

**ASSIGNMENT/ SCOPING REPORT/ FOR DETERMINATION OF
THE SCOPE AND CONTENT OF THE ENVIRONMENTAL
ASSESSMENT REPORT**

**of the draft Cross-border Cooperation Programme 2021-2027, co-financed
under the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance, between the Republic of
Bulgaria and the Republic of North Macedonia and the draft Territorial
Strategy for Integrated Measures**

*(according to art. 19a of the Regulation on the conditions and arrangements for
environmental assessment of plans and programs and art. 86, para 3 of the
Environmental Protection Act)*

Assignor: Ministry of Regional Development and Public Works

2021

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

BOD₅	Biological oxygen demand - oxygen consumed per liter of the sample at a constant temperature of 20°C within 5 days incubation period
BCC	Border crossing checkpoint
EAR	Environmental assessment report
EA	Environmental assessment (Strategic Environmental Assessment within the meaning of Directive 2001/42)
ICT	Information and communication technologies
AAQ	Ambient air quality
MoEW	Ministry of Environment and Water
MRDPW	Ministry of Regional Development and Public Works
SME	Small and medium enterprises
EA ordinance	Ordinance on the terms and conditions for carrying out an environmental assessment of plans and programs
NA	National Authority
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
EIA	Environmental Impact Assessment
PAH	Polycyclic Aromatic Hydrocarbons
PoM	Programme of Measures
CBCP	Cross-border Co-operation Programme
RBMP	River Basin Management Plan
FRMP	Flood Risk Management Plan
MA	Managing Authority
FDP	Fine Dust Particles

I. INTRODUCTION

The assignment for determination of the scope and content of the Environmental Assessment Report (EAR) of the Cross-Border Cooperation Programme 2021-2027 (CBCP) projects, co-financed under the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance, between the Republic of Bulgaria and the Republic of North Macedonia and the Territorial Strategy for Integrated Measures (TSIM) has been prepared within the Environmental Assessment Procedure (EAP), in compliance with the requirements of Art. 19a of the Ordinance on the conditions and arrangements for environmental assessment of plans and programs (EA Ordinance). The assignment is in accordance with the instructions in the Ministry of Environment and Water (MoEW) letter, Ref. No. EC-17/29.06.2021, by which the Minister of Environment and Water has determined to carry out a mandatory environmental assessment of the CBCP and TSIM projects.

The purpose of this Assignment for the EAR scope and content is to propose the scope and content of EAR on which stakeholders can make suggestions, comments, and recommendations. The received opinions will be reflected/implemented at the EAR preparation, which will ensure the achievement of the EA procedure objectives for integration of environmental considerations in the draft programme and strategy and the environment and human health protection at their implementation.

According to Art. 19, para. 1, para. 3 and para. 4 of the EA Ordinance, during the various phases of preparation of CBCP and TSIM and EA, the Assignor should consult with the public, stakeholders and third parties who may be affected by the programme and strategy implementation, in order to obtain and comply with their opinions and comments, according to a *Consultation Scheme*, prepared as a separate document.

On the Republic of Bulgaria territory the Assignment for the scope and content of EAR is submitted for consultations by the Ministry of Regional Development and Public Works (MRDPW) to the *Ministry of Environment and Water (MoEW)* - acc. to Article 19a, item 1 of the EA Ordinance, *Ministry of Health* acc. to Article 19a, item 2 of the EA Ordinance and to the *public, other interested authorities and third parties, specified in the Consultation Scheme* - acc. to Article 19a, item 3 of the EA Ordinance.

The Assignment for the scope and content of EAR is provided by the Bulgarian Ministry of Regional Development and Public Works, in its capacity as Programme's Managing Authority (MA) and Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development of the Republic of North Macedonia - the National Authority (NA) for CBCP and TSIM, for conduction of consultations in the partner country on the programme and strategy

II. ASSIGNOR'S CONTACT INFORMATION

1. Name, registered office and unique identification number of the legal entity

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III. ASSIGNMENT FOR DETERMINATION OF THE SCOPE AND CONTENT OF THE ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

The assignment for determining the scope and content of the EAR has been prepared in compliance with the requirements of Art. 86, para. 3 of the *Environmental Protection Act* and the instructions laid out a letter of the Ministry of Environment and Water, reference No. EO-17/29.06.2021.

The Environmental Assessment Report (EAR) will be prepared in the following structure, scope and content:

1. Description of the CBCP and TSIM main objectives content and their relation with other relevant plans and programs

1.1. Grounds for PTSG and TSIM preparation

The drawing up of cross-border cooperation programs is based primarily on the Regulation (EU) 2021/1060 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 24 June 2021 laying down common provisions on the European Regional Development Fund, the European Social Fund Plus, the Cohesion Fund, the Just Transition Fund and the European Maritime, Fisheries and Aquaculture Fund and financial rules for those and for the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund, the Internal Security Fund and the Instrument for Financial Support for Border Management and Visa Policy (General Regulation) and Regulation (EU) 2021/1059 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 24 June 2021 on specific provisions for the European territorial cooperation goal (Interreg) supported by the European Regional Development Fund and external financing instruments (Interreg Regulation).

At the national level the leading documents for programs preparation are:

- Draft **Partnership Agreement** containing a list of INTERREG programs;
- ***The Council of Ministers Decision No. 196 of 11 April 2019 approving the Economic and social development analysis of Bulgaria for the period 2007-2017 for determining the national priorities for the 2021-2027 period, list of policy objectives to be supported during the programming period 2021-2027, and a list of programs and lead agencies for their development, which designated the Ministry of Regional Development and Public Works (MRDPW) as the leading agency for programs development under the European Territorial Cooperation (INTERREG) 2021 - 2027 objective;***

- *Council of Ministers Decree No. 142 of the of 2019 for development of the Republic of Bulgaria’s strategic and programme documents for EU funds management for the programming period 2021-2027.*

PTSG and TSIM are funded by the European Union with funds from the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance=

The MRDPW is the Managing Authority (MA) under the bilateral INTERREG programs for cross-border cooperation between the Republic of Bulgaria and the Republic of Serbia, the Republic of Turkey, and the Republic of North Macedonia.

1.2. CBCP and TSIM main goals and assumptions

A. The CBCP 2021-2027 between the Republic of Bulgaria and the Republic of North Macedonia has the following geographical scope:

- *Republic of Bulgaria:* 2 regions at NUTS III level: Blagoevgrad and Kyustendil;
- *Republic of North Macedonia:* 3 regions at NUTS III level: Northeast, East and Southeast.

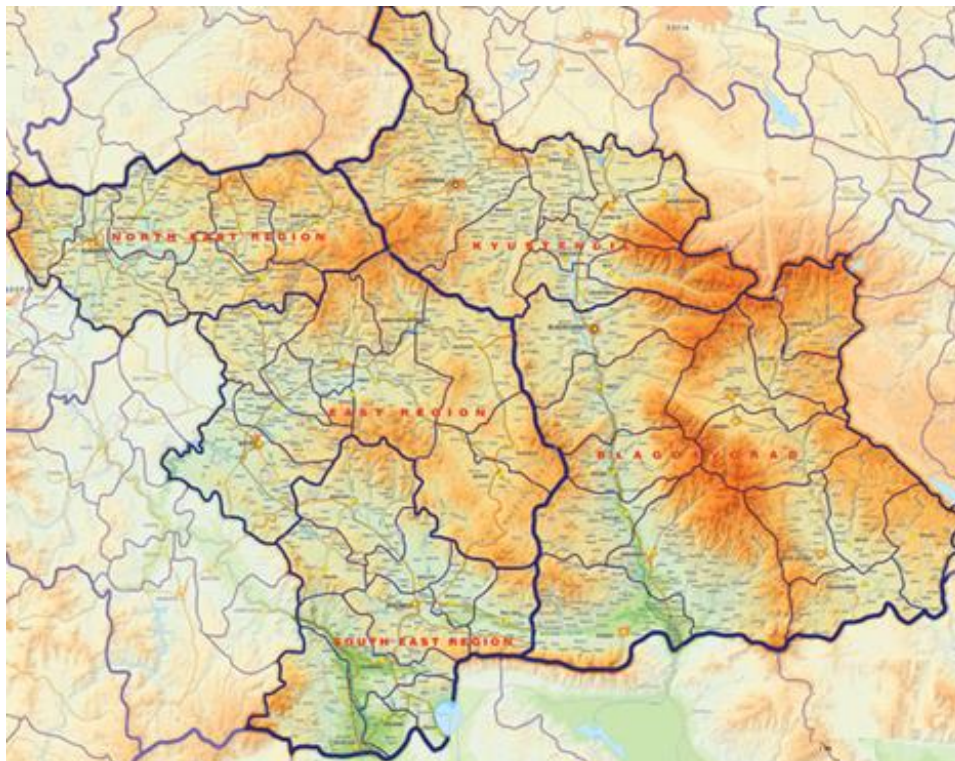


Figure No. 1.2-1 Territorial scope of the CBCP 2021-2027 between the Republic of Bulgaria and the Republic of North Macedonia

The programme identifies the following **General Objective**, **Policy Objectives** (from the General Regulation Proposal), **and related Priorities**, **Specific Objectives**, and **Support Activities/Investments**:

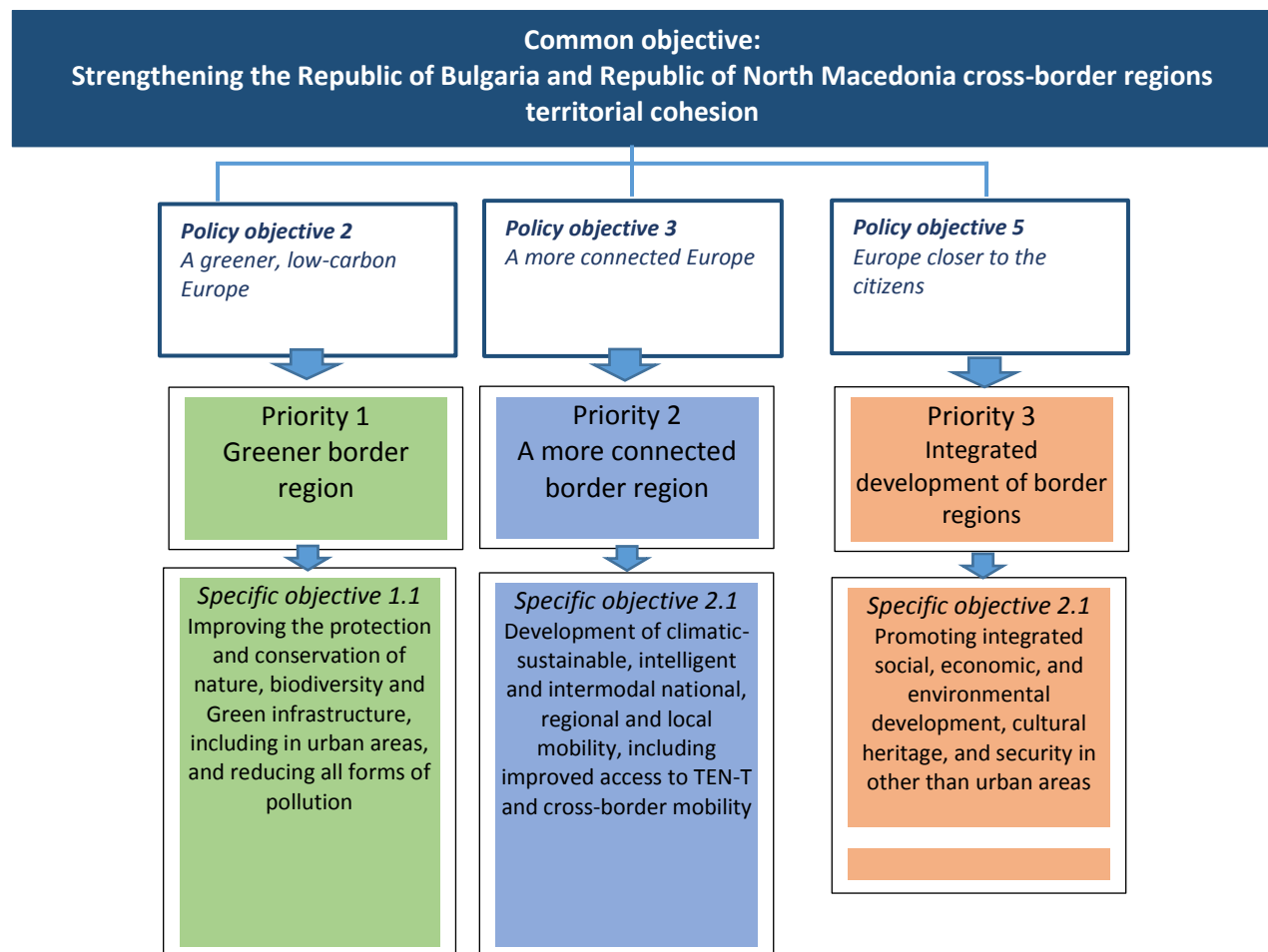


Figure No. 1.2-2 Thematic concentration of CBCP 2021-2027 between the Republic of Bulgaria and the Republic of North Macedonia

The content of the **priorities** is as follows:

Priority 1 Greener border region

Policy Objective 2 “A greener, low-carbon Europe”

Specific objective “Enhancing protection and preservation of nature, biodiversity and green infrastructure, including the urban areas, and reducing all forms of pollution”

Type of actions/investments to be supported:

- Investments in building greens (green balconies, green walls, green roofs, atrium, green pavements, green parking, green fences, noise barriers, etc.)
- Investments in developing urban and peri-urban green areas, including improving connections between green spaces (tree alley and street tree/hedge, street green and green verge, green playground/school ground, riverbank greens);
- Investments in developing natural urban green areas (urban park, historical park/garden, pocket park/parklet, neighbourhood green space, institutional green space, green sport facility, forest, shrub land, abandoned and derelict area with patches of wilderness);
- Investments in developing green areas for water management (swales, creek restoration and nature scaping, rain gardens or sustainable urban drainage systems (SUDS), naturalized stormwater ponds, bioretention areas);
- In addition to the above mentioned investments, the programme intends to support the following actions in line with the needs to promote GI and ecosystem-based solutions:
- Investments in activities dedicated to the control of pollution and rehabilitation of rivers and brownfields;
- Support for joint strategies and action plans for increasing awareness and developing new tools, instruments, experiments, as well as transferring solutions between relevant stakeholders;

Target groups:

Local population and visitors, local authorities and regional structures of central administration, NGOs, academic and scientific institutions

Beneficiaries:

Public authorities, scientific institutions, NGOs

Priority 2 More connected border region

Policy Objective 3 “A more connected Europe”

Specific objective “Developing sustainable, climate resilient, intelligent and intermodal national, regional and local mobility, including improved access to TEN-T and cross-border mobility”

Strategic project: “Establishment of a new Border crossing check point (BCCP) “Klepalo” between the Republic of Bulgaria and the Republic of North Macedonia”

Main project objective: To improve regional connectivity and to boost the economic growth of the CBC area

Specific project objectives:

- To facilitate the increasing traffic of people and goods between the two countries
- To strengthen communication links between the two countries
- To improve and extend access to core Trans European Transport Network (TEN-T)

Indicative types of actions:

- Upgrade of the existing and construction of new BCCP facilities;
- Purchase of new generation specialized technical equipment based on the latest ICT solutions;
- Rehabilitation of existing and construction of new roads in both countries;
- Environmental and other project-related assessments

Beneficiaries:

Customs Agencies, Ministries of Interior of the Republic of Bulgaria and Republic of North Macedonia, the competent regional public authorities

Partners:

Regional Administrations, Road Infrastructure Agencies of the both countries

Priority 3 Integrated development of the border region

Policy Objective 5 “A Europe closer to citizens”

Specific objective “Fostering the integrated social, economic and environmental development, cultural heritage and security in areas other than urban”

Within Priority 3, for the implementation of **Policy Objective 5 "Europe closer to the citizens"**, the development of **Territorial Strategy for Integrated Measures** is envisaged

(TSIM), which will address the measures (identified eligible support activities under the programme) by specific territorial needs.

The integrated approach for covering the needs and addressing the territorial potential of the developed TSIM is manifested in three main aspects:

- territory defined on the basis of sustainable results achieving in terms of common needs and development potential;
- participation of a wide range of partners in the whole process of the strategy drafting, discussion, adoption, and implementation.
- derived package of interconnected and supplementary (integrated) measures, based on the close coordination of different public policies according to the local specificities, covering the local needs and development potentials and bringing common benefits to partners and the region.

Through *TSIM* it will give priority to the support for some projects/actions/activities over others - *described below in the TSIM description*.

Target groups:

Civil society, NGOs, research, academic, training and social institutions, SMEs, tourists, local communities and residents, public local/regional authorities, territorial structures of the central authorities.

Beneficiaries:

Decision making bodies of local authorities, territorial structures of the central governing bodies of public authorities, NGOs, academic, training and social institutions, SMEs.

B. TSIM 2021-2027 between the Republic of Bulgaria and the Republic of North Macedonia

The TSIM defines the **Vision** of the CBCP, **the strategic objective, specific objectives** (described above in **Priority 3** of the **CBCP**) and **the measures**.

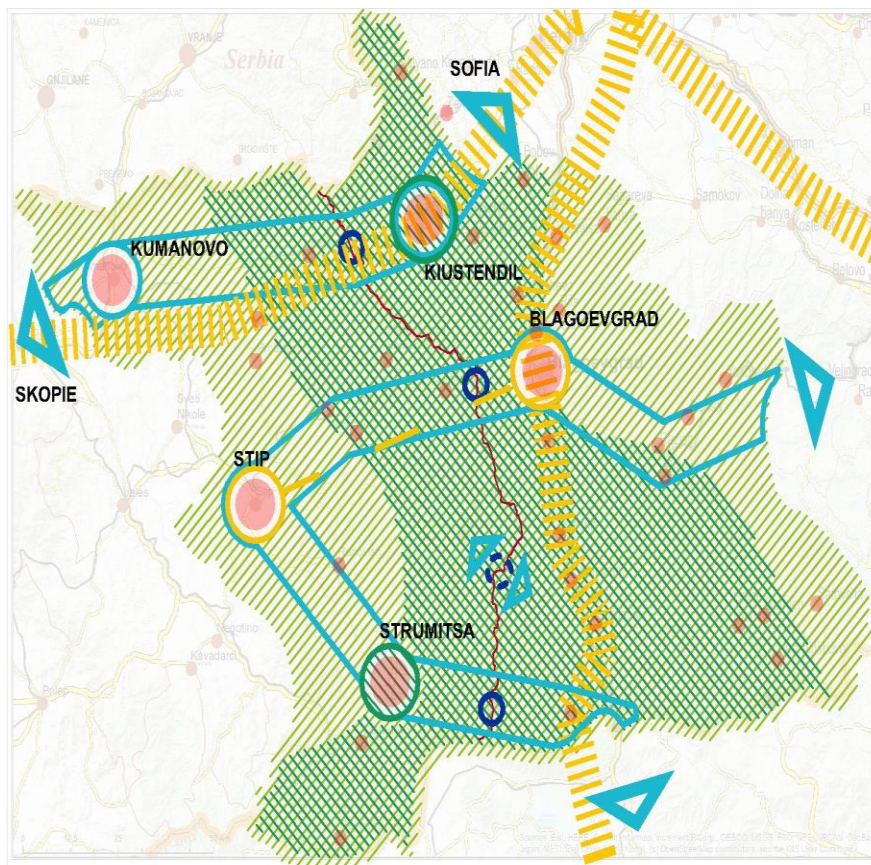
Vision: The territory of the Republic of Bulgaria — Republic of North Macedonia CBC region: a place for consolidation and stability of the cultural and historical reality through joint efforts for mutually beneficial cooperation, socioeconomic cohesion and sustainable development

The area within the TSIM geographic scope is characterized by common needs and development potentials and is essentially a functional area, but a more deeply tailor-made intervention approach allows for identification of **Intensive intervention zones in it**.

The local context specifics determine the determination of **four such zones (Figure No. 1.2-3)**. Each of them also contains at least one development center of higher-level (large city) and

is thus connected to the core of the polycentric network. This connection has not only a spatial but also a functional dimension - in larger and more developed cities it is easier to achieve results in the field of new technologies (green, circular, digital) and there it is most likely to take the first steps and to give a push the whole territory development.

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



Legend:





-  The whole functional area (the whole territory of the strategy)
-  City area, knowledge centers (two academic centers)
-  Active transport communication area (sustainable development of transport connections)
-  European Green Belt area (enhanced role of biodiversity conservation)

Figure No. 1.2-3 Identified intensive intervention zones between the Republic of Bulgaria and the Republic of North Macedonia in TSIM 2021-2027

Strategic objective 1: Social development and cohesion through sustainable economic growth based on a ‘knowledge economy’ and aimed at ironing out the significant differences between population centres at different hierarchical levels in the CBC region:

Specific objective 1.1: Increase the competitiveness of the local economy and improve the business environment:

Measure 1.1.1 Providing incentives for startup and development of SMEs in all areas with the potential to create jobs, including in alternative employment; orientation towards high-tech high- added-value industries; a transition towards a circular economy involving a decrease of resource dependency and utilisation of industrial waste;

Relevant needs and development potential:

- balanced development of the business environment in the CBC area, through targeted support for both the regions lagging behind and for the development of high-tech industries with significant added value;
- need of SMEs competitiveness increasing by raising the qualification and acquiring key skills - leadership, management, marketing, digital and other competencies;
- increasing the resource and energy efficiency of SMEs and supporting the implementation of circular economy models;
- a stable trend for sustainable economic growth, good resources for economic diversification, and increased SMEs' economic activity.

Measure 1.1.2 Balanced business environment development in the CBC region by means of targeted support both for the less developed regions and for the launching of high-tech, high-added-value industries; increasing the attractiveness of the CBC region for direct foreign investments;

Relevant needs and development potential:

- balanced development of the business environment in the CBC area, through targeted support for both the regions lagging behind and for the development of high-tech industries with significant added value;
- increasing the CBC area attractiveness for direct foreign investment.

Measure 1.1.3 Singling out of SMEs, with a focus on family businesses, as a leading factor for sustainable socioeconomic development by support for/raising the competence of SMEs for participation in European and national funding programmes; raising the resource and energy efficiency of SMEs and support for the introduction of models of the circular economy; promoting entrepreneurship by improving the business environment while utilising locally available resources;

Relevant needs and development potential:

- promoting entrepreneurship by improving the business environment using the available local resources;
- Singling out SMEs with a focus on the family business as a leading factor for sustainable socio-economic development by supporting/increasing the competence of SMEs for participation in European and national funding programmes;
- promoting entrepreneurship by improving the business environment while utilising locally available resources;

Measure 1.1.4. Raising the qualifications of the workforce and acquisition of crucial skills in leadership, management, marketing, digital literacy and other competencies; continuous technological renewal of the SMEs involving new knowledge and skills, machinery, software products and the introduction of digital technology; improving the corporate culture of cooperation among SMEs, including their joint participation in projects and programs seeking external financing and addressing common challenges in a highly competitive environment;

Relevant needs and development potential:

- Singling out SMEs with a focus on the family business as a leading factor for sustainable socio-economic development by supporting/increasing the competence of SMEs for participation in European and national funding programmes;
- need of SMEs competitiveness increasing by raising the qualification and acquiring key skills - leadership, management, marketing, digital and other competencies;
- continuous technological renewal of the SMEs involving new knowledge and skills, machinery, software products and the introduction of digital technologies.

Measure 1.1.5. Measures to address the issue of shortening of qualified personnel and to raise the qualification of executive and senior management staff by continuing education, refresher and re-training courses in accordance with the needs of the business sector; territorially focused measures for addressing unemployment in the problem areas of the CBC region, for encouraging economically inactive persons to seek employment and stimulating the business sector for job creation;

- Measures to address the qualified personnel shortening issue and to raise the qualification of executive and senior management staff by continuing education, additional training, and re-training courses in accordance with the business needs;
- territorially oriented measures to tackle the unemployment in the problem areas of the CBC region, for encouraging economically inactive people to look for work and study and to stimulate the business to create new jobs.

Specific objective 1.2: The cultural and historical heritage of the Republic of Bulgaria and the Republic of North Macedonia: a prerequisite for the development of an attractive, all-season tourism product by means of smart solutions that ensure universal access and participation

Measure 1.2.1. Improving the mobility and connectivity of the transport and engineering infrastructure by a system of alternative mobility, including a grid of bicycle lanes, ‘dirt’ forest and country roads, helipads, etc.;

Relevant needs and development potential:

- providing investments in renovation and/or construction of engineering and transport infrastructure sites and facilities according to the territorially determined needs - road and railway connections, water supply and sewerage system, power supply, renewable energy sources, safety and security equipment, telecommunications and communication links;
- alternative mobility system development, including including a grid of bicycle lanes, ‘dirt’ forest and country roads, helipads, etc.

Measure 1.2.2. Development and marketing of integrated regional tourism products suitable for various activities through the inclusion of the cultural and historical heritage and natural assets; joint efforts for diversification of the forms of tourism services and the realization of all-season tourism in the CBC region;

Relevant needs and development potential:

- targeted measures for ecological tourism development;
- opportunity to development of regional tourist product based on the available natural resources, cultural heritage, mineral springs and relatively good tourist infrastructure;

Measure 1.2.3. Development of integrated targeted financial packages for supporting business activity and the creation of new SMEs in tourism with a focus on family businesses and the offering of local tourism products: wine and gourmet tourism, rural eco-tourism, cycling tourism, hunting and fishing, off-road tourism, etc.;

Relevant needs and development potential:

- targeted interventions to overcome the significant differences between the settlements of different hierarchical levels in the territorial structure in order to overcome the depopulation through packages of integrated measures for population retention;

- Singling out SMEs with a focus on the family business as a leading factor for sustainable socio-economic development by supporting/increasing the competence of SMEs for participation in European and national funding programmes;
- opportunity for the development of local crafts and services by adapting them to the modern market situation;

Measure 1.2.4 Creating a joint network of locations for the realization of concepts like ‘green school’, ‘in the country’, ‘visiting with...’, ‘made by...’, etc.;

Relevant needs and development potential:

- joint measures to reduce the vulnerability of tourist services due to pandemic and epidemic situations;
- targeted measures for ecological tourism development;
- financial support for cultural activities and exchange of cultural heritage;

Measure 1.2.5 Elaborating and applying joint measures for reducing the vulnerability of services in the tourism sector to the effects of pandemic and epidemic situations; promoting the development of health and recreational tourism: products and services related to physical exercise, outdoor sports, strengthening the immune system and improving the health status through spa procedures, climate therapy, mud therapy; combining short breaks of different kinds with individual travel;

Relevant needs and development potential:

- increasing the security and safety in tourist locations;
- opportunity to create a regional tourist product based on natural resources, cultural heritage, mineral springs, and the relatively good tourist infrastructure.

1.3. Alternatives to CBCP and TSIM

The programme and strategy drafts submitted by the Assignor do not contain alternatives. At a later stage it is possible to identify alternatives and options that will be analyzed in the EAR in terms of their impact on the environment and human health.

A detailed examination of the alternatives available at the time of its preparation will be made in the EAR, incl. the "zero alternative", if such are developed for CBCP and TSIM.

1.4. Relationship of CBCP and TSIM with other relevant plans, programs and strategies

In the EAR sub-item the relationship and correlation of the projects of CBCP and TSIM 2021 - 2027 will be analyzed with other plans, programs, and strategies:

- at European and international level;

- at the national, regional, and local level (that fall in the programme and strategy territorial scope of the Republic of Bulgaria and the Republic of North Macedonia).

A. Plans, programs and strategies related to CBCP and TSIM 2021-2027 at European (including bilateral) and international level.

- The United Nations (UN) 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development "Transforming our World";
- Territorial agenda 2030;
- European Green Deal/European Green Pact;
- Road map for an action plan aiming at zero pollution of water, air and soil (under preparation);
- Circular Economy Action Plan;
- 2030 EU Biodiversity Strategy;
- Regional Energy Strategy of the Cross-Border Region - Blagoevgrad District, the Republic of Bulgaria and the Eastern Planning Region of the Republic of Macedonia for the period 2018-2023;
- Other

B. Plans, programs and strategies on the territory of the Republic of Bulgaria, related to CBCP and TSIM 2021-2027:

- Draft Partnership Agreement for the programming period 2021-2027;
- National Development Programme: Bulgaria 2030;
- National Strategy for Regional Development for the period 2012-2022;
- National Concept for Spatial Development for the period 2013-2025 - Updated 2019;
- National Disaster Risk Reduction Strategy 2018-2030;
- National Strategy for Road Safety in the Republic of Bulgaria 2021 - 2030 and Action Plan for its implementation for the period 2021 - 2023;
- Recovery and sustainability plan (*draft*);
- National Air Pollution Control Programme (2020 - 2030);
- National Programme for Improving Ambient Air Quality 2018-2024;
- The National Strategy for Adaptation to Climate Change and the Action Plan until 2030;
- Integrated energy and climate change action plan of the Republic of Bulgaria 2021 - 2030;
- National Programme for Protection, Sustainable Use and Restoration of Soil Functions 2020-2030;
- National Waste Management Plan 2021-2028 (*draft*);

- National Strategy for Management and Development of the Water Sector in the Republic of Bulgaria and Action Plan for its implementation in short-term (2013 - 2015), medium-term (2016 - 2021), and long-term (2022 - 2037) perspective;
- National plan for protection of the most significant wetlands in Bulgaria 2013-2020;
- River Basin Management Plan in the West Aegean Region (2016-2021);
- Flood Risk Management Plan in the West Aegean Basin Management region for 2016-2021, incl. Draft of the Updated Preliminary Flood Risk Assessment for the West Aegean Basin Management Region, March - 2021;
- National Priority Framework for Action for Natura 2000 for the period 2021-2027 (*draft*).
- Integrated Territorial Strategy for Development of the Southwest Region from Level 2 for the period 2021-2027 (*draft*);
- Municipal strategies, plans and programs for Blagoevgrad and Kyustendil municipalities, incl. General development plans of the Municipality of Blagoevgrad and the Municipality of Kyustendil;
- Other

B. Plans, programs and strategies on the territory of the Republic of North Macedonia related to CBCP and TSIM 2021-2027:

- Regional Development Strategy of the Republic of North Macedonia 2021-2031;
- Development Programme for the Northeastern Planning Region 2020-2024;
- Development Programme for the Eastern Planning Region 2020-2024;
- Development Programme for the Southeastern Planning Region 2021-2026;
- National Strategy for Sustainable Development of the Republic of Macedonia 2009-2030;
- National Strategy for Protection of Nature 2017-2027;
- National Biodiversity Strategy with Action Plan 2018-2023;
- Energy Development Strategy of the Republic of Macedonia until 2040 (*draft*);
- Risk Management Strategy 2018-2020;
- Environmental and Climate Change Strategy;
- Water Strategy of the Republic of Macedonia;
- Strategic plans of the Ministry of Environment and Spatial Planning of the Republic of North Macedonia;
- National Strategy for Sustainable Development in the Republic of Macedonia;
- National Strategy for Environmental Investments;
- National Strategy for Environment Cohesion;

- Waste Management Strategy of the Republic of Macedonia (2008-2020);
- National Waste Management Plan of the Republic of Macedonia 2020 - 2026 (*draft*);
- National Ambient Air Protection Plans;
- Air Pollution Reduction Programme;
- Regional Waste Management Plans of the Republic of North Macedonia
- Plan for closure of non-compliant landfills in the Republic of Macedonia
- Other

The EAR will analyze the compliance and coherence of the CBCP and TSIM 2021-2027 assumptions with the relevant plans, programs, and strategies, incl. those proposed for consideration by the stakeholders as a result of consultations under this Assignment.

2. Current state of the environment and the likely development without application of CBCP and TSIM

2.1. Current state of the environment

The current state of the environment in the scope of the cross-border region - subject of CBCP and TSIM will be considered, analyzed and assessed in the EAR in relation to each environmental component and factor, incl. with regard to the population and human health for the territory of Blagoevgrad and Kyustendil Districts (Republic of Bulgaria) and Northeastern, Eastern and South-Eastern regions (Republic of North Macedonia). For the purpose of the Assignment only basic/summary information on the state of the environment is presented.

2.1.1. Climate and climate change

A. Climatic characteristics

Blagoevgrad and Kyustendil districts (Republic of Bulgaria)

The transitional geographical position and the diverse topography of the two districts determine the climate dynamics and variations in their territory. Three main climate types can be distinguished - temperate continental, transitional-continental, and mountain climate.

Along the rivers Struma, Strumeshnitsa and Mesta the climate has most markedly Mediterranean influence.

In general, the two districts are characterized by prolonged summer droughts in the lowlands, late spring and early autumn frosts, and below the national average and unevenly distributed by seasons and months rainfall values.

Northeastern, Eastern and Southeastern regions (Republic of North Macedonia)

In the western (lower) part of the **Northeastern region**, the temperate-continental (warm continental) climate prevails, in the eastern part a colder continental climate prevails, and in the mountains of an altitude over 1000 m - mountainous climate. According to the average monthly precipitation data, the values are relatively low but are spread relatively evenly over the year. The exception is the month of May with the largest precipitation quantities.

The climate in the **Eastern region** is formed under the influence of the Mediterranean and continental climate. Long and dry summers are typical, with frequent occurrence of high temperatures up to + 41°C and mild and humid winters with rare occurrence of low temperatures.

The specific **South-Eastern region's** geographical and topographical position favors long hot summers with high daily temperatures and decreasing annual precipitation, as well as low winter temperatures and winds from all directions. Typical winds for this region are: northwestern, southwestern, North, and southern warm winds.

B. Climate change

The record high temperatures in recent decades, the glaciers melting, the wetter air, etc. show that global warming is an indisputable fact. Since 1989, positive anomalies of the average annual air temperature compared to the climatic norm of the 1961-1990 base period have prevailed.

For the cross-border area in question the trends are:

- Decrease in precipitation, which is mainly due to the increase in temperatures - a decrease in water resources is expected, incl. for drinking and sanitary purposes and irrigation, which will have a negative impact on the population and agriculture;
- Registered increasing the frequency of extreme meteorological phenomena - floods and droughts, compared to the recent past;
- Deterioration of water quality in water bodies - due to the reduced water quantity, respectively the reduced amount of dissolved oxygen, the discharges will lead to an increase in the concentration of pollutants;
- Drying of the forest plantations, especially in the oak belt up to altitude about 1200 m, and change of the vegetation species composition at higher altitude, leading to increased risk of fires and pests;
- Direct and indirect effects on human health - air pollution, food pollution, drinking water, incl. shortage of drinking water.

The EAR will provide detailed information on the current state and climatic specificity of the climatic areas and sub-areas in which the cross-border territory falls within the scope of CBCP and TSIM; the state and trends of climate change; greenhouse gas emission levels by indicators.

2.1.2. Ambient air status

Blagoevgrad and Kyustendil districts (Republic of Bulgaria)

According to the national and European legislation requirements by Order No. 969/21.12.2013 of the Minister of Environment and Waters the country's territory is divided into six Regions for Ambient Air Quality Assessment and Management, (RAAQAM). The Quality of Ambient Air (QAA) data analysis is performed by regions, taking into account the specifics of each settlement in which the control is performed. Blagoevgrad and Kyustendil districts fall in the territory of Southwestern RAAQAM.

According to Order RD-969/21.12.2013 of the Minister of Environment and Water, the territory of the Blagoevgrad Municipality is included in the list of regions for Ambient Air Quality Assessment and Management (AAQAM) in the territory of the Republic of Bulgaria as a zone/territorial unit in which fine particle air pollution (PM10) and polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (surfactants) are observed. An updated Programme for the ambient air quality of the Blagoevgrad municipality for the period 2019-2023 is applied. The main air pollution source is domestic heating.

Northeastern, Eastern and Southeastern regions (Republic of North Macedonia)

The Republic of North Macedonia also faces ambient air quality problems. Annually the concentrations of certain pollutants exceed the limit values set in the national legislation - the main problem is fine particulate matter pollution (PM10 and PM2.5), as the main source is domestic heating, similar to the Republic of Bulgaria. The state implements a *Programme for Limitation of Ambient Air Pollution*.

The EAR will analyze data on ambient air pollution in the areas covered by CBCP and TSIM, the main sources of pollution and current trends in ambient air quality.

2.1.3. Water status, water protection zones, flood risk

The main objective of European water policy is to ensure a sufficient good quality water supply, both for human needs and for the environment.

A. Surface water

Blagoevgrad and Kyustendil districts (Republic of Bulgaria)

The territory of the two districts falls within the West Aegean Water Management Region and in the catchwater basins of Struma and Mesta rivers.

These two river basins are the most water-bearing among the river basins in the country, with the largest annual runoff volume. The basins of Strumeshnitsa and Lebnitsa rivers (tributaries of the river Struma) are cross-border between the Republic of Bulgaria and the Republic of North Macedonia.

The period of validity of the CBC Programme and the TSIM coincides with the implementation of RBMPs and RBF in the West Aegean Region for the period 2016-2021, as well as for the period 2022-2027.

The current environmental status review, shows the surface and groundwater status and characteristics determined by the relevant water bodies according to the information contained in

the RBMP 2016 - 2021 in the West Aegean Region and current information on the state of water posted on the website of West Aegean Basin Directorate. / WABD/

The environmental assessment report will take into consideration the statement of West Aegean Basin Directorate with reference № 11-01-155 (1) /09. 06.2021.

Northeastern, Eastern and Southeastern regions (Republic of North Macedonia)

The surface water bodies in the three regions of the Republic of North Macedonia fall into two river basins - Aegean - Strumica River and Vardar - Bregalnitsa River.

The most common reasons for the surface water bodies' environmental status deterioration in the region are related to organic pollution from untreated domestic and industrial wastewater, diffuse pollution from agricultural activities - agriculture and livestock farming, unauthorised discharges of untreated domestic and industrial waste waters.

B. Groundwater

The factors that determine the conditions for the groundwater formation, dynamics and regime are physico-geographical: relief, climate, hydrology and hydrography, and geology: geological structure, lithological structure of rocks and tectonic structures.

The cross-border area is rich in groundwater bodies.

The most significant cause for the poor condition of the water bodies in the region, assessed by physicochemical parameters (exceeded values for BOD₅, electrical conductivity, nitrite nitrogen, nitrate nitrogen, total phosphorus content, etc.), are the sources of diffuse pollution (settlements without built sewerage, waste pollution, etc.).

C. Water protection zones

According to the provisions of Art. Article 6 of the EU Water Framework Directive EU Member States are required to ensure setting up of registers for all water protection zones within each individual basin management area, which are reviewed and updated every 6 years.

Regulated are the following water protection zones:

- the catchment area of the surface water bodies and the land over the groundwater bodies, used for drinking and sanitary water supply, and have an average daily flow of more than 10 cubic meters or serve for water supply of more than 50 people, and water bodies that are planned to be used for drinking and sanitary water supply;
- water bodies defined as recreational and water sports waters, including designated bathing areas;
- areas where water is sensitive to nutrients pollution, including vulnerable zones and sensitive areas;
- areas for preservation/protection of economically valuable fish species and other aquatic organisms;

- protected areas and zones designated or declared as for habitats protection and species in which the sustainment or improvement of water status is an important factor for their protection.

D. Flood risk

An integrated approach to flood risk management is introduced by Directive 2007/60/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 October 2007 on the assessment and management of flood risks, aimed to reduce the future risks through research, assessment and impact on all factors influencing the occurrence of floods and the significance of their consequences on human health, economic activity and the environment.

The Directive requires Member States to develop a Flood Risk Management Plans (FRMP) with a Programme of Measures (PoM) included. They are aimed to create the conditions for reducing the adverse effects of floods on the human health, the environment, the cultural heritage and the economic activity, in particular in certain areas with a significant potential risk of floods.

The cross-border area subject to CBCP and TSIM includes areas with a significant potential flood risk.

The EAR will present information on the state of the surface and groundwaters in the area of the cross-border region, subject to CBCP and TSIM, the water protection zones status, and the existence of areas with significant potential risk of floods. For the waters analyzes on the territory of Blagoevgrad and Kyustendil districts RBMPs and FRMPs of the West Aegean region for the period 2016-2021 will be used, as well as the updated preliminary flood risk assessment to the draft FRMP for the period 2022-2027.

2.1.4. Condition of the earth's depths

The contemporary natural geographical territorial appearance of the Republic of Bulgaria and the Republic of North Macedonia is a result of a long and complex development, which beginning is set in the geological past. The main relief formations were formed during the action of the folding, fault, volcanic and sedimentation processes, especially during the last neotectonic stage of the territory development.

The EAR will consider the specificity of the earth's depths on the territory within the scope of CBCP and TSIM.

2.1.5. Soil status

Blagoevgrad and Kyustendil districts (Republic of Bulgaria)

According to the forest-vegetation zoning of the Republic of Bulgaria, Blagoevgrad and Kyustendil districts fall into the Thracian forest-vegetation region, Osogovia subregion. Main soil type in the river valleys, in the plains and in the lower parts of the mountain slopes up to altitude of 600 m are fluvisols (alluvial and deluvial soils), luvisols (terra rossa (cinamonic) forest soils), and also shallow rendzic leptosols. In the mountains at altitude from 700 to 1300 m, in sessile oak,

beech and fir forests area the cambisols (brown forest soils) are widespread. At an altitude of 1000 - 1500 m there are cambisols (brown forest soils) under beech and mixed forests of fir and spruce.

In the higher parts of the high mountain belt, under spruce forests, there are cambisols (dark-colored forest soils), which at an altitude of over 1500 m are replaced by mountain-meadow soils and shallow regosols.

Northeastern, Eastern and Southeastern regions (Republic of North Macedonia)

Based on the geological composition, the relief structure, climatic conditions, hydrographic features and characteristics of the vegetation and the wild nature, different soil types mosaic has been formed in the considered regions of the Republic of North Macedonia. The river valleys soils are characterized by fluvisols, and for the mountain foothills - brown forest soils. Umbric leptosols (rankers) or humus silicate soils are typical for high mountain pastures.

The EAR will provide detailed information on the soils status, incl. soil sealing, soil erosion, soil pollution in the area ofCBCP and TSIM.

2.1.6. Biodiversity status

The biodiversity of the Republic of Bulgaria and the Republic of North Macedonia within the territorial scope of CBCP and TSIM is characterized by great heterogeneity and a high degree of relictness and endemism. This is a result of their central geographical position on the Balkan Peninsula, as well as the influences to which the territory has been exposed in the past, especially during the Pleistocene. Large temperature fluctuations before, during and after the end of the ice age have caused mass wildlife migrations. Such movements have left deep traces on the recent flora and fauna of the wider European area, including the cross-border area in question.

The EAR will provide information on the characteristic vegetation and fauna in the area covered by the CBCP and TSIM, incl. rare and endangered species (including species subject of protection according to normative acts), invasive alien species and non-native species, natural habitats, etc.

2.1.7. Protected zones and protected territories

For preservation or restoration of the favorable status of natural habitats and species in their natural area ofdistribution, specially differentiated territories with a protection regime shall be established.

The EAR will address the protected zones and protected territories within the cross-border area.

2.1.8. Landscape status

Blagoevgrad and Kyustendil districts (Republic of Bulgaria)

According to the Landscape zoning of G. Petrov, 1997, the region of Blagoevgrad and Kyustendil districts falls in the South Bulgarian mountain-valley region, occupying parts of the

Krayshte, Osogovo - middle Struma, South Struma, Rila and Pirin subregions. As landscape classes, river valley and mountain classes prevail.

Northeastern, Eastern and Southeastern regions (Republic of North Macedonia)

The range of the three regions also includes a variety of relief forms and the altitude varies from 60 to over 2000 m - river valley and mountain landscapes are also typical.

The EAR will include an analysis of the area landscape status in the territory within the range of CBCP and TSIM.

2.1.9. Tangible assets status

The tangible assets are divided into fixed assets (land, buildings, infrastructure, facilities) and short-term assets (raw materials). Their status depends directly on the availability of financial resources for their renovation and development. In the cross-border area, the need for investment in specific activities and measures is determined mainly on the basis of the current tangible assets status.

The EAR will include an analysis of the main tangible assets status related to CBCP and TSIM.

2.1.10. Cultural and historical heritage, including architectural and archaeological heritage

The Republic of Bulgaria and the Republic of North Macedonia possess wealth of cultural values, incl. registered on the territory of the cross-border region in the range of CBCP and TSIM.

The EAR will present information on the cultural heritage and the regulations for its preservation and protection on the territory of the cross-border region within the range of CBCP and TSIM.

2.1.11. Harmful physical factors status

The motor vehicle traffic is the main source of noise pollution in Europe, and due to the development of urbanization and the increased need for mobility, over the next decade, the noise levels are expected to increase in both urban and rural areas.

To limit the harmful effects of the environmental noise, Directive 2002/49/EC of 25 June 2002 on the assessment and management of environmental noise was adopted.

In both the Republic of Bulgaria and the Republic of North Macedonia the relevant legislation to limit environmental noise has been adopted.

The EAR will provide information on the harmful noise factor status and the main sources of noise pollution in the cross-border region in the range of CBCP and TSIM.

2.1.12. Waste status and management

Waste is perceived as an environmental, social and economic problem, and the growing consumption and "consumer" behavior of society continue to produce large amounts of waste. To prevent waste formation large and diverse efforts are needed. Wastes are also loss of material

resources (metals and other recyclable materials), and at the same time has potential as energy sources.

The implementation of waste treatment activities such as reuse and recycling are environmentally friendly, allowing for turning the waste off the landfills.

Both the Republic of Bulgaria and the Republic of North Macedonia develop and implement National Waste Management Plans. Regarding the trends observed so far:

- In recent years, the **Republic of Bulgaria** has maintained a relatively constant level of waste handed over for recovery, which is indicative of efforts for waste recycling, reduce the amount of landfilling at the national level and apply the hierarchy in waste management practices;
- The main method for final waste disposal in the **Republic of North Macedonia** is landfilling. Only some hazardous waste from healthcare facilities and some hazardous liquid waste are incinerated. There are reported issues with waste accountability.

The EAR will provide detailed information on waste management in the cross-border region falling under the range of CBCP and TSIM.

2.1.13. Hazardous chemicals and risk of major accidents

At the implementation of activities and measures under CBCP and TSIM, related to the construction of sites and infrastructure, it is necessary to take into account the existing enterprises in the area, executing activities for storage/production/use of hazardous chemicals and mixtures in quantities that pose a risk of large accidents. Depending on the quantity of these substances (when it is above the relevant threshold quantity), the enterprises are classified as having a low or high risk potential.

In order to take into account the existing such enterprises in terms of the risk to the environment and human health, information on them will be presented in the EAR.

2.1.14. The population health status

The main health indicators for assessing the population health status are the demographic indicators (birth rate, mortality, infant mortality, natural increase), morbidity, mortality classified by cause of death and others. Their analysis, together with the analysis of risk factors for the population and human health (factors of the socio-economic environment; lifestyle factors; environmental and occupational environment factors), will give a clear idea of the current situation and trends in the health status of the population.

In recent years, in the considered cross-border area there are tendencies for population decrease, low birth rate, high mortality - with the leading cause cardiovascular diseases and neoplasms.

The most significant of the environmental factors, is the impact of the air and noise pollution.

EAR will use the available official statistics and reports, based on which an analysis of demographic indicators and risk factors for human health in the cross-border area within the range of CBCP and TSIM will be performed.

2.2. Possible development of the environment without application of CBCP and TSIM

Based on the characteristics of the environmental aspects in item 2.1 of the EAR, in item 2.2. an analysis of possible development of environmental aspects will be made, incl. the impact on the human health, without CBCP and TSIM implementation (thus the impact of the “zero alternative”, i.e. refusal of CBCP and TSIM implementation will be assessed).

3. Environmental characteristics for areas that are likely to be significantly affected by the implementation of CBCP and TSIM

Based on the characteristics of the current environmental aspects (which will be assessed in item 2 of the EAR), as well as the CBCP and TSIM assumptions, this section of the EAR will be pay attention to areas that will be the most -significantly affected by the programme and strategy. Sensitive areas such as protected territories of the Natura 2000 ecological network, settlements and other sites, subject to health protection, sanitary protection zones around water sources, areas at risk of floods, etc. will be examined in detail.

4. Existing environmental problems, identified at different levels, and related to CBCP and TSIM, including those related to areas of special environmental importance, such as protected areas under the Biodiversity Act.

The item will describe the existing country’s environmental problems, identified at different levels, and related to CBCP and TSIM. An analysis of the relationship between environmental problems and the programme and strategy assumptions will be made, respectively - conclusions whether CBCP and/or TSIM lead to the environmental situation improvement or deterioration of existing environmental problems and/or occurrence of new ones.

5. Environmental protection objectives at national and international level relevant to the CBCP and TSIM and the way these objectives and all environmental considerations are taken into account in the preparation of the programme and strategy.

An analysis of the strategies, plans and programs that set goals for environmental protection at national (for the Republic of Bulgaria and the Republic of North Macedonia) and international (European) level, relevant to CBCP and TSIM will be made in this item. Based on the analysis, conclusions will be drawn on the way and extent to which these objectives and environmental considerations are taken into account in the programme.

6. Possible significant effects on the environment and human health, incl. also cross-border environmental impacts in other countries

As CBCP and TSIM are strategic documents, according to the nature and detail of their assumptions, the assessment of the possibly significant effects on the environment and human health will be made at two levels of detail:

- Strategic level:
 - For CBCP, this includes an assessment of the impact of *the General Objective, the Priorities and the Specific Objective*;
 - For TSIM, this includes an impact assessment of *the Vision, the Strategic Objective and the Specific Objectives*.
- Level "Measures/Activities":
 - For CBCP, this includes an assessment of the impact of *the supported activities/investments*;
 - For TSIM, this includes an assessment of the impact of *the measures*.

The impact will be assessed by components and environmental factors analysis of the probable significant impacts on the environment and human health, incl. secondary, cumulative, simultaneous, short-term, medium-term, long-term, permanent and temporary, positive and negative consequences of the implementation of CBCP and TSIM.

Regarding the **probable cross-border impact** as a result of the implementation of the CBCP and TSIM:

- The CBCP and TSIM are cross-border as a nature and scope, and both documents aim to have an impact within the range of the defined cross-border region. In this context, **by drafting up a common EAR for the whole territory within the range of the programme, the impact the both documents assumptions in the cross-border region will be assessed by default, and consultations will be carried out in both countries;**

- Regarding the cross-border impacts within the meaning of *the Protocol on Strategic Environmental Assessment to the Convention on Environmental Impact Assessment in a Transboundary Context*, the EAR will analyze the likelihood of cross-border impacts on the territory of other countries outside the CBCP and TSIMs. At this stage, taking into account the assumptions of the draft programme and strategy, there is no reason to assume a cross-border impact on the nearest neighboring countries - the Republic of Serbia and the Hellenic Republic.

7. Envisaged measures for as fully as possible prevention, reduction and compensation of the adverse effects of CBCP and TSIM implementation on the environment and human health

Based on the results of the analyzes and assessments, performed in the previous item (of the EAR), of alleged impact on the environment and human health as a result of the implementation of the CBCP and TSIM, measures will be proposed to prevent, reduce and compensate in the maximum possible extent the unfavorable consequences on the environment and human health caused by programme and strategy implementation.

The measures will be reasoned, also with regard to the expected results of their implementation. They will be presented as:

- *measures to be included in the final version of the programme;*
- *measures to be executed at the programme implementation.*

When proposing the measures, the results of the consultations under the EA procedure will also be taken into account.

8. Reasons for choosing the considered alternatives

At the time of development of this Assignment for the scope and content of the EAR, the CBCP and TSIM projects do not contain alternatives.

In case alternatives and options are identified at the next stage, they will be analyzed in the EAR in terms of their impact on the environment and human health.

The EAR will include a comparison of the alternatives available at the time of its preparation, incl. "Zero alternative", if identified for CBCP and/or TSIM.

9. Methods for carrying out the ecological assessment, used regulatory provisions and documents and difficulties in gathering the necessary information

The main **methodological documents** that will be used include the following instructions and methodologies:

- Guidance on the implementation of Directive 2001/42/EC on the assessment of the effects of certain plans and programmes on the environment - European Commission – DG Environment;

- Guidance on Integrating Climate Change and Biodiversity into Strategic Environmental Assessment, 2013 – European Commission;
- The Use of Spatial Data for the Preparation of Environmental Reports in Europep JRC technical support, 2010;
- Resource Manual to Support Application of the Protocol on Strategic Environmental Assessment, 2011 – UNECE;
- Good Practice Recommendations on Public Participation in Strategic Environmental Assessment, 16 February 2016 – UNECE;
- Cross border orientation paper for IPA CBC cooperation programmes with the participation of regions of Bulgaria, North Macedonia and Turkey, Ref. Ares(2019)6239329 - 09/10/2019;
- Strategic environmental assessment in Interreg NEXT programmes - Guidance note and review of approaches, July 2020, TESIM;
- Letter Ref. Ares(2020)32846 - 06/01/2020 of EC with provisions and clarifications for environmental assessments applicable to the plans and programmes co-financed by the EU in the period 2021-2027;
- Presentation on *Application of the SEA Directive to the EU 2021-2027 cofinanced programs*, 40th meeting of the Expert Group on ESIF(EGESIF), Brussels, 11-12 February 2020, Directorate-General for the Environment.

The EAR preparation will be carried out according to the following **methodological approach**:

- 1) Acquaintance of the expert team with the drafted CBCP and TSIM and their assumptions, as well as the other documentation provided by the Assignor, and the opinions on the assignment for determining the scope and content of EAR;
- 2) Analysis of the plans, strategies and programs related to the drafts of CBCP and TSIM;
- 3) Collection, analysis and processing of data on the current status of the environment by components and factors, and its relationship with the current level of development of the cross-border area in the scope ofCBCP and TSIM;
- 4) Analysis of the environment development in case of non-implementation of CBCP and TSIM (impact assessment of the so-called "Zero alternative");
- 5) Analysis of the probable significant impact on areas with CBCP and TSIM;
- 6) Collection, analysis and processing of data on existing environmental issues at national level and their relation with the CBCP and TSIM, incl. probable development of these issues with and without CBCP and TSIM implementation;
- 7) Analysis of the extent to which the CBCP and TSIM drafts take into account the relevant environmental protection objectives and measures, included/identified in documents - plans, strategies and programs at national and international level;

- 8) Analysis and assessment of CBCP and TSIM impact on the environment: As CBCP and TSIM are strategic documents, the assessment of the possibly significant effects on the environment and human health will be made at two levels of detail (“strategic” and “measures*activities”);
- 9) Proposing measures to prevent, reduce and limit the impacts, as well as impact monitoring and control measures of the programme at its implementation;
- 10) Reasoned choice of the most appropriate alternative in terms of impact on the environment and human health;
- 11) Elaboration of reasoned conclusion for the CBCP and TSIM implementation.

The main **legislative acts** that will be taken into account when preparing the EA report are:

A. For the Republic of Bulgaria:

- Environmental Protection Law;
- Biodiversity Act;
- Waste Management Law;
- Clean Ambient Air Law;
- Mitigating Climate Change Law
- Water Law;
- Plant Protection Law;
- Law for Soil;
- Noise Protection in the Environment law;
- Law on Protected Areas;
- Agricultural Land Protection Law and Regulations for its implementation;
- Cultural Heritage Act;
- Disaster Protection Act;
- Spatial Planning Act;
- Forest Law and Regulations for its implementation;
- Health and Safety at Work Law;
- Health Law;
- Regulation on the conditions and arrangements for environmental assessment of plans and programs;
- Regulation on the conditions and arrangements for assessing the compatibility of plans, programmes, projects and investment proposals with the object and aims of conserving protected areas;
- Other by-laws regulating the components and factors of the environment and human health.

B. For the Republic of North Macedonia (https://www.moep.gov.mk/?page_id=901):

- Environmental Law (incl. *Chapter X Assessment of the effect of particular strategies, plans and programs on the environment*);
- Ambient Air Quality Law;
- Nature Protection Law;
- Law on Environmental Protection from Noise;
- Waste Management Law;
- Law on Batteries and Accumulators and Waste Batteries and Accumulators;
- Environmental Management of Packaging and Packaging Waste Management Act;
- Law on Management of Electrical and Electronic Equipment;
- Water Law;
- Spatial and Urban Planning Act;
- Law on Implementation of the Spatial Plan of the Republic of Macedonia;
- World Natural and Cultural Heritage Act;
- Law on Assessment;
- By-laws on *Strategic Environmental Impact Assessment*:
 - Decree on public participation during the preparation of regulations and other acts, as well as plans and programs in the field of environment;
 - Decree on strategies, plans and programs, including changes in such strategies, plans and programs, for which it is compulsory to apply procedure for impact assessment on the environment and on human life and health;
 - Decree on strategic environmental assessment report content;
 - Decree on the criteria on the basis of which decisions are made as to whether certain planning documents could have a significant impact on the environment and human health;
- Other by-laws regulating the components and factors of the environment and human health.

The following **information sources** will also be used:

- Official statistical data, reports and bulletins for the Republic of Bulgaria and the Republic of North Macedonia;
- National reports on the environmental status and protection in the Republic of Bulgaria and the Republic of North Macedonia;
- Strategies, plans and programs of the Republic of Bulgaria and the Republic of North Macedonia related to CBCP and TSIM;

- Strategies, plans and programs at national (of the Republic of Bulgaria and the Republic of North Macedonia) and international (European) level, setting goals for environmental protection;
- Literary sources on the environmental components and factors in the Republic of Bulgaria and the Republic of North Macedonia (climatic factors, geology, hydrology, landscape, vegetation, fauna, etc.).

The technical shortcomings (if any are established) and the lack of know-how in obtaining information will also be considered.

For the preparation of this Assignment the following documentation was used:

- CBCP and TSIM drafts;
- Regulatory provisions for programme development for the programming period 2021-2027;
- Letter Ref.No. **EC-17/29.06.2021** of the Minister of Environment and Water;
- Other documentation provided by the Managing authority (MA) and National authority (NA), (plans, programs and strategies related to CBCP and TSIM, environmental information for the territory of the Republic of North Macedonia).

10. Monitoring measures during the implementation of CBCP and TSIM

According to the results and conclusions of the forecasts for the impact on the environment and human health resulting from CBCP and TSIM implementation, measures for monitoring and control of the impact on the environment and human health, as a result of the application of the programme and strategy, will be recommended. The measures will include measurable indicators, which value will determine the presence or absence of significant impact on the environment and human health resulting from CBCP and TSIM implementation.

11. Environmental Assessment Conclusion

Based on the results of the forecasts elaborated in the EAR, as well as the opinions received during the EA procedure, the team of experts will formulate its conclusion on the alleged significant impact of CBCP and TSIM on the environment and human health.

12. Reference on the results of the conducted consultations in the process of CBCP and TSIM preparation and the Ecological Assessment

The EAR will describe all the opinions received in the course of the environmental assessment procedure, as well as the way they are reflected in the Environmental Assessment Report and the reasons for this.

13. *Non-technical summary of the Environmental Assessment*

As a separate appendix to the Environmental Assessment Report, a non-technical summary will be prepared, in which concise, but sufficient for the general public information on the main sections of the EAR, containing no technical terms, subject to the provisions of Art. 3 of the EA Ordinance, will be presented.

14. *Annexes to the Environmental Assessment Report*

In addition to the statutory required non-technical summary, which is a separate annex, copies of opinions obtained as a result of consultations on the assignment for the scope and content of EAR and other annexes will be provided, where necessary.