

SUBJECT: Presentation of project ideas for development of the cross-border region within the scope of the CBC programme between the Republic of Bulgaria and the Republic of Serbia 2021-2027

Dear partners,

In the next seven years the European Union will expand financing of projects that come from the local communities. This territorial approach, known as "bottom-up", is deeply embedded in the CBC programme between Republic of Bulgaria and Republic of Serbia 2021-2027, where half of the budget is streamed for such projects. Their implementation of the programme will be based on an Integrated Territorial Strategy of the CBC region (ITS) (its summary is attached to this invitation). It aims to support the ideas of local entrepreneurs, institutions and organizations for integrated development of the territory, taking into account common challenges that both side of the border face. The ITS support concentrates on two specific objectives: (1) To expand and improve service provision, and (2) To enhance regional competitiveness, incl. in the area of tourism.

A very important aspect of the implementation of ITS is the need to build a strong link between funded projects and strategy`s goals. In this regard, we invite you and your members to present project ideas and solutions that you believe can transform the cross-border region into a desired place for life and investments. When drawing your idea, you should take into account the following factors:

- The submission of a project idea at this stage does not guarantee the green light for funding;
- The deadline for signing of contracts under the programme is December 31, 2027.
- The indicative total budget of the Strategy is EUR 20,96 million;
- A critical component of your project idea is the need to build it on broad partnership with local organizations from either side of the border and to emphasize on clearly measurable cross-border benefits and effects.

The submitted project ideas will be used as a basis to set up a list of operations (thematically grouped project ideas) that will underpin the implementation of the ITS. Here are the criteria by which the received project ideas will be thematically grouped in operations:

- Cross-border effect of the project idea, achieved as a result of a broad and multi-sectoral partnership (e.g wide range and different type of partners which cooperate on a joint solution/joint project such as NGOs, municipalities, universities, local and regional bodies and other public authorities as well as in different fields of activity);
- Clear links of the project idea with the objectives and measures set in the Strategy;
- Correspondence between the resources needed and the time and budget framework of the Strategy.

There will be workshops organized in each of the programme regions where interested enterprises, organizations and all types of institutions may take part and receive answers of all questions they may have in relation to the present campaign for collecting project ideas. Gathering all CBC actors in one place can spur and unlock strong motivation and inspiration to set up an active community that really makes a difference on the cross-border region.

Participation in the workshops needs to be confirmed. Each workshop is expected to be no more than 2 hours.

The workshops are scheduled as follows:

1. For Bulgarian speakers – two dates (*online, via Webex platform. The workshops will be hosted by the National Centre for Regional Development, Bulgaria*) - **December 16th and 17th 2021, 15.00 EET.**
2. For Serbian speakers – two dates (*online, The workshops will be hosted by the National Authority, Ministry of European Integration*) - **December 20th and 21th 2021**

Participants willing to join the workshops on the territory of Bulgaria should send email to office@ncrdhp.bg no later than 1 day before the meeting, and they will receive a Webex link for the workshop. Those willing to take part in the workshops on the territory of Serbia should send email to gd_nis@mei.gov.rs no later than 2 days before the scheduled meeting.

Please, briefly present your project idea by answering 4 short questions here. The deadline to do so is **January 31th 2022.**

Looking forward to seeing our cross-border region cooperative and flourishing!

Sincerely,

Managing and National authority of the INTERREG IPA CBC programme between the Republic of Bulgaria and the Republic of Serbia 2021-2027