** developed through the programme being sustained in the future is dependent upon a combination of factors. Most obviously sustainability depends on whether there is an institutional will on the part of key partners to ensure that project activities continue to be resourced beyond the lifetime of funding through the CBC programme. This would appear more likely, but not necessarily guaranteed, in relation to some of the larger scale projects funded through the programme. The sustainability of learning and co-operation is also likely to be determined by the level of trust and cohesion between partners. In turn, that is likely to have been enhanced as a result of their experience of collaboration within the context of the programme.

Given that the CBC programme has no predecessor programmes, there is no history of repeat applications for the same partners for further project funding. Unless projects have clearly demonstrated added value in terms of providing joint solutions to common environmental problems it is unlikely that further support to sustain these projects would be forthcoming from exclusively domestic funding sources. Therefore, **future EU financing** is likely to be a significant factor in determining sustainability.

It is not an exaggeration to assert that the vast majority of projects financed through the programme in general and in relation to the environmental theme in particular **would not have happened without the existence of EU funding**. Participants in this study were, almost without exception, clear that the programme has had a catalytic function in enabling their projects to come to into existence and function collaboratively. The programme operates in a policy and development space which national, regional and sectoral programmes cannot occupy or replicate for reasons of purpose and design.

Assessment of the **monitoring system** shows that while programme level indicators are quantifiable, it is not possible to capture the actual impact in terms of environmental protection that project interventions are having at the programme level. This is a significant drawback of the effectiveness of the indicators as regards their efficacy in monitoring the actual results of project funding.

The **INTERACT programme** is considered to have added value to the effective functioning of the CBC programme. It is particularly valued as a mechanism for sharing ideas, identifying good practice and getting advice on technical programme management issues.

The process of **co-ordinating CBC programme objectives with those of national and regional programmes** has been extensive and has involved a range of stakeholders. Stakeholder representation from other mainstream programmes has helped to avoid overlap between these mainstream programmes and the CBC programme and ensure complementarities of interventions under the programmes. However, in practice there does not seem to be an obvious synergy (in terms of connecting project interventions funded by the CBC and mainstream programmes) for reasons of disparity of scale and focus of projects in each programme. Both the Romanian and Bulgarian Environment 2007-13 SOPs are primarily concerned with developing large-scale hard infrastructure projects to ensure compliance with relevant EU Environmental Directives within their own jurisdictions. This is quite distinct from the much smaller scale collaborative projects undertaken by the cross-border programme with its emphasis on softer outcomes associated with joint working, learning and knowledge transfer between beneficiaries.

1. Introduction

This case study is part of the ex-post evaluation of all programmes in the period 2007-2013 aiming at promoting European Territorial Cooperation (ETC), widely known as Interreg, in view of creating synergies and European value-added by eradicating internal borders and capitalizing on the existing assets of the whole territory of the Union. It is one amongst 9 case studies of programmes aiming at cross-border cooperation (Strand A of Interreg).

The purpose of the case study work in the overall evaluation is to deepen the analysis of the contribution of cross-border programmes to co-operation and to economic and social integration between European regions. This Task 2 of the overall evaluation is performed through a field analysis with a variety of programme stakeholders, that complements a first documentary analysis and an interview with Managing Authority previously carried out in Task 1 of the evaluation.

The present case study provides an assessment of the Romania – Bulgaria Cross Border Cooperation Programme 2007-2013's main achievements, the cooperation mechanisms put in place, their effects in terms of reducing barriers to co-operation and taking advantage of common opportunities. It also aims to identify the added value of such programme in comparison with mainstream programmes at play in the same area.

This case study focuses on the 'environmental protection' theme (the two other themes being 'capacity building' and 'R&D, innovation and entrepreneurship'). The programme places a particularly high priority on the environment protection theme. It is on the 6th rank of all 53 cross-border programmes in terms of budget allocated to the theme.

This report starts in Section 2 with the methodology adopted for the case study. [Annex 1](#) provides an analysis of the main features of the programme, which is helpful to understand the specific situation of the area and of the programme.

Section 3 is the core of the report. It is structured according to the evaluation questions as mentioned in the terms of reference (the order of the first two questions has been switched compared to the terms of reference). Each sub-section responds to each evaluation question in turn.

- Section 3.1 assesses what has been delivered by the programme and its impacts. It also provides an analysis of resources spent and types of activities supported (evaluation question b).
- Section 3.2 deals with impacts of the programme on cooperation practices in the area (evaluation question a).
- Section 3.3 appraises achievements in terms of learning and capacity and knowledge transferred (evaluation question c).
- Section 3.4 discusses sustainability of cooperation and learning and the extent to which these achievements are dependent on EU funding sources (evaluation question d).
- Section 3.5 discusses the issue whether the projects would have happened without existence of EU funding, if there were no prior CBC programmes (evaluation question e).

- Section 3.6 assesses the quality of the programme monitoring system (evaluation question f).
- Section 3.7 investigates the value-added of the INTERACT programme to support implementation of this programme (evaluation question g).
- Section 3.8 appraises the extent to which the objectives of this programme have been coordinated with those other regional and national programmes active on the same territory (evaluation question h).
- Section 3.9 compares this programme with other programmes in the mainstream of Cohesion policy – the Romania and Bulgaria Environment programmes - and discusses how the programmes differ in practice (evaluation question i).

1.1 Main features of the programme

The area covered by the Romania-Bulgaria Cross-Border Cooperation programme includes one of the longest borders (610km) in the EU, demarcated for 470km by the River Danube. The eligible area is located in the North of Bulgaria and the South of Romania, extending from Serbia to the Black Sea coast. **It consists of seven Romanian counties and eight Bulgarian districts**, all of which are directly located along the national border. These 15 administrative units (NUTS III level) belong to 6 regions (NUTS II level). The adjacent area of Razgrad district is eligible for programme support under the adjacency rule permitting support of up to 20% of total programme expenditure and its inclusion makes the entire eligible territory more compact.

The Managing Authority (MA) for the programme is the **Romanian Ministry of Regional Development and Public Administration**. The MA's implementation and governance functions are supported by the Bulgarian Ministry of Regional Development and Public Works. Programme governance is further assisted by representation of the Managing Authorities of the National Operational Programmes and Rural Development Programmes in both Romania and Bulgaria as members/observers in the Joint Monitoring Committee and Joint Steering Committee of the cross-border programme. This has helped to avoid overlap between the mainstream and CBC programmes and ensure complementarities of interventions under the programmes. Additionally, the Romanian Ministry of European Funds uses a reporting tool designed to cross-check data with other EU programmes financed under the Convergence Objective to avoid double financing and overlaps at Programme level.

The **area is peripheral and largely rural** with a population of 5,104,508 inhabitants of whom 3,262,807 (64%) reside in Romania, and 1,841,701 (36%) in Bulgaria. There is a distinct urban-rural split in terms of where the programme area's population lives. The split in Romania is 50/50 but in Bulgaria 2/3 of the population are urban residents while 1/3 are rural residents. The population is distinctly multi ethnic and reflects the historical background of the region. Accordingly, groups of various origins are located in the programme area including: Roma, Turks, Germans, Hungarians, Tartars, Russians, Armenians, Valachs and Macedonians. There are, however, no ethnic tensions or conflicts impacting on the socio-economic development of the programme area.

The programme belongs to the Type 4 of cross-border programmes, namely programmes covering new internal borders with low intensity of cooperation at the start of the period (as measured by the 2000-2006 cooperation index). **The context**

conditions are broadly favourable but not optimal for cross-border cooperation. The area has an intermediate history of cooperation along its internal border linked to balanced development. Institutional power is centralized and there is low connectivity in the region. The area benefited from the implementation of Phare CBC programmes between 1999-2004 although projects were evaluated as being more “border orientated” than joint cross-border in character. The programme OP notes that “*cooperation and integration between cross-border actors is still relatively inexperienced, and much remains to be done further to consolidate a spirit of partnership*”. That is an important underpinning point to note in relation to the analysis contained in the following sections of this report. In many instances, the programme has been a catalyst for increased co-operation between previously unconnected partners, leading to project achievements that would, in all likelihood, otherwise not have been delivered.

The Operational Programme is **financially large**: it has a total budget of EUR 255,189,999 million, to which the European Union contributes with an ERDF amount of EUR 213,413,977 million (this compares to an average of EUR 100 million for Strand A programmes).

Figure 1: Map of the eligible area



Figure 2 : Thematic priorities for Type 4 programmes in Strand A

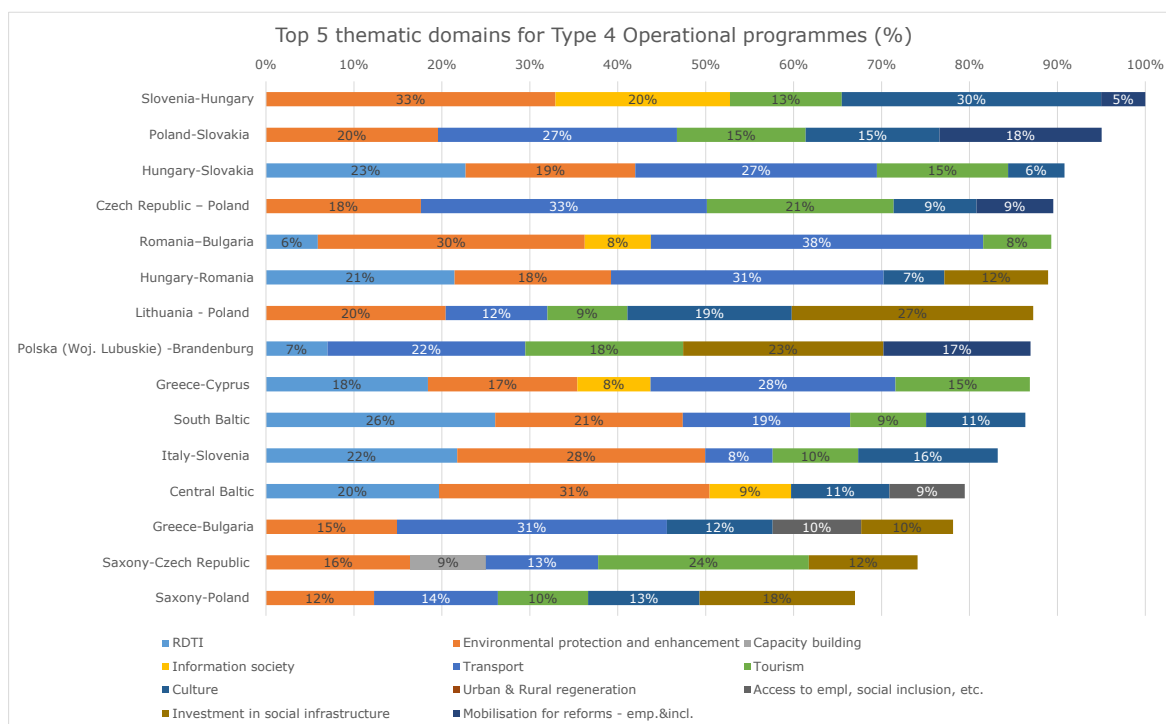


Table 1 : Context conditions in Type 4 cross-border cooperation programmes

Type	Operational programme	Border	History	Institutionalisation	Development	Institutional power	Density	Connectivity	Diversity
Type 4 New internal borders Low degree of cooperation	Central Baltic	Internal	Old	Not institutionalized	Unbalanced	Mixed	Different	Low	Average
	Czech Republic - Poland	External	Intermediate	Not institutionalized	Unbalanced	Mixed	Different	Average	Average
	Greece-Bulgaria	Internal	Intermediate	Institutionalized	Unbalanced	Mixed	High	Average	High
	Greece-Cyprus	Internal	Intermediate	Institutionalized	Unbalanced	Centralized	High	Average	Average
	Hungary-Romania	Internal	Old	Institutionalized	Balanced	Centralized	Different	Average	Average
	Hungary-Slovakia	Internal	Old	Institutionalized	Balanced	Decentralized	Different	Average	Low
	Italy-Slovenia	Internal	Old	Partly institutionalized	Balanced	Mixed	Different	Average	Average
	Lithuania - Poland	Internal	Intermediate	Institutionalized	Balanced	Mixed	Low	Average	Average
	Poland-Slovakia	Internal	Old	Institutionalized	Balanced	Decentralized	Low	Average	Low
	Polska (Woj. Lubuskie) -Brandenburg	Internal	Recent	Partly institutionalized	Unbalanced	Decentralized	Low	Average	High
	Romania-Bulgaria	Internal	Intermediate	Institutionalized	Balanced	Centralized	Different	Low	High
	Saxony-Czech Republic	External	Old	Partly institutionalized	Unbalanced	Mixed	Low	High	High
	Saxony-Poland	Internal	Intermediate	Institutionalized	Unbalanced	Mixed	Low	Low	High
	Slovenia-Hungary	Internal	Intermediate	Partly institutionalized	Balanced	Centralized	Different	Average	High
South Baltic	Internal	Recent	Partly institutionalized	Unbalanced	Mixed	Different	Low	High	

Source: ADE, based on One-page summaries

The Programme is structured along the following 3 main priorities (Table 2):

Priority 1: Accessibility - Improved mobility and access to transport, information and communication infrastructure in the cross-border area (37% of total funding)

This priority focuses on two key areas: improvements to land and river cross-border transport facilities; development of information and communications networks and services within the cross-border area. The first area's indicative operations include improving river and road transport infrastructure (facilities) having cross-border impact, and improving the public river and roads cross-border transport services. Target groups include individuals, enterprises, NGOs, public sector and community institutions and organisations.

Priority 2: Environment - Sustainable use and protection of natural resources and environment and promotion of efficient risk management in the cross-border area (35% of total funding)

This priority focuses on two key areas: development of joint management systems for environmental protection; Development of joint infrastructure and services to prevent natural and man-made crises, including joint emergency response services. The first area's indicative operations include improving nature protection and conservation of cross-border environment and improving the cross-border public awareness on environmental management and protection. The second area's indicative operations include joint natural and technological risk prevention and joint early warning and emergency response activities. Target groups for this priority include individuals, enterprises, NGOs, public sector and community institutions and organisations.

Priority 3: Economic and Social Development - Economic development and social cohesion by joint identification and enhancement of the area's comparative advantages (22% of total funding)

This priority focuses on three key areas: support for cross-border business cooperation and promotion of regional image and identity; cooperation on human resources development – joint development of skills and knowledge; and people-to-people cooperation. **The first area's** indicative operations include: support for cross-border business infrastructure development and promotion of cooperation; general networking to promote foreign investment and a positive regional identity and image; promotion of cross-border tourist networks and diversification of existing cross-border tourist service; and promotion of co-operation between universities, research institutes and businesses in the field of R&D and innovation. **The second area's** indicative operations include: support for a cross-border sharing of information on employment opportunities; development of specific training services for employment, in connection with the integrated market needs; and development of cross-border linkages and exchanges between education/training centres. **The third area's** indicative operations include: support for development of civil society and local communities; improvement of local governance; and increase of educational, cultural, health, youth and sports exchange. Target groups for this priority include individuals, enterprises, NGOs, public sector and community institutions and organisations.

**Table 2 : Priority Axes in Interreg IVA programme
Romania – Bulgaria Cross Border Cooperation Programme**

Priority Axis	EU Investment	National Public Contribution	Total Public Contribution
1. Accessibility	EUR 81 million	EUR 14 million	EUR 95 million
2. Environment	EUR 76 million	EUR 13 million	EUR 89 million
3. Economic and Social Development	EUR 48 million	EUR 8 million	EUR 56 million
4. Technical Assistance	EUR 9 million	EUR 5 million	EUR 14 million
Total	EUR 214 million	EUR 40 million	EUR 254 million

Source: Operational Programme 2007-2013

2. Methodology

The team has developed a methodology to address the evaluation questions that takes into account the general finding from Task 1, namely that the quality of indicators and information in the Operational Programmes and Annual Implementation Reports is not sufficient to robustly assess achievements of the programme. The main way to tackle this challenge lies in collecting additional qualitative information from Managing Authorities, stakeholders in the cross-border region, and from people and organisations involved in projects funded by the programme. Deepening the analysis of the allocation of resources spent and of the types of activities supported, and an analysis of projects database with a focus on the environment protection theme also contribute to an assessment of the results achieved by the programme. This helps create a qualitative picture on results achieved by programme, in the form of a narrative rather than of verified indicators.

A field visit of 5 days, from 24th to 28th August 2015, has taken place in order to collect additional documents and data and to interview Managing Authorities from the programme and from ERDF programmes, as well as some of the main stakeholders involved in programme implementation or as project beneficiaries. The selection of projects has been done before the visit through an analysis of the projects database and documentation from the programme. The cooperation of the programme Secretariat has been very helpful to organize the schedule of visits and get commitment of stakeholders. The full list of interviewees and the field visit schedule are in [Annex 3](#).

3. Answers to the evaluation questions

This section responds to the evaluation questions listed in the introduction¹. Each subsection starts with the question copied from the terms of reference and then includes the analysis of the issue treated in the evaluation question.

3.1. Achievements and impacts of the programme

EVALUATION QUESTION

b) What has been delivered via co-operation, and what is its impact (e.g. in terms of R&D and innovation, enhanced administrative capacity, or better environmental status)?

3.1.1. What has been delivered via co-operation?

According to data contained in the 2014 Annual Implementation Report the programme has funded a total of 38 projects under Priority Axis 2 '*Environment-Sustainable use and protection of natural resources and environment and promotion of efficient risk management in the cross-border area*'. The importance of the **environmental protection theme** within the programme's menu of thematic activities is illustrated by the fact that it accounts for a 30% share of that menu (only transport is ranked higher at 38%).

Key Area of Intervention 1 under Priority 2 (*Development of joint management systems for environmental protection*) has included 18 projects (9 with Romanian lead partners and 9 with Bulgarian lead partners). The total value of the contracted projects to date has been EUR 24 million (of which EUR 20 million has been contributed by ERDF). Key Area of Intervention 2 (*Development of joint infrastructure and services to prevent the impact of natural and man-made crises, including joint emergency response services*) has included 20 projects (17 with Romanian lead partners and 3 with Bulgarian lead partners). The total value of the contracted projects to date has been EUR 90 million (of which EUR 76, million has been contributed by ERDF).

The programme has funded seven strategic projects overall, two of which are environmental projects that are co-financed through Priority Axis 2. Strategic projects are distinguishable from other projects within the programme in that they are directly awarded to the eligible beneficiaries (although an application is submitted and evaluation conducted of the project), impact upon the programme's entire eligible area (7 counties in Romania and 8 districts in Bulgaria), and have a longer implementation period. The two strategic projects for the environment are:

- **Danube WATER Integrated Management (WATER project)** which has 8 Romanian and 5 Bulgarian partners and a total budget of approximately EUR 14 million. Its objective is to create a common system of management and control of water quality in the Danube in extreme conditions caused by natural and technological disasters. This project is substantially larger in terms of

¹ As mentioned in Section 1, the order of questions a) and b) has been switched in order to first provide an analysis of programme's achievements and impacts, which can be referred to when discussing impacts on cooperation more specifically.

number of partners and funding allocation than any other project supporting the environment theme.

- **Joint Risk Monitoring during Emergencies in the Danube Area Border (RISK projects)** which had 5 Romanian and 3 Bulgarian partners and a budget of EUR 11.5 million. This project aimed at improving the emergency preparedness and intervention by developing a joint integrated system for efficient monitoring and disaster consequences mitigation, according to EU standards and procedures. Its objectives were (i) the improvement of the emergency preparedness and intervention, efficient prevention, monitoring and disaster consequences mitigation and fight for combating pollution of environmental factors in the eligible area; (ii) creating of an integrated system to prevent disasters caused by hail in Dolj-Vidin border region and its extension over the all Romania-Bulgaria border region; (iii) increasing of information level of decision factors from Romania and Bulgaria directly involved in the issue of environment policies for pollution control; (iv) the air quality monitoring for sustainable protection of the environment in cross border area Romania-Bulgaria; and also (v) establishment of a joint model of flood risk sustainable management in the Danube border area.

Projects have delivered a diverse range of outputs as a result of the support of the programme. These have included the development of **joint strategies and procedures**, purchase and use of **specialised equipment** to deal with environmental risks and emergency situations (see *box 1*), **training and awareness raising** for various stakeholders (governmental and other public institutions, SMEs, NGOs and the general public) on specific environmental issues and situations (*these are discussed in more detail in the next section*).

Box 1: Specialised Equipment Delivered through the CBC Programme

"6 ambulances, 14 boats, one ship, 2 cranes, 3 decontamination vehicles, one decontamination mobile laboratory, 22 fires fighters vehicles, 43 intervention 4x4 vehicles, 10 scuba diving equipment, 14 special vehicles for winter time intervention, 15 other special vehicles for intervention, 1 off road machine, 16 vehicles equipped with equipment for intervention in case of nuclear accidents, chemical and biological, 2 backhoes, 1 mobile center investigation, analysis, monitoring and coordination of local intervention in emergency situations".

All of the purchased equipment can be used in cross border situations as necessary. However, there is no available programme data to record the extent of such cross border use in practice.

Source : AIR 2014, p.48; MA correspondence.

Annex 2 provides an overview of projects supported under the environmental protection and enhancement theme in Priority Axis 2. The examination of this portfolio of projects generates the following insights:

1. As noted above, two strategic projects have been funded in support of the environmental protection theme; '*Joint Risk Monitoring During Emergencies in the Danube Area Border*' and '*Danube WATER Integrated Management*'. These are significantly larger in scale than other funded projects (in terms of number of partners and total financial value) and also contain complex range of interlinked project activities in support of their strategic aims.
2. The cross-border dimension is clearly built into the design of projects. A previous evaluation of activities funded through the Phare programme between

1999-2004 suggests an emphasis on a “border orientation” rather than genuine cross-border cooperation in practice. That phenomenon appears to still exist to some degree and there remain predominantly practical challenges leading to asymmetric project implementation in some cases. However, a growing culture of cooperation and partnership is apparent in general within supported projects, leading to quantifiable achievements in practice.

3. Numerous projects are focused on dealing with natural disasters, environmental risks and crisis of different types (e.g. earthquake alerts; flooding; industrial pollution of water and other environmental media). A much smaller number of projects have renewable energy, habitat or other natural resource conservation as their primary focus.
4. The role of lead partner is split evenly (9:9) between Romania and Bulgaria in relation to Key Intervention Area 1 (*Development of joint management systems for environmental protection*) under which a total of EUR 24 million has been allocated between 2007-2014. However, there is a clear majority of lead partners from Romania (17:3) in relation to Key Intervention Area 2 (*Development of joint infrastructure and services to prevent natural and man-made crises, including joint emergency response services*) under which a total of EUR 90 million has been allocated between 2007-2014. It is unclear from our study as to why this disparity should exist.
5. There is a diverse range of partners involved in projects. These include national ministries, local municipalities, universities and research institutes, and environmental NGOs. The number of partners varies from 2 to 13 depending on the spatial scale and complexity of the project. In some instances there has been no history of collaboration between partners prior to embarking on their funded projects.

The 2007-2013 CBC programme is the first of its type between Romania and Bulgaria and reflects the relatively recent accession to the EU by both countries (although there has been previous collaboration between both member states through the Phare programme between 1999-2004). **The establishment of two strategic projects has been useful in concentrating programme resources on priority activities designed to generate added value.** These projects provide an excellent illustration of the way in which the programme has helped to create conditions for collaborative action leading to tangible and intangible achievements. However, that has had to be balanced with the challenges of making sure that a substantial amount of programme funding devoted to these strategic projects is allocated and claimed timeously to ensure effective financial management of the programme in line with Commission requirements. At the same time, projects have also been developed as bottom-up collaborations between a smaller number of partners in other instances.

An overarching finding of this study is that programme-level indicators relating to Priority Axis 2 are insufficiently sophisticated to capture project achievements in relation to delivering environmental protection and enhancing environmental status. This can be seen from Table 3 which shows that these indicators focus on outputs rather than results or impacts. The implications of this for evaluation are discussed in the next section which considers impact in more detail.

Table 3 : Outputs and results of Romania-Bulgaria Cross-Border Cooperation Programme in environment

Environment	Outputs	Target	Value
	Number of projects developing joint management systems for environmental protection	30	18
	Number of projects raising awareness on environmental protection and management	50	44
	Number of projects contributing to risk prevention in the cross-border area	10	24
	Number of projects contributing to joint early warning and emergency response to risk	10	22
	Results		
	Number of joint management systems implemented	20	23
	The extent to which the eligible area is covered by awareness raising campaigns (%)	70	100
	Number of people benefiting from awareness raising activities on environmental protection	2.5m	5m
	The extent to which the Danube is covered by joint flood prevention systems in the cross-border area (%)	70	100
	The extent to which the eligible area is covered by joint risk prevention systems (%)	30	100
	The extent to which Danube is covered by joint early warning emergency activities against flooding (%)	70	100
	Number of partnerships created for early warning and emergency response activities	10	57

3.1.2. What is the impact of the programme?

As can be seen from Table 1 in the preceding section, there is a significant programme design issue that makes it difficult to evaluate the impact of the programme in practice using these matrices. In common with most, if not all, other EU cross-border co-operation programmes, these indicators are exclusively focused on **outputs** (*what the funding does*) rather than **impacts** (*what difference it makes*). That is perfectly rational from a technical-managerial perspective, but not from a strategic perspective. It makes it virtually impossible to use these indicators in isolation to say anything meaningful about the impact of the programme in terms of environmental protection and enhanced environmental status. Indeed, one might argue that this is not the function of these indicators in any case because they are predominantly designed show evidence of collaboration rather than specific environmental impacts. The underlying programme assumption is that positive environmental impacts will follow from these collaborations.

Assessment of programme impact is therefore a much more imprecise process, dependent upon drilling down beyond the surface of these programme level indicators to the sphere of the projects themselves. In that context, it is clear that the programme has had a variety of valuable hard impacts in relation to the practical

application of systems and procedures as well as softer impacts in terms of establishing collaborative relationships both within the two regions and, importantly, across the border.

The following achievements were identified by senior Ministry officials involved in territorial co-operation policy and programme management as resulting from the CBC programme:

- **Investments in infrastructure development** in cross-border regional emergency preparedness;
- **Purchasing common equipment** for measuring/monitoring environmental parameters, i.e. emission levels, water purity analysis of soil and water samples etc., and joint assessment of results;
- **Institutional cooperation to harmonize activities** in the field of Danube River flood prevention and protection of air, soil and water quality;
- **Establishing common structures for unexpected situations, emergencies requiring rapid response / intervention programme area** (e.g. transport accidents, floods, fires, disasters, etc.);
- **Institutional cooperation** (e.g. environmental protection agencies, administrations of protected areas) to maintain the sustainability of ecosystems and natural environment in common, cross-border approach and integrated networking; development of the joint/correlated management plans for protected areas;
- **Joint campaigns to raise public awareness for environmental protection and nature-friendly behavior**; joining conferences, workshops, exhibitions;
- **Institutional cooperation to harmonize activities and implement joint measures in the Black Sea shore protection** and rehabilitation and reducing pollution loads in the Black Sea;
- **Preparation of studies and plans** for joint disaster early warning, control and emergency management, emphasizing the sharing of best practices; preparing emergency plans and joint disaster management.

3.2. Impacts of the programme on cooperation

EVALUATION QUESTION

a) To what extent has co-operation been enhanced? What barriers to co-operation have been removed? What is the evidence for the contribution of Interreg programmes?

3.2.1 To what extent has co-operation been enhanced?

The overarching objective of the programme is to encourage and facilitate co-operation between stakeholders in the two regions. Mechanisms to ensure co-operation are built into the design of the programme through the specific project selection criteria of 'joint development; 'joint development', 'joint implementation', joint staffing' and joint financing': at least two of these criteria must be evident in any project selected for funding. In practice, 75% of supported projects across the entire programme have met all of these criteria according to the programme's Interim Evaluation (Ernst & Young, undated).

With regard to the environment theme, there is a very strong emphasis on co-operation in order to meet the objectives of Priority Axis 2. This is particularly evident in relation to Objective 1 (*to ensure effective protection and use of the area's natural assets by co-ordinated joint management systems*) and the extent of that co-operation can be quantified as, according to the 2014 AIR, there are 18 projects developing joint management systems for environmental protection and 14 of these systems in implementation.

Similarly for Objective 3 of Priority Axis 2 (*focusing on joint preventive actions and emergency response services throughout the border area*) there is quantifiable evidence of enhanced co-operation. Specifically, through the fact that five of the six programme indicators relating to this objective focus on joint aspects of risk management relating to environmental hazards and record significant levels of activity in relation to each of these aspects. Specifically, these indicators and their achieved values include: number of projects contributing to joint early warning and emergency response to risk (22); extent to which the Danube is covered by joint flood prevention systems in the cross border area (100%); extent to which the eligible area is covered by joint risk prevention systems (100%); extent to which the Danube is covered by joint early warning emergency activities against flooding (100%); number of partnerships created for early warning and emergency response activities (57).

In a number of instances, project participants in our case-study indicated that there was either very little or no history of co-operation between stakeholders in their regions and that the programme acted as a catalyst to facilitate co-operation through project activity. Therefore, the fact that many of the supported projects exist at all can be taken as a proxy measure for enhanced co-operation within the context of the programme. One interviewee suggested that without the cross-border cooperation programme "*the real cooperation will remain only at the ministries' level and for some NGOs*".

The projects highlighted in boxes 2 and 3 below provide good examples of how the programme has encouraged cross border cooperation by helping to identify new partners to work with and developing joint strategic actions.

Box 2: Joint actions for the management of emergency situations in case of hydro-meteorological events and accidental water pollutions – JAMES

This was a 30 months project led by Giurgiu County Council, Romania (GCC) with Civil Protection and Fire General Directorate, Ruse, Bulgaria (CPF) as the partner. Its total value was EUR 4.717.915 (of which EUR 4,001,735.71 was contributed by ERDF).

The project's key operations involved:

- Elaboration of joint detailed maps and data bases indicating natural and technological risks, and land use for regional planning authorities, environmental agencies and emergency services;
- Joint disaster control studies, exchanges of information on issues of mutual interest, exchanges of experience and knowledge in the field of efficient risk prevention and management in the cross-border area;
- Creation and/or harmonizing of joint flood forecast signalling systems;
- Joint training (including bilingual skills) for staff involved in fast responding to emergency/risk actions.

The project was successfully implemented and the interviewed project representative considered that this would not have been possible without the co-operation between the authorities involved in Romania and Bulgaria. The programme was important in facilitating cross-border cooperation:

"The project brought us together because if I found it so hard to find a partner in Bulgaria to do the project with, you can imagine that the cooperation doesn't exist. So they need to do projects, to develop in emergency situations, but we didn't think to do it together". (Project representative, case-study interview).

The sustainability of that co-operation is evidenced by the fact that further projects are being developed for submission through the CBC successor 2014-20 programme by the same partners.

Source: Project Interview.

Box 3: Improvement of the capacity of the public administrations in Ruse-Giurgiu Euroregion for better joint risk management, prevention and environment protection.

This project involved a partnership between the Municipalities of Ruse and Giurgiu which was implemented over 18 months between 2010 and 2012 and which had an overall budget of EUR 595,945 (EUR 505,481 from ERDF). Its overall purpose was to provide the necessary conditions for effective risk management, prevention and environmental protection in the cross-border area by developing a joint information database for planning and pursuing a common crisis management policy.

Specific objectives included:

- Creating the information background for effective risk management and prevention by elaborating a methodology for assessment and implementation of field studies for the creation of 3 digital registers with profiles of critical infrastructure and assessment of preventive measures in crisis situations within the cross-border area;
- Improving the capacity of the public administrations and the responsible institutions in the region to plan and pursue a joint policy for effective risk management through organization of specific training courses and elaboration of a common strategy for crisis management, calamities and emergency cases along with an Action Plan with indicative measures.

Project results included:

- Establishing information conditions for a risk management strategy;
- Improved strategic capacity to implement a common crisis management policy;
- Raised public awareness about the common crisis management policy.

Source: Project documentation provided by Partner Organisation.

Although difficult to precisely calibrate the extent to which cooperation has been enhanced in all project cases, it seems clear that, for a great many of these projects, that has happened to a significant degree as indicated by joint project outputs and associated processes. It is equally clear from project interviews, such as that cited in box 2 above, that the programme has been instrumental in enhancing the conditions for cooperation which serve as a basis for these outputs and processes.

3.2.2. What barriers to co-operation have been removed?

A recurring theme in our discussions with project partners in particular was the existence of significant barriers to co-operation between Romanian and Bulgarian partners. Several of these barriers are acknowledged in the Operational Programme. Some of these barriers are interlinked to some extent and not all relate to every project. One such barrier is **partners on one side of the border not having readily identifiable partners on the other with which to co-operate**. The programme has been instrumental in helping to facilitate partner identification in some instances (see box 2 above).

Barriers have also included **a reluctance to share data** (an essential pre-requisite for joint management systems relating to various emergency situations) due to concerns over intellectual property rights and other sensitivities. This has been

overcome in a number of the joint management systems projects as trust has developed between partners.

More generally the programme has also helped to reduce the **financial constraints of project development** as a consequence of its co-financing element and the **dominance of centre over periphery** in terms of geographical targeting of regional development support.

Other barriers to cooperation are more persistent. They include **cultural and language differences** and **legislative and administrative differences** resulting in problems of 'asymmetric project implementation' in some instances, especially in relation to environmental protection initiatives for pollution control on either side of the border.

3.2.3 What is the evidence for the contribution of Interreg programmes?

The main evidence for the contribution of the CBC programme to enhancing cooperation comes from the programme's Interim Evaluation which states that:

"98% of the selected projects go beyond the minimum requirements regarding cooperation and 75% are respecting all the four criteria of joint development, implementation, staffing and financing. However there is a need to further clarify the cooperation requirement" (Interim Evaluation, (undated) p.4).

That, together with evidence of cooperation demonstrated by the projects engaging in this case-study, indicates the significant contribution of the programme in encouraging cross-border cooperation.

3.3. Impacts on learning, knowledge transfer and capacity building

EVALUATION QUESTION

c) What learning has been generated during the implementation of the CBC programme? Who has benefited? From which stakeholders to which other stakeholders has knowledge and capacity been transferred?

3.3.1 What learning has been generated during the implementation of the CBC programme?

Learning on the part of institutional beneficiaries and specific target groups has been an important feature of the programme in general. With regard to the environment protection theme such learning has been generated by projects in various ways. Some projects have sought to **raise awareness of natural resources and environmental protection issues** in their regions. See for example, **Step by Step Towards a Nature-Friendly Behaviour and Increased Environmental Protection in Calarasi-Silistra Cross Border Area**, which sought to increase awareness of environmental protection via effective resource and waste management and training for eco-friendly solutions for business development; and **Nature Around Us – a Joint Programme for Non-Formal Environmental Education in the Districts of Dobrich, Bulgaria and Constanta** which aimed to improve knowledge of biodiversity in the region, ensure proper training techniques and environmental awareness of teachers in the region, increase awareness of environmental problems in the region, support green actions of local groups, and improve cross border cooperation in environmental protection. Box 4 outlines the focus and project results

of **The Green Gold of the Danube**, a good example of a project with a strong emphasis on awareness raising for specific target groups.

Box 4: The Green Gold of the Danube

This project was led by the Community Cultural Centre "Nikola Jonkov Vaptsarov 1873" based in Tutrakan, Silistra (Bulgaria) with participation from The Museum of Gumelinta Civilization (Oltenita, Calarasi) (Romania) and Silistra District Administration. It was implemented over 18 months between September 2011 and March 2013 with a total budget of EUR 863,514 (EUR 732,432 from ERDF).

It aimed to improve knowledge of and attitude towards biodiversity conservation along the Danube amongst different stakeholders from Tutrakan, Silistra, Kalarasi and Oltenita. All the events and products of the project were created and conducted with the direct participation of the target groups (teachers in kindergarten and schools, businesses, administration)

Project Results

- kindergarten teachers from Tutrakan and Oltenita created colouring books and a puzzle;
- scientists; NGOs and professionals from both sides of the Danube created and published a popular encyclopaedia on nature conservation along the Danube;
- young photographers and artists from Tutrakan and Oltenita created pictures and conducted exhibitions;
- new songs were created, recorded and performed;
- six festivals devoted to nature conservation were conducted on both sides of the river, sign boards were produced and installed in the partnering institutions (the Cultural Center in Tutrakan and the Museum in Oltenita); a multimedia on DVD was produced and distributed with all project products;
- Around 50 events were conducted with more than 4500 direct participants;
- The project events and results were publicised in more than 20 media publications.

In order to achieve these results the two partner organizations were equipped with relevant computers, printers, scanners, cameras, multimedia projects, furniture and boats, folklore costumes.

All results are uploaded on the project website <http://greengoldofdanube.com>

The most important result of the project is the establishment of the partnerships which have continued beyond the project's lifespan.

Source: Documentation provided by Project Lead Partner.

A significant number of projects have focused on **developing and implementing joint technical solutions for specific environmental hazards and environmental protection issues**. For example, **Common Strategy to Prevent the Danube's Pollution, Technological Risks with Oil and Oil Products**, a joint project by the National Research & Development Institute for Gas Turbines COMOTI (Romania) and the University of Ruse to prevent pollution of the Danube with oil products via a common strategy and implementation of technical solutions and a

common structure for crisis management. Total funding for the project was EUR 562,601.18, of which EUR 477,198.33 was contributed by ERDF.

Other projects have had a specific learning focus on providing specific business or industrial sectors with **knowledge to minimise negative environmental impacts and enhance their capacity for environmental management** in support of sustainability. A good example of this type of project is shown in Box 5.

Box 5: Improved awareness of the Cross-Border Tourism Cluster on Environmental Management and Protection

This project ran for 18 months between April 2012 and October 2013. It was led by CCI DOBRICH (Bulgaria) and included 2 other partners EICT EUREKA (Bulgaria) and MARE NOSTRUM (Romania). Its total budget was EUR 455,654.82

The project's objectives were to:

- **promote** sustainable exploitation of the natural resources of the cross border region Constanta – Dobrich;
- **educate** the tourism cluster and the consumers of tourist services in the regions of Dobrich and Constanta s about the need for sustainable exploitation of the natural resources;
- **introduce** to the tourism cluster methods and systems for environmental management and protection (EMAS and Eco Label).

The project generated a variety of learning via its educational objective. Specifically, SMEs capacity regarding sustainable development, environmental protection and combating climate change was enhanced by:

- establishing a **curriculum** for sustainable development of the cross border region for the tourism cluster;
- **creating a teaching tool and cd** on sustainable development;
- creating a system for **online distance training**;
- holding **two day seminar** on sustainable development;
- facilitating a cross border **cluster eco network**;
- exchange of **good practices**;
- establishing a system for **online consulting**.

Similarly, learning for the tourism cluster for certification of EMAS and Eco labelling was generated by the following means:

- **curriculum for experts** on eco label and EMAS;
- **five days training for experts** on eco label and EMAS;
- **two day seminar for the tourism cluster** on awareness raising on eco label and EMAS;
- **handbook for certification** with eco label and EMAS for experts and the tourism cluster.

This project provides a good illustration of how the CBC funding for a project can have indirect impacts on environmental protection and enhanced environmental status by facilitating target group learning leading to the application of measures designed to enhance their environmental performance, and by extension, that of the region as a whole.

Source: Project Presentation

Overall, a diverse range of **strategies, monitoring tools, procedures** and **events** have been developed and implemented to capture and communicate specific types of learning in relation to the contexts of issues addressed in particular projects. These range from **complex integrated management systems** (see for example in the case of project 161, Danube WATER Integrated Management detailed in Box 6 below) to the development of a **joint action plan on crises in Ruse-Giurgiu Euroregion** (Improvement of capacity of the public administrations in Ruse-Giurgiu – see Box 3) and **environmental partnerships and festivals** (The green gold of the Danube – see Box 4 above).

The programme has also generated 'process' learning in terms of enabling stakeholders to work together within the context of an EU funding programme which in some instances is leading to further project development by partners. This helps to embed the cooperation principle still further within the cross-border context.

Box 6: Danube WATER Integrated Management

This is one of the two strategic projects focused on the environment theme funded through the cross border programme. The project was led by the Romanian Ministry of Environment and Climate Change and involved 13 partners in total including national Environment Agencies, Universities and National Institutes for nuclear research and hydrology research. The project was implemented between July 2012 and June 2014. It had an overall budget of EUR 13,751,025.58 (of which ERDF contributed EUR 11,663,619.9)

The project had a particular focus on integrating water management and environmental technologies into policymaking and building consensus across stakeholder and sectoral perspectives, with particular emphasis on disasters prevention.

Pilot projects and integration of different methodologies has helped to increase 'know-how' on the part of stakeholders and contributed to implementation of EU legislation including the Water Framework, Flood and Groundwater Directives, as well as enhancing stakeholder knowledge regarding the Danube Green Corridor. Two technologies for nuclear waste cleaning have also been developed which diminish the risk of environmental pollution from this type of waste.

Source: Project Interview

3.3.2 Who has benefited?

The programme has funded a diverse range of projects under the environmental protection theme resulting in benefits for a wide range of stakeholders. The Priority Axis 2 has a specific focus on the development of joint management systems for environmental protection and joint infrastructure and services to prevent the impact of natural and man-made disasters. Therefore, arguably the most important beneficiaries are the 2 million citizens who have had their awareness raised regarding environmental protection directly as a consequence of project interventions. More generally, and less tangibly, citizens within the regions where joint solutions to manage environmental risks and natural disasters of various kinds have been deployed are also beneficiaries of these project activities even though the outcomes of these activities may be hard to quantify.

The projects that were included in the focus group for this study provide a useful indication of the range of direct and indirect beneficiaries of initiatives supported by the Cross-Border Programme. For example:

Businesses through a project titled **Renewable Energies – Tool for Preventing and Combating Climate Change, Economic Growth and Social Welfare** with the objectives of increasing the awareness of entrepreneurs, public authorities and the population of the necessity to reduce pollution and prevent climate change for economic and social welfare and developing joint initiatives to enable target groups to save energy. The project was led by the Romanian Association for Technology Transfer and Innovation (Dolj) and partners included; Cross Border Association Equilibrium Environment (Dolj) Regional Development Agency and Business Centre 2000 - Montana, (Montana) Balkan Civic Coalition, (Vidin) and "Euroregion Pleven – Olt", (Pleven). The project budget was EUR 291,533.51 (of which EUR 247,278.72 was contributed by ERDF).

Textile industry SMEs interested in improving their management of waste water treatment processes to minimise the risk of environmental pollution incidents and improve their economic sustainability through a project titled Integrated System of Monitoring and Controlling Waste Water, the Quality and Security of Textile Products Commercialized in Romania and Bulgaria. The lead partner was the National Research & Development Institute for Textiles and Leather (Bucharest) and other partners included the Academy of Economic Studies (Bucharest), Business Support Centre for Small and Medium Enterprises (Ruse) and Ruse Chamber of Commerce and Industry. The overall budget was EUR 722,280.51 (of which EUR 612,638.32 was contributed by ERDF).

Users of tourism services in the project area and the project partners (chamber of commerce, cultural heritage institute and a non-governmental organisation) for a project titled **Improved Awareness of Cross Border Tourism Cluster and Environmental Management and Protection** led by the Chamber of Commerce and Industry (Dobrich) with partners including the European Institute for Cultural Tourism EUREKA (Dobrich) Mare Nostrum, (Constanta). The overall budget for the project was EUR 455,653.82 (of which EUR 386,485.56 was contributed by ERDF).

Examination of the profile of project partners relating to the environmental protection indicates that there are several distinct categories of direct beneficiaries. They include:

- National Government Ministries and Regional Authorities/Agencies;
- National and regional research institutions;
- Universities;
- Chambers of Commerce and other regional Business Associations and support centres;
- Non-Governmental Organisations and Civic Associations;
- Municipalities and networks of municipalities;
- County Councils;
- Primary school and high schools.

It is evident that the range of beneficiaries from projects relating to the environmental protection theme is therefore extensive.

3.3.3. From which stakeholders to which other stakeholders has knowledge and capacity been transferred?

Knowledge and capacity transfer from and to specific stakeholders inevitably varies from project to project. For some projects there is a very clear focus on transferring knowledge and capacity from project partners to specific target groups of beneficiaries; for example in relation to the project mentioned earlier regarding developing pollution control capacity on the part of businesses in the textiles industry through more effective management of wastewater treatment processes. In that case, knowledge is being transferred primarily from a specialised research institution to other partners and on to businesses in the sector. Another project works with children on a cross-border basis to enhance their appreciation of nature and environmental protection so there is partner to target beneficiary group knowledge transfer and capacity building in that context as well as peer to peer knowledge exchange between beneficiaries.

The Priority Axis's focus on developing joint management systems for environmental protection and joint infrastructure and services to prevent the impact of natural and man-made disasters means that much of the knowledge transfer and capacity building occurs between partners in these project contexts. That was also identified as a direction of learning transfer by the representative of **Improved Awareness of Cross Border Tourism Cluster and Environmental Management and Protection** focusing on awareness raising of the tourism cluster in the project's area of operation.

More generally, it is worth noting that the scope for inter-project learning through the capitalisation of knowledge transfer and capacity building initiatives and results appears to be relatively unexplored. One notable exception is **Danube WATER** project which includes capitalisation of results as one of its objectives. That is something that has occurred in other CBC programmes (for example, the France-UK-Channel programme) and such an approach may further enhance the transfer of knowledge to a wider range of interested stakeholders within the region.

3.4. Sustainability of learning and cooperation

EVALUATION QUESTION

d) What is the likely future for such learning mechanisms and co-operation? Will its sustainability depend on future EU financing?

3.4.1. What is the likely future for such learning mechanisms and co-operation?

The prospect of learning mechanisms and co-operation developed through the programme being sustained in the future is dependent upon a combination of factors.

Most obviously sustainability depends on whether there is an **institutional will on the part of key partners to ensure that project activities continue to be resourced beyond the lifetime of funding through the CBC programme**. This would appear more likely, but not necessarily guaranteed, in relation to some of the larger scale projects funded through the programme. A number of these projects have established monitoring methodologies (for example relating to flooding and earthquakes) which have significant practical applications in terms of managing and responding to environmental risks and impacts from man-made and natural disasters.

The 2014 AIR highlights three projects that directly address environmental needs and challenges faced by the Danube region (Danube WATER integrated management; RISK Project Joint Risk Monitoring during Emergencies in the Danube Area Border; and Danube Cross-border system for Earthquakes Alert) the first two of which are the only strategic projects in Priority Axis 2 and which have substantially larger funding packages than other projects supported through that Axis. Danube WATER has capitalisation of results as a project outcome and that is one important way to promote further dissemination of learning mechanisms and co-operation amongst project partners. It has also established processes for 'real-time' monitoring data which is accessed by stakeholders via an information portal. Our interview with project partners indicated that there is an appetite on the Romanian side of the project to continue to use and develop the project further. However, it is unclear whether Bulgarian partners in particular will have the financial capacity to continue to service the project with data and contribute to its further development.

The sustainability of learning and co-operation is also likely to be determined by the level of trust and cohesion between partners. The co-operative nature of the Cross-Border Programme is an intrinsic driver for enabling different partners to work together on a cross-border basis to arrive at joint solutions for common problems. For some partners, the development of collaborative partnership relationships through the programme is considered by them to act as an important basis for sustaining and further developing learning mechanisms beyond the confines of the current CBC programme. Some participants in the current study indicated that their project partnerships established through the 2007-2013 programme are developing projects that build upon the achievements of their 2007-2013 funded projects. If and when these projects are successful, they should represent an avenue for the continuing sustainability of learning and co-operation gained through the current programme.

3.4.2. Will its sustainability depend on future EU financing?

Given that the CBC programme has no predecessor programmes, there is no history of repeat applications for the same partners for further project funding. As such, unless projects have clearly demonstrated added value in terms of providing joint solutions to common environmental problems it is unlikely that further support to sustain these projects would be forthcoming from exclusively domestic funding sources. Therefore, future EU financing is likely to be a significant factor in determining sustainability.

The conclusion is that (perhaps with the exceptions of the two strategic projects) the sustainability of learning and co-operation mechanisms generated by the majority of environmental projects will depend on future EU financing (for reasons discussed more fully in the next section).

3.5. Significance of Interreg programme

EVALUATION QUESTION

e) If there were no prior CBC programmes, would the projects co-financed through the programme have happened without the existence of EU funding?

It is not an exaggeration to assert that the vast majority of projects financed through the programme in general and in relation to the environmental theme in particular would not have happened without the existence of EU funding. This is especially so

given the relatively limited history of cross-border cooperation between the two countries that the programme has helped to overcome.

The underpinning rationale for the CBC programme is to overcome the natural and historical barriers that have traditionally impeded co-operation between the two regions (the River Danube; cultural and language differences). Participants in our study were, almost without exception, clear that the programme has had a catalytic function in enabling their projects to come into existence and function collaboratively. Even for projects that would have happened without EU support, the intensity and quality of that co-operation would have been considerably lower:

"[I]t's very difficult, even for preparing good meetings for exchanging know-how, exchanging ideas....You need to harmonise the countries, even the culture, even the difficulties of overlooking the languages because it's very difficult to understand certain scientific definitions in different languages. So even here you need harmonisation. So working over these discrepancies is very important and couldn't be done by your own [national] funding." (Project representative interview).

The significance of the CBC programme has been in creating an opportunity – underpinned by joint project selection criteria – for regional development actors within both the Romanian and Bulgarian jurisdictions to develop a dialogue and solutions to environmental problems of common interest. In that regard, the programme operates in a policy and development space which national and sectoral programmes cannot occupy or replicate for reasons of purpose and design. Closely related to that is the important contribution that the programme makes in enabling projects to be developed within the border region of each country. Several participants in our study remarked that this served as a useful counterpoint to mainstream national development programmes which focused more on geographically central areas rather than on the border regions. This point was also made by the MA interviewee, who stated:

"The border area is constantly having a lower degree of development than the central core of Romania and Bulgaria. I think without cross-border cooperation programmes, everything that would be done in mainstream programmes, the risk exists that the central area would get most of the action and the border areas would remain at the same level of development. This would be the case if we stuck to the mainstream programmes only".

The significance of the programme is particularly evident in relation to the two strategic projects given both their large scale and focus. In the case of Danube WATER it has helped facilitate a process of knowledge capitalization drawing on the results of the project which creates added value for capacity building in the fields of intervention. The programme's significance is further reinforced in relation to the examples of joint management systems established as a result of funding.

3.6. Quality of monitoring system

EVALUATION QUESTION

f) Which programmes have the best monitoring systems and which have the worst?

The Programme uses a relatively small number of core indicators to monitor project activity in relation to the environmental protection theme. These reflect the joint nature of programme interventions in relation to Priority Axis 2 and provide information on Programme outputs and results in that context as indicated in Table 1. However, there are no impact indicators associated with the environmental protection and enhancement theme (or indeed in relation to the programme as a whole). This is in contrast to some other programmes (for example, the Interreg IVA Northern Ireland, Border Region of Ireland and Western Scotland programme) where impact indicators are in evidence. Thus, while the indicators that do exist are readily quantifiable, it is not possible, at programme level at least, to capture the actual impact in terms of environmental protection and enhancement that project interventions are having.

From one perspective the decision to ignore impact indicators suggests a weakness of the monitoring framework, especially as at least one project is able to provide impact data in relation to the environmental protection component of its activities (project 129). On the other hand, the decision reflects the difficulty in attributing direct causality to project interventions in relation to environmental protection within relatively short timeframes. As discussed earlier in this report, the prime function of these indicators appears to be to help facilitate types of joint action relating to the environment theme from which it is assumed (but not formally monitored by the programme) that environmental protection benefits will flow.

There are two main components to the monitoring system used by the Programme. The first of these is the **Management Information System – European Territorial Cooperation (MIS-ETC)** to enable data collection and monitoring at both programme and project levels during the implementation phase. This system is designed to provide the Programme's competent bodies (Monitoring and Joint Steering Committees, Managing Authority, Certifying Authority, Audit Authority, Joint Technical Secretariat) with an effective practical tool for monitoring purposes. The second element is the **Joint Monitoring Committee** which, together with the Managing Authority, is responsible for monitoring Programme implementation in line with sound financial management principles.

The main sources of information regarding progress towards programme objectives are programme implementation reports and project progress reports. These are supplemented by on-the-spot monitoring visits to projects which are generally undertaken by the Joint Technical Secretariat and occasionally by the Managing Authority.

Although the MIS-ETC is in place its functionality is limited as a reporting tool according to a finding of the programme's mid-term evaluation. This is because of its inability to generate reports that are adequate for the information needs of Programme stakeholders, leading to greater workloads for the MA, National Authorities, JTS and Certifying Authority with the potential to create bottlenecks in the financial circuit of the programme (JTS interview). For example, the Bulgarian National Authority (NA) has access to the MIS-ETC but without the functionality to enable it to generate reports. This results in the NA requiring information about final payments to

projects from the JTS at project closure stage in order to make final payments of Bulgarian national co-financing to Bulgarian beneficiaries.

The MA interviewee commented that "the MIS-ETC has improved with a reporting tool from Oracle (APEX) which can help the advanced users to build different kind of reports with the data from the MIS-ETC data base. The MIS-ETC is fully functional and operational at all levels, being updated with many functionalities in order to help MA and CA in processing the project and programme data."

3.7. Value-added of INTERACT

EVALUATION QUESTION

g) What has been the added value of the INTERACT programme to the effective functioning of the CBC programme?

The INTERACT programme is considered by interviewees representing the MA and JTS to have added value to the effective functioning of the CBC programme. One example cited by the MA related to guidance provided on the use of flat rates for simplified cost options for 2014-20; a procedure that was new to the organisation. Drawing on INTERACT's databases has been helpful in resolving and clarifying other issues also. For example, in 2014 staff in the programme management organisations attended meetings and events relating to lessons learned from the ex-ante evaluation of the Cross Border Cooperation Programmes 2014-2020; Interreg Communication, antifraud measures, first level control, the irregularities in Interreg programmes, programme closure 2007-2013, preparing the next programming period, focus on indicators, and communication activities (AIR, 2014). A Bulgarian Programme representative stated that:

*"Adding value consists not only, but predominantly in **sharing ideas**. The Programme appears to be a hub for exchange of information and best practices among cooperation programmes. Thus, project results are made more visible. The services, seminars and advice help by all means streamline the work of the CBC programme, allowing it to devote more time and energy to projects' elaboration and implementation."*

3.8. Coordination with national and regional programmes

EVALUATION QUESTION

h) To what extent were the programme objectives coordinated with those of national and regional programmes? Can synergies be objectively evaluated?

3.8.1. To what extent were the programme objectives coordinated with those of national and regional programmes?

The underpinning rationale for the programme is to encourage cross-border solutions for common problems. As such, that cross-border focus makes it unique amongst national and regional territorial development programmes given that such programmes support initiatives exclusively within national jurisdictions at various spatial scales. It was noted during interviews conducted for this study and in the content analysis of programme documentation that the border region covered by the CBC programme experiences specific challenges of development and environmental protection that demand joint action and management to maximise their efficacy and

impact. These challenges are exacerbated by the physical and other barriers discussed previously.

The overarching strategic context for development of the CBC programme and other national and regional EU supported programmes is comprised of the EU's regulatory framework on Community Funds management², key EU principles and policies as reflected in the Lisbon Strategy, Community Strategic Guidelines on Cohesion 2007-13 and Community Integrated Guidelines for Growth and Jobs for 2007-13. In turn, that regulatory framework informs the National Strategic Reference Frameworks of Romania and Bulgaria which set the operational context and parameters of intervention for both countries' Regional and Sectoral Operational Programmes, national programmes for Rural Development and other national and regional development programmes and plans for each country. The Phare cross-border programme (1999-2006) has also been an important factor in helping to shape the objectives of the 2007-2013 CBC programme.

Consequently, the dynamics of CBC programme co-ordination have been shaped by distinctive factors. One such factor has been an ambition to build upon the collaborative work undertaken via the Phare programme in the fields of transport, environment and people to people actions. This has involved scaling up the levels of financial investments (each country was awarded EUR 8 million annually, apart from in 1999 when the figure was EUR 5 million each), deepening and strengthening existing formal and informal links between the two countries and establishing new ones within the eligible jurisdictions of the 2007-2013 CBC programme. A second factor has been a concern to ensure that project interventions supported through the CBC programme are aligned with rather than duplicating initiatives undertaken by the range of other national and regional programmes outlined above.

The process of objective setting for the CBC programme reflects both of the above factors and has involved extensive consultation with a range of stakeholders including: Ministries with direct interest in managing Structural Funds assistance and other Government Institutions; Regional Development Agencies; local public administrations; regional and local environment and environmental protection organizations; Border social and economic partners; Non-Governmental Organizations; and regional/local universities and other educational establishments.

Coordination of objectives is further ensured through representation of the Managing Authorities of the National Operational Programmes and Rural Development Programmes in both Romania and Bulgaria as members/observers in the Joint Monitoring Committee and Joint Steering Committee of the cross-border programme. This has helped to avoid overlap between the mainstream and CBC programmes and ensure complementarities of interventions under the programmes.

Additionally, the Romanian Ministry of European Funds uses a reporting tool designed to cross-check data with other EU programmes financed under the Convergence Objective to avoid double financing and overlaps at Programme level (AIR, 2014).

The process of objective setting and ensuring subsequent inter-programme coherence has also been assisted by the role played by the CBC programme's ex ante evaluators.

² References from OP 1.3 (p7) reference documents.

Their recommendation to focus and streamline the SWOT analysis to fit the description of the region was followed by the programme drafters. Consequently, that SWOT and the Priority Axis that underpin the intervention logic of the programme are informed by the specific characteristics of the programme area and the common challenges it faces. There also appears to have been a narrowing and strengthening of the priority axis along with a reduction in the range of indicative operations so as to provide more targeted interventions through the programme.

The programme objectives are focused and appropriate for the overall rationale of the CBC programme. The specific objective of *'sustainability of the intrinsic value of the area's natural resources by prudent exploitation and effective protection of the environment'* is sufficiently broadly pitched to address key environmental challenges within the context of Priority Axis 2. In turn, that is given more focus in relation to the specific objectives of that axis, namely: *'to ensure effective protection and use of the area's natural assets by coordinated joint management systems'*; *'to increase the awareness on the environmental protection and management in the cross-border area'*; and *'to protect local population, business, environment and infrastructure from the potentially disastrous consequences of natural and man-made crises, by joint preventative actions and emergency response services throughout the border region'*.

As a result of feedback for the ex ante evaluators, Priority Axis 2 has undergone some modification during the programme's lifetime to provide greater focus to the interventions; specifically by revising and reducing the range of indicative operations that can be funded under Key Areas 1 and 2. Part of the ongoing process of ensuring complementarity has involved including representatives from ERDF operational programmes on key CBC programme structures (Joint Monitoring Committee and Joint Steering Committee) to ensure a degree of co-ordination between the cross-border programme and these mainstream programmes and avoid duplication of interventions where possible.

3.8.2. Can synergies be objectively evaluated?

Synergies between the CBC programme and national and regional programmes should ideally be evaluated at project level. In practice that does not appear to happen beyond consideration of issues of funding duplication/overlap undertaken by the CBC programme's Joint Technical Secretariat. As noted in the next section, there does not seem to be an obvious synergy (in terms of connecting project interventions funded by the CBC and mainstream programmes) for reasons of disparity of scale and focus of projects in each programme.

3.9. Comparison with regional programme

EVALUATION QUESTION

The contractor will compare for the theme of the case study the selected programmes with a programme financed from the national/regional ERDF budgets to understand the difference between the different programmes as regards their impact on the theme and on cooperation.

A range of EU funding programmes exist in both Romania and Bulgaria that include Priority Axes designed to promote environmental protection and enhancement in various contexts within the 2007-2013 programming period. For the purposes of this study, the analysis focuses on a comparison of the environmental protection and

enhancement theme as it relates to the Sectoral Environment and Regional Programmes, of which there is one each in Romania and Bulgaria respectively. These programmes are funded through a combination of resources from ERDF and the Cohesion Fund. Box 7 below shows the different Key Intervention Areas for the Cross-Border Cooperation Programme and the Priority Axes for both the Romanian and Bulgarian Environment Sectoral programmes.

Box 7: Comparison of Environment Interventions in CBC and Sectoral Programmes		
Cross Border Programme (Key Interventions)	Romania Environment SOP (Priority Axes)	Bulgaria Environment SOP (Priority Axes)
Development of joint management systems for environmental protection	Extension & modernization of water and wastewater systems	Improvement and development of water and wastewater infrastructure and improvement of ambient air quality
Development of joint infrastructure and services to prevent man-made and natural crises, including joint emergency response services	Development of integrated waste management systems & rehabilitation of historically contaminated sites	Improvement and development of waste treatment infrastructure
	Pollution reduction & climate change mitigation by restructuring and renovating urban heating systems	Preservation and restoration of biodiversity
	Implementation of adequate management systems for nature protection	
	Implementation of adequate infrastructure of natural risk prevention in most vulnerable areas	

Sources: CBC and Romanian and Bulgarian Environment Sectoral Operational Programme Documents 2007-2013

From box 7 it can be seen that there appears to be some overlap between areas of Cross-Border Programme interventions and the Romanian and Bulgarian Environment Programmes, as shown in bold. For example, the Romanian Environment SOP includes 'implementation of adequate infrastructure of natural risk prevention in most vulnerable areas' as Priority Axis 5 (although this is supported through the Cohesion Fund) which covers some of the same types of activities as supported through the cross-border programme in relation to flood prevention and early warning systems. Similarly, the wastewater treatment (Priority Axis 1) in the Bulgarian Environment SOP indicates some potential for overlap with activities funded through the Cross-Border Programme.

In practice, the scope for duplication is relatively limited due to the **scale** and **focus** of projects funded via the Environment SOPs. Both the Romanian and Bulgarian Environment 2007-2013 SOPs are primarily concerned with developing large-scale hard infrastructure projects to ensure compliance with relevant EU Environmental Directives within their own jurisdictions. This is quite distinct from the much smaller scale collaborative projects undertaken by the cross-border programme with its emphasis on softer outcomes associated with joint working, learning and knowledge transfer between beneficiaries. Therefore the risk of overlap of activities between the mainstream national/regional programmes in both jurisdictions and the cross-border programme is arguably less than in more 'mature' mainstream and CBC programmes (e.g. mainstream and CBC ERDF programmes involving the UK) where much of the hard environmental infrastructure capacity-building has been undertaken over successive programming periods

The focus of the Regional SOP programmes for both Romania and Bulgaria also have a distinctively different focus on the environmental theme in comparison to the Cross-Border Programme as can be seen from box 8 below.

Box 8: Romanian and Bulgarian Regional Programme Priorities 2007-2013

Romanian Regional Operational Programme Priorities 2007-2013

- 1) Support to sustainable development of urban growth poles
- 2) Improvement of regional and local transport infrastructure
- 3) Improvement of social infrastructure
- 4) Strengthening the regional and local business environment
- 5) Sustainable development and promotion of tourism

Bulgarian Regional Operational Programme Priorities 2007-2013

- 1) Sustainable and integrated urban development
- 2) Regional and local accessibility
- 3) Sustainable tourism development
- 4) Local development and co-operation

Source: Romanian and Bulgarian Regional Operational Programme Documents 2007-13

Regarding the Bulgarian Regional OP, the only potential area of thematic overlap with the Cross-Border Cooperation programme relates to Operation 1.3 (Improvement of Physical Environment and Risk Prevention). It is not evident from the Romanian OP that there are any areas of overlap in that regard.

References

Documents for the Interreg IVA Romania-Bulgaria Cross Border Cooperation Programme France 2007-2013

- Operational Programme (2012, EN version);
- Annual Implementation Report 2014;
- Ernst & Young, (undated), Interim Evaluation of the Romania-Bulgaria Cross-Border Cooperation Programme 2007-2013: Evaluation Report.

Knowledge and Expertise in European Programmes (KEEP) Database;

Ministry of Regional Development and Public Works (2010) Operational Programme 'Regional Development' 2007-2013 (Bulgaria);

Operational Programme 'Environment' 2007-2013 (Bulgaria);

Ministry of European Funds, (2015) Sectoral Operational Programme 'Environment' 2007-2013 (Romania);

Ministry of Regional Development and Housing, Operational Programme 'Regional'. (Romania);

Various documents supplied by project partners relating to their specific projects.

Annexes

ANNEX 1. Projects supported by the Romania-Bulgaria programme in Environment

Project name and EU funding	Project description
<p>Raising awareness of necessity of environment protection and biodiversity preservation: Constanta and Vidin in the mirror</p> <p>EUR 0.4 million</p>	<p>The project brings together Romanian and Bulgarian environmental specialists to: identify environmental problems occurring in the two regions and analyse their similarities in terms of pollution and degradation; create a favourable mentality to the environmental aspect; increase awareness of individuals' environmental impacts and take responsibility for minimising these impacts the responsibility towards the environment and awakening awareness on the impact of our own actions on it; develop shared projects by the two communities in support of environmental protection and biodiversity preservation.</p>
<p>Improving the management of emergency situations in the cross border region</p> <p>EUR 4.7 million</p>	<p>The project aims to develop Romanian – Bulgarian cooperation and collaboration relations in civil protection and defence against natural disasters by: enhancing the efficiency of emergency situations management of environmental threats in the cross border area; and upgrading the logistics system necessary for intervention activities in case of emergency situations, in the cross border area.</p>
<p>Step by step towards a nature friendly behaviour and increased environmental protection in Calarasi-Silistra cross border area</p> <p>EUR 0.3 million</p>	<p>The project aims to increase cooperation on environmental issues from the cross border area Calarasi – Silistra by: reducing pollution and area resources' waste; and providing information and training on environmental issues, by developing innovative and eco-friendly solutions and technologies for business development.</p>
<p>Network and web platform to improve the public awareness on environmental management and protection in the cross-border area Giurgiu-Rousee and the adjacent cross-border area</p> <p>EUR 0.8 million</p>	<p>The project aims to: improve public awareness of environmental management and protection in the cross-border area Giurgiu-Rousse and adjacent cross border areas; transfer environmental knowledge to the medium of instruction and specialty, organizations with environmental impact and other stakeholders; and develop Romanian-Bulgarian scientific partnership for technology transfer and knowledge to specific target groups.</p>

Project name and EU funding	Project description
<p>Green energy cluster: Constanta- Dobrich</p> <p>EUR 0.4 million</p>	<p>The project aims to ensure sustainable favourable conditions in the cross-border region for both catalysing mastered growth of the regional clean energy industry and maximizing the clean energy potential of local industries, federating expertise, knowledge and resources from Bulgaria and Romania through the establishment and deployment of a Cross-border Green Energy Cluster "Constanta-Dobrich".</p>
<p>Prevent the risk of flooding from the Danube at Nikopol and Turnu Magurele –a prerequisite for environmental protection in cross-border region</p> <p>EUR 4.1 million</p>	<p>The project aims to improve the effective protection of the environment and sustainable development of natural resources in the transboundary region Turnu Magurele – Nikopol, ensuring a better environment to live, work and cooperation between people. Specifically, via effective flood prevention via harmonized activities from Government specialist services, increased capacity building; and increased public awareness regarding disasters and environmental protection.</p>
<p>Nature around us</p> <p>EUR 0.03 million</p>	<p>The project aims to improve knowledge on the biodiversity of the region; ensure proper training techniques and environmental knowledge for teachers in the CBC region; increase awareness of the environmental problems in the CBC region; support green actions of local groups; and improve cross-border cooperation in the field of environmental protection.</p>
<p>Set up and implementation of key core components of a regional early warning system for marine geohazards of risk to the Romanian-Bulgarian Black Sea coastal area</p> <p>EUR 4.8 million</p>	<p>Implementation of an integrated early-warning system accompanied by a common decision-support tool, and enhancement of regional technical capability, for the adequate detection, assessment, forecasting and rapid notification of natural marine geohazards of risk to the Romania-Bulgaria Black Sea cross-border area.</p>

Project name and EU funding	Project description
<p>Enhancing the operational Technical capacities for Emergency situations response In Giurgiu-Rousse cross-border Area</p> <p>EUR 5 million</p>	<p>Project aims to increase the efficiency of emergency response activities for the responsible public authorities in the Rouse – Giurgiu Euro-region by: modernization of the existing fire emergency-rescue fleet and rescue teams’ equipment, working in the Ruse- Giurgiu Euro-region; ensuring compatibility and inter-operability of fire extinguish and emergency-rescue equipment in the Ruse-Giurgiu region; strengthening the capacity of forecasting and management, for a quick response in situations of epidemiological risk</p>
<p>Joint actions for the management of emergency situations in Case of hydro-meteorological events and accidental water pollutions (JAMES)</p> <p>EUR 4 million</p>	<p>The project set up a monitoring and decision support system for emergency situations related to hydro-meteorological threats and water pollution to the cross border area Giurgiu-Ruse.</p>
<p>Integrated systems for monitoring and controlling wastewater, the quality and security of textile products commercialised in Romania and Bulgaria</p> <p>EUR 0.6 million</p>	<p>Project aimed to: establish a joint short, medium and long-term strategy specific to the cross-border area in the field of environmental protection, natural resources efficient valorization and for the promotion of some modern technologies that should assure a sustainable development of the area: develop common systems for monitoring and control for environmental protection; develop common informational and promotional materials on environmental protection in the cross-border area.</p>
<p>Development of an environmental system for environmental protection by enhancing the use value of animal dejections in the Teleorman-Veliko Tarnovo cross border area</p> <p>EUR 0.8 million</p>	<p>The project aimed to support environmental protection by enhancing the use value of animal dejection as biogas and organic fertilizers.</p>

Project name and EU funding	Project description
<p>REACT – Integrated system for dynamic monitoring and warning for technological risks in Romania-Bulgaria cross border area</p> <p>EUR 0.8 million</p>	<p>The project aimed to increase the institutional capacity of the local public administration and business community in order to prevent and react in the case of accidental industrial pollution by: developing joint planning and intervention mechanisms; building public administrations capacity for prevention and reaction regarding accidental industrial pollution; increasing public, local public administrations and businesses awareness regarding the risks of accidental industrial pollution.</p>
<p>Management of emergencies caused by dangerous hydrological and Environmental quality events</p> <p>EUR 4.1 million</p>	<p>The project aimed to set up a monitoring and decision support system for emergency situations related to hydro-meteorological events, accidents at hydro-technical buildings and accidental spills. This included: efficient alarming system by the acquisition and deployment of sirens, spread throughout the entire county (both in urban and rural areas); better rescue and intervention capabilities by the acquisition of two patrol and rescue boats; stimulating the local awareness in case of risk related to water by creating and maintaining a local risk register.</p>
<p>The Green Gold of the Danube</p> <p>EUR 0.7 million</p>	<p>The project's overall aim was to improve the awareness on environment protection, sustainable development and climate change in the Silistra and Calarasi districts based on a model, which can be multiplied in other districts of the cross-border region.</p>
<p>Cross border ecological corridor Ruse-Giurgiu</p> <p>EUR 0.3 million</p>	<p>The project aimed to develop reasonable management and use of natural resources and sustainable development of the cross-border areas by the establishment of an ecological corridor, underpinned by increased capacity for management of the corridor and management plans for the protected areas. It also aimed to support the income of communities in the protected areas.</p>
<p>Coordination and management Centre for intervention in case of Disasters in cross border area</p> <p>EUR 4.8 million</p>	<p>The general aim of the project was to improve the cooperation between authorities in the field of emergency situation in the cross border area Dolj-Vratsa.</p>

Project name and EU funding	Project description
<p>Romanian-Bulgarian cross border Joint natural and technological Hazards assessment in the Danube Floodplain, the Calafat-Vidin-Turnu Magurele-Nikopole sector</p> <p>EUR 0.8 million</p>	<p>This project's objectives included to; elaborate a joint integrated GIS database; identify the natural and technological hazards typologies; assess the vulnerability to the natural and technological hazards; elaborate the specialised natural and technological hazards maps; assess water quality and aquifer vulnerability to pollution; identify the best sustainable development strategies for environmental protection; and disseminate the results.</p>
<p>Danube WATER integrated Management</p> <p>EUR 11.7 million</p>	<p>The project's aim was improving water monitoring and the warnings system, environmental data dissemination on the Romanian-Bulgarian border counties</p> <p>Its specific objective was processing and conditioning the liquid organic wastes radioactively contaminated from the nuclear plants Cernavodă and Kozloduy.</p>
<p>Improved awareness of the cross-border tourism cluster and improved environmental management and protection</p> <p>EUR 0.4 million</p>	<p>The project was designed to increase the awareness of the tourism cluster and the consumer of tourist services in the regions of Dobrich and Constanta for sustainable exploitation and protection of the natural resources and combat the climate change. A second objective was to increase the awareness of the tourism cluster about methods and systems for decreasing the pressure on the environment.</p>
<p>Monitoring the environmental factors in cross-border area Olt-Belene</p> <p>EUR 5 million</p>	<p>The project aims to enhance and develop the Romanian-Bulgarian cooperation and collaboration relations in order to prevent the degradation of the environmental quality in the Olt-Belene border region via: streamlining the decision making process regarding the quality assurance of the environment within the Olt-Belene cross border region; increasing the awareness of the decision makers in the field of water-channel from the Olt-Belene border region, but also of the public, media regarding the impact of water discharges on the environment and everyday life.</p>

Project name and EU funding	Project description
<p>Eco-Business-joint center for managing unexpected situations in Mehedinti-Vidin cross border area</p> <p>EUR 0.8 million</p>	<p>The project aims to protect and maintain environmental quality, by applying the principles of prevention and precautions in the development of business in border areas, by implementing ITC in Mehedinti-Vidin area. It also aims to increase the level of information and participation of business community and citizens in the cross border area, in the domain of integrated environmental management, to ensure common sustainable development. A third aim is to develop the EcoBusiness Mehedinti – Vidin Center, as support for monitoring, communication, data transmission and rapid intervention.</p>
<p>EMERSYS – towards an integrated, joint cross-border detection system and harmonised, rapid response procedures to chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear emergencies</p> <p>EUR 5.1 million</p>	<p>No available data</p>
<p>Danube cross-border system for Earthquake alerts</p> <p>EUR 4.8 million</p>	<p>The focus of the project is prevention of the natural disasters generated by earthquakes in cross-border area Romania-Bulgaria developing the early warning integrated communication network and capacity building at local level based on results of research in this field.</p>
<p>Common action for prevention of environmental disasters</p> <p>EUR 4.9 million</p>	<p>The project aims to decrease environmental vulnerability, social and economic disaster caused by flooding in the border area between Romania and Bulgaria by strengthening institutional and technical capacity for prevention and emergency response. This includes: streamlining decision-making process to ensure development sustainable environment by reducing flood risk; raising awareness of the population, but also other stakeholders on the impact of floods on the environment, but also on measures required to ensure environmental protection.</p>

Project name and EU funding	Project description
<p>Renewable energies –tool for preventing and combating climate change, economic growth and social welfare</p> <p>EUR 0.2 million</p>	<p>The project aimed to increase awareness of entrepreneurs, public authorities and population on the necessity to reduce pollution and prevent climate change for economic and social welfare and develop joint initiatives for the access of target groups to alternative solutions for saving energy.</p>
<p>Equipment for save our lives</p> <p>EUR 5.1 million</p>	<p>The project aimed to promote cooperation in the field of intervention in case of emergency situations in the crossborder region, in order to ensure a sustainable development and increasing living standards of the population.</p>
<p>Insuring an efficient management of the joint intervention in emergency situation in the Giurgiu-Rousse cross-border area</p> <p>EUR 4.8 million</p>	<p>The project’s objectives include: increasing the response capacity and operative interventions in emergency situations within the Giurgiu-Rousse area through building and endowing the Giurgiu-Rousse Centre for Cross-border Coordination and Management of Intervention (CCCMI); endowment with specific equipments in case of disasters; realizing a Communication and Information System (CIS) which will insure the technical and logistical support necessary for the efficient management of emergency situations; developing joint activities for information and training in the field of efficient management of emergency situations.</p>
<p>ECO-Force: joint actions for eco-responsible cross-border SMEs</p> <p>EUR 0.3 million</p>	<p>The project aimed to: contribute to the sustainable development of the cross-border area through safeguarding the natural environment; foster cross-border cooperation and joint efforts to solve common problems and utilize the border area potential in a sustainable way; raise awareness among the cross-border based economic operators in view of improving their environmental performance for minimizing the negative impact on the environment in a cross-border context.</p>
<p>Improvement of the capacity of the public administrations in Ruse-Giurgiu Euroregion for better joint risk management, prevention and environmental protection</p> <p>EUR 0.5 million</p>	<p>The project aimed to provide the necessary conditions for effective joint risk management, prevention and environmental protection in the cross-border area Ruse-Giurgiu, through development of a joint information data base for planning and pursuing a Common crisis management policy.</p>

Project name and EU funding	Project description
<p>Common strategy to prevent the Danube's pollution technological risks with oil and oil products</p> <p>EUR 0.5 million</p>	<p>The project aimed to: harmonise Romanian – Bulgarian issues of contamination of the Danube with oil by creating a common structure that will manage crisis situations; design technology solutions based on modeling and virtual simulation; develop technical execution documentation and control equipment in the new integrated solution to purge water contaminated with petroleum products; and establish a common strategy to prevent technological Danube pollution with oil products.</p>
<p>Health without Borders</p> <p>EUR 1.3 million</p>	<p>The overall objective was to create a response system for epidemics and other public health emergencies based on public health systems and capacity and an effective trans-border system for coordinated response. It aimed to strengthen the capacity of forecasting and management for medical services and medicines, for the Health Insurance Fund Calarasi and Regional Health Insurance Fund Silistra.</p>
<p>Cross border model for nature conservation and sustainable use of the natural resources along the Danube</p> <p>EUR 0.3 million</p>	<p>The project aimed to improve nature protection and contribute to sustainable use of natural resources in the Bulgarian-Romanian cross-border region along the Danube. Specifically to: mainstream biodiversity concerns into regional planning; raise public awareness on biodiversity conservation and sustainable use of natural resources; and strengthen capacity of local environmental institutions.</p>
<p>Joint risk management during emergencies in the Danube area Border</p> <p>EUR 9.8 million</p>	<p>The project aimed to improve the emergency preparedness and intervention through a joint integrated system for efficient monitoring and disaster consequences mitigation, according to EU standards and procedures. Measures include: development of a joint integrated system for efficient monitoring and disaster consequences mitigation, along the Danube river and border area; achieving an integrated interdisciplinary monitoring, evaluation and prevention of disasters caused by hail in the border region; achievement of a cross-border network for ambient air quality monitoring; cooperation between the public authorities and the academic circles for efficient natural risk management in the cross-border region; and development of a uniform cross-border concept for hydro meteorological phenomena risk assessment.</p>

Source: KEEP Database

ANNEX 2. Programme of Interviews and Visits

Romania – Bulgaria Cross – border Co-operation Programme

Case-Study Programme

Monday August 24th – Bucharest (RO)

- 10:00am Interview **Mr. Gabriel FRIPTU**, (Ministry of Regional Development and Public Administration, Head of the General Directorate for European Programmes) – **Bucharest (RO)**
- 12:00am Interview **Ms. Ioana GLĂVAN, Head of Unit - Managing Authority for the Romania-Bulgaria Programme – Bucharest (RO)**
- 15:00pm Interview **Mr. Valentin Simion, Head of Unit, General Directorate for Evaluation and Programming – Managing Authority Environment OP – Bucharest (RO)**

Tuesday August 25th - Bucharest (RO)

- 10:00am Interview **Ms. Maria Duzova**, (Ministry of Regional Development and Public Works Director General, Bulgaria, Sofia), General Director, DG “Territorial Cooperation Management” – on-line interview with Sofia (BG) (*Postponed and written responses to interview questions provided subsequently*).
- 12:00pm Project visit nr.1 – **Mrs. Mary – Jeanne ADLER** - Ministry of Environment, Waters and Forests, Romania - **Danube WATER integrated management** – Strategic Project – **Bucharest (RO)**
- 15:00pm Project visit nr.2 – **Constatin Ionescu (General Director), Gheorghe MARMUREANU** - National Institute of Research and Development for Earth Physics, Romania - **Danube Cross-border system for Earthquakes Alert– Bucharest (RO)**

Wednesday August 26th - Ruse (BG) – Giurgiu (RO)

- 11:00am Project visit nr.3 - **Mr. Karapchanski (Deputy Mayor)**- Municipality of Ruse, Bulgaria - **Improvement of the capacity of the public administration in Ruse – Giurgiu Euroregion for better joint risk management, prevention and environmental protection – Ruse (BG)**

14:00pm Project visit nr.4 - **Despina Oprea (Project Manager)** - GIURGIU COUNTY COUNCIL, Romania - ***Joint actions for the management of emergency situations in case of hydro-meteorological events and accidental water pollutions - Giurgiu (RO)***

Thursday August 27th - Calarasi (RO)

11:00am Interview **Bogdan MUSAT**, Deputy Director BRCT Calarasi, JTS for RO-BG OP, **Calarasi (RO)**

13:00AM Focus Group with 4 beneficiaries, Calarasi (RO) - see below

Friday August 28th - Nikopol (BG)

10:00am Project visit nr.5 - **Mr. Emil Bebenov - mayor** - Nikopol Municipality, Bulgaria - ***Prevent the risk of flooding from the Danube at Nikopol and Turnu Magurele - A prerequisite for environmental protection in cross-border region - Nikopol (BG)***

List of invitations for the focus group

Nr. Crt	Project code	Cod MIS ETC	Project title	Lead Partner/Beneficiary	Country
1	1-2.1-7	65	Renewable energies – tool for preventing and combating climate change economic growth and social welfare	Romanian Association for Technology Transfer and Innovation	RO
2	2-2.1-5	660	Cross-border model for nature conservation and sustainable use of the natural resources along the Danube	Bulgarian Society for the Protection of Birds	BG
3	2(3i)-2.1-4	127	The Green gold of the Danube	Community Cultural Centre „Nikola Jonkov Vaptsarov“ - Tutrakan	BG
4	2(4i)-2.1-8	332	Improved awareness of the cross-border tourism cluster and environmental management and protection	Chamber of Commerce and Industry Dobrich	BG

ANNEX 3 List of indicators for the programme³

(according to Annual Report 2014)

Common Programme Indicators			
		Target	Value
Output	▪ Number of cross-border community based partnerships and networks established for the joint development of the cooperation area, using its human, natural and environmental resources and advantages	300	295
	▪ Number of cross-border community based permanent partnerships and networks active by end of the Programme ⁴	40	0
	▪ Joint projects respecting two of the following criteria: joint development, joint implementation, joint staffing, joint financing (%)	70	171
	▪ Joint projects respecting three of the following criteria: joint development, joint implementation, joint staffing, joint financing (%)	20	168
	▪ Joint projects respecting four of the following criteria: joint development, joint implementation, joint staffing, joint financing (%)	10	143
	▪ Projects reducing isolation through improved access to transport, ICT networks and services	39	44
	▪ Projects encouraging and improving the joint protection and management of the environment	50	46
	Output and Result Indicators, targets and values achieved		
PRIORITY 1: ACCESSIBILITY - IMPROVED MOBILITY AND ACCESS TO TRANSPORT, INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION INFRASTRUCTURE IN THE CROSS-BORDER AREA			
Output	• Number of projects improving transport accessibility in the programme area	9	15

³ The Managing Authority anticipates that all programme indicators will have met or surpassed their targets by the end of the programme period.

⁴ The 2014 AIR states that the value for this indicator will be cumulated at the end of Programme implementation period, hence the value of 0 in the table. Monitoring visits will be checked the functionality of the projects partnerships will be checked via ex post monitoring visits.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of projects improving ICT accessibility in the programme area 	30	41
Result	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Reduction of travel time between settlements located on either side of the border 	70	70
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Number of people having access to ICT facilities 	1.6 million	1,699,340 million
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Number of people using ICT facilities 	825,000	823,120
Output and Result Indicators, targets and values achieved			
PRIORITY 2: ENVIRONMENT - SUSTAINABLE USE AND PROTECTION OF NATURAL RESOURCES AND ENVIRONMENT AND PROMOTION OF EFFICIENT RISK MANAGEMENT IN THE CROSS-BORDER AREA			
Output	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Number of projects developing joint management systems for environmental protection 	30	18
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Number of projects raising awareness on environmental protection and management 	50	44
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Number of projects contributing to risk prevention in the cross-border area 	10	24
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Number of projects contributing to joint early warning and emergency response to risk 	10	22
Result	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Number of joint management systems implemented 	20	23
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The extent to which the eligible area is covered by awareness raising campaigns (%) 	70	100
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Number of people benefiting from awareness raising activities on environmental protection 	2.5 million	5 million
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The extent to which the Danube is covered by joint flood prevention systems in the cross- border area (%) 	70	100
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The extent to which the eligible area is covered by joint risk prevention systems (%) 	30	100
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The extent to which Danube is covered by joint early warning emergency activities against flooding (%) 	70	100

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Number of partnerships created for early warning and emergency response activities 	10	57
<p>Output and Result Indicators, targets and values achieved PRIORITY 3: ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT - ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND SOCIAL COHESION BY JOINT IDENTIFICATION AND ENHANCEMENT OF THE AREA'S COMPARATIVE ADVANTAGES</p>			
Output	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Number of projects developing cross-border business infrastructure and services 	10	52
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Number of projects promoting the image of the cross-border area inside and outside its boundaries 	10	78
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Number of projects supporting the development of integrated tourism products based on the comparative advantages of the cross-border area 	10	36
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Number of projects stimulating cross-border cooperation between universities, research institutes and businesses 	15	39
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Number of projects supporting cross-border sharing of information on employment opportunities 	20	17
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Number of projects developing cross-border training services for employment in connection with the integrated market needs 	17	15
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Number of projects developing cross-border linkages and exchanges between education/training centres 	15	30
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Number of projects strengthening cultural coherence and cooperation among local people and communities in the local area 	90	112
Result	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Number of SMEs benefiting from business facilities 	500	19,123
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Number of promotion materials/ events developed 	30	659
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Number of joint integrated tourism products created 	10	50
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Number of partnerships between universities, research institutes and businesses 	15	90

	▪ Number of people informed on employment opportunities	360,000	370,256
	▪ Number of people graduating cross-border training courses	3,500	6,896
	▪ Number of partnerships created between education/ training centres	30	273
	▪ Number of people participating in people to people actions	4,500	59,127

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