ANNEX 5:

Analysis report:

Questionnaires on 2007-2013 IPA CBC strategic projects

Version of 14 March 2017

Table of Contents

[Aim of the assessment 3](#_Toc477189256)

[General information on the questionnaire 3](#_Toc477189257)

[1. Strategic projects – definition and understanding 4](#_Toc477189258)

[2. Project generation 7](#_Toc477189259)

[3. Cross-border communication and visibility 19](#_Toc477189260)

# Aim of the assessment

This analysis is aiming to provide guidance on key issues relating to the character and importance of strategic projects under the 2014-2020 IPA II CBC programmes, based on responses to a questionnaire on the experience the operating structures of the 2007-2014 IPA CBC programmes had with this type of projects.

This analysis is addressing fundamental questions such as:

* What is a strategic project?
* Strategic for whom?
* What are the dimensions and/or characteristics of a strategic project?
* Why and how should strategic projects be developed?
* How the CBC stakeholders (OSs, JMCs, JTSs, etc.) support the development of strategic projects?
* How can “project partners” generally contribute to the preparation of strategic projects;

Following the submission of a questionnaire by the CBIB+ Phase II team to the Operating Structures in the Western Balkans region, the analysis is structured in three main parts, namely:

* Strategic projects – definition and understanding
* Strategic projects generation
* Cross-border communication and visibility

Moreover, this assessment aspires to find and describe the patterns of formal and informal communication, structures, processes and activities that can facilitate the generation of strategic projects under the IPA II CBC programmes between two or more Beneficiaries.

# General information on the questionnaire

The questionnaire was dispatched to all the Operating Structures by the end of November 2016. All answers were eventually collected in January 2017 further to some requests for clarification by the CBIB+ Phase II team. Please note that there was no feedback on strategic projects under the IPA CBC programmes BA-ME, ME-XK and RS-ME, since no strategic project was implemented under any of them. The OS from Bosnia-Herzegovina informed the CBIB+2 team that the Serbian OS was going to provide answers for their common programme.

In the table below, you can find the name of the programme under which a questionnaire was completed and the OS who responded:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **No** | **Programme name** | **OS responding** |
| 1 | AL-XK | AL |
| 2a &2b | AL-ME | AL & ME |
| 3 | MK-AL | MK |
| 4 | MK-XK | XK |
| 5 | RS-BA | RS |
| 6 | HR-BA | HR |
| 7 | HR-RS | RS |
| 8 | HR-MNE | HR |

## 1. Strategic projects – definition and understanding

Strategic projects are defined as those which have a significant cross–border impact throughout the programme area and which will, on their own or in combination with other strategic projects, achieve in particular a specific objective put forward in the CBC programme document. A strategic project aims to achieve, in an extraordinarily integrative way, a significant and long lasting impact by improving peoples’ lives on the whole or large parts of the eligible programme area. It involves the main stakeholders usually responsible for the type of policy or domain in which the project is contextualized. It is beyond the scope of projects that could be funded under calls for proposals.

* 1. ***Do you agree with the above definition for strategic projects?***

Those respondents agreeing with the above definition were asked to choose from a list of potential characteristics and refer to the most important ones according to their opinion (the question allowed the OSs to mark up to eight characteristics).

*Q 1.1 Do you agree with the definition for strategic projects? If ‘yes’, please select from the list of characteristics below, those eight that you consider the most important*

These characteristics provide a fundamental understanding between the CBC stakeholders of what is meant “strategic” for projects under the IPA CBC, and are summarised in the diagram above.

Out of the 16 **characteristics** available for prioritization, the following five proved to be the most popular amongst the respondents.

|  |
| --- |
| 1. Produce long lasting effects 2. Entail a tangible impact 3. Contribute to the improvement of life of the citizens in the eligible border area 4. Attract other financial contributions from different resources 5. Have an added value for the implementation of local/regional/national strategies |

Only the OS from the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia brought up another opinion on the strategic projects, namely: *‘’The CBC component goal is creating new partnerships, get to know each other cultures, bringing people together, therefore the allocation for this component is too small in compare to other components. There are other IPA components with even higher allocation in, which can be used for strategic projects, which mainly includes cooperation between the main stakeholders’’.*

The technical working group (TWG) in charge of discussing a method for identifying, selecting and implementing strategic projects will have to deal with another important question, to wit: ‘Whose perspective has to prevail in determining whether a project is strategic?’ This is a question that is actually dealing with the “quality of a strategic project”. Is it strategic for the local government or only for the regional government within the eligible area? Does it represent a common interest between different tiers of government?

In connection to this, one can formulate another important question, namely: ‘who has or can have access to funds to be able to steer the process of generation of a strategic project?’ Experience so far from the IPA CBC proves that, in the vast majority of cases, the fact that there have been financial leftovers from the allocations of a call for proposals becomes the means that steers the generation of a strategic project. More specifically, a project whose value can match the amount of the leftovers becomes in most cases a strategic one.

Last but not least, there should be understood that a strategic project is different from the best projects selected through a call for proposals, that is, not every good CBC project necessarily is a strategic project. But does a strategic project represent a “good” project? The answer should be definitely ‘yes’, since a strategic project includes all those characteristics presented in the diagram above.

***1.2 Does your CBC counterpart share this definition with you?***

*Q 1.2 Does your CBC counterpart share this definition with you?*

The majority of the respondents replied positively indicating that their CBC counterpart is sharing the same definition with them. The OSs that were not involved in strategic projects implementation were not replying to this question.

From the received replies, it can be concluded that it is important to have a common understanding on what a strategic project is or may look like, but there is no guarantee that this understanding could encompass all of the IPA II CBC programmes’ diversities and peculiarities.

***1.3 How many strategic projects have been generated and/or implemented with your participation under the 2007-2013 CBC programmes at Western-Balkans internal borders?***

In total ten strategic projects were or are still under implementation in the region. Out of them five projects are under the RS-BA programme. The table displaying the list of strategic projects as well as their implementation status in the region can be found in Annex 1.

## 2. Project generation

***2.1 Do you have a specific approach for generating strategic projects?***

*Q2.1 Do you have a specific approach for generating strategic projects?*

As can be seen from the responses, the OSs mostly confirmed (57 %) that they don’t have any specific approach for generating strategic projects.

The OS in Montenegro, in the case of the programme AL-ME, provided the following type of approach: “After the programme OSs in close consultations with DEUs had decided to use funds from the IPA 2012 and 2013 allocations for strategic projects, the JMC members were invited to propose project ideas. Four project ideas were proposed and the JMC decided (JMC decision no 30 through written procedure) to select the project “Reconstruction of the existing border-crossing point (BCP) Hani i Hotit – Božaj and construction of the new BCP Grabom – Zatrijebačka Cijevna”.

In contrast, the OS in Serbia, regarding the RS-BA and HR-RS programmes, provided the following type of approach: “At the proposal of the OSs, the JMC has to approve the use of financial leftovers for strategic projects. The OSs initiate a collection of project ideas and the JMC decides which project ideas shall be further developed into project proposals. After the development of project proposals, the JMC takes a final decision which strategic projects shall be funded and gives a recommendation for the improvement of project proposals, if any”.

***2.2 Please describe how do programme management bodies or other structures support strategic projects in the various phases of project generation?***

The replies received from the programme management bodies are presented in the following table[[1]](#footnote-1) and reflect the current situation with the implementation of some of their projects.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **No** | **Programme name** | **Approach** |
| 1 | AL-XK | The Albanian OS acts as a coordinator and intermediate between project beneficiaries and institutions and also gives its support to entities involved through info sessions for potential applicants and ad hoc meetings. More specifically, for the case of the strategic project located in Dragash/Dragaš, the following approach has been implemented:   1. Initial phase – The OSs, the municipality of Dragash/Dragaš and the District of Kukës; 2. Financial allocation – MLGA, NIPAC office and EUOK; 3. Preparation of the project fiche - the OSs, JMC, EUOK; 4. Contracting of the company which will prepare a detailed project design and carry out the supervision of works – EUOK; 5. Preparation of the documents for the construction work (work permit, environmental consent, expropriation, electro-energetics study, etc.); 6. Contracting of the company for the execution of 85 % of works, EUOK; 7. Contracting of the company for the execution of 15 % of works, MLGA and the municipality of Dragash/Dragaš. |
| 2 | **AL**-MNE | Albanian OS acts as a coordinator and intermediate between project beneficiaries and institutions and also gives its support to entities involved through info sessions for potential applicants and ad hoc meetings. |
| 3 | AL-**MNE** | The programme management bodies were the key actors during the preparation and revision of the project fiche. Since the strategic project is expected to have a significant cross-border impact and high interest for both countries, involving national governmental bodies, the programme management bodie were continuousl y performing intermediation and coordination of actions between project actors such as explanation of CBC rules, available budget, VAT exemption, contract revision, explanation of roles and support to beneficiaries and partners etc. During the implementation phase, the programme management bodies are in charge of technically assisting the project beneficiaries and monitoring the progress made according to the project activities schedule. |
| 4 | MK-XK | Management bodies support the strategic projects as it is foreseen by the programme, but it takes longer in implementation than foreseen depending on the involvement of the other stakeholders out of the management bodies, based on the programme for IPA CBC MK – XK. On the other side, the other institutions involved, the matter of importance under the border points and procedures, are the piece on the puzzle that delays the process of implementation. Regarding political issues, as elections (in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia), make the bodies set by states as technical groups being invalid and forming new groups once more taking additional time and delays are expected in the implementation again. |
| 5 | **RS**-BA | OS and DEU provide assistance in development of strategic projects through engagement of experts who write project proposals with the assistance of the beneficiaries. OS and DEU are usually part of Steering Committees for strategic projects and assist beneficiaries during project implementation if problems occur. |
| 6 | HR-**RS** | OS and DEU provide assistance in development of strategic projects through engagement of experts who write project proposals with the assistance of the beneficiaries. OS and DEU are usually part of Steering Committees for strategic projects and assist beneficiaries during project implementation if problems occur. |

The various programme management bodies have used different approaches regarding the identification, selection and even implementation of their strategic projects. A more harmonized approach is in need.

***2.3 Who was/is involved (e.g. local, regional, central levels, decision makers, etc.)?***

The replies[[2]](#footnote-2) received by the respective OSs are presented in the following table and reflect the actual situation with the implementation of their strategic projects (not the case for MK-AL).

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **No** | **Programme name** | **Approach** |
| 1 | AL-XK | Local, regional and central level institutions |
| 2 | **AL**-MNE | Local, regional and central level institutions |
| 3 | AL-**MNE** | Programme Managing Bodies and Project beneficiaries are all central Governmental institutions, on both countries: Contracting Authorities (DEU to Albania & DEU to Montenegro). Programme OSs (Ministry of European Integration of Albania & Ministry of European Affairs of Montenegro (former Ministry of Foreign Affairs and European Integration of Montenegro)) and Beneficiaries (Ministry of Interior of Albania, Albanian Development Fund and Ministry of Interior of MNE) |
| 4 | MK-AL | The decision makers and the relevant ministries were involved. |
| 5 | MK-XK | The implementation of the ***Strategic Project for construction of the joint building in the new joint border crossing Point Stanqiq-Bella Novce*** involved the relevant Ministries signing the supporting agreement on 2013 signed from Ministry of Interior Affairs-XK side and Ministry of Foreign Affairs-MK, Protocol on the Manner of construction and opening of the New Border Crossing Point for International road traffic between the MK and XK. After the singing of the above mentioned Agreement the Mixed Expert Committee is established from the following institutions (both sides): Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Interior Affairs, Statistics, Customs, Border Police, Agency of Roads, Ministry of Environment and Spatial Planning, Ministry of Local Government Administration, also other institution can be part of the Mixed Expert Committee based on the RoP of the Committee in regard of the matters that are going to be involved in the implementation of the project. The level of the political involvement on this strategic project aiming to support it, was from the Prime Ministers of both Countries and down to the local stakeholders. Local institutions also are involved during the phase of the preparation of the expropriation, other relevant documents needed, as Municipality of Gjilan/Gnjilane, also there is foreseen through the time of the construction can be involved also the other local stakeholders. |
| 6 | **RS**-BA | Beneficiaries were local, regional and central level institutions. |
| 7 | HR-**RS** | Beneficiaries were local, regional and central level institutions. |

The replies show that based on the characteristics of the projects there were different governmental bodies involved, but in most cases there were different levels (central, regional or local) of government involved in the process.

***2.4 Which interactive methods were/are used?***

*Q2.4 Which interactive methods were/are used?*

Out of the six interactive methods offered as options in the questionnaire, the following two proved to be the most frequent ones between the respondents.

- High level coordination, and;

- Bottom-up and/or Top-down approaches

*High level coordination*: The respondents clearly believe that without the involvement of the decision makers at high level, the coordination mechanism and potential generation pipeline for a strategic project might be weak.

*Bottom-up approach*: Local and regional actors through their involvement are actively influencing the orientation of a given Programme (SWOT, interviews, public consultations and opinions) and separately are generating their own project proposals, for which they apply for co-funding, through the announced calls.

*Top-down approach*: Usually the Programme management bodies are getting actively involved in the generation of strategic projects. On the basis of their own strategic considerations, eventually influenced by political guidance and support, they may steer and influence the development of such projects by means of their support and advice to project applicants. In general, strategic projects seem to be initiated by public institutions at the regional or central level rather than by actors at the local level. Through this top-down approach issues of general public interest could be implemented as projects of strategic character.

***2.5 Which kind of activities were/are supporting the generation?***

The replies received by the respective OSs are presented in the following table

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **No** | **Programme name** | **Approach** |
| 1 | AL-XK | Info sessions and trainings for potential applicants as well as ad hoc meetings |
| 2 | **AL**-MNE | Info sessions and trainings for potential applicants as well as ad hoc meetings |
| 3 | AL-**MNE** | Since the project activities are still ongoing it is difficult to differ some of them. However, the project essential part is the reconstruction of one existing Cross Border Point ˝Hani Hotit – Božaj˝ and construction of another one ˝Grabom - Zatrijebačka Cijevna. These two activities can be distinguished as those which will mostly impact and contribute toward the achievement of programme objective. |
| 4 | MK-AL | Only the institutions dealing with the relevant issue (building a new border point) were involved in the working group. Therefore, the Ministry of Local Self-government as Operating Structure for IPA CBC does not have information’s regarding the concrete activities. |
| 5 | MK-XK | Intensive daily management & communication, coordination, analytical approach and different levels of meetings were held in order to improve the rhythm of implementation. |
| 6 | **RS**-BA | Engagement of experts for development of project proposals. |
| 7 | HR-**RS** | Engagement of experts for development of project proposals. |

Again the respondents provided a variety of approaches in regards to the kind of activities that are supporting the generation of the strategic projects. A more harmonized approach is needed.

***2.6 Which of the following dimensions was the most important for the project generation? (please select a maximum of three)***

*Q2.6 Which of the following dimensions were the most important for the project generation?*

This question allowed the OSs to mark up to three dimensions, according to their experience/opinion. The results show that two dimensions are very important, out of the nine available choices. Another important fact is other optional dimensions such as social cohesion, environmental aspects, innovation as well as competitiveness, received no attention from the respondents.

1. Geographical conditions
2. Common Political support

*Geographical dimension*: Strategic projects are significant for the entire eligible area, or at least for large sections of it. Accordingly, the outcomes and impacts attributable to such a project are also relevant to those areas (adjacent ones) which are not directly involved in the strategic project.

*Political dimension*: Strategic projects are usually politically relevant across the border. In other words, they either generate a certain level of public interest within society in the eligible area, or they are engaged to deal with an issue which is evidently already the subject of public or political debate in the area. In general, the strategic project hints at the importance of a problem for the cross-border society, especially for the isolated ones, and its magnitude should be seen in the light of the solution to the aforementioned problem, with or without the assistance from a CBC programme.

*Q2.6 Other type of dimensions for generation of strategic projects*

As can be seen from the responses (those who replied positively on the Q2.6), the majority of the OSs (71 %) does not feel that any other dimension for generating strategic projects is important.

Only the OS in Serbia for the RS-BiH and HR-RS programmes provided an additional dimension, to wit: “a strategic project must better address a certain cross-border issue than a grant scheme and must clearly contribute to achieving the objectives and priorities of the programme. A strategic project must also have support from both partner countries and have clear cross-border impact even though the activities take place on one side of the border only”.

***2.7 What has proved most successful in each of the phases (activity/ies, methods, etc.)?***

The replies received by the respective OSs are presented in the following table.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **No** | **Programme name** | **Approach** |
| 1 | AL-XK | The project is still under implementation. We do not have information on what is most successful. |
| 2 | **AL**-MNE | There was a good cooperation and coordination between all the Albanian and Montenegrin actors involved in the phase of the generation of the idea and drafting of the project fiche. |
| 3 | AL-**MNE** | The project is under implementation and therefore is difficult to identify successful aspects until finalization. |
| 4 | MK-AL | Since the project is still pending, we are not able to mention something successful. |
| 5 | MK-XK | The most successful that was proved in the implementation phases were the activities to be done, and to be taken on time and from relevant institutions, without the delays. |
| 6 | **RS**-BA | The most successful approach was to collect expressions of interest and then to select project ideas that will be further developed and taken into consideration. |
| 7 | HR-**RS** | The most successful approach was to collect expressions of interest and then to select project ideas that will be further developed and taken into consideration. |

The respondents adopted a very diversified approach with regards to the kind of activities/methods engaged as well as their usefulness (successfulness) that have supported the generation of their strategic projects. From the responses received it’s evident that they show a variety of experiences between them, in so far as implementation of strategic projects goes.

***2.8 Were there any success factors in each of the phases? (please select a maximum of three)***

This question allowed the OSs to mark up to three success factors, from a list of eight options for prioritisation according their opinion.

The results show that three success factors are very important, out of the eight available choices. These three are indicated in the table below. Another important fact is that proposed success factors like proximity of actors’ involved, existence of regional networks, and prior experience with similar cases, received no attention from the respondents.

|  |
| --- |
| 1. Strong coordination and management 2. Availability of the structures for meetings 3. Appropriate design of the tender dossier for the procurement of works, services or supplies |

*Q2.8 Were there any success factors in each of the phases?*

*Availability of the structures for meetings/Strong coordination and management*: These two success factors are going hand to hand. If no management structures are available to discuss the generation of strategic projects, there will be a weak (if at all) coordination and management of the mechanism for generation and implementation of strategic projects, suitable for the eligible area. Moreover any hierarchical differences between programme actors from the different countries concerned can complicate the cross-border co-operation at programme level.

*Appropriate design of the tender dossier for the procurement of the works, services or supplies*: Experience from the implementation of strategic projects under the 2007-13 IPA CBC programmes has shown that this part of the chain (appropriate tender dossier) is a crucial one, since otherwise big delays could be expected, jeopardizing the implementation of the strategic project.

Only the OS in Montenegro, mentioned that one additional success factor was/is, the “common interest of both countries AL & MNE”.

***2.9 Were there any major difficulties/obstacles in any of the phases?***

This question allowed the OSs to mark up to four major difficulties/obstacles, from a list of eight options for prioritisation according their opinion.

The results show that three major difficulties/obstacles are very important, out of the eight available choices. These three are indicated in the table below. Another important fact is that proposed major difficulties/obstacles like, low popularity, budget shortage, received no attention from the respondents.

*Q2.9 Were there any major difficulties/obstacles in any of the phases?*

1. Complex preparatory steps

2. Complicated execution / Highly time demanding

*Complex preparatory steps*: Even-though it is not specified under which step (generation, selection or implementation), the preparatory steps were complicated, it can already be assumed that the respondents are mainly referring to the stage of initiation of the implementation. Projects that will need certain preparatory studies (feasibility study, environmental impact assessment, detail design, bill of quantities, permissions required, etc.), can be seen as projects that have complex preparatory steps, but on the other hand, such projects should not be chosen for implementation if they are not at a mature stage. This issue will need to be further discussed within the TWG and if it will be necessary the question can be further taken up with the respective OS during the coming visits. The maturity of the projects is an important issue for their successfully and timely implementation. One more dimension with the complexity of the projects can be attributed to the fact that such projects might involve many different stakeholders from the eligible area and/or address more than one sector of the economy. Furthermore based on the circumstances they are requiring a longer period of time for preparation of a good application.

*Complicated execution / Highly time demanding*: Once more these difficulties are associated mainly with the maturity of the selected strategic projects (especially those that are involving infrastructure elements), but also to the inexperience of administrators dealing with implementation of strategic projects. Moreover they require much greater support and coordination than ordinary projects through CBC calls.

The OS in Albania stated as other major difficulties the following: “Local elections; Rotation of staff; New regional council and new administration that are not very involved in the project”

While the OS in Montenegro pointed out that “No previous experience in implementation of CBC Strategic Projects” was also a major difficulty,

***2.10 What support roles for strategic project generation did the various actors cover?***

The replies received by the respective OSs are presented in the following table.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **No** | **Programme name** | **Approach** |
| 1 | AL-XK | MEI and DEU Albania were mainly involved in supporting the applicants with trainings and info about the criteria of the applications. Additionally, MEI was involved during the drafting of the project proposals by the applicants, in order to improve the quality of the proposals. |
| 2 | **AL**-MNE | Beneficiaries for drafting and implementation of the project. MEI and DEU for training and monitoring the implementation of projects. |
| 3 | AL-**MNE** | DEUs – Contracting Authorities and technical support for the preparation of project fiche. Programme OSs – intermediate and coordination bodies (between CA, Governments and beneficiaries), support for the preparation of project fiche, project monitoring etc. Project beneficiaries – implementing the project activities and preparation of project fiche. Lack of quality offers on tenders for works contracts. Complex procedures for obtaining building permits. |
| 4 | MK-XK | Different actors supported the roles foreseen or assigned for their institutions, as environment, border police, agreement between the Governments, EUOK supported with the financing under IPA I 2010 – 2013 and concept design, local stakeholder their part as in the process of expropriation, MLGA as responsible for the financing coordinated the part of that and so on. |
| 5 | **RS**-BA | Institutions that are JMC members proposed project ideas from their field of competence. The role of the OSs and the EUDs was already explained (please see point 2.2) |
| 6 | HR-**RS** | Institutions that are JMC members proposed project ideas from their field of competence. The role of the OSs and the EUDs was already explained (please see point 2.2) |

Few OSs have a clear picture on their role as well as other actors’ roles in the generation of the strategic projects.

***2.11 Please confirm whether the following statements describe the sustainability aspects of your strategic projects***

In regards to the sustainability aspects of the implemented strategic projects, the recipients of the questionnaire were asked to verify or refuse statements from a list of six ones.

*Q2.11 Please confirm whether the following statement describe the sustainability aspects of your strategic projects*

The respondents feel pretty sure (provided a 100 % positive reply) that the partners of a strategic project will be/are able to capitalize on the results of the project. On the contrary the respondents are not feeling comfortable (provided mostly a negative reply) with the statement on the existence of a previous successful cooperation. The latter is due to no past experience in implementation of a strategic project.

In regards to the remaining four statements, the respondents provided mostly a positive reply, as can be seen from the diagram above.

## 3. Cross-border communication and visibility

***3.1 How did/does the communication between partners, especially in the generation/preparation but also during the implementation phases, take place (formal, informal channels, etc.)?***

The replies received by the respective OSs are presented in the following table.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **No** | **Programme name** | **Approach** |
| 1 | AL-XK | AL OS and KSV OS have maintained regular contacts during the whole period (electronic communication, joint meetings, etc.). We have no information, as regards the communication between partners during the programming and implementation of the project. |
| 2 | **AL**-MNE | Formal meetings and electronic communications |
| 3 | AL-**MNE** | Formal channels, formal meetings, Task Force meetings for the preparation of strategic project fiche, JMC decision for approval of strategic project fiche, JMC informative sessions dedicated to the implementation of the strategic project, communication via e-mail |
| 4 | MK-AL | Formal channels |
| 5 | MK-XK | The communication between partners during all phases took place in very positive manner and formal channels based. |
| 6 | **RS**-BA | Communication during the preparatory phase takes place through organization of meetings between experts and beneficiaries and through exchange of e-mails. Formal communication during the implementation phase takes place through establishment and meetings of the Project Steering Committees. Involved actors are in regular e-mail communication. |
| 7 | HR-**RS** | Communication during preparatory phase takes place through the organization of meetings between experts and beneficiaries and through exchange of e-mails. Formal communication during the implementation phase takes place through establishment and meetings of the Project Steering Committees. Involved actors are in regular e-mail communication. |

While all the respondents are describing the channels of communication used, none has mentioned the type but also the importance of informal communication. Further to this, certain type of “common activities” should be taken on board to underline the importance of the informal communication beside the formal one. Those common activities will help to create a sound basis of common understanding, both of the relevant programme procedures but also on the situation and procedures in the across the border.

***3.2 When did/does it take place?***

The respondents had to choose one or several of the four options available whose choices are depicted in the diagram below.

*Q3.2 When did/does it take place?*

*During the programming phase*: In this phase the communication between the “two” programme management bodies is intensive mainly via the Joint Task Force, in establishing the elements (TP, SO, results, indicators, etc.) of the programme. Those bodies that have been able to already identify strategic project/s have the opportunity to include it in the programming document and even specify the mode of the implementation as well as the timing.

*During the implementation phase*: Regular communication during this phase is also required, for the implementation and monitoring of the programme. Beside any technical meetings between the “two” programme management bodies, one more communication channel is open via the Joint Monitoring Committee of each programme. During this phase the partners have the possibility to identify and select strategic project/s and propose to be included in the programming document via an amendment.

*When there are/were leftovers from the calls*: Experience has shown that such communication is intensive so that the two partners are able to agree and utilize the leftovers from a call before the contracting deadlines of the financial allocations will be reached. Usually the amount left determines the type of project that will fit in this budget. Technical meetings during this phase are the most common instrument used.

***3.3 Which were/are the entities involved?***

The replies received by the respective OSs are presented in the following table.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **No** | **Programme name** | **Type of entities involved** |
| 1 | AL-XK | The entities involved are the beneficiaries (in Albania, the Kukes Regional Council and in Kosovo[[3]](#footnote-3)\*, the Ministry of Local Government Administration), Operating Structures and EU Delegation to Albania. |
| 2 | **AL**-MNE | Beneficiaries from each organisation |
| 3 | AL-**MNE** | Programme OSs, DEUs and project beneficiaries |
| 4 | MK-XK | The entities involved were the entities living most in the border region covered under the IPA I CBC Programme the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia – Kosovo and also the structures from all levels involved during the process |
| 5 | **RS**-BA | The preparatory phase involves OSs, JMC, DEU, beneficiaries and experts engaged to develop project proposals. |
| 6 | HR-**RS** | The preparatory phase involves OSs, JMC, DEU, beneficiaries and experts engaged to develop project proposals. |

The respondents provided a wide range of type of entities and variety of stakeholders involved in the process.

***3.4 What differences in communication quality have you noticed between different programmes and partners, where you are participating?***

The replies received by the respective OSs are presented in the following table.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **No** | **Programme name** | **Differences** |
| 1 | AL-XK | There are no differences in communication quality with other regional OS. As regards the communication with partners there is of course a large difference. |
| 2 | **AL**-MNE | No differences |
| 3 | MK-XK | The quality of communication was very high and the differences were minimal and even un-noticed during all phases |
| 4 | **RS**-BA | Communication is more difficult with beneficiaries that are big institutions with complex internal communication channels. |
| 5 | HR-**RS** | Communication is more difficult with beneficiaries that are big institutions with complex internal communication channels. |

The respondents will further need to clarify their answers. It is unclear whether they understood the question properly.

***3.5 What might be the reason for these differences?***

The replies received by the respective OSs are presented in the following table.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **No** | **Programme name** | **Reason/s** |
| 1 | AL-XK | The difference in the communication with partners, is mainly related with the existing differences between the relevant partners implementing the project, which are, commitment of the beneficiary, capacities, resources, etc. |
| 2 | **RS**-BA | Mainly with big institutions; decision makers are usually not involved in implementation of the project and it takes time for the project beneficiaries to get necessary approvals within their own institution. It was easier to communicate with beneficiaries when decision makers were involved in project implementation. |
| 3 | HR-**RS** | Mainly with big institutions; decision makers are usually not involved in implementation of the project and it takes time for the project beneficiaries to get necessary approvals within their own institution. It was easier to communicate with beneficiaries when decision makers were involved in project implementation. |

The replies to this question have to be reviewed in accordance with the clarifications that should be provided under the question 3.4 above.

***3.6 What are the most important success factors for effective and efficient cross-border communication?***

This question allowed the OSs to mark up to four important success factors for efficient and effective cross border communication, from a list of provided nine options for prioritisation according their opinion.

The results show that four success factors for efficient and effective cross-border communication are the most important ones, out of the nine available choices. These four are indicated in the table below. Another important fact is that proposed important success factors for efficient and effective cross border communication like, similar level of economic development, common language across the border, comparable size of population, received no attention from the respondents.

1. Common understanding of the process

2. Similar administrative systems and set up / mutual trust between the partners / transparency of the process.

*3.6 What are the most important success factors for effective and efficient cross-border communication?*

*Common understanding of the process*: Each participating country has its own picture of the complex common processes of IPA CBC programme management. There is a need to develop understanding of the processes, interests and the needs of the other countries across the borders.

*Similar administrative systems and set up:* The programme counterparts need to be on a comparable administrative level. If all decisions on one side are taken centrally and the relevant institutions on the other side are at another administration level, the joint decision-making becomes complicated. Moreover, the level of responsibilities and competences is a significant factor in negotiation processes and programme management.

*Mutual trust between the partners:* It is helping to create a sound basis of common understanding, both of the relevant programme procedures and of the situation and procedures in the neighbouring country.

*Transparency of the process*: Each country has its own special administrative structures and processes, and these differences have to be kept in mind when working together across the border. The frequent communication and provision of explanations is contributing to the transparency of the process.

The OS in Kosovo added that another important factor for success is the following “Providing the activities in time and in line with the foreseen activities in the programme and in agreements. Political support and level of involvement in the structures to implement Strategic Projects should be the pragmatic; the responsible person assigned to the committees should be appointed out of political scheme in order to act in time and in very flexible time of coordination with the full political support.”

***3.7 What are the major difficulties/obstacles to effective and efficient cross-border communication?***

The replies received by the respective OSs are presented in the following table.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **No** | **Programme name** | **Major difficulties** |
| 1 | AL-XK | Rotation of staff |
| 2 | **AL**-MNE | Continuous changes of staff dealing with project implementation in the case of Albania |
| 3 | AL-**MNE** | Considering that this was an infrastructure project, the complexity and number of project actors/bodies involved was the major difficulty/obstacle to an effective and efficient cross-border communication.. |
| 4 | MK-XK | During the past period of implementation of the Strategic Project under this programme we have not faced any difficulties/obstacles to effective and efficient cross-border communication |
| 5 | **RS**-BA | There were no major obstacles in cross-border communication. |
| 6 | HR-**RS** | There were no major obstacles in cross-border communication. |

***3.8 Have you undertaken any publicity or visibility measures with regard to the strategic projects?***

The majority of the respondents (71 %) provided a positive reply, meaning that they have undertaken publicity and/or visibility measures with regards to the strategic projects implemented or under implementation.

*Q3.8 Have you undertaken any publicity or visibility measures with regard to the strategic projects?*

Those that provided a positive reply specified further their approach towards visibility measures taken as follows:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **No** | **Programme name** | **Approach** |
| 1 | AL-XK | Launching event for the Call for Strategic Projects and publication of the awarded project in the website of the Programme. |
| 2 | AL-**MNE** | The Director for Western Balkans at the Directorate-General for European Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations (DG NEAR), Jean-Eric Paquet, and the Head of the Delegation of the European Union to Montenegro, ambassador Mitja Drobnič, visited the border crossing point (BCP) Božaj between Montenegro and Albania, together with the representatives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and European Integration and the Ministry of Interior. Visit to this particular place reflects some of the key priorities of the European Commission – **regional cooperation and interconnectivity** – on the one hand, connectivity between the Western Balkan countries and on the other, between the Western Balkans and other parts of Europe. |
| 3 | MK-XK | During the publication of the leaflets and other publicity materials and during the different media coverage was mentioned the Implementation of the Strategic Project for the NBCP (new border-crossing point), and also it has awakened the interest of the inhabitants in that CBC region in both sides of the border. Also it was on all media during the signing the agreement for the supporting the NBCP, also the singing of the protocol for the same purpose was on all media when it was signed. |
| 4 | **RS**-BA | A strategic project was promoted and awarded as one of the best practice projects at the bi-annual CBC conference. Project beneficiaries also organized visibility events for projects they participated in. |
| 5 | HR-**RS** | A strategic project was promoted and awarded as one of the best practice projects at the bi-annual CBC conference. Project beneficiaries also organized visibility events for projects they participated in. |

The question that cannot be answered at this point and should be further discussed within the TWG, but also during future missions to the respective OSs, is if these measures taken regarding the visibility of the strategic projects, were/are enough or more actions should be taken towards visibility of the strategic projects?

Moreover, should all strategic projects include a communication and visibility element (a horizontal activity) as an instrument for achieving the project objectives?

1. Verbatim. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Verbatim [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. \**This designation is without prejudice to positions on the status, and in line with UNSCR 1244/1999 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence.* [↑](#footnote-ref-3)