

Cross Border Institution Building - CBIB Phase I ending !

Dear readers,

After an exciting 29-month long journey, the first phase of the CBIB – Cross Border Institution Building project is nearing its end. Officially, the project will close on October 22nd 2008.

Cross-border cooperation under the new EC financial instrument, IPA, is a complex process that is taking place for the first time on 8 Western Balkan internal borders in parallel. In order for this process to be successful, an efficient regional coordination mechanism and synergies at all levels had to be established. With the hard work and commitment of all the National Authorities in all WB countries, as well as the firm guidance and direct involvement of the European Commission, programming documents were prepared as the legal basis for the process and approved in December 2007.

Subsequently, Joint Management Structures, necessary for the effective and efficient programme and project management and implementation, have been set up on all borders.

Potential Applicants of the IPA CBC have been informed on time on the content of the programmes and the funding opportunities through an awareness campaign organized throughout the Region by the CBIB in cooperation with National Authorities and other local and regional partners.

After the information campaign and in order to strengthen programme management and implementation capacities as well as project preparation capacities that would ensure efficient usage of funds available CBIB has organized a series of training sessions for the representatives of national institutions and Joint Management Structures and for Potential Applicants.

All these steps were necessary in order to come to the current, very important, milestone in the process: launching of Calls for Proposals on all borders!

A lot has already been done. However, successful programme and project implementation are currently the biggest challenge before all the IPA CBC stakeholders in the Region. In order to make sure that the process continues to run smoothly and to maintain the momentum gained during the first phase of the CBIB, the European Commission has decided to fund the second phase of the project that should follow immediately. This proves the added value of achieving coordination and cooperation on the regional level!

In this issue of CBIB focus, we are presenting the two Western Balkan countries we did not cover so far – Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia (pages 2-8) - but we also wanted to present you a summary of the project activities and show you the CBIB team who supported you during the whole process and with its professionalism and belief in a common goal has strongly contributed that so much was achieved (pages 9-14).

After this first phase of the project, I and the whole CBIB team would like to thank all the project partners and IPA CBC stakeholders in all the countries of the Western Balkans for their hard work, support and commitment to achieving important new milestones for the cross-border cooperation process among the Western Balkan countries together!

Natasa Gospodjinacki
CBIB Team Leader

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**Cross Border Institution
Building**



Interview: Ms Gordana Lazarevic, Assistant Minister, Ministry of Finance, Republic of Serbia



Programming and Managing EU Funds and Development Assistance, has succeeded in creating a new way of communicating with potential beneficiaries in areas where these programs are implemented. We created a network of local offices in Subotica, Vrsac, Bor, Nis, Sremska Mitrovica, Uzice and Prijepolje through which anyone who is interested can receive all the information and express their needs for training which will be provided to them during the entire period of programme implementation. The establishment of a powerful IT system was of significant help too. The system enables direct reporting on the internet; it organizes all the documents and provides easy access to them, and gives answers to frequently asked questions. Of course, there is great enthusiasm and work among all of the members of the team in order to provide permanent and timely communication with potential participants in the programme and those whose projects were approved.

all work is done by people. However, I hope that these problems will be overcome and that, on the basis of experience gained from Neighbourhood Programmes, suitable solutions adapted to the characteristics of cooperation with Bosnia, Montenegro and Croatia will be found.

CBIB: What is the importance of cross-border cooperation for Serbia's European integrations?

G.L.: The importance of cross-border cooperation for EU integrations is manifold. Firstly, in this way Serbia receives additional funds which it can use to expand and strengthen cooperation with the neighbours, which are at the same time its main trading partners, and to renew all forms of cooperation among local communities, both between the bodies and institutions of local self-government and civil society organizations. This represents an indirect financial support to border areas, which are, as a rule, relatively less economically developed because of the proximity to the border.

Secondly, these kind of programmes enable joint planning of activities in areas they cover, joint financing and joint realization of projects. In a longer term, CBC represents a basis for strengthening cohesion policies which are the cornerstone of European integrations, because cohesion means reducing differences between current and future EU member states, and as an end result, it has convergence of economic and social development, lessening of regional disparities, increase in employment and competitiveness.

In addition, CBC has initiated a major process of educating the participants in those programmes. They are getting to know the way of thinking about new projects and goals which are to be realized and the way those projects contribute not only to cooperation, but to better lives of the citizens and overcoming difficult problems in interethnic relations inherited from the past. They also learn the way the projects are implemented, how does financial reporting and controlling work, how to respect deadlines and work hard to meet them, and finally they get to feel the joy when the project gives results.

This work is far from easy, but the Ministry of Finance, through its Sector for

Our goal is to break the stereotype that there are not enough projects, that there are no capacities for their implementation and that the money is not being spent purposefully. I believe that we have managed to do so, mainly through joint efforts and setting a standard of zero tolerance for negative occurrences – they must be avoided and if they do happen, they need to be corrected immediately with the ultimate consequence being shutting down the project and demanding that the funds spent up to that point be returned. This message was clearly communicated to all participants in projects from the first day and there was no backing down. Serbia was fortunate enough so the hard work on overcoming complex financial rules set by the EU paid off. No project was cancelled and the funds from the previous cross-border projects were fully used. Close to 200 projects, which are now in different stages of implementation, were created along the border with Hungary, Romania and Bulgaria.

CBIB: Programs with neighbouring countries in the Western Balkans – a challenge?

G.L.: What was learned during the implementation of Neighbourhood Programs will be applied in practice in cross-border cooperation with the Western Balkan countries. This cooperation will be a lot easier because there are no visas and there no language barriers. Economic ties are very strong as well. What I see as possible problems are the relatively big lagging behind of some border areas, unfavorable terrain configuration, and nonexistence of strong economic and university centers which could use their knowledge and experience and relative financial strength to support the co-financing of the programs in the first call for proposals. Also, a relatively low population density is worrying because

Serbia will, based on the experience from Neighbourhood Programmes, manage joint technical secretariats for Bosnia and Herzegovina and Montenegro. This is a big responsibility because it is the first time that a country which is not a member of the EU is managing an administrative structure like that. Also, it is very important that Serbia did not hesitate for a moment to share its experience, regulations and the developed IT software for monitoring projects in cross-border cooperation.

CBIB: What are the internal organization and the capacities of the Ministry for implementing the programmes?

G.L.: The Ministry of Finance continuously monitors the new developments in CBC and tries to secure the necessary financial and material means for performing its duties. The assistance that came from the CARDS programme was extremely important for raising capacities of the department for cross-border cooperation. Joint expertise and money from the EU and UNDP helped establish new administrative structures and educate the employees, relieve the burden of high costs of forming new institutions and ease the pressure on the budget. Also, Serbian Government supported the expansion of the administration in the area of cross-border cooperation and enabled the continuous increase in the number of employees. However, the fluctuation of personnel is still high.

As far as the readiness for the programmes with the countries of the Western Balkans is concerned, it is satisfactory at this moment. We founded joint technical secretariats and new local offices, and we hired trained people in order to be ready for the opening of the call for proposals which are expected by the end of this year. In addition, we worked a lot on meeting with people and organizations in areas eligible for funds and introducing them to the contents of the programmes and the activities that can be financed. This work was not done only by the Ministry, but also by the people from the regional EC project, CBIB. This project was of particular importance for the countries which had no or limited experience in working on cross-border cooperation projects.



Interview: Ms. Nada Bojanic, Head of Department for Cross-Border Cooperation, Directorate for European Integration of Bosnia and Herzegovina



Ms Nada Bojanic talked about the challenges in implementation of CBC programs in the region, specific activities implemented to date and upcoming tasks of a small, but dedicated team in Bosnia and Herzegovina

CBIB: Bosnia and Herzegovina recently signed the SAA. How will the CBC contribute to achieving European integration?

N.B.: The Agreement includes a chapter on Regional Cooperation, which calls for fostering regional cooperation with other countries concerned by the Stabilization and Association process. CBC to be launched utilizing EC funds under the second component of IPA among the countries in the region will enhance the accomplishment of this goal but also, like other existing CBC programmes all over the EU, will contribute to socio-economic development of the border regions, enhance partnerships of local communities on both sides of the border in solving common problems and lead to creation good neighbourly relations and stability.

In addition, as most of the structural funds rules are replicated in the IPA Implementing Regulation, participation in IPA CBC programmes represents the preparation for next phases on our path to the EU, namely for future participation in the three remaining components of IPA and ultimately, in the EU structural funds, once we join the EU.

CBIB: In which programmes under IPA CBC Bosnia and Herzegovina can participate and what are the funds available?

Under IPA CBC, Bosnia and Herzegovina participates in 6 programmes: IPA Adriatic

CBC Programme, three bilateral programmes with neighbouring Western Balkan countries: Croatia, Serbia and Montenegro and two transnational programmes: South-East European Space (SEES) and Mediterranean (MED).

The allocation for the Adriatic Programme is fixed by the EC (€6 million for three years 2007-2009), while for other programmes we distributed funds at our disposal for each of them on annual basis. It was done during the programming phase which took place in 2007.

We tried to ensure balanced allocations on both sides of the border. For example, for the programme with Croatia, we have €1 million each, with Montenegro, Bosnia and Herzegovina has €0.5 and Montenegro €0.6 million and with Serbia, €0.7 million on Bosnia and Herzegovina side and €1.1 million on Serbian side. For SEES, Bosnia and Herzegovina's yearly allocation is approximately €0,45 million and for MED €0,1 million.

CBIB: What has been Bosnia and Herzegovina's CBC experience so far?

N.B.: By 2004, Bosnia and Herzegovina participated in 17 projects within INTERREG III A Adriatic and two projects within INTERREG IIIB CADSES programs, mainly with "in kind" contribution.

This limited participation in these two programmes was changed with the Regional CARDS allocations supporting Western Balkan countries' participation in the New Neighborhood Programmes.

In the period 2004-2006, Bosnia and Herzegovina was eligible for INTERREG IIIA Adriatic NNP and INTERREG IIIB CADSES NNP, where the first real experience with CBC projects was gained. Out of 93 projects approved within Adriatic NNP, 27 projects included partners from our country and the total value of the projects was €1.259.000, while within the CADSES NNP, we had two projects with a total value of €200.000.

However, IPA CBC 2007-2013 programming, which took place during 2007 through Joint Programming Committees and Drafting Teams established for that purpose, and with the support of the CBIB, resulted in the CBC programmes approved by the EC in December 2007. It was a valuable experience and a good basis for future developments.

CBIB: What do you see as the biggest challenge for the successful implementation of CBC in Bosnia and Herzegovina and the region?

N.B.: Our challenge now is to manage all six programmes with our limited previous CBC experience, in particular the three bilateral programmes that are being launched for the first time.

In collaboration with the Operating Structures of the partner countries, we are currently establishing joint structures for the implementation for each of these Programmes. Joint Monitoring Committee (JMC) appointments have been finalized and we are planning the first meetings to take place in October 2008 where a number of documents, currently under preparation (JMC Rules of Procedures, JTS Manual, Call for Proposals with Guidelines for Applicants), will be on the agenda for approval.

As for Joint Technical Secretariats (JTS), the JTS and Antennae staff are in place. Hopefully, by October 2008 at the latest, the JTS and Antennae staff will be in place. JTS and Antennae fully operational is the first challenge to come and in this regard, the EC technical assistance projects will play a very important role.

The EC made available €520.000 from CARDS Regional 2005/06 funds to Bosnia and Herzegovina to cover the initial costs of setting up the joint structures. The contract for a direct grant to DEI worth €400 000 is already signed while the rest of €120 000 remain within the ECD and will be used for procurement of furniture and equipment for the JTS and Antennae as well as for hiring assessors for evaluation of the projects submitted within the CfP to be launched. The direct grant will cover the running cost of the JTS and Antennae for the first 18 months.

As we have already organized several awareness seminars at different places throughout Bosnia and Herzegovina, in collaboration with the CBIB and different local stakeholders, with the aim to disseminate information about the IPA CBC, we are now challenged with fulfilment of the expectations raised.

Finally, as future beneficiaries will be required to ensure minimum 15% co-financing rate, their financial capacity represents an important precondition for the success of the IPA CBC programmes.





Serbia – Bosnia and Herzegovina

ELIGIBLE AREA:
 In Serbia, eligible are the Sremski, Macvanski, Kolubarski and Zlatiborski counties.
 In Bosnia and Herzegovina, eligible are the municipalities from three economic regions: North-West, North-East and South-East.

OVERALL STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE:
 To bring together the people, communities and economies of the border area to jointly participate in the development of a cooperative area, using its human, natural and economic resources and advantages.

JTS location: Uzice, Serbia.
Antenna location: Tuzla, Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Programming area	
Serbia	15,370 km ²
Bosnia and Heryegovina	17,612,01 km ²
Total eligible area	32,982,01 km ²
Total population	2,976,023
Border lenght	382,8 km
Border crossings	8

Priority I	Social - economic cohesion through joint actions to improve physical, business, social and institutional infrastructure and capacity
Measure I.1	Improving the productivity and competitiveness of the areas' economic, rural and environmental resources
Measure I.2	Cross-border initiatives targeting the exchange of people and ideas to enhance the professional and civic society cooperation

Priority II	Technical assistance
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Serbia – Montenegro

ELIGIBLE AREA:
 In Serbia, eligible are the Zlatiborski and Raski counties.
 In Montenegro, eligible are the municipalities of Pljevlja, Bijelo Polje, Berane, Rozaje, Plav, Andrijevica, Kolasin, Mojkovac, Zabljak, Pluzine, Savnik. The municipalities of Cetinje, Podgorica and Danilovgrad are in the adjacent area.

OVERALL STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE:
 To bring together the people, communities and economies of the border area to jointly participate in the development of a cooperative area, using its human, natural and economic resources and advantages.

JTS location: Prijepolje, Serbia.
Antenna location: Bijelo Polje, Montenegro.

Programming area	
Serbia	10,063 km ²
Montenegro	9,369 km ²
Total eligible area	19,432 km ²
Total population	847,787
Border lenght	250 km
Border crossings	2 (6)

Priority I	Socio - economic cohesion through joint actions to improve physical, business, social and institutional infrastructure and capacity
Measure I.1	Improving the productivity and competitiveness of the areas' economic, rural and environmental resources
Measure I.2	Cross-border initiatives targeting the exchange of people and ideas to enhance the professional and civic society cooperation

Priority II	Technical assistance
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Croatia – Serbia

ELIGIBLE AREA:
 In Croatia, 2 counties are eligible: Osječko-Baranjska and Vukovarsko-Srijemska.
 In Serbia, 4 counties are eligible: North-Backa, West-Backa, South Backa and Srem.

OVERALL STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE:
 To stimulate cross-border cooperation in order to diversify and improve the regional economy in a socially and environmentally sustainable way, whilst at the same time, improving good neighbourly relations across the border.

JTS location: Zagreb, Croatia.
Antenna location: Sremska Mitrovica, Serbia.

Programming area	
Croatia	6,609 km ²
Serbia	11,703 km ²
Total eligible area	18,312 km ²
Total population	1,888,905
Border lenght	318
Border crossings	8

Priority I	Sustainable Socio-Economic Development
Measure I.1	Economic Development
Measure I.2	Environmental Protection
Measure I.3	People to People

Priority II	Technical assistance
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Priority I	To support the creation of a common socio-economic environment for people, communities and economies of the eligible area
Measure I.1	Cross-border economic development initiatives with an emphasis on tourism and rural development
Measure I.2	Environmental development initiatives mainly for protection, promotion and management of natural resources
Measure I.3	Social cohesion and cultural exchange through institutional and people-to-people interventions

Priority II	Technical assistance to increase administrative capacity in the management and implementation of the CBC programme
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Bosnia and Herzegovina – Montenegro

ELIGIBLE AREA:

In Bosnia and Herzegovina, it is all the municipalities in the Sarajevo and Herzegovina economic regions.

In Montenegro, it covers the municipalities of Pljevlja, Pluzine, Zabljak, Savnik, Niksic, Herceg Novi, Kotor, Tivat, Bijelo Polje, Mojkovac, Berane, Kolasin.

OVERALL STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE:

To foster the joint sustainable development of the cross-border area, its economic, cultural, natural and human, resources and potentials by strengthening the capacities of human resources and joint institutional networks among local communities and local private and public actors.

JTS location: Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Antenna location: Niksic, Montenegro.



Programming area

Bosnia and Herzegovina	20,459.90 km ²
Montenegro	8,784 km ²
Total eligible area	29,243.90 km²
Total population	1,355,278
Border length	249 km
Border crossing	7

Priority I	Creation of a Joint Economic Space
Measure I.1	Joint development of tourism offer
Measure I.2	Promotion of entrepreneurship

Priority II	Improved Quality of Life and Social Cohesion
Measure II.1	Protection of nature and environment
Measure II.2	Improved accessibility of community based services in the border area

Priority III	Technical assistance
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Croatia – Bosnia and Herzegovina

ELIGIBLE AREA: In Croatia: Vukovarsko-Srijemska, Brodsko-Posavska, Sisačko-Moslavačka, Karlovačka, Ličko-Senjska, Zadarska, Šibensko-Kninska, Splitsko-Dalmatinska, Dubrovačko-Neretvanska counties, and in the adjacent area: Osječko-Baranjska, Bjelovarsko-Bilogorska, Požeško-Slavonska, Zagrebačka and Primorsko-Goranska. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, three economic regions: North-West, North-East and Herzegovina.

OVERALL STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE: Encourage the creation of cross-border networks and partnerships and the development of joint cross-border actions with a view to revitalizing the economy, protecting the nature and the environment and increasing social cohesion of the programming area.

JTS location: Zagreb, Croatia.

Antennae location: Banja Luka and Mostar, Bosnia and Herzegovina.



Programming area

Croatia	30,882 km ²
Bosnia and Herzegovina	38,022 km ²
Total eligible area	68,904 km²
Total population	4,394,831
Border length	992
Border crossings	992

Multi-annual Indicative Planning Document 2007 – 2009 for Bosnia and Herzegovina: Financial indications – IPA Component II

CBC programme	IPA funds 2007	IPA funds 2008	IPA funds 2009
IPA Adriatic CBC	1.313	2.243	2.446
Bosnia and Herzegovina – neighbouring candidate/potential candidates and ERDF transnational/interregional programmes	2.653	2.706	2.760
Total	3.966	4.949	5.206

Multi-annual Indicative Planning Document 2007 – 2009 for Serbia: Financial indications – IPA Component II

CBC programme	IPA funds 2007	IPA funds 2008	IPA funds 2009
Serbia – Hungary	1.334	2.279	2.486
Serbia – Romania	1.580	2.698	2.943
Serbia – Bulgaria	1.265	2.160	2.356
IPA Adriatic CBC	0.319	0.546	0.595
Serbia - potential candidate countries and ERDF interregional and transnational programmes	3.714	3.789	3.864
Total	8.212	11.472	12.244



EC Delegation to Bosnia and Herzegovina



DELEGATION OF THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION
TO BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

The Delegation of the European Commission to Bosnia and Herzegovina (ECD) was established on July 10th, 1996 and has, since, played an important role in the conduct of the Common Foreign and Security Policy, providing regular political analysis, carrying out evaluations jointly with Member State Embassies and contributing to the policy-making process.

The ECD plays a key role in the implementation of substantial external assistance to Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH). The current EC assistance to BiH is «de-concentrated» and therefore the management responsibility lies with the ECD. Whilst the future de-centralisation of the EC assistance to the country is the intention of the EC, considerable institutional reform remains a prerequisite before such a step can be taken.

Since 1991, EC assistance to BiH amounted to more than € 2.5 billion. Between 2001 and 2006, the main source of EU assistance for the country was the CARDS programme, which provided €4.6 billion to support institution-building in the country. In 2007, the Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance (IPA) replaced the former pre-accession instruments. Currently, Bosnia and Herzegovina, as a potential candidate country, is eligible for two IPA components: Transition Assistance and Institution Building and Cross-Border Cooperation Assistance.

The objective of the Cross-Border Cooperation Assistance programme in BiH is to support the relevant BiH state and local institutions and organizations to successfully participate in projects related to EU programmes that promote cross-border, transnational and interregional cooperation.

The three-year budget for the six IPA CBC programmes BiH is participating in for the period 2007 – 2009 amounts to almost €9 million.

As far as the implementation of the IPA is concerned, the ECD has the role of the Contracting Authority. When talking about cross-border cooperation programmes, this means that the Delegation is in charge of concluding contracts with BiH applicants who have been awarded grants, as well as their subsequent financial implementation.

All related monitoring activities conducted by the Directorate for European Integration and the joint management structures (Joint Monitoring Committees and the Joint Technical Secretariats/Antennae) are coordinated with the ECD Task Manager responsible for cross-border cooperation at the Economic Development Section of the ECD.

EU CORIN: Supporting Cross-Border Cooperation



The EU CORIN project, funded by the EU and is implemented by an international consortium of companies led by Hypodomi Consulting S.A. (Greece), has been operational since July 16th, 2007.

The Project has been established to help initiate the creation of both state and joint management structures for the implementation of the CBC programmes with Bosnia and Herzegovina's neighbouring countries. The Project also aims to play a facilitating role in preparation and launching of CFP and enabling potential applicants to seize the grant funding opportunities.

The EU CORIN team provides advice and support to the Directorate for European Integration (DEI), as the main beneficiary of this project, in its role as IPA Component II Coordinator and Operating Structure for the cross-border programmes, as well as National IPA Coordinator (NIPAC) on behalf

of Bosnia and Herzegovina. The project also provides training and support to all other CBC related management structures based in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Achievements of EU CORIN so far...

The important focus of EU CORIN project has been the provision of support to DEI to fulfil its tasks and responsibilities according to IPA Implementing Regulation. This, for instance, involved drafting of a direct grant application to enable the establishment of Joint Technical Secretariat/Antennae, as well as provision of assistance in recruitment of the staff for these structures.

The project also supported the drafting of the Terms of Reference for setting up a South Eastern Europe Programme Contact Point, which was finalised and forwarded to the regional Joint Technical Secretariat in May 2008.

EU CORIN also provided assistance for the development of the "Strategy for the Implementation of the Decentralised Implementation System for Managing EC Assistance in BiH" for IPA components I and II, which was approved in June 2008.

In order to enhance BiH's participation in IPA Adriatic CBC, EU CORIN developed a first draft of the ToR for a framework contract. Once approved, it will be followed with the

generation of multilateral projects along with the organisation of the first partner search events prior to the launch of the 1st Call for Proposals.

Upcoming EU CORIN activities...

In the period ahead, EU CORIN team will provide consultations to the IPA CBC Programme Management Structures in preparation of the grant scheme documents, Calls for Proposals and call packages including guidelines for applicants, draft contracts, etc. The period will moreover see a series of trainings related to the implementation of IPA CBC programmes with particular focus on IPA CBC Grants Schemes for different target groups.

In order to further understanding of practical aspects of CBC Programme implementation and to deepen partnership between representatives of participating IPA CBC structures, EU CORIN will be organizing an international study tour for IPA BiH Structures in BiH to take place in the last quarter of 2008.

Finally, EU CORIN will intensify activities aimed at raising public awareness on cross-border cooperation as well as IPA CBC programmes, and funding opportunities within the related EU funded grant schemes.





Regional Development Agency (RDA) NERDA covers the area of the economic region Northeastern BiH with 34 municipalities and Brcko District with its activities. After building the internal infrastructure and a network of five offices (the main office is in Tuzla and four sub-regional offices are in Bijeljina, Orasje, Brcko and Zvornik) NERDA, with its team of 16 experts, fully justified the prefix of a regional agency.

NERDA was founded in 2004 and began working in January 2005. Since its very beginning, it was supported by the Delegation of the European Commission in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and its capacities were significantly strengthened through the European Union projects for the support of local economic development. One of the best possible ways to show NERDA's success and credibility is the CREDO project (project for competitive regional economic development in NE BiH) whose realization was entirely handed over to NERDA. This was the first time that a project of this volume and value (€3.2 million) was implemented independently by a BiH organization.

In March 2007, NERDA representatives took part in the CBIB technical seminar in Zagreb in order to get better acquainted with the implementation procedures for IPA funds for cross-border cooperation after which they initiated an information and promotional campaign for this programme, lobbying in municipalities to actively participate in the preparation of programming documents. Through cooperation with the Directorate for European Integrations of BiH (DEI) and the Cross-Border Institution Building (CBIB) project, NERDA gathered data on social and economic indicators of municipalities in NE BiH for the needs of the SWOT analysis.

In cooperation with DEI and CBIB, NERDA helped organize a presentation of the programmes and procedures for cross-border cooperation in Brcko District and Tuzla in December 2007 and March 2008 respectively.

DEI (National IPA Coordinator) has recognized the RDAs as good partners capable of assisting the implementation of the CBC programmes in the field. NERDA, together with three other RDAs in BiH formed a partnership with DEI and will represent a part of operational structures in the programme BiH-Serbia. Antenna, the office for the implementation of the programme in BiH, will be situated in Tuzla in NERDA's premises. In this way, NERDA will offer its infrastructure, resources, knowledge and network of contacts in the region to the Antenna.



Cross-border cooperation, as one of IPA's five components, plays an important role in the possibility for financing particular projects and initiatives with a shared interest for cross-border partners. Bosnia and Herzegovina can, for the first time, participate in cross-border cooperation programs financed by the EU directly and at the same level as other countries.

The region of Herzegovina, with its geographical position, is eligible to participate in three cross-border programs: Croatia – BiH, BiH – Montenegro and the Adriatic Program. In addition to the direct impact on the economic and social development, these programs are also extremely important from the perspective of preparation of local and regional authorities for using funds from other IPA components, but also for using money from other EU funds and structural funds in the future.

Having in mind that the means available from the cross-border programs are not large, the biggest expectations are directed towards gaining experience and finding partners from cross-border areas together with concrete projects of solving specific joint challenges.

Regional Development Agency for Herzegovina, REDAH, recognizes cross-border cooperation as one of the ways to use the funds from the EU to initiate joint project ideas and develop projects which will solve common problems. Bilateral programs with Croatia and Montenegro are of special importance for Herzegovina because it is functionally and naturally connected with the border area of Dalmatia and Montenegro, and there are a number of common development priorities such as the development of tourism, environmental protection, economic cooperation, development of common products etc.

In order to use the available funds adequately, REDAH has, as a RDA founded by 23 municipalities in Herzegovina together with partners from the business and non-governmental sector, taken a number of steps in order to be prepared for these programs. They include meeting local and regional actors, gathering information, establishing connections with cross-border partners, initiating and developing project ideas, training on preparing and implementing projects and other activities which are necessary for the successful preparation for these programs. In addition, REDAH, together with other RDAs in BiH, formed a good partnership relation with the Directorate for European Integrations of BiH which is the national coordinator for these programs.



Regional development agency ARDA NW has, in its four years of work in the Northwestern economic region of BiH, recognized the need for education of economic subjects as one of the primary activities in this area.

In the framework of preparation of the Western Balkans countries for using the European funds (IPA II component, Cross-Border Cooperation), in cooperation with the regional project CBIB, we participated in the organization of info days, presentations and trainings. Over 200 people from the Northwestern region of BiH took part in trainings on project preparation according to EC requirements.



Training on preparation of project proposals organized by CBIB and ARDA, September 22 – 23, 2008, Banja Luka

Through presentations, info days and direct contact between the Agency and different subjects from the region, over 500 people were introduced to the program. Thanks to the Agency's efforts, we are proud to say that from over 1,000 project proposals within the SEE programs which were sent to Budapest a considerable part came from BiH and our region.

In addition, we agreed that two conferences are held within the program CBC Croatia – Bosnia and Herzegovina before the opening of the first Call for Proposals.

In its business plan for the following period (2009 – 2011), ARDA intends to put considerable resources in supporting the strengthening of the absorption capacities of future IPA beneficiaries from Northeastern BiH.

To support that, Antena for the program with Croatia is located in our offices which will contribute to the even closer cooperation between the RDA and the operational structure of the program.

The beneficiaries from our services and our Agency's employees are satisfied with well implemented activities and tasks in cooperation with the CBIB, which provided a good model for promotion and support of programme lines both from this component and all others envisaged by IPA.



The Experience of Vojvodina in the EU Cross-Border Programmes



Ivan Knezevic, Head of the Sector for Project Management, Centre for Strategic Economic Studies

Between 2004 and 2006, the Autonomous Province (AP) Vojvodina participated in EU cross-border cooperation programmes with Hungary and Romania. The participation of organizations from AP Vojvodina was possible with the financial assistance from the CARDS program with a total value of €9.6 million. The experience of organizations which took part in the realization of cross-border projects has shown that these programmes have a big importance for AP Vojvodina. The financial effect which occurs through the usage of the above mentioned grants is also important in the short term.

On the other hand, in the long run, these programs represent the opportunity to establish direct cooperation with border regions from EU member countries with the aim of reaching common development priorities, but also the possibility for transfer of knowledge which would lead to a more efficient usage of means from the

structural funds once Serbia becomes a member of the EU. Finally, a very important long term effect is the strengthening of development partnerships and cooperation between the domestic regional and local actors.

The fact that AP Vojvodina borders with regions from EU member states which have more capacity and are better acquainted with these programmes has considerably influenced the organizations from Vojvodina to be very successful in the preparation and implementation of projects. In two calls for proposals so far, 72 projects in the amount of €6.7 million were approved within the programs with Hungary and Romania. Out of the total number of approved projects at the territory of AP Vojvodina, some 60 of them were implemented with a total value of €5.4 million. The analysis of the calls for proposals shows that the biggest number of approved projects concerned the establishment of institutional cooperation, and the spatial distribution of organizations which received financial assistance was rather balanced with a slight concentration on four urban centers: Subotica, Novi Sad, Sombor and Vrsac.

During the project selection, the fact that a cross-border project should be the result of joint local and regional initiatives with a clear cross-border effect was valued the most, together with the management and financial abilities and the economic sustainability of project results. However, the evaluation of the approved projects shows that most of the projects clearly affect the defined border regions, but that joint projects represent more

of an exception than a rule. The experience also shows that during the realization of joint projects it of the utmost importance that the partner activities are synchronized so the appropriate results could be achieved, as well as the project's impact and the sustainability of those results. Therefore, further building on partnerships in the cross-border cooperation projects, which will be continued through IPA in the period between 2007 and 2013, is a priority for all participants in the programme. That will be even more important having in mind the relatively large funds which will be available in the framework of new (old) cross-border programmes in the amount of €16.3 million for the period between 2007 and 2009.

Vojvodina's Executive Council has a very important role in the preparation of organizations from Vojvodina for taking part in the CBC. With the opening of the programmes in 2004, the Executive Council founded several institutions which focused their activities on raising capacities of regional and local actors for participation in cross-border activities. Owing to this initiative and the possibility of taking part in the first cross-border cooperation programmes, organizations from Vojvodina acquired the necessary knowledge and skills and significantly improved their capacities for future projects within new programmes with Hungary, Romania, and for the first time Croatia.



Partnership between the CBIB and 'Economic Region in the Sava Watershed' project

Following the signing of the Framework Agreement for the Economic Region in the Sava Watershed, the Regional Chamber of Commerce in Valjevo started an initiative for cooperation between chambers of commerce in the spirit of the agreement, and the first meeting was held in April 2007 in Sabac when the Protocol on Regional Cooperation between 12 chambers of commerce from Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia and Serbia was signed in the presence of the representatives from the embassies, chambers of commerce and other officials. With the possibility of concrete funding to support the projects for the period between 2007 and 2013, the conditions are met to gather all interested parties and establish frameworks for cooperation of all regional chambers of commerce in the Sava Watershed.

The economic significance of the Protocol, which covers the area with 6.8 million inhabitants and over 140,000 companies, is extraordinary, and the river that connects it all will represent a basis of cross-border cooperation with all its potential.

The project, **Economic Region in the Sava Watershed (ERSUS)**, has the aim of connecting border regions in the Western Balkans, enhancing economic cooperation and unifying the regional market to be compatible with the CEFTA 2006 Agreement. The cooperation with the Sava Commission was established in the matters of transport, development of tourism, environmental protection. At the same time, the CBIB provided assistance in the area of getting close to the EU pre-accession funds. The cooperation with the CBIB opened a new phase of joint learning and exchange of experience in the region's European integration process.

A seminar entitled "EU Pre-accession Funds" was held for the members of working groups in the chambers that are members of the ERSUS in Sabac on March 23, 2008. According to the previous agreement, the seminar was supported by the CBIB and the Sector for Cross-Border Cooperation at

the Ministry of Finance of the Republic of Serbia.

In the upcoming period, trainings and seminars are planned aimed at educating people to apply for IPA funds and to realize concrete projects.



ERSUS region



Working Together Towards the Same Goal: Successful IPA CBC in the Western Balkans!

In June 2006, the main task before both the CBIB and the countries of the Western Balkans was to set up the basis for the cross-border cooperation that was to take place for the first time on the WB internal borders in the framework of the new EC financial instrument, IPA.

In a diverse Region, with varying degrees of previous CBC experience, this was certainly a challenge!

However, under the firm guidance of the Commission and its Delegations and EAR offices in the Region, with the full cooperation of the National Authorities of WB countries, as well as other relevant actors in the process, the wheels of the IPA CBC have been set in motion and the process is moving forward successfully!



Programming was the first important phase that took place from December 2006 until June 2007. After **60 bilateral meetings** supported by both CBIB and national TA teams, **7 workshops** and a **Regional Forum** held in Zagreb in March 2007, that were organized by CBIB, eight IPA cross-border programmes among WB countries were finalized and submitted to EC on May 31st 2007. The EC approved all programmes in December of the same year.



Awareness Campaign: Presenting IPA CBC to the Western Balkans



Banja Luka, 18.04.2008



Bihać, 11.12.2007



Brčko, 13.12.2007



Elbasan, 27.07.2007



Mostar, 22.11.2007



Kukes, 26.10.2007



Nikšić, 02.04.2008



Podgorica, 25.12.2007



Šabac, 27.03.2008

The right information at the right time is vital for any undertaking to succeed. In order to reach as many future IPA CBC Potential Applicants with proper information on programmes and available funds, in cooperation with National Authorities of WB countries, various local and regional actors CBIB organized an awareness campaign that took place from June 2007 until May 2008. **1600 participants attended 25 events in 6 countries of the Region.**



Priština, 23.10.2008



Tuzla, 19.03.2008



Dibra, 24.08.2007

The crowning event of the campaign was the cross-border seminar organized in Višegrad, Bosnia and Herzegovina with 180 participants from 3 countries: Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and Serbia. It proved the strong interest on the ground to solve common issues and create synergies through cross-border projects!

Višegrad, 20.05.2008



Capacity Building for Successful Programme Implementation and Management



Skopje, 18.-19.04.2007



Podgorica, 31.10.-1.11.2007



Sarajevo, 5.-6.12.2007



Tirana, 17.-18.01.2008



Pristina, 19.-20.03.2008



Kotor, 29.09.-02.10.2008



Skopje, 7.-10.10.2008

In order for the programmes to be fully operational and eventually successful, properly staffed and trained national Operating Structures and Joint Management Structures (Joint Monitoring Committees and Joint Technical Secretariats) are necessary.

Having this in mind, CBIB first undertook a series of **trainings** for the representatives of the **National Authorities** that will be directly involved in the management and implementation of programmes.

In the mean time, the 2nd Regional CBC Consultative Forum, organized by CBIB in Skopje, in June 2008, was an opportunity for all directly involved in IPA CBC in the Western Balkans to obtain answers on questions related to programme management and implementation through open discussions and direct contact with the EC representatives.

CBIB also actively supported the process of the establishment of the joint structures. 30 bilateral meetings were held since November 2007 and the structures are established. Three **4-day training sessions** were held for the **staff** of the established **JTS and antennae** during September and October 2008, in order to prepare them for the upcoming Calls for Proposals.



Capacity Building for Successful Project Preparation

Once the programmes are prepared and approved and the management structures in place, CBIB tackled an important task of preparing those who are to be the potential final beneficiaries of the IPA CBC funds to successfully participate in the upcoming calls for proposals.

After the potential applicants were informed on funding opportunities under IPA CBC during the awareness campaign, CBIB organized **18 two-day training session for approximately 600 potential applicants** in the Region.



Under a watchful eye of the trainers . . .



. . . through brainstorming and discussions . . .



. . . through group work and consultations . . .



. . . with a few doubts and uncertainties . . .



. . . and with the help of a 'happy horse' . . .



. . . everyone made it successfully to the end . . .



. . . ready for the challenges in the upcoming Calls!



CBIB Team



Natasa Gospodjinacki,
Team Leader

"Managing a Regional project was a hard, delicate and complex task. A lot has been done, many hours spent at work, thousands of kilometers are behind us, pages and pages of documents prepared, many important achievements were made, but the work is far from being completed. CBIB team, composed of highly professional and skilled people, has gone beyond its original "job descriptions" and has become in less than two years a CBIB "family" where we are more than colleagues, we are friends supporting each other at work but, also in private matters. Thank you for your trust, great commitment and hard work and for making sure that the achievements are not only personal or related to the project and that they were not only taken as a task of each individual. By doing so you have contributed to the wellbeing of those for whom the project was intended, the people in each country who equally shared our fears, work and dreams and by believing in us they are those who made all our efforts worth. For me at the end of the CBIB Phase 1, the opportunity to work with such a great team, people in the institutions and all those involved in our activities in each country, was a great honor, once in a life time experience for which I know it will hardly repeat, but I wish could last forever."



Sotirag Guga,
Key Expert, Albania

"It has been a great experience working to bring people together in this historically diverse Region. We believe in people, only together they can make borders disappear..."



Remy Reymann,
Key Expert, the former Yugoslav
Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro

"It was an incredible opportunity to meet and work with people from all over the Western Balkans and to feel part of a network which will last much longer than CBIB project. To participate in the beginning of the IPA CBC adventure was an enthusiastic feeling, shared by many others."



Haris Piknjac,
Key Expert, Bosnia and Herzegovina

"By implementing CBC Programmes we are not only helping people in need, but also putting one more puzzle in the big picture, which is aiding EU positive views on this region and its opening of doors for new Member States. Supporting this process and being part of CBIB is a unique experience and honour."



Jasminka Taseva-Jankovic,
Local Expert, the former Yugoslav
Republic of Macedonia

"IPA CBC means a lot of reading and understanding many EC related policies as well as language and terminology and transfer of such knowledge to NA staff and potential applicants. This is just the beginning; the real work is coming with the first CFP."



Alda Duraji,
Local Expert, Albania

"It was the most constructive experience that I have had in terms of professionalism and working as a team, both in the national and in the regional context. I am sure this will reflect in every other undertaking I will be engaged in."



Marijana Ivanova,
Local Expert, Montenegro

"CBC is a real challenge in the SEE. To make people think beyond borders - the real ones and those existing in their minds - is something very important for this region. I am happy to be a part of this process, which could accelerate the progress and the well-being of the whole region as well as its EU integration."



Marija Stevanovic,
Local Expert, Serbia

"In these 29 months small, baby steps for all of us, but gigantic steps for the Region were made."



Maja Stojanovic,
Local Expert, Serbia

"During my work in CBIB not only that I worked with people from all over the Region but I learned much more on IPA CBC. Most importantly I made friends and I wish to thank my colleagues, especially my team mates from CBIB Belgrade, for support and patience. Good work everybody!"



Milena Milovic Blagojevic,
Local Expert, Serbia

"To have been a witness of a process that has steered so many positive impulses in the whole Region was a privilege. I hope synergies created on all levels will continue to exist and yield benefits for all."



Eleonora Matov,
Office Manager, Skopje

"Every successful project has a painful story, and every painful story has a successful ending. We accepted the challenge and got ready for success. Being part of the Western Balkan mosaic is a challenging adventure everyone should experience."



Teofana Mitrovic,
Office Manager, Sarajevo

"CBIB successfully provided much needed assistance to Western Balkan countries on their way to EU membership, promoting cross-cultural respect and tolerance at the same time. Being a part of this team was a unique and valuable experience."



Fredi Bejleri,
Office Manager, Tirana

"The IPA CBC puzzle hides a beautiful picture."



Olivera Milutinovic,
Office Manager, Belgrade

"Sometimes it feels as if you are on a mission impossible, so many differences and so much trouble in overcoming them... Balkans is hard to understand, but that's what makes it so irresistible - always giving you many reasons to believe."



Dragoslav Pejanovic,
Office Assistant, Belgrade

"Being a part of such a dynamic team was a valuable experience that will for sure be useful in the future."



This is how it all begun . . .



. . . and then . . .



Common issues on the ground were

Brought together by joint efforts and

Implemented through CBC that yields

Benefits for the whole Region!

. . . but . . .

**this is just the first piece of the complex
IPA CBC puzzle and the big challenges
are still ahead for everyone!**

