



CBIB
Cross Border Institution Building

Assessment of the First Calls for Proposals IPA - IPA Countries

Analysis Report *(Third Part)*



Cross Border Institution Building - a Tool for Regional Integration



"CBIB - Cross Border Institution Building"
An EU-funded Regional Project

Glossary of acronyms

AF	<i>Application Form</i>
CA	<i>Contracting Authority</i>
CBC	<i>Cross Border Cooperation</i>
CBIB	<i>Cross Border Institution Building</i>
CfPs	<i>Call for Proposals</i>
EC	<i>European Commission</i>
EU	<i>European Union</i>
EUD	<i>Delegation of the European Union</i>
FB	<i>Final Beneficiaries</i>
GfA	<i>Guidelines for Applicants</i>
GB	<i>Grant beneficiaries</i>
IPA	<i>Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance</i>
JMC	<i>Joint Monitoring Committee</i>
JMS	<i>Joint Management Structures</i>
JTS/A	<i>Joint Technical Secretariat and Antennae</i>
MS	<i>Member States</i>
NGO	<i>Non Governmental Organisation</i>
OS	<i>Operating Structure</i>
PA	<i>Potential Applicant</i>
RoP	<i>Rules of Procedure</i>
WB	<i>Western Balkans</i>



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¹ Kosovo under UNSCR 1244/99



1. INTRODUCTION

The CBIB (Cross Border Institution Building), as an EU-funded Regional Project, has so far produced two Assessment reports. The first part of the Assessment, which was related to the preparation, promotion and launching of the CfPs, with specific emphasis on the role of all the actors, their interactions, mechanisms behind decisions and information campaign, was presented at the 3rd Regional CBC Forum held in Tirana in January 2010. In the meantime, the Joint Management Structures (JMSs) have invested a significant effort into launching eight Calls for Proposals (CfPs) in the period between June and November 2009, with the grand total of € 17,987,000 available for funding. Under this 1st Call, 492 grant applications were received, requesting a total funding of € 97,167,848, clearly showing a great interest in the opportunities created by the IPA CBC. Following complex evaluation and selection processes, the first grant contracts were signed in late autumn 2010 and the implementation of the first joint cross-border projects began.

In line with the process, the aim of the second part of the Assessment was to analyse and present not only the details of the evaluation processes and their outcomes, but also the interest expressed by potential applicants for cross-border cooperation among the Western Balkan countries. The second Report, presented at the Specialist Meeting on IPA CBC between WB Countries organized on 8th December 2010 in Brussels, showed that there is a great interest for CBC funds targeting local communities in the border areas. As funds available for the 1st CfPs have been almost fully absorbed, the European Commission recommended the CBIB to further assess the overall situation in the region with regard to the capacities and actual needs of potential applicants.

Consequently, the main objective of this third Assessment is to provide an opportunity for a wide range of institutions and organizations to express their views on the benefits of the CBC, as well as the potential difficulties/obstacles experienced during project preparation/implementation in line with EC procedures. Furthermore, the respondents were able to give their suggestions on what needs to be improved/addressed in the overall aspect of the process (type of capacity building activities needed, the most difficult parts of the application process, support provided by relevant CBC structures, etc).

At the same time, the Assessment ensures the gathering of relevant information on the success of the 1st CfP by identifying the positive results, eventual constraints and bottlenecks experienced by potential applicants and grant beneficiaries in the context of the whole Western Balkan (WB) region at the programme level. Finally, the results of the assessment provide a platform for joint decision-making on the rules and procedures related to the application



process, i.e. the essence of future Calls for Proposals, and also on the allocation of programme resources. This will send out a strong message to the national authorities in all WB countries, as well as to the European Commission, and will consequently affect the IPA CBC process in the future.

2. METHODOLOGY

For the purpose of conducting the assessment, the CBIB prepared a detailed questionnaire targeting a wide range of organizations/institutions from all 7 Western Balkan countries. The link for the on-line questionnaire in the local languages was distributed to more than 8000 addresses from the CBIB contact database. In total, 1130 questionnaires were submitted, and thus the response rate is 14%.

The questionnaire was structured so as to include questions intended for a) all potential applicants, b) actual applicants those who applied for funds under the 1st CfP, and c) grant beneficiaries, those who have been awarded grants and are implementing projects.

The questionnaire contained 99 questions in total, divided into the following sections:

1. General information (name, address, type of institution, contact details, etc.);
2. Level of knowledge about CBC programmes and structures (knowledge of IPA, IPA CBC, Programme Structures, participation in CBC events, visibility tools, etc.);
3. Capacities for the preparation and implementation of projects (trainings attended, capacities developed and future recommendations);
4. Preparation of cross-border projects (experience in establishing partnerships, main problems encountered, support received, type of support needed for future CBC CfPs, etc.);
5. Implementation of cross-border projects (the budgetary clearing process, main bottlenecks and constraints experienced and foreseen in the implementation, support needed, etc.).

The purpose of the first three of the above-mentioned sections was to reach as many institutions and organizations as possible from all the Western Balkan countries, regardless of their type, size, capacities and experience with the cross-border cooperation. The aim was not only to collect relevant data but also to reach institutions/organisations still not familiar with IPA and IPA CBC opportunities.

While the fourth section is intended for applicants from the 1st CfP, regardless of the success of their projects, the fifth section focuses on the input provided by grant beneficiaries of the 1st CfP. The input for these two sections will directly serve as a basis for further improvements of Calls



to be launched, so that the process of project preparation, evaluation and implementation of cross-border projects is managed in the most efficient manner and the results of the Calls are used in the most effective way.

Since the CBC Programmes with Kosovo were only adopted recently, in December 2010, and no CfPs have been launched to date, sections 4 and 5 do not contain any inputs from Kosovo respondents.

The two Assessment reports earlier produced by the CBIB mainly contained inputs provided by the relevant WB CBC Programme Structures and Contracting Authorities and the participation of potential applicants was limited. Unlike the last two reports, the 3rd Assessment was solely based on the inputs provided by the potential applicants and grant beneficiaries of cross-border cooperation. Nevertheless, in order to make this report easier to be read and understood by a wider audience, some relevant findings from the two previous Assessment reports were integrated.

Moreover, due to the complexity of cross-border cooperation, the assessment findings are presented in a comparative way at country and regional levels. The value of this approach is illustrated in the boxes at the end of each section where the main findings and recommendations are given. In addition, the specific country findings can be found in the Annexes attached to this report.

3. NUMBER AND TYPE OF RESPONDENTS

In total, 1130 completed questionnaires were received and the table below gives the number of survey participants from each country.

Country	Number of respondents
AL	84
BiH	231
CRO	259
KS	40
FYROM	166
MNE	67
SRB	280
Total	1130



As the questionnaire contained a number of questions relevant only to the actual applicants of the 1st Call for proposal between IPA-IPA countries and for those who were successful and had signed grant contracts, the same type of division of respondents was needed for the purpose of analysis. The table below shows the number of applicants and grant beneficiaries from each country. It is to be noted once again that since the programmes with Kosovo were only recently adopted with no CfP launched to date, the data received from Kosovo were only analysed within the general overview and not in connection with the applicants and grant beneficiaries of the 1st CfP.

Division of respondents per applicants and per grant beneficiaries of the 1st CfP

Albania		
Total number of respondents	Applicants from the 1 st CfP	Grant beneficiaries of the 1 st CfP
84	27	9

Out of 84 respondents from AL, 32.1% were applicants of the 1st CfP, of which 33.3 % were successful with their project proposals.

Bosnia and Herzegovina		
Total number of respondents	Applicants from the 1 st CfP	Grant beneficiaries of the 1 st CfP
231	46	18

Out of 231 respondents from BIH, 20% were applicants of the 1st CfP, of which 39.1 % were successful with their project proposals.

Croatia		
Total number of respondents	Applicants from the 1 st CfP	Grant beneficiaries of the 1 st CfP
259	45	18

Out of 231 respondents from CRO, 17.4 % were applicants of the 1st CfP, of which 40 % were successful with their project proposals.

Montenegro		
Total number of respondents	Applicants from the 1 st CfP	Grant beneficiaries of the 1 st CfP
67	24	14

Out of 67 respondents from MNE, 35.8 % were applicants of the 1st CfP, of which 58.3 % were successful with their project proposals.



The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia

Total number of respondents	Applicants from the 1 st CfP	Grant beneficiaries of the 1 st CfP
166	39	15

Out of 166 respondents from FYRoM, 23.5 % were applicants of the 1st CfP, of which 38.5 % were successful with their project proposals.

Serbia

Total number of respondents	Applicants from the 1 st CfP	Grant beneficiaries of the 1 st CfP
284	55	17

Out of 284 respondents from SRB, 19.4 % were applicants of the 1st CfP, of which 30.9 % were successful with their project proposals.

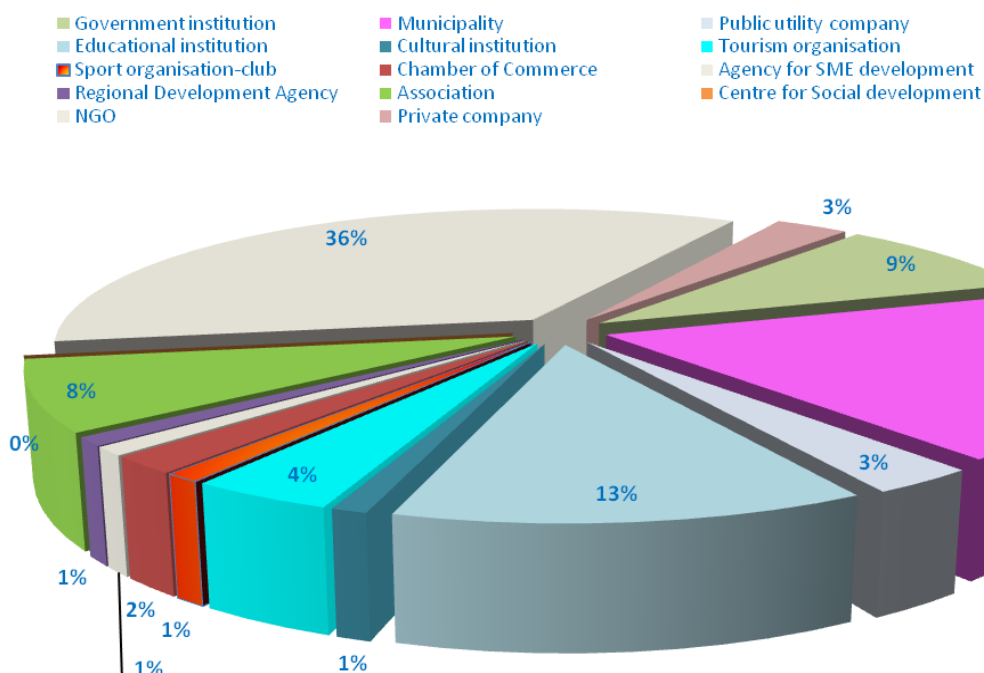
At the regional level, out of the 1130 survey respondents, 236 (21%) had applied for IPA CBC funds under the 1st CfP for WB countries, of which 91 (38.6%) were successful and have since signed grant contracts. Having in mind the interest expressed in the 1st CfPs and the total number of applications received for all WB CBC Programmes (492 applications), it can be concluded that 48% of applicants took part in the CBIB survey. Out of the 95 projects contracted under the 1st CfP, 91 grant beneficiaries provided inputs for this Assessment. The high response rate speaks in favour not only of the high interest in the CBIB Assessment, but also in cross-border cooperation.

For better understanding certain findings and conclusions in this report, it is important to present an analysis of the types of institution/organisation that participated in the survey.

Out of the grand total of 1130 survey participants, the response by NGOs is dominant with 36%. Municipalities also took an active part, with 19%, while Educational institutions represent 13% and Government institutions 9%. A variety of Associations took part in the survey as well, with an 8 % response rate, while Tourist organisations/institutions participated with 4%. Details of the division of respondents from each country can be found in the Country Annexes.



Type of respondents per type of institution



4. LEVEL OF KNOWLEDGE ON AND VISIBILITY OF IPA AND IPA CBC

IPA aims to provide targeted assistance to countries that are candidates or potential candidates for membership in the EU. In order to achieve each country's objectives in the most efficient way, IPA consists of five different components: transition assistance and institution building; cross-border cooperation; regional development; human resources development, and rural development.

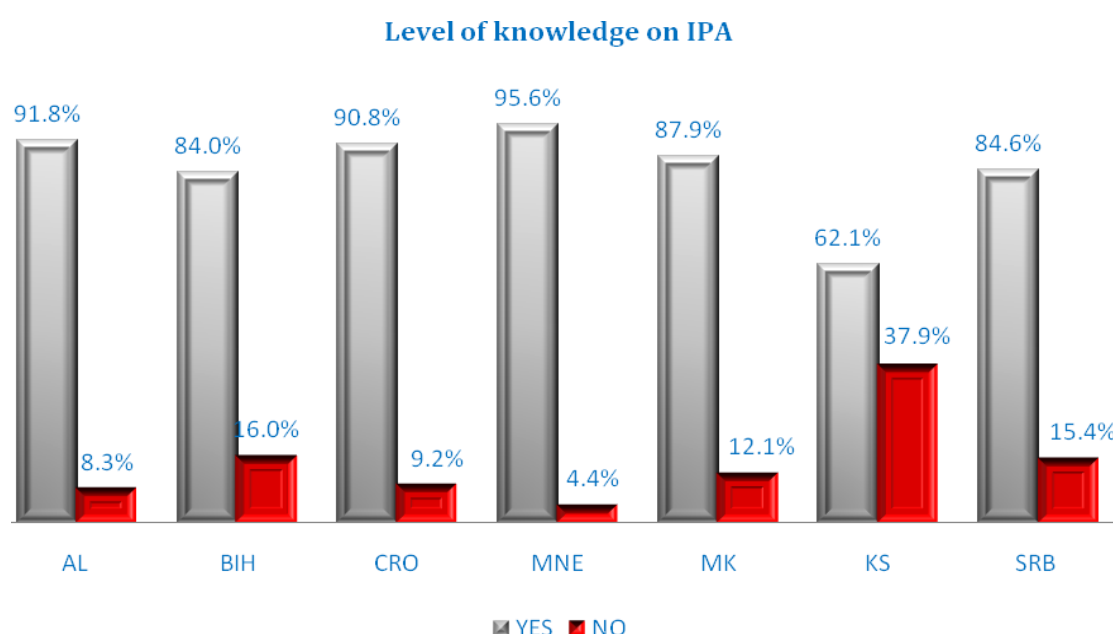
Although all the WB countries working towards EU accession share a common goal, IPA stipulates that the potential candidate countries (Albania, Serbia, Bosnia Herzegovina and Kosovo) are eligible to benefit only from Components I and II of the IPA scheme, while candidates such as Croatia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Montenegro benefit from all five components.

This section of the report analyses a group of questions in connection to the respondents' general knowledge of IPA and, more specifically, IPA CBC in Western Balkan countries. Through the different questions, the respondents had the opportunity to express their opinion on what the CBC represents in their respective country and how cross-border cooperation affects their local needs. The objective of this section is to provide an overview at country and regional level of the general visibility and knowledge about CBC Programmes among WB countries and the Programme Structures responsible for their implementation.

Even though the survey was distributed in all Western Balkan countries regardless of the status of CBC Programmes and the number of components used, this fact must be taken into consideration before assessing the data collected. For example, the CBC Programmes between Kosovo and Albania, and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia were recently adopted, meaning that the level of awareness and knowledge of CBC is to a certain degree lower. Moreover, though the subjects of this assessment are not CBC Programmes with the Member States, the fact that some WB countries have been implementing CBC Programmes with the MS over the last few years certainly affects the level of visibility and awareness of CBC in those WB countries.

4.1 Level of knowledge of IPA and IPA CBC Programmes and structures

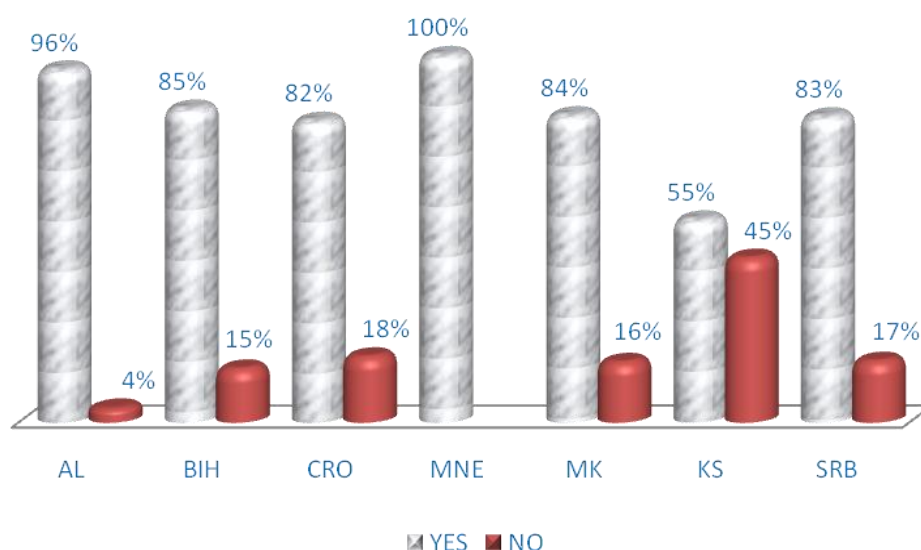
The majority of survey participants (85.3%) from the region claim to have knowledge of the Instrument for Pre-Accession (IPA). With the exception of Kosovo, in all the other countries the number of those who replied affirmatively ranged from 84 to 95 percent.



There is almost the same percentage (83.7%) of those who have a general knowledge of cross-border cooperation in which their country participates, again with the exception of Kosovo where the percentage (44.8%) of those still not familiar with CBC is to a certain degree higher in comparison to the other countries.

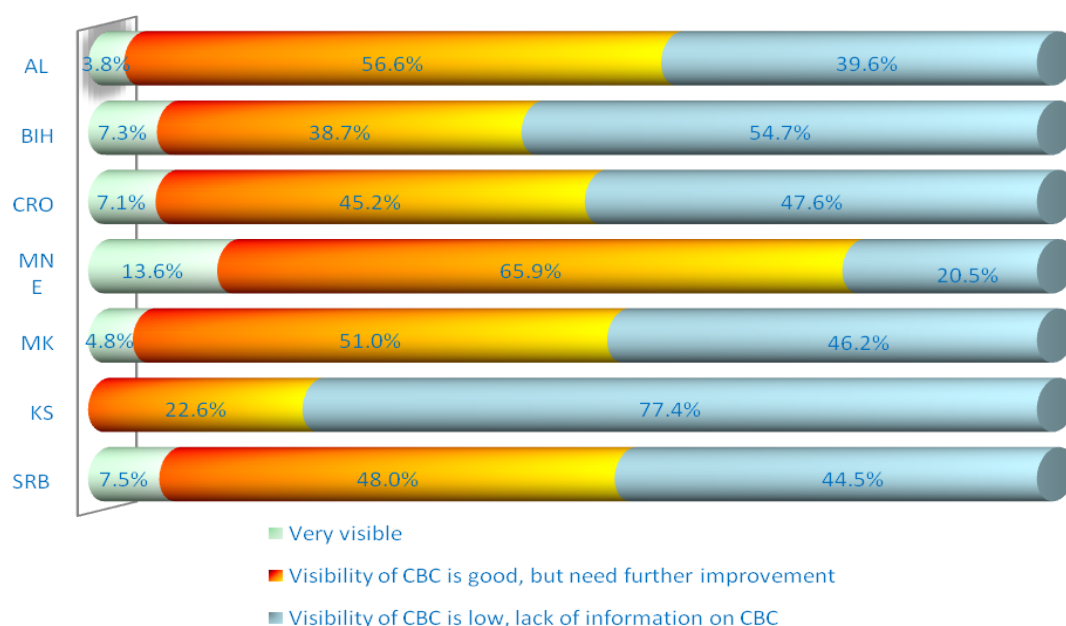


Level of awerness on IPA CBC



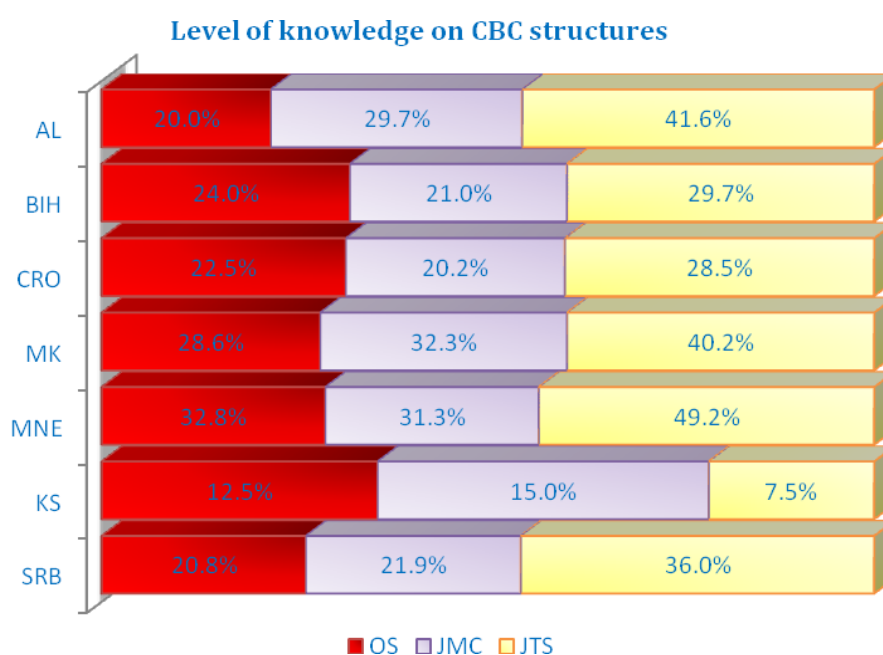
The general level of cross-border cooperation visibility in each WB country shows a clear need for further improvements. In fact, if we analyse the data at a regional level, 47.2 % of survey participants feel that CBC visibility is low and that there is a lack of information, while 46.9% are of the opinion that CBC visibility is good but with a clear need for further improvements. As shown in the chart below, in countries such as Bosnia and Herzegovina (54.7%), Croatia (47.6%) and Kosovo (77.4%), most of the survey participants emphasized a lack of information about the CBC. With the exception of Montenegro, a high percentage of respondents from Albania, Serbia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia expressed the same opinion.

Level of CBC visibility in each country



In order to further analyse the visibility of the CBC Programmes, the respondents were asked if they are acquainted with the role of CBC Programme Structures (Operating structure (OS), Joint Monitoring Committee (JMC) and Joint Technical Secretariat (JTS)), and with the content of CBC programme documents.

The findings at the regional level clearly demonstrate that JTSs (33.2%) have a higher visibility than the JMCs (24.5%) and OSs (23%). This is understandable since the primary role of the JTS is the support of potential applicants and it is in daily communication with them. From the country perspective, a high JTS visibility is the case in all the countries except Kosovo, which can be explained by there not having been a JTS established for the two new CBC Programmes as yet. On the other hand, it is interesting to note that with the exception of Croatia (22.5%) and Bosnia and Herzegovina (24%), in all other WB countries JMCs have more visible role in comparison to the OSs.

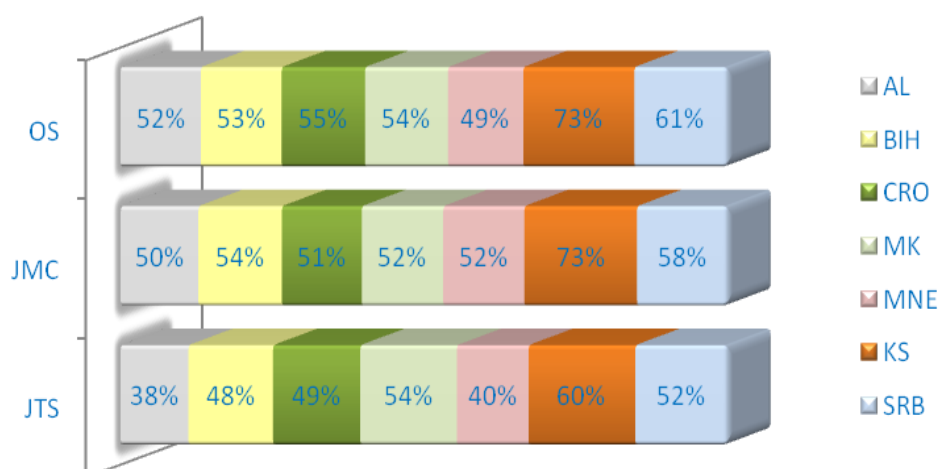


In line with the visibility findings, the respondents are most interested in learning about the role of the OS (56.63%), previously identified as having the lowest visibility of the Programme Structures. The respondents' interest in the role of the OS is more or less the same in all countries and, as can be seen from the chart below, it ranges from 52% to 55%.

As the JTSs/As directly communicate/work with potential applicants, and having in mind that the JTSs for the new Kosovo programmes have not yet been established, it is understandable that the Kosovo representatives expressed the highest interest (60%) in getting a better insight into the role of the JTS. In addition, from the regional level, 55.73% of respondents would like to know more about the role of the JMC. Alongside Kosovo with 73%, this interest is also high in BIH (54%) and SRB (58%).



Interest expressed for CBC Programme structures

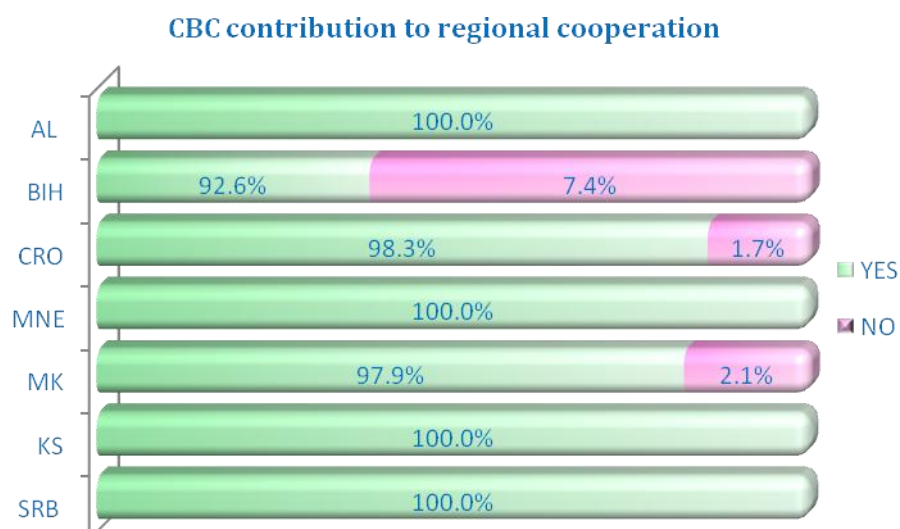


Furthermore, the level of knowledge of the content of the CBC Programmes per country (AL 88.2%, BIH 75.5%, CRO 68.6%, MNE 90.7%, FYROM 66.7%, KS 46.7% and SRB 71.9%) only complements these initial findings. In fact, at the regional level, of the 1130 survey participants, 73% claim to be familiar with the content of the CBC Programmes in which their country participates.

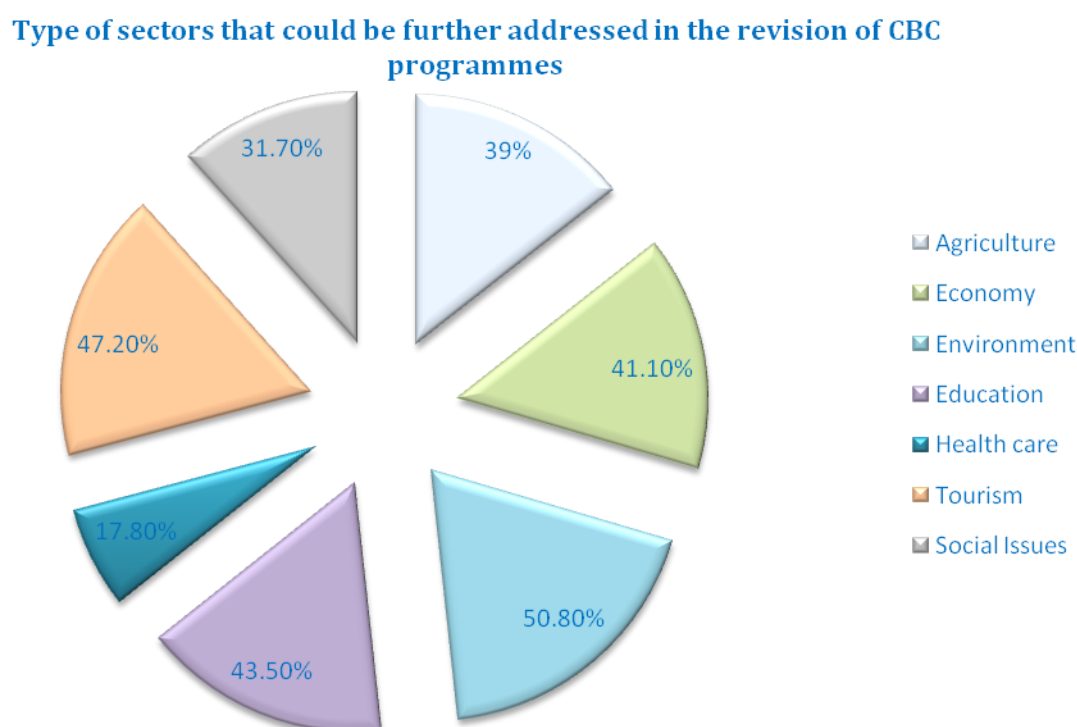
Respondents familiar with the content of the CBC Programmes were given the opportunity to rate whether the existent cross-border programmes match their local needs and if, in their opinion, the CBC between Western Balkan countries contributes to a better socio-economic situation and to regional cooperation.

Over 95% of respondents consider the cross-border cooperation among Western Balkans countries to be in line with their local needs and that the CBC Programmes contribute to a better socio-economic situation in their respective country. Furthermore, 100% of survey participants from Albania, Montenegro, Kosovo and Serbia believe that cross-border cooperation contributes to better regional cooperation. This opinion is complemented by 98% of respondents from Bosnia and Herzegovina, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Croatia.





In light of the future revision of CBC Programmes and in order to collect the opinions of a wide range of institutions and organizations from WB countries, the questionnaire provided the opportunity for all respondents to suggest the type of socio-economic sectors that could be further addressed in the upcoming revision. The respondents had the opportunity to select as many sectors as they wanted. The following chart demonstrates the type of sectors preferred from the regional point of view. The type of sectors selected and proposed by respondents from each country can be found in the country Annexes.



The majority of survey participants from the region believe that sectors such as environment (50.8%), tourism (47.2%), education (43.5%) and economy (41.1%) need further strengthening through CBC Programmes. The same types of sectors were also identified in the Second Assessment report as being those in which the majority of applicants were interested. In fact, out of the 492 projects received in the 1st CfP, at the regional level and regardless of the size of the project, applicants mostly applied with proposals dealing with Environmental protection (24%), Development of tourism (19%), Economy/entrepreneurship (19%), and Social cohesion and/or People-to-people (with 8% each).

The respondents proposed additional sectors; it is interesting to mention that Energy efficiency and Consumer protection sectors were suggested for the first time to be part of cross-border cooperation.

4.2 Communication tools and capacity building measures

Since their establishment, the JTS/A have prepared and adopted Communication Plans which envisage visibility tools and actions aimed at raising awareness of IPA CBC and specific programmes, as well as activities for strengthening the capacities of Potential Applicants for their participation in CfPs. To date, various communication tools, both electronic and printed, have been developed by the JTS/A. Importantly, six out of eight programmes have operational websites with the number of visitors ranging from 2000 to almost 8000. In the period leading up to the CfPs, the Programme Structures organised various events such as awareness raising seminars, info days, meetings with PAs, Partner Search Forums, PCM trainings and Project Pipeline Development Workshops. Moreover, once the CfPs were published it was compulsory for the JTS/A staff to organise information sessions to present and explain the content of the Call for Proposal, and to provide an opportunity for potential applicants to seek additional information about the published application package.

Since the CBIB has organized 67 training sessions (1693 trainees) and 25 awareness raising seminars (1600 participants) in all the Western Balkan countries, and due to the high rate of visits to the CBIB website (on average 2500 visitors per month), it was important to collect respondents' inputs on the tools and events organized by the CBIB.

In order to analyse the level of awareness among potential applicants in the region and the impact of tools and organized events developed by the CBC Programme Structures and the CBIB, it should be kept in mind that in the First and Second Assessment reports the contribution by potential applicants was limited and the visibility of the CBC was measured by inputs provided by the Programme Structures. In contrast, this section analysis is based on the

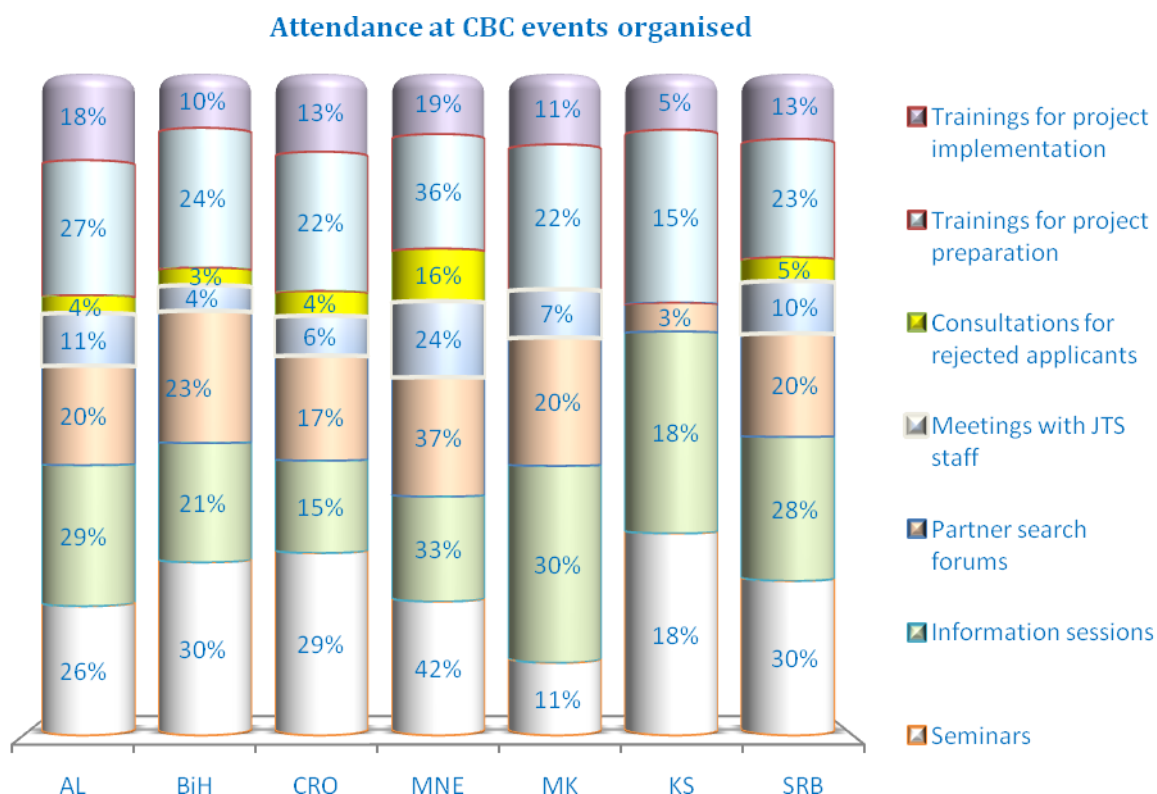


responses from survey respondents to a set of questions relating to the quality and level of their satisfaction with the visibility tools and measures taken.

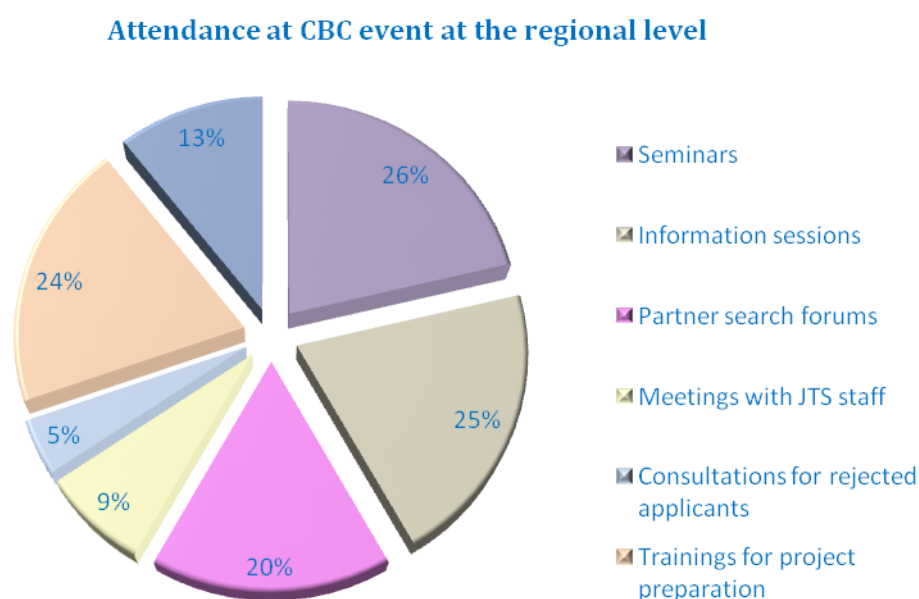
4.3 Type of events organized

With the aim to assess potential applicants' attendance at WB CBC information and/or capacity building events, the survey participants were asked if they had attended a cross-border cooperation event and if so, what type. As can be seen from the chart below, when looking from the country perspective, awareness raising seminars were most attended in MNE with 42%, BIH and SRB with 30%, while participation in information sessions was almost the same for AL, FYRoM and SRB, from 29% to 30%. It has to be noted that the highest participation rate in all CBC events was in Montenegro. In fact, partner search forums (37%), meetings with the JTS staff (24%) and consultations for unsuccessful applicants (16%) in Montenegro had the highest attendance in comparison to the other countries.

Training for project preparation was most attended in MNE (36%) and AL (27%), while in BIH and SRB the participation rate was around 24%. Trainings on project implementation were most attended by respondents in Albania (18%) and Montenegro (19%). Trainings on project implementation were most attended by respondents in Albania (18%) and Montenegro (19%).



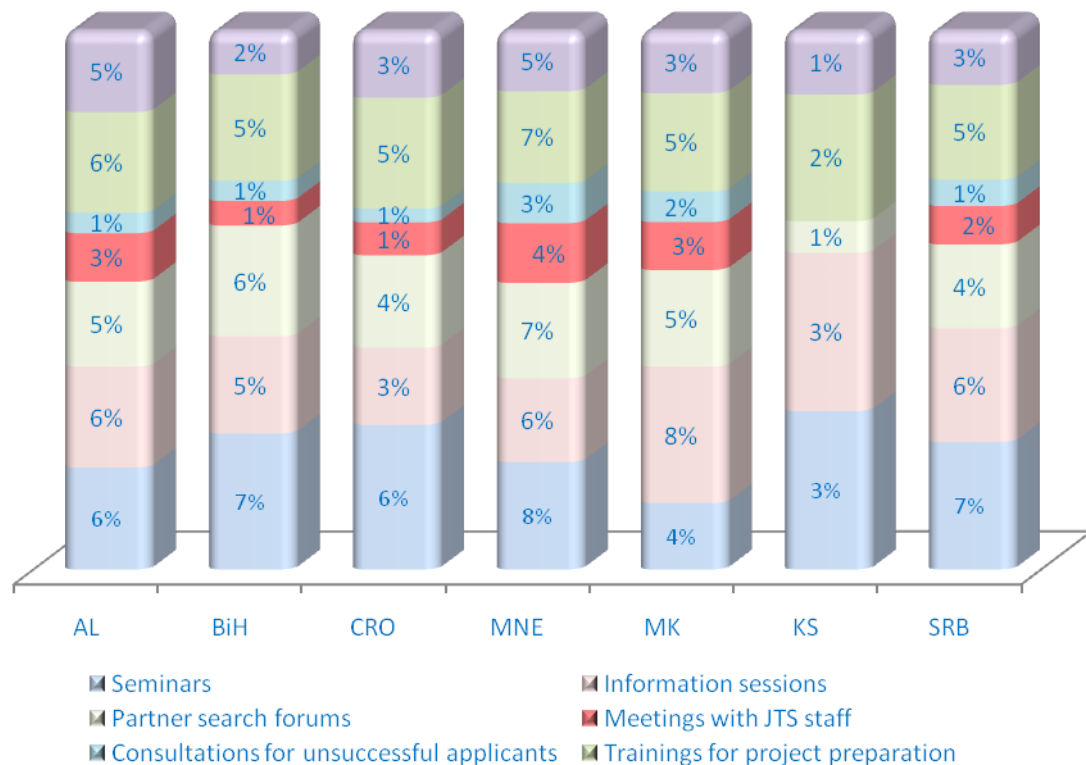
From the regional level, and as presented in the chart below, the highest number of potential applicants (26%) participated in seminars, with 24% at information sessions and project preparation trainings. Additionally, 20% of respondents took part at partner search forums.



The survey participants who attended one or more WB CBC events expressed their views on the quality of information provided and suggested what should be improved in future. Please note that in order to analyse the level of satisfaction with organised events, the survey participants were invited to select one out of five different categories (very satisfied, somewhat satisfied, neither satisfied nor dissatisfied, somewhat dissatisfied and very dissatisfied). However, for presenting data in this report the average grade was calculated per each event. Detailed analysis per each country can be found in the country Annexes.

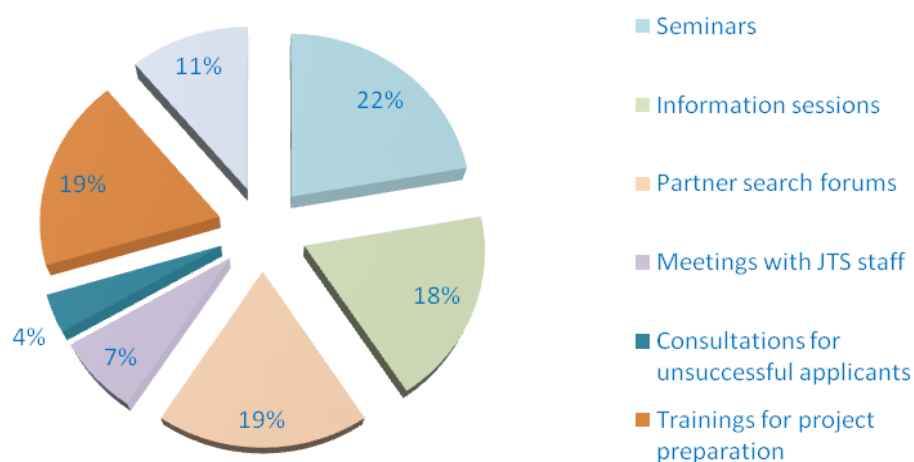
The findings show that the participants were most satisfied with seminars organized in BiH (7%), MNE (8%) and Serbia (7%), partner search forums in MNE (7%) and BIH (6%) and information sessions in FYROM (8%) and AL, MNE and SRB (equally 6%). The highest satisfaction for project preparation trainings was equally expressed with 7% in AL and MNE.

Level of satisfaction with organised events



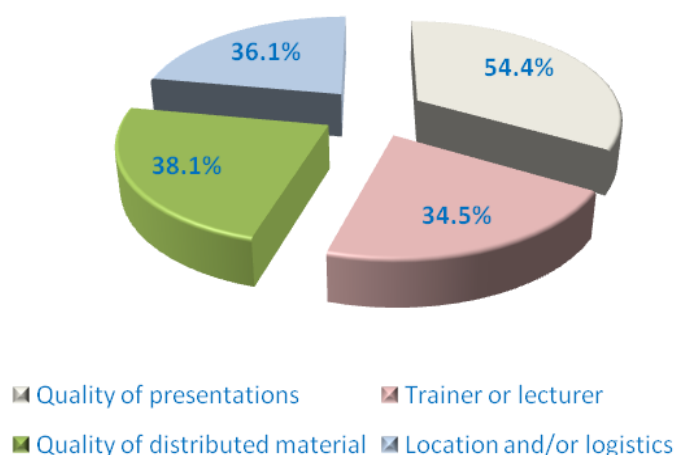
Looking at satisfaction from a regional level, the applicants who took part in CBC organized events were most satisfied with the seminars (22%), partner search forums and project preparation trainings (19% each), and almost evenly with information sessions (18%). It should be noted that the level of satisfaction with consultations for unsuccessful applicants (4%) is the lowest but this can be explained by the fact that the CBIB organized this type of event only for the CBC Programmes CRO-MNE and SRB-MNE on request of the Operating Structure from Montenegro.

Level of satisfaction with organised events



The survey participants who attended cross-border events but were not fully satisfied with provided information/quality of events, were invited to give their suggestions on what could be improved in the future. The quality of the presentations (54.4%) should definitely be further improved, as well as the quality of distributed material (38.1%). In addition, the location and/or logistics (36.1%) and trainer/lecturer (34.5%) could also be better.

What can be improved with regard to CBC events



Comments and suggestions regarding the organised trainings show a need for more practical training material with details on how to develop project proposals and important information which can contribute to the approval of project proposals. More concretely, the respondents requested training in the filling out of application forms with detailed explanations of every question in the form. It was also proposed that trainings be held over weekends as many people (from NGOs, but also other organisations) are in full-time employment and have daily commitments. It was also suggested that participants be divided into two groups according to their knowledge, i.e. beginners and those who already have some acquaintance with the EU procedures/project preparation and implementation.

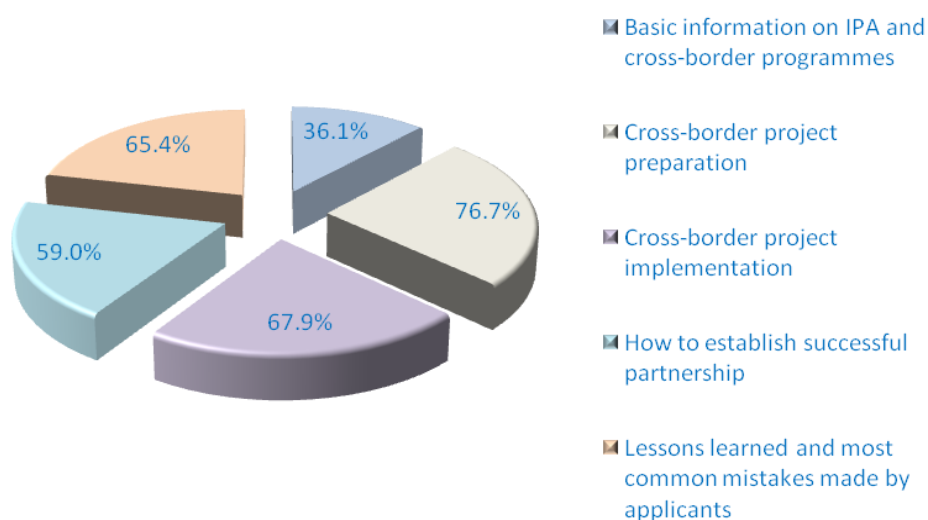
Regarding locations and logistics for the events, it was suggested that they be organised in different locations, closer to the borders so that potential applicants would not need to travel too far, or, instead, that the donors cover their travel costs.

On a positive note, when asked whether they would like to be better informed about future CBC events and whether they would like to participate, the response was high with over 95%.



The topics for which the highest interest was expressed are CBC project preparation (76.7%), CBC project implementation (67.9%) as well as for lessons learned and most common mistakes made by applicants (65.4%).

Topics of most interest for future CBC events



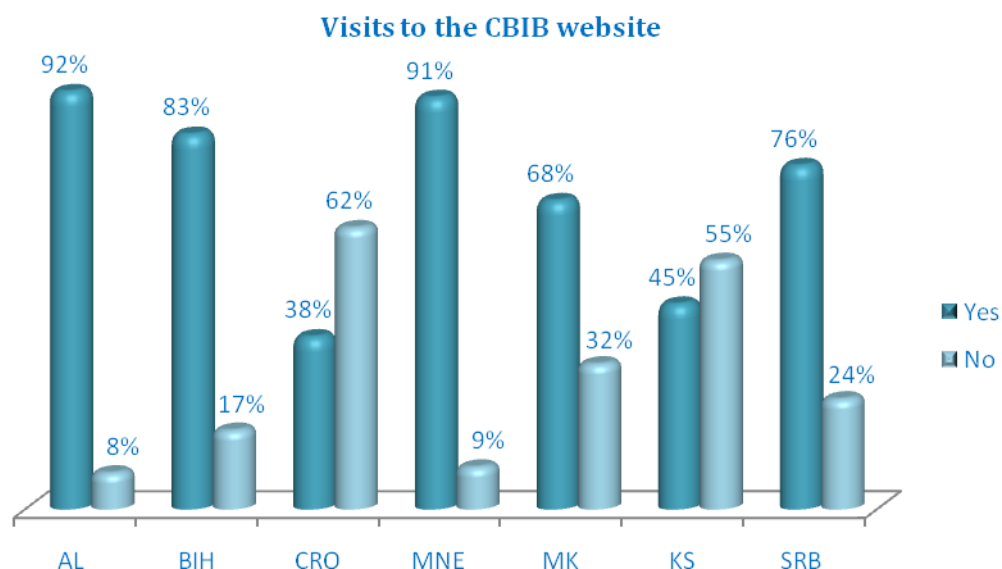
4.4 Visibility tools

Further to organising different CBC events, both the CBC Programme Structures and the CBIB have developed different visibility tools. One of the most used and efficient visibility and promotional tools is the established website. To date, only two CBC Programmes, AL-MNE and FYRoM-AL, have not created websites and many comments were in relation to their establishment.

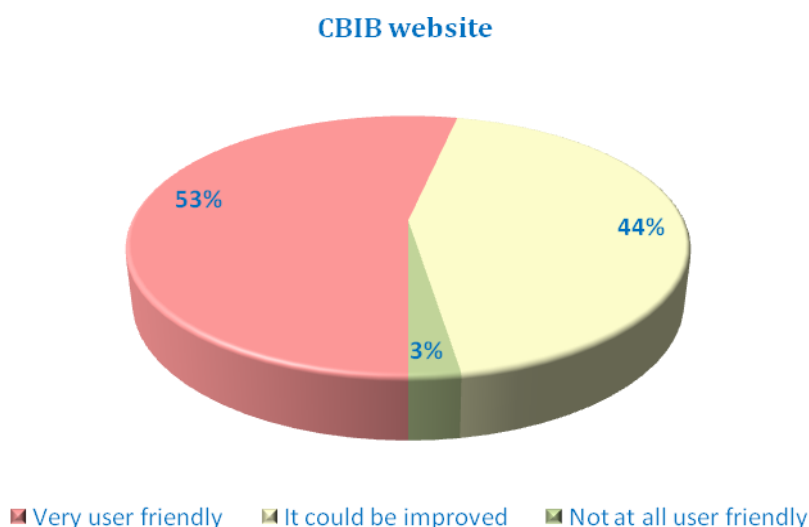
In general, the respondents regularly visit the CBC programme websites and are relatively satisfied with their content. Thus, the comments are on improvements to the regular publishing of forecasts for the next CfPs, updates on the evaluation and implementation process, more concrete information on project selection, potential ideas and partners, events plan, etc.

According to the collected data, 70% of respondents had visited the CBIB website in the past. In comparison to the other WB countries, the percentage is to a certain degree lower in Croatia and Kosovo where the CBIB did not carry out any awareness raising activities. The reason for this is the presence of the National Technical Assistance project in Kosovo and the fact that the CBIB has never conducted visibility activities in Croatia.





On a positive note, 53% of those who visited the CBIB website found the site very user friendly, while 45% feel that there is a need for further improvement.



Consequently, the respondents had the opportunity to select and suggest what type of additional information they would like to find on the CBIB website. As expected, 45.7% of respondents would like to receive more information on ongoing Calls for Proposal, while 41.7% would like to receive more information on other EU-funding opportunities in their respective country. Additionally, according to the input collected, the CBIB website should contain more information on lessons learned and mistakes made by applicants from the region; a database on other initiatives from the region with a background on partners and their potential ideas; a full



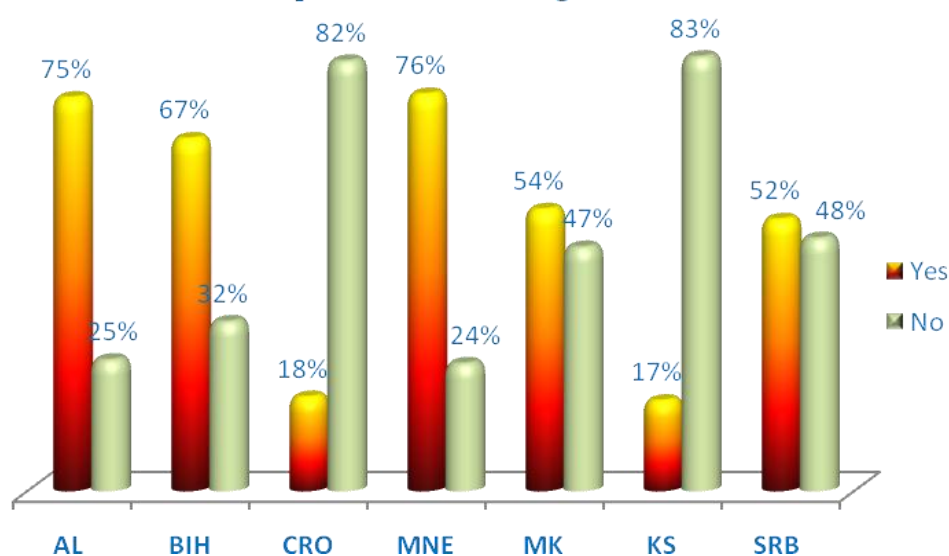
list of selected projects and results of the CfPs, and advances made in the implementation of projects. In addition, the CBIB website should be updated more frequently.

Additional information requested at the CBIB website



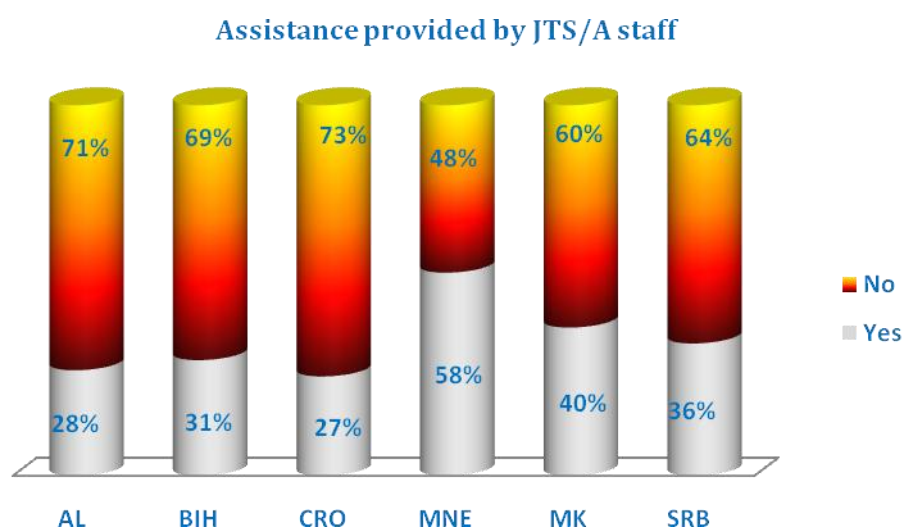
In addition to the established websites, the CBIB is distributing on weekly basis e-mail alerts to over 10000 contacts in all the WB countries. With the exception of Croatia and Kosovo where, as previously explained, the CBIB has not conducted many raising awareness activities, the percentage of respondents already receiving the e-mail alerts is more than satisfactory. More importantly, almost 95% of survey participants wish to receive CBIB e-mail alerts in future and have posted their e-mail addresses for this purpose.

Number of respondents receiving CBIB e-mail alerts



4.5 Direct support provided by Programme Structures

For further analysis of the support provided to potential applicants by CBC Programme Structures, the survey representatives were asked if they had requested any assistance from the JTS/A staff and if so, to what extent they were satisfied with the support provided. In addition, they were able to post their comments and main suggestions for improvement. Having in mind that the CBC Programmes in which Kosovo participates have not yet established JTS/A offices, for further analysis the two CBC Programmes with Kosovo have not been taken into account.



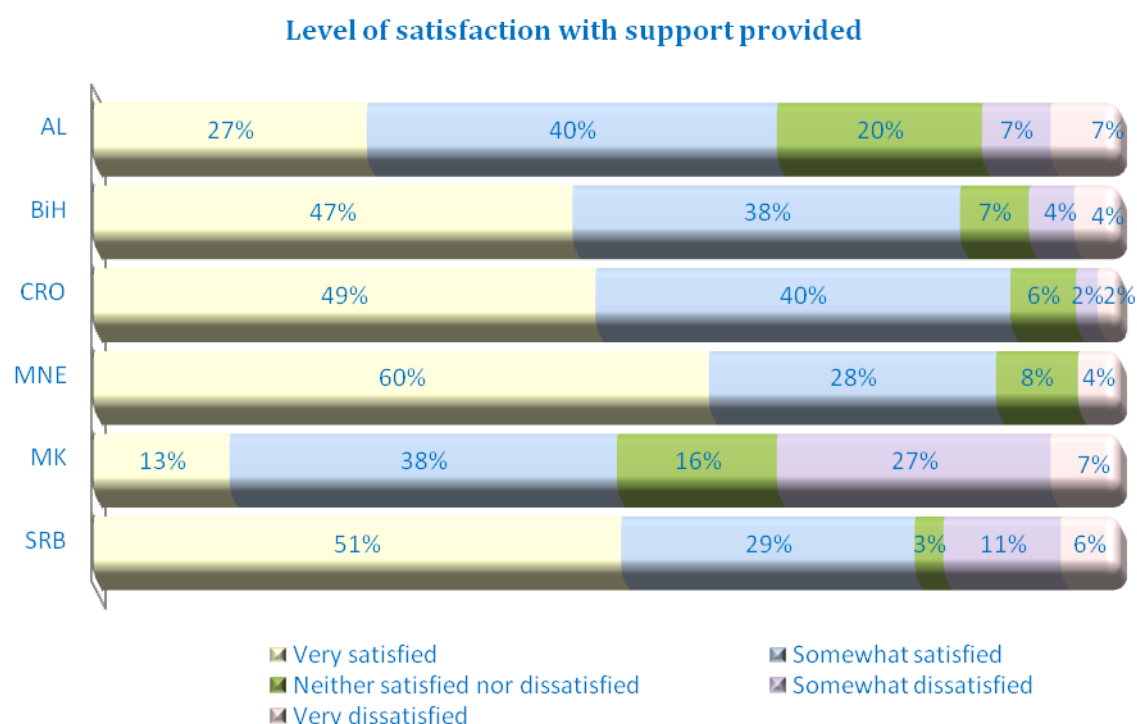
From the regional point of view, it seems that 64% of survey participants did not request any support from the JTS/A staff. Out of the 37% of survey participants that had requested support, the highest interest by potential applicants was in Montenegro (58%), as can be seen from the chart above. In three WB CBC countries, FYRoM, SRB and BIH, the interest for JTS/A support ranged from 31 to 40%, while in Croatia and Albania the expressed interest in assistance was 27% and 28%.

More importantly, the potential applicants who requested support from JTS/A staff had the possibility to express their satisfaction with the assistance received and to suggest what could be improved in relation to the structures responsible for CBC in their respective country.

Looking regionally, of the survey participants who requested support from Programme Structures, 41% was very satisfied. Out of the six WB countries, the highest level of those who were satisfied was in Montenegro (60%), while in Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia, this percentage was around 47% to 51%. As the rate of satisfaction is somewhat lower in Albania (27%) and in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (13%), it is understandable



that the percentage of those who were not satisfied with provided assistance is to certain degree higher in these two countries (AL and FYROM evenly 7%).



Since in all countries there is a number of potential applicants who requested JTS/A support but were not satisfied with the assistance provided, and for a better understanding of the reactions of potential applicants regarding their dissatisfaction with the assistance received from the JTS/A, they were asked to list the main reasons for such an opinion and scoring. As the responses were numerous and very different, they have been grouped according to similarities in the replies and the issues they were addressing. Please note that all comments were translated from the local languages, taking care to keep the original meaning and context.

The main reasons why survey respondents were dissatisfied with assistance received from the JTS/A are as follows:

In relation to JTS/A functioning:

- Low JTS/A visibility and therefore low knowledge about their role;
- Lack of transparency in their work;
- Lack of knowledge of the JTS tasks within the structures;

Related to the assistance provided by JTS/A:

- Time lapse in providing replies too long or no reply at all;
- No possibility in learning about specific mistakes made in negatively scored applications;
- CfP presentations too short with general



<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Existing conflict of interest within the JTS/A; • JTS still being in the start-up phase; • Unprofessional and incompetent; • Lack of skills; • Lack of relevant knowledge and experience in EU procedures; • Lack of knowledge about partnership; • JTS/A work overloaded; • Sufficient theoretical knowledge but lack of practical knowledge. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • information provided by the JTS; • Language barrier, namely expressions need better translation; • Information provided over the phone insufficient; • Difficulties in being posted on the mailing list; • Non-functional website; • Lack of professionalism and promptness in providing responses; • Lack of clear information on possibilities to participate in CfPs; • Lack of clear and unique finance and tender procedures; • Difficulties in understanding whom to address for different issues.
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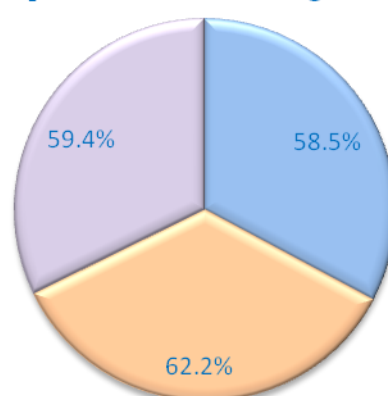
From the listed comments it can be concluded that the dissatisfaction of survey participants with the role of the JTS/A refers to two aspects, namely, the proper functioning of the JTS/A and the quality of assistance provided to potential applicants from the WB CBC countries.

Regarding the functioning of the JTS/A, there is a perceived lack of competencies and relevant knowledge about the EU and EU procedures, as well as a lack of practical knowledge needed in order to provide accurate and qualitative responses. Regarding the assistance/information received from the JTS/As, it seems that the replies provided were not always timely, accurate or complete. Moreover, the potential applicants had problems in obtaining information from the relevant websites, in getting on the mailing list and being regularly informed, as well as in receiving the necessary information related to the CfP or project proposal deficiencies and reasons for not passing on to the next evaluation phase.

In order to explore ways to improve the role and functioning of the Programme Structures, the survey participants were given the chance to provide suggestions as to what could be improved. In the Annexes attached, suggestions per country can be found, and as can be seen from the chart below, the majority of respondents require more events (62.2%) to be organized by the CBC Programme Structures.



Improvements at the regional level



■ More personal contacts ■ More events ■ Distribution of promotional events

This can also be seen from the table below, where respondents were able to provide their additional suggestions on what should be improved, both relating to the functioning of CBC structures and the provision of support mainly by JTS/A staff.

<u>Related to the functioning of CBC structures:</u>	<u>Related to support provided</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Raising awareness of the role of the JTS/A; • Better media coverage; • Transparency in the work of JTS/A and closer cooperation; • Better communication between structures and beneficiaries so that provided information is transparent and timely; • The role of all structures/stakeholders to be better explained (from JTS/A up to Brussels Headquarters); • To engage persons in the JTS/A with relevant knowledge and practical experience, including proposal writing and project implementation; • Urgent need for JTS/A staff to be trained and their offices to be open for public communication; • Higher and more visible presence on the field; • The number of staff in Antennae to be increased; • HR capacities to be enhanced; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More training for potential applicants, including details on filling out the application form; • More training on IPA with certificates to be issued at the end of the training; • More training and education programmes related to the application procedure; • More practical trainings, namely examples of project writing within smaller groups; • More instructive training based on specific and positive examples from implemented CBC projects; • More trainings, workshops and partner search forums, and consultations; • More joint seminars and informative seminars; • Additional trainings in budget preparation; • Application form to be in the local language of the beneficiary country; • Presentation at an inter-regional level;



- From an early stage to better define the role of the JTS/A;
- Programme Structures to communicate with other project staff and not only the project managers, especially when dealing with issues such as finances/budget;
- E-mails to be sent from official addresses and not from personal ones.
- To provide assistance in project preparation/writing;
- To respect deadlines in the evaluation process;
- Transparency of results and projects implemented;
- Updated information on the evaluation procedures;
- Information on project implementation to be provided in the local language and also, wherever this possible,
- more equal “distribution” of funds/grants between the two respective entities;
- Networking with relevant local institutions and continuous cooperation;
- To participate/cooperate in field visits so as to better learn about local needs/problems in order to address them;
- Promotion of email communication, web-conferences and video presentations;
- Regular monthly meetings with all partners on the progress in implementation and providing assistance for eventual problems;
- Better information flow related to innovations in the programmes;
- Establishment of contacts between institutions and local organizations;
- More contacts and establishment of regional cooperation.

In relation to the functioning of CBC Programme Structures, the survey participants are of the opinion that JTS/A staff need additional trainings so as to improve their knowledge and capacities in order for them to better assist the potential applicants. A better distribution of tasks within the JTS/A seems to be needed as well, including increased presence in the field and better visibility of their roles.

Furthermore, the respondents have provided suggestions for eventual improvements related to the CfPs, more specifically on project evaluation procedures and the services provided by the JTS/A. The focus is on the need for further and specific training on project preparation for potential applicants, additional trainings on budget preparation and supplementary trainings in



project implementation. All these trainings, in order to be more practical, should be accompanied by successful and specific CBC project examples. Assistance in project preparation/writing would also be most welcome. Regarding the evaluation process, the respondents have stated that more transparency and timely information is needed, including a better information flow and networking leading to enhanced regional cooperation.

Level of knowledge of IPA and IPA CBC Programmes and Structures

Main Findings

- The majority of survey participants (85.3%) from the region claim to have knowledge about the Instrument for Pre-Accession, IPA, and there is almost the same percentage (83.7%) of those who have a general knowledge of the cross-border cooperation in which their country participates;
- 47.2% of survey participants consider CBC visibility to be low and that there is a lack of information about CBC, while 46.9% are of the opinion that CBC visibility is good but with a clear need for further improvements;
- In countries such as Bosnia and Herzegovina (54.7), Croatia (47.6%) and Kosovo (77.4%), most of the survey participants emphasized that there is a lack of information about the CBC. With the exception of Montenegro, a high percentage of respondents from Albania, Serbia and the former Yugoslav republic of Macedonia expressed the same opinion;
- At the regional level, knowledge about the roles of CBC structures clearly demonstrates that the JTSs (33.2%) have higher visibility than the JMCs (24.5%) and OSs (23%);
- With the exception of Croatia (22.5%) and Bosnia and Herzegovina (24%), in all the other WB countries the JMCs have more a visible role than the OSs;
- Out of 1130 survey participants, 73% claim to be familiar with the content of the CBC Programmes in which their country participates;
- Over 95 % of respondents finds that the cross-border cooperation among Western Balkan countries is in line with their local needs and that CBC Programmes contribute to a better socio-economic situation in their countries;
- 100% of survey participants from Albania, Montenegro, Kosovo and Serbia believe that cross-border cooperation contributes to better regional cooperation. This opinion is complemented by 98% of respondents from Bosnia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Croatia;
- The majority of survey participants from the region feels that environment (50.8%), tourism (47.2%), education (43.5%) and economy (41.1%) sectors need to be further strengthened through CBC Programmes;



- Additional sectors such as energy efficiency and consumer protection are suggested for the first time to be further addressed in relation to cross-border cooperation.

Recommendations

- Even though the general knowledge of the IPA and IPA CBC is quite high, there is a clear need for an increase in IPA CBC visibility in the whole region and at all levels;
- Information on cross-border cooperation must be distributed more frequently with details of all stages of the process, including the content of the CBC Programmes and the roles of CBC Programme Structures which are to be clearly explained to the wider audience;
- Given that cross-border cooperation evidently addresses local needs and contributes to a better socio-economic situation in the WB countries, as well as to regional cooperation, additional efforts should be made and available funds should be increased so that the positive impacts are further enhanced;
- In future revisions of CBC Programming documents additional public consultations should be made so that insufficiently covered sectors are more targeted;
- Wide consultations at the local level during future revisions of CBC Programmes would additionally help raise awareness and encourage a sense of ownership.

Type of events organized

Main Findings

- The highest number of potential applicants/survey participants (26%) had participated in seminars, while 24% had participated in information sessions and project preparation trainings. From respondents that participated in CBC events, 20% took part in partner search forums;
- The potential applicants were most satisfied with the seminars (22%), partner search forums and project preparation trainings (19% each), and almost evenly with information sessions (18%);
- In general, the quality of the presentations (54.4%) should be further improved as well as the quality of distributed material (38.1%). In addition, the location and/or logistics (36.1%) and trainer/lecturer (34.5%) could also be improved;
- The respondents suggested that training should be more practical with examples of how to develop project proposals, focussing on details and important information which can contribute to the approval of project proposals, e.g. filling out application forms with a detailed explanation of every question in the form;
- Regarding locations and logistics for the events, it was suggested that they could be organised in locations closer to borders so that potential applicants from the region would not need to



travel far;

- Over 95% of respondents would like to be better informed about future CBC events and would like to participate in future CBC events related to project preparation (76.7%) and implementation (67.9%) of cross-border projects, as well as for lessons learned and most common mistakes made by applicants (65.4%).

Recommendations:

- The number, frequency and content of CBC events should be additionally tailored to the needs of potential applicants, including more concrete information on what is expected in preparing applications for CBC projects;
- The applicants need to be better and more timely informed of future events, while the quality of presentations and distributed materials should be further improved;
- Better media coverage of events related to CBC Programmes and projects will also have a positive impact on the process of disseminating relevant information, and in this way introducing the CBC to as many potential applicants as possible;
- Trainings on project preparation and implementation should be organised more often, and should include lessons learned and most common mistakes made by applicants and grant beneficiaries.

Visibility tools

Main Findings

- To date, only two CBC Programmes, AL-MNE and FYRoM-AL, have not established websites and many comments were in relation to their establishment;
- In general, the respondents regularly visit the CBC programme websites and are quite satisfied with their content;
- Comments on improvements relate to the regular publishing of forecasts for the next CfPs, updates on the evaluation and implementation process, more concrete information on projects selected, potential ideas and partners, events plan, etc.
- 70% of respondents have visited the CBIB website in the past. The percentage is to a certain degree lower in Croatia and Kosovo where the CBIB has not carried out awareness raising activities, unlike the other countries.
- On a positive note, 53% of those who visited the CBIB website found it very user friendly while 45% feel that there is a need for further improvement.
- 45.7% of respondents would like to receive more information on the CBIB website on ongoing Calls for Proposal, while 41.7% would like to receive more information about other



EU-funding opportunities in their respective country;

- Additionally, according to the inputs collected, the CBIB website should contain more information on lessons learned and mistakes made by applicants from the region; a database on other initiatives from the region and a complete background on partners and their potential ideas; a full list of selected projects and results of the CfP, and progress made in the implementation of projects.
- The CBIB is distributing on weekly basis e-mail alerts to more than 10000 contacts in all the WB countries. Except in Croatia and Kosovo where, as previously explained the CBIB has not conducted any raising awareness activities, the percentage of respondents already receiving e-mail alerts is more than satisfactory.
- Almost 95% of survey participants wish to receive CBIB e-mail alerts in future and posted their e-mail addresses for this purpose.

Recommendations:

- The two CBC Programmes, AL-MNE and FYRoM-AL, should shortly establish their websites;
- All CBC Programmes and CBIB websites should be updated more regularly with specific information on ongoing Calls for Proposal and other EU-funding opportunities, potential partners and ideas, as well as on the results of the CfPs;
- Transparency should be increased by informing the general public of the impact of the CfPs, and ensuring the proper dissemination of relevant information through all possible communication and information channels.

Direct support provided by Programme Structures

Main Findings

- From the regional level, 64% of survey participants did not request any support from JTS/A staff. Out of the 37% of survey participants that did request support, the highest interest by potential applicants in approaching and requesting assistance from the JTS/A was in Montenegro (58%);
- From the survey participants who requested support from the Programme Structures, 41% was very satisfied. Of the six WB countries, the highest level of those who were satisfied is in Montenegro (60%), while in Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia, this percentage is from 47% to 51%. As the rate of satisfaction is somewhat lower in Albania (27%) and in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (13%), it is understandable that the percentage of those who were not satisfied with provided assistance is to a certain degree higher in these two countries (AL and FYROM evenly 7%);



- Dissatisfied potential applicants are under the impression that JTS/A staff have insufficient competencies, a lack of relevant knowledge about the EU and EU procedures, as well as a lack of the practical experience necessary to provide accurate and qualitative responses.
- Regarding the assistance/information received from the JTS/A, it seems that provided replies were not always timely, accurate or complete. Moreover, the potential applicants had problems in obtaining information from the relevant websites, in getting on the mailing list and being regularly informed, and in receiving information related to the CfP or project proposal deficiencies and reasons for not passing on to the next evaluation phase.
- In order to explore ways to improve the role and functioning of the Programme Structures, the survey participants are of the opinion that the JTS/A staff need additional training so as to improve their knowledge and capacities, thereby enabling them to better assist the potential applicants. Better distribution of tasks within the JTS/A seems to be needed as well, including an increased presence in the field and better visibility of their roles.
- The respondents have provided suggestions for eventual improvements related to the CfPs, focussing on the need for further and specific training on project preparation for potential applicants, additional training in budget preparation and supplementary trainings in project implementation. All these trainings, in order to be more practical, should be accompanied by successful and specific CBC project examples, and assistance in project preparation/writing would be most welcome. Regarding the evaluation process, the respondents have stated that more transparency and timely information is needed, as well as a better information flow and networking to enhance regional cooperation.

Recommendations:

- The role of JTS/A staff in providing support to potential applicants should be clearly explained to the wider public so that applicants understand which type of assistance they may expect in each specific phase of the Call;
- The knowledge/capacities of JTSs/A staff should be additionally augmented in order for all JTS/A staff to equally provide assistance to the applicants;
- The presence of JTS/A staff in the field must be increased through meetings, cross-border events and more specific support to potential applicants.



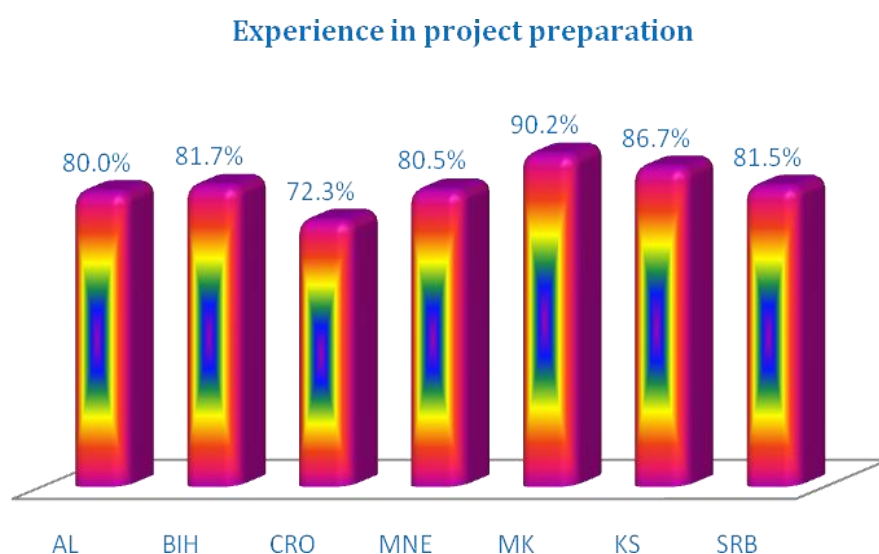
5. CAPACITIES FOR PREPARATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF PROJECTS

The capacity of an institution/organization in project preparation and implementation relies on the previous experience of its staff in developing projects and to what extent the organization can successfully carry out the project.

This section of the report analyses a group of questions relating to the respondents' self-evaluation in project preparation and implementation capacities in general, and not specifically in relation to cross-border projects and the 1st CfP.

5.1 Previous experience in project preparation and implementation

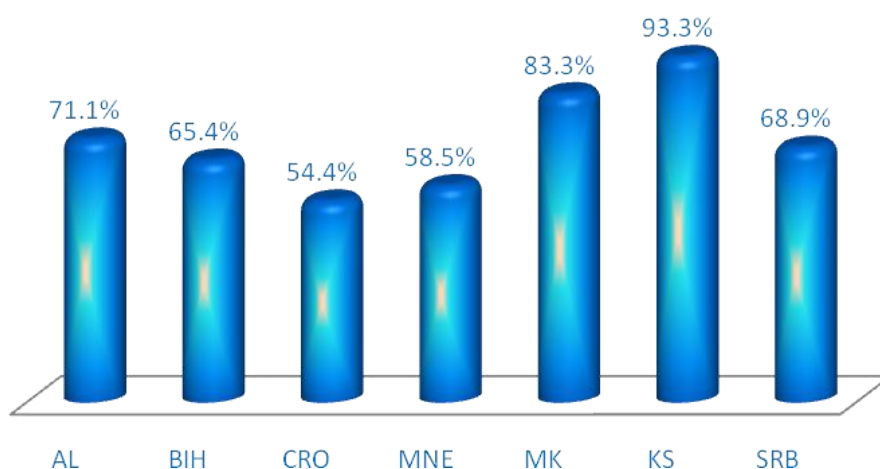
Bearing in mind the number of respondents from each country and the type of institutions from which the respondents originate, at the regional level 82% of survey participants claim to have previous project preparation experience. The majority of respondents, namely 68%, claimed to have a unit or person responsible for project preparation within their organization/institution.



As for experience in project implementation, 54.4% to 93.3% of the survey respondents at a country level claimed to have previous experience, while at the regional level this experience is around 71%.



Experience in project implementation



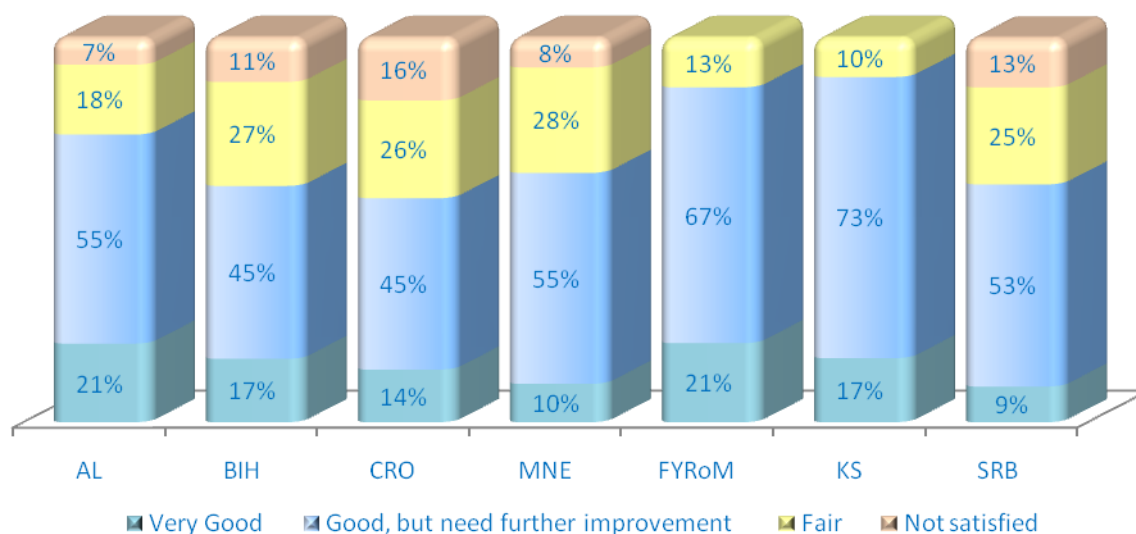
5.2 Capacities for project preparation and implementation

Even though many respondents claim to have previous experience in the preparation and/or implementation of projects, they were also asked to evaluate the level of their own capacities and skills.

At a regional level, the majority of survey participants (with an average of 56%) self-evaluated their project preparation capacities as good with a need for further improvement, while 21% of respondents claimed to have fair project preparation capacities. It is interesting to mention that in all the countries there is a number of respondents claiming to have very good capacities (15%). On a regional level, with the exception of Kosovo, 8% of respondents from all the other WB countries were not satisfied with their capacities in project preparation.

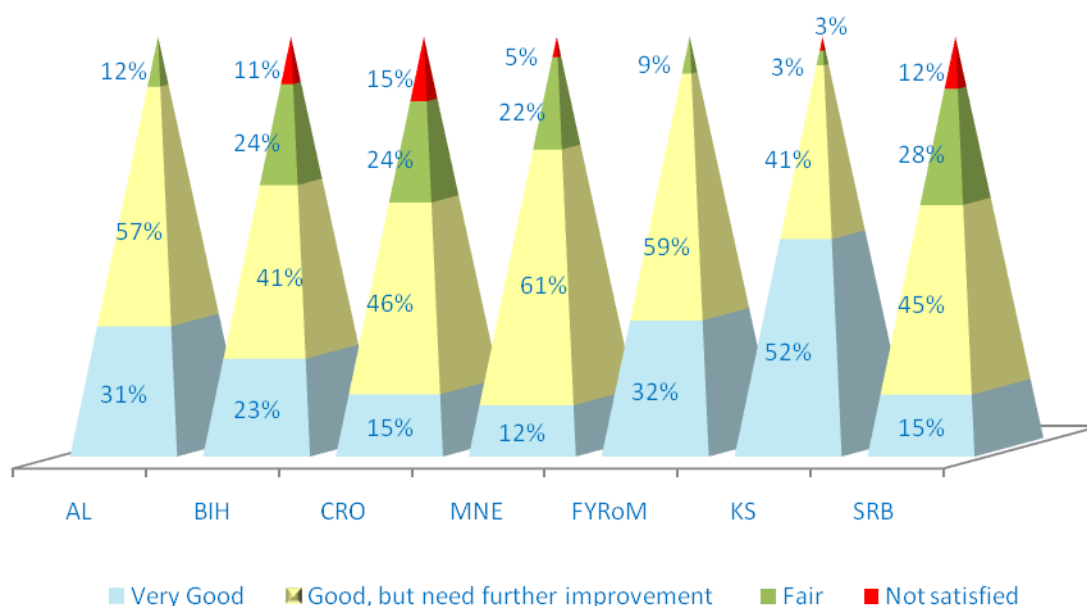


Project preparation capacities



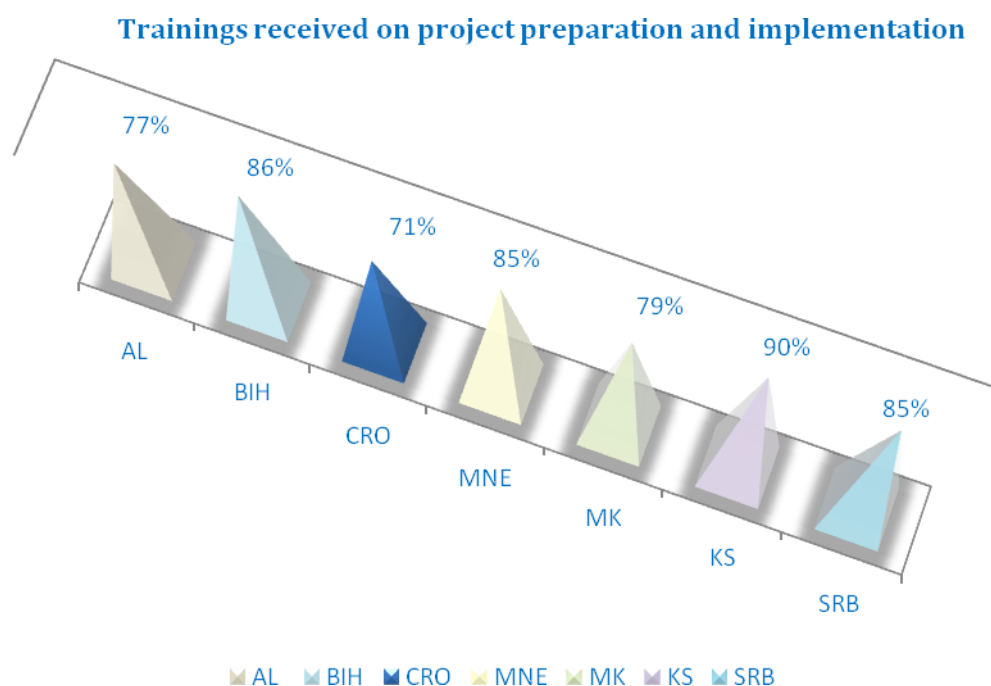
With regard to the respondents' evaluation of their capacities in project implementation, 50.1% said they had good capacities, with a need for further improvement. From the regional point of view, there is significant percentage of those who believe they have very good project implementation capacities, on average 25.7 % of respondents, while 17.4% claim to have a fair knowledge. The chart below supports this finding and demonstrates how respondents from each WB country evaluated their own capacities in project implementation.

Capacities for project implementation



5.3 Trainings received on project preparation and implementation

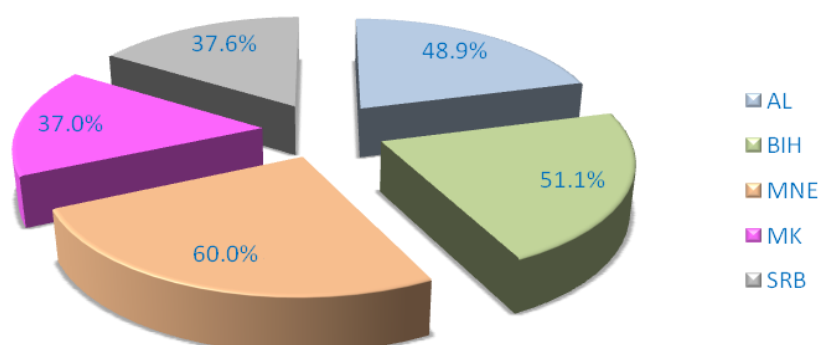
In total, 82% of respondents and/or staff from their organizations/institutions have received training in project development and implementation. Having in mind the number of respondents from each country, 90% of respondents from KS, 86% from BIH and 85% from SRB and MNE claim to have previously been trained in project preparation and implementation. Project Cycle Management training was the most frequently organised training.



To date, the CBIB has organised 67 training sessions on project preparation for more than 1690 trainees. Since the National Authorities from Croatia have not requested support from the CBIB for training in Croatia and since the IPA CBC Programmes have only recently been adopted in Kosovo, the questions relating to participation in and evaluation of CBIB trainings in these two countries were not assessed in this section. In connection to the participation of the other 5 countries in CBIB trainings, most participants were from Montenegro (60%), Albania (48.9%) and Bosnia and Herzegovina (51.1%).

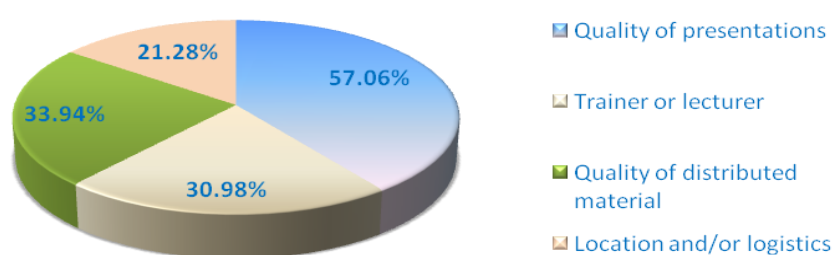


Participation at CBIB trainings



Most of the respondents who participated positively evaluated the organised CBIB trainings. In fact, 43% participants were very satisfied while 48.4% were somewhat satisfied. A very small number, around 1%, was somewhat dissatisfied and suggested that the CBIB improve the quality of its presentations (57.06%) and the quality of distributed materials (33.94%). Most of the training participants think that the demands and complexity of the EU procedures they need to acquire require the trainings to be extended. Having longer trainings (for example 5 days instead of 3) would make it possible for the trainer to provide more detailed training and to include additional practical examples.

What could be improved in CBIB trainings

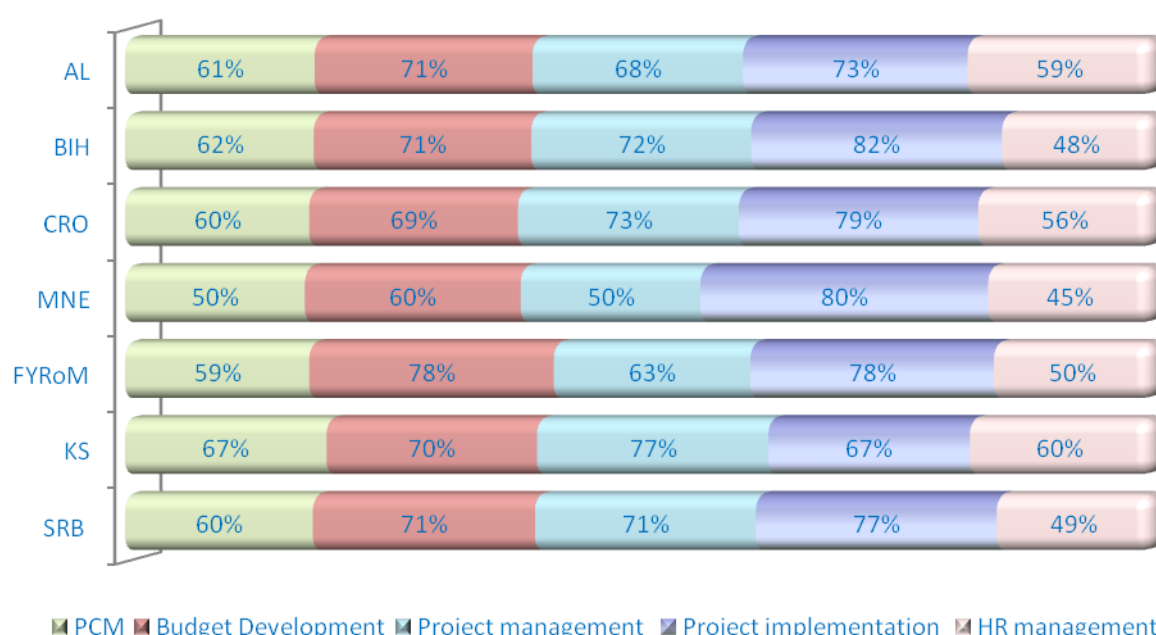


As regards the content of the training, the participants/respondents would like to see more detailed explanations of the application form and to receive assistance in filling out the form during the training. Moreover, information on lessons learned has been suggested, as well a reduction in the size of the training groups (maximum 15 attendants).



On a positive note, the respondents from all the WB countries expressed a willingness to participate in future CBIB trainings. Both from the regional and country perspective, the majority (76%) of respondents wish to be trained in project implementation. The next topic of preference is budget development with an average of 70%, while interest in the same topic per country level ranges from 60 to 78 percent. It is interesting to note that the topics of project management (KS with 77%) and HR management are most requested in Kosovo (60%) and Albania (59%).

Topics preferred for future CBIB trainings



Capacities for preparation and implementation of projects

Main Findings

- From a regional point of view, 82% of survey participants claim to have had previous project preparation experience while 71% have experience in project implementation;
- 68% of respondents said they had a unit or a person responsible for project preparation within their organization/institution;
- At the regional level, the majority of respondents, 56%, evaluated their own project preparation capacities as good with a need for further improvement, while 21% of respondents considered themselves to have fair project preparation capacities;
- With regard to respondents' evaluation of capacities in project implementation, 50.1% claim to have good capacities with the need for further improvement;
- In total, 82% respondents and/or staff from their organizations/institutions have received



training related to project development and implementation. Project Cycle Management training was the most often organised;

- The CBIB trainings on project preparation were most attended by participants from Montenegro (60%), Albania (48.9%) and Bosnia and Herzegovina (51.1%);
- The majority of respondents that participated in CBIB trainings positively evaluated them. In fact, 43% participants are very satisfied while 48.4% are somewhat satisfied;
- A very small number of participants, around 1%, was somewhat dissatisfied and suggested that the CBIB improve the quality of its presentations (57.06%) and the quality of distributed materials (33.94%);
- Additional comments on the improvement of CBIB trainings in the future mainly relate to the duration of the training. Having a longer training (for example 5 days instead of 3) would enable the trainer to provide more detail and to include additional practical examples. As regards the content of the training, the participants/respondents would like to see more in-depth analysis of the application form and to also receive assistance in filling in the form during the training;
- Almost 100% of respondents from all the WB countries expressed willingness to participate in future CBIB trainings;
- Both from the regional and country perspective, the majority of respondents (76%) wish to be additionally trained in project implementation. The second topic of preference is budget development, with an average of 70%, and interest in this topic per country ranges from 60 to 78 percent.

Recommendations:

- The capacities of potential applicants need to be further improved both in project preparation and implementation;
- The CBIB should organise longer trainings in project preparation which are more focused on budget development and how to fill in the application form, including additional practical examples;



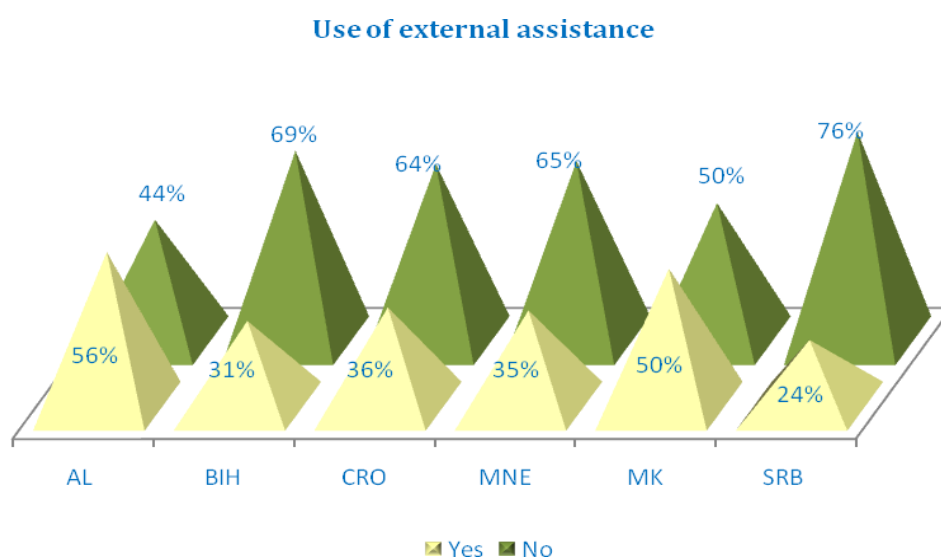
6. PREPARATION OF THE CROSS BORDER PROJECTS

From the regional perspective, out of 1130 survey respondents, 236 (21%) had applied for IPA CBC funds under the first CfP, of which 91 (38.6%) were successful and signed grant contracts. Having in mind the interest expressed in the first CfPs and the total number of 492 applications received for all WB CBC Programmes, it is to be noted that 48% of applicants took part in the CBIB survey.

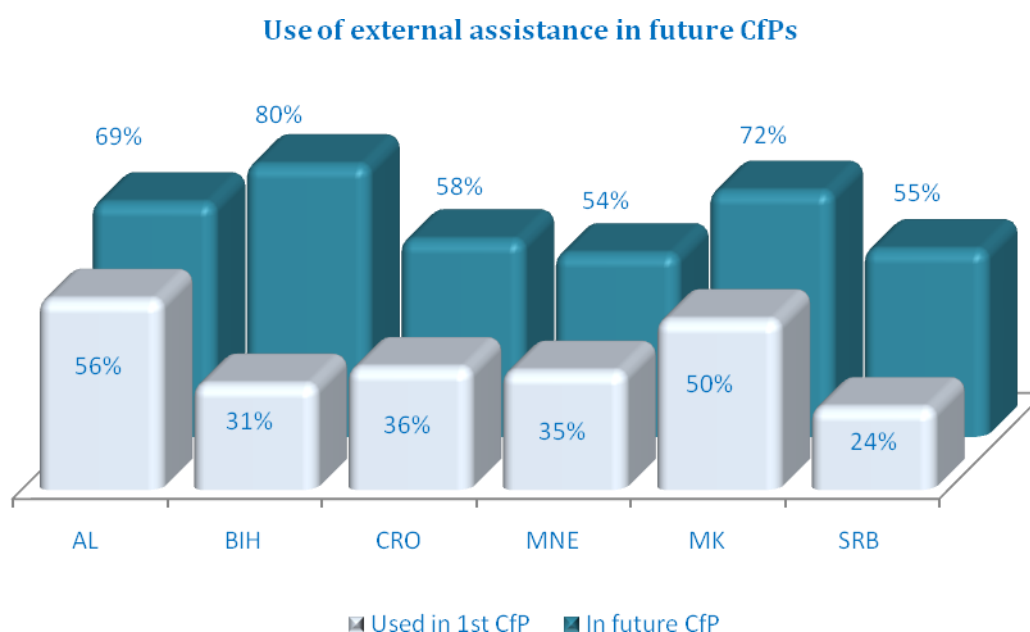
While the objective of the 2nd Assessment report was to present the expressed interest, the evaluation process and the results of the 1st CfP based on the inputs provided by CBC Programme Structures and CAs, this specific section of the 3rd Assessment report provides the views of those who actively prepared cross-border projects for the 1st CfP. Through various questions the applicants of the 1st CfP had the opportunity to assess their own and partners' capacities and their overall experience in CBC project development. More importantly, they were able to identify the main problems encountered and to suggest what could be improved in the future.

6.1 Level of involvement in the preparation of the CBC projects

The majority of respondents provided a positive answer to the question regarding their active involvement in the preparation of cross-border projects. In line with their capacities, 39% of institutions/organisations have used the assistance/services of external experts/consultants for project preparation under the 1st CfP. As presented in the chart below, in some countries such as in Albania (56%) and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (50%), the percentages are to a certain degree higher than in the other WB countries.



More importantly, it is necessary to draw attention to the fact that when asked whether the applicants were planning to use external assistance for future CfPs, the percentage of those who answered affirmatively increased in all countries. This was also the case at the regional level where this number increased to 65% from the 39. In countries such as BIH and SRB, this number doubled while in the others the percentage is up to 50%.



6.2 Cross-border partnerships

In line with the rules of the 1st CfP, the submitted proposals had to have two applicants, one from each side of the border acting in partnership. Each applicant acts as the Lead Partner (LP) for the part of the action financed by the IPA CBC financial allocation for its own country. In addition, the rules of the 1st CfP enabled both applicants to have an unlimited number of partners.

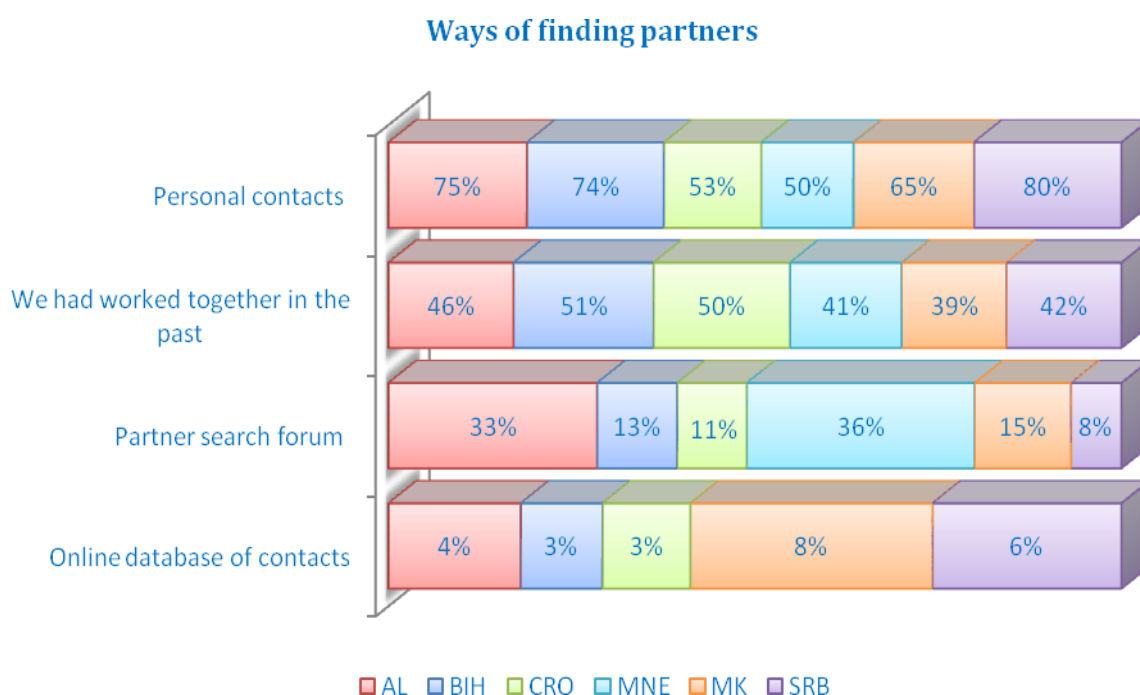
The advantage of cross-border cooperation is that it enables the participation of different types of institutions, covering a wide range of activities in different sectors and creating opportunities for an unlimited number and type of partnership. As identified in the 2nd Assessment report, 492 applications were received and each proposal had two applicants (A1 and A2), meaning that 984 institutions/organisations applied for IPA CBC funding under the 1st CfPs. An additional 820 partner institutions/organisations of the two applicants were also involved in developing cross-border project ideas. This makes around 1804 organisations/institutions directly involved in the 1st CBC CfPs across the region. The findings of the 2nd Assessment report demonstrate the participation by NGOs and Municipalities in the 1st CfP to be the highest. Since



it was concluded that cross-border partnerships were established mainly between the same types of institutions/organisations with similar financial and operational capacities, this section further deals with an analysis on the ways and experiences of establishing CBC partnerships in the 1st Call for proposals.

66% of applicants participating in the survey found their project partners through personal contacts. As can be seen from the chart below, this practice was more present in SRB (80%), AL (75%) and BIH (74%) than in the other WB countries. However, it is interesting to note that 45% of respondents had previously worked with their partners on other occasions.

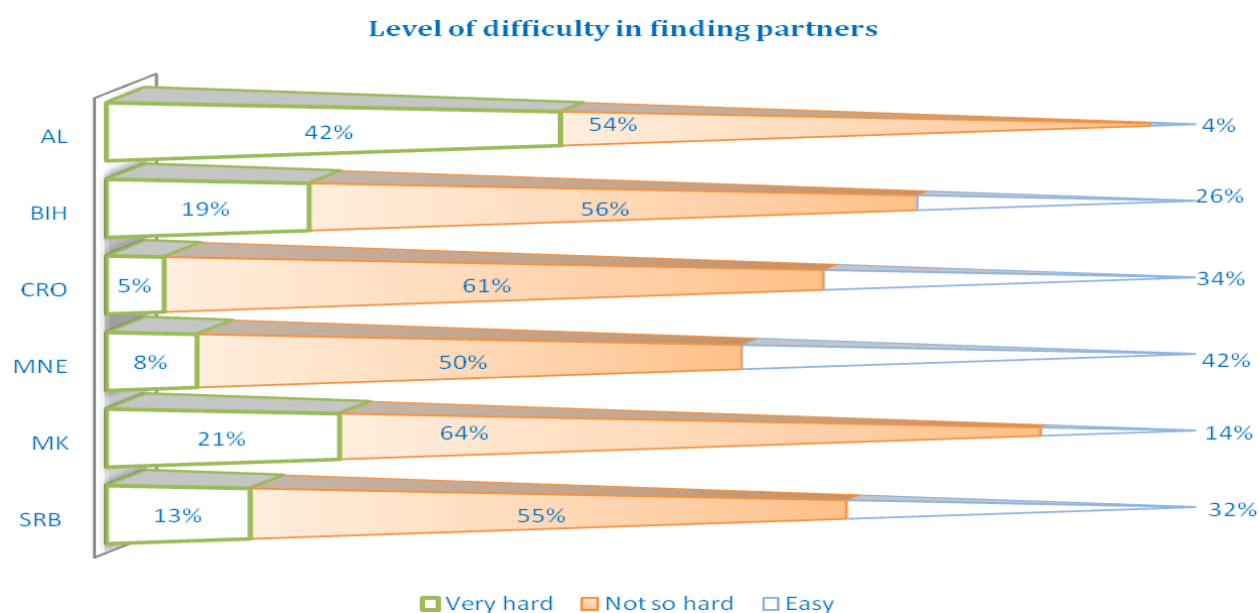
The percentage of those who met through partner search forums is slightly higher in Albania (33%) and in Montenegro (36%), while at a regional level only 20% found partners through these events organised by the Programme Structures. It interesting to note that the online database of contacts (4%), established by the CBC Programme Structures, proved to be the least used tool.



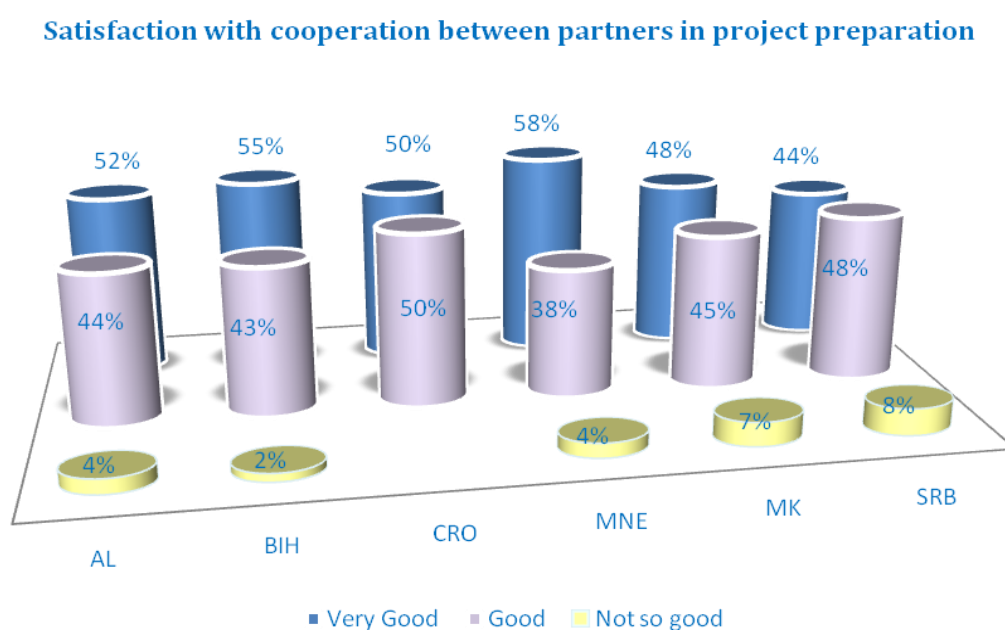
Complementing the above-mentioned ways and tools, according to the applicants, assistance from the JTS/A staff, Chamber of Commerce, Associations of Cities and Municipalities and Regional Development Agency was also used in identifying potential partners. Overall the partner search was not so difficult for the majority of applicants (57%), as can be seen from the chart below, and in some countries it was even easy (MNE 42%, CRO 34%, SRB 32%). However,



it has to be underlined that there is still 18 percent of applicants who found partner searching very difficult, particularly applicants from Albania (42%), FYRoM (21%) and BIH (19%).

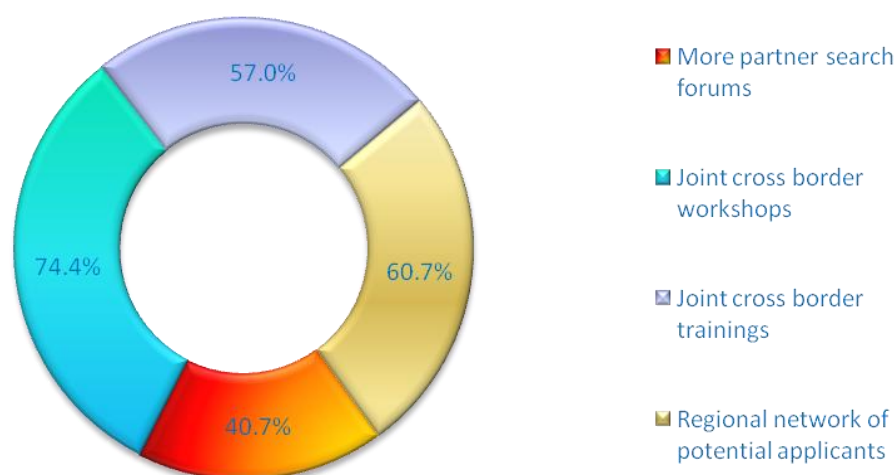


Regarding the level of satisfaction, in most cases the respondents from all the WB countries and at a regional level judged the cooperation with project partners in the development of cross-border project proposals to be very good (51.3.6%). Nevertheless, 4.3% of applicants were not satisfied with how they collaborated with their partners in project development. Apart from Croatia, this percentage in the other countries ranges from 2% in BIH to 8% in SRB.



From the regional point of view, a high percentage of respondents believe that joint cross-border workshops (74.4%) and a regional network of potential applicants would additionally assist potential applicants in finding adequate partners (60.7%). It is interesting to note that many applicants prefer joint CBC trainings (57%) to partner search forums (40.7%).

Preferred type of events for future partner search



6.3 Possibility to receive additional information on published CfP

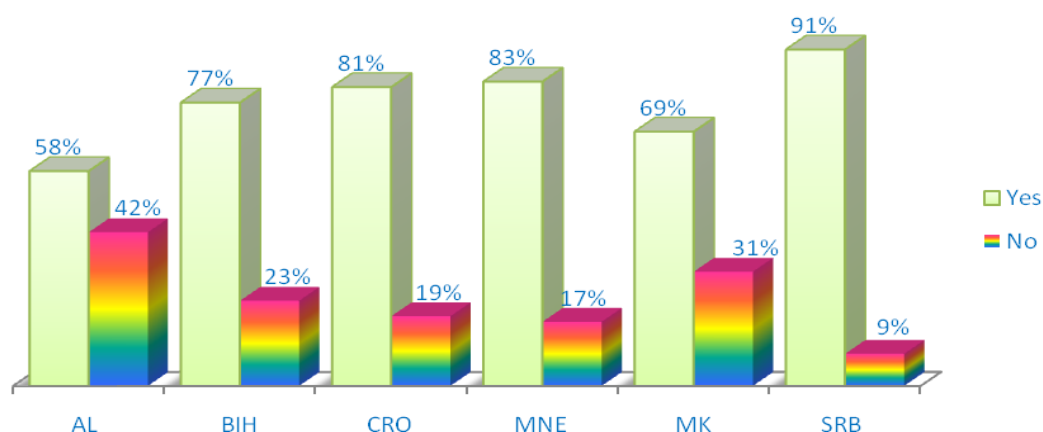
Potential applicants had the opportunity, in the period from the publication of the CfPs to the deadline for the submission of proposals and during information sessions, to ask questions related to the filling in of the application form and to the drafting of their applications. The applicants could submit requests for additional information, in writing, to the JTSs, up to 21 days before the deadline for the submission of proposals. As identified in the 1st Assessment report, in total 708 questions were posted from all over the Western Balkans, both during the information sessions and in the course of the official procedure for submitting requests for additional information. Findings of the 1st Assessment report demonstrate that most of the questions from the 1st CfP related to eligibility rules (31% or 222 questions), followed by questions on the preparation of the budget (23% or 162 questions), GfAs (135 questions) and the Application Form (78 questions).

To assess the benefits of having being able to post questions during published CfPs, the applicants were asked whether they used this type of JTS assistance and how satisfied they were with the answers provided. From the total number of applicants who took part in this assessment, 77% addressed the JTSs during the open CfP for additional clarification. This percentage, i.e. the number of potential applicants requesting JTSs assistance during the Call, is



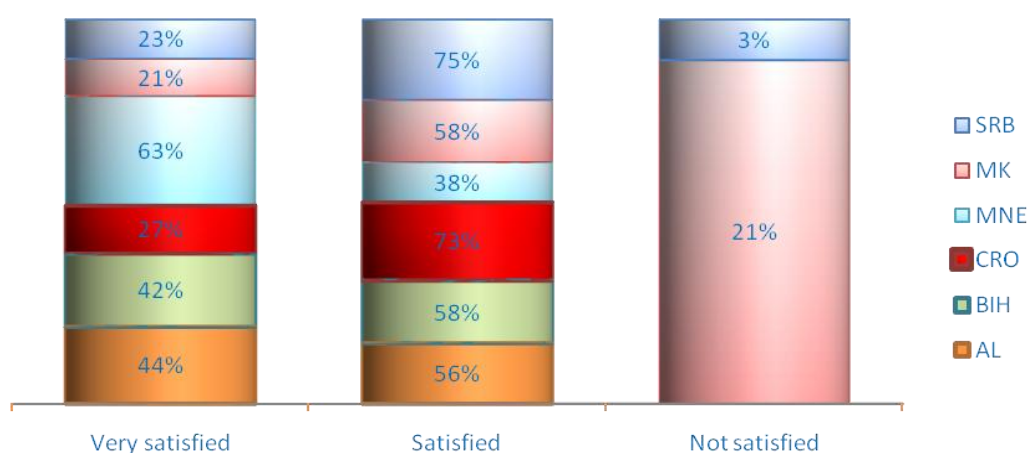
quite high per country, as is shown in the chart below, and the number of respondents ranges from 58% in AL to 91% in SRB.

Posting questions during open CfP



In all six countries, potential applicants who received replies stated that this type of assistance enabled them to continue developing their project proposal. Thus, from the regional level, 36% of applicants were very satisfied with answers received, while 60% were rather satisfied. However, around 4% of respondents were not satisfied with the replies provided. It is necessary to mention, as can be seen from the chart below, that the dissatisfied applicants are from FYROM (21%) and SRB (3%). Through their comments, they mainly complained about the lack of detailed explanations of received clarifications, or to very general answers quoted from the GfAs, as well as to the extensive time lapse in receiving replies from JTSs.

Level of satisfaction with received answers



6.4 Main problems encountered during cross-border project preparation

Out of 492 submitted project proposals, 95 projects have been approved for funding under the 1st CfPs of the second component of IPA funds. The approval rate on a regional level is 19.3% and although it may seem that the number of rejected project proposals is rather high (80.7%), it is to be emphasized that the total number of projects which passed the evaluation process is nonetheless significant. To be more precise, in addition to the 95 selected projects, 58 proposals successfully passed the evaluation process but remained on the reserve lists due funding limitations, i.e. allocation per programme. When assessing the success rates that differ among the programmes, one should have in mind the diversities of these programmes (e.g. the surface of eligible areas), as well as the complexity of project preparation and the evaluation process. In general, the approval rates vary from 9% to 29% and are proportional to the financial allocations available under the CfPs, as well as in comparison to allocations per measure.

The approval rate only indicates the quality of project generation and not the quality of selected projects. Since the implementation of CBC projects has just started, any detailed assessment on the physical progress of the programmes on “intra” WB borders to date is still not possible. It should be noted that while the 2nd Assessment report analysed the results of the evaluation process, the reasons for rejection and the quality of projects received based on the opinions of JSC members and representatives of the CAs, this report provides an overview of applicants’ inputs about the obstacles faced during the project preparation process which had affected the quality of the projects.

Although around 90% of respondents from all CBC countries said that the rules of the Call for Proposals were clear to them prior to applying, many encountered problems during the preparation of cross-border projects for the first time. The table below presents the specific problems applicants experienced during the preparation of cross-border projects in each country.

Main issues	AL	BIH	CRO	MNE	FYRoM	SRB
The procedures related to the project preparation are too complex	80%	56.1%	47.1%	50%	70.4%	54%
Lack of knowledge about the preparation of projects in line with EC procedures	44%	39%	35.3%	41.7%	25.9%	58%

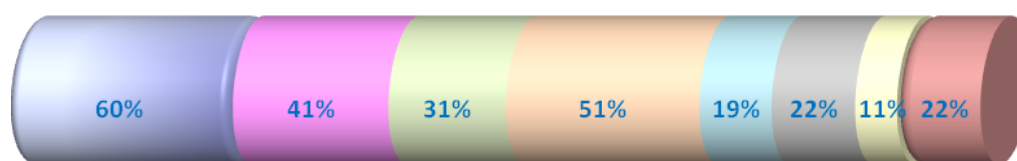


Lack of human resources within the organisation	12%	43.9%	38.2%	33.3%	22.2%	34%
Lack of funds to cover the beneficiary's contribution (co-financing)	68%	48.8%	64.7%	33.3%	48.1%	42%
Difficulty in defining good cross-border project ideas	12%	24.4%	17.6%	25%	25.9%	10%
Difficulties in finding a partner from the other side of the border	44%	22%	8.8%	16.7%	25.9%	16%
Information is unclear and we don't know where/how to find it	12%	7.3%	8.8%	0%	22.2%	14%
It is difficult for us to write the project in English	12%	31.7%	20.6%	20.8%	14.8%	30%

From the regional point of view, 60% of applicants feel that, in general, the project preparation procedures are too complex. In addition, 51% of respondents lack the funds to cover the beneficiary's contribution (co-financing), and around 41% of applicants claim that the main problem is a lack of knowledge of project preparation according to EC procedures. Furthermore, 31% does not possess the human resources within their organization for project preparation, while 22% of respondents emphasized that it was difficult to write a project in English and to find a partner from the other side of the border. On a positive note, the lowest percentage of respondents experienced problems in defining good cross-border project ideas (19%) and in finding/understanding the relevant information (11%) for project preparation.



Major problems encountered during the preparation of CBC projects



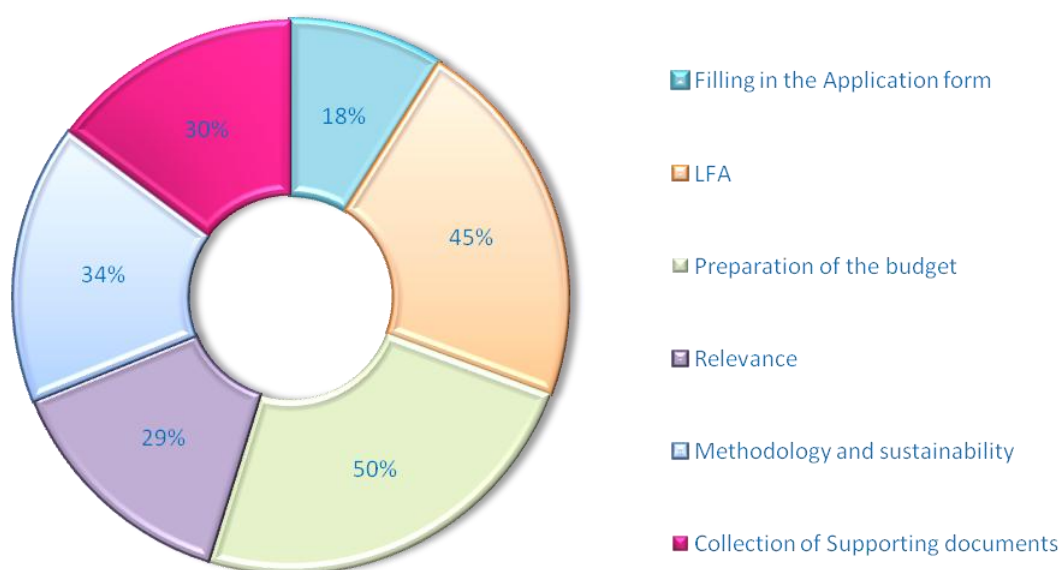
- The procedures related to the project preparation are too complex
- Lack of knowledge related to the preparation of projects in line with EC procedures
- Lack of human resources within the organisation
- Lack of funds to cover the beneficiary contribution (co-financing)
- Difficult to define good cross border project idea
- It is hard to find partner from other side of the border
- Information is not clear and we don't know where /how to find it
- It is difficult for us to write the project in English

As reported in the 2nd Assessment, a total of 339 projects were rejected, out of which 22% failed during the administrative check and 5% during the eligibility verification. The majority of applications did not pass the administrative check due to miscalculations of requested funds (minimum and maximum grant requested). In addition, and as previously assessed, the rejection reasons at the regional level show that 73% were rejected due to low scores and not for administrative or eligibility reasons.

Having in mind the general problems related to project preparation, the respondents were asked to further identify the most difficult parts of the application form. According to the inputs, 50% of applicants feel that budget development is the most difficult part of the application package. Next is the preparation of the logical framework matrix, with 45%, closely followed by the development of an adequate methodology and sustainability of the CBC projects, with 34%. It is interesting to mention that more respondents had difficulties in gathering supporting documents (30%) than in filling in the application form (18%). This only speaks in favour of the applicants from Western Balkan countries having, to certain extent, managed to overcome the complexity of the application procedures and application form required under the 1st CfP for all 8 CBC Programmes.

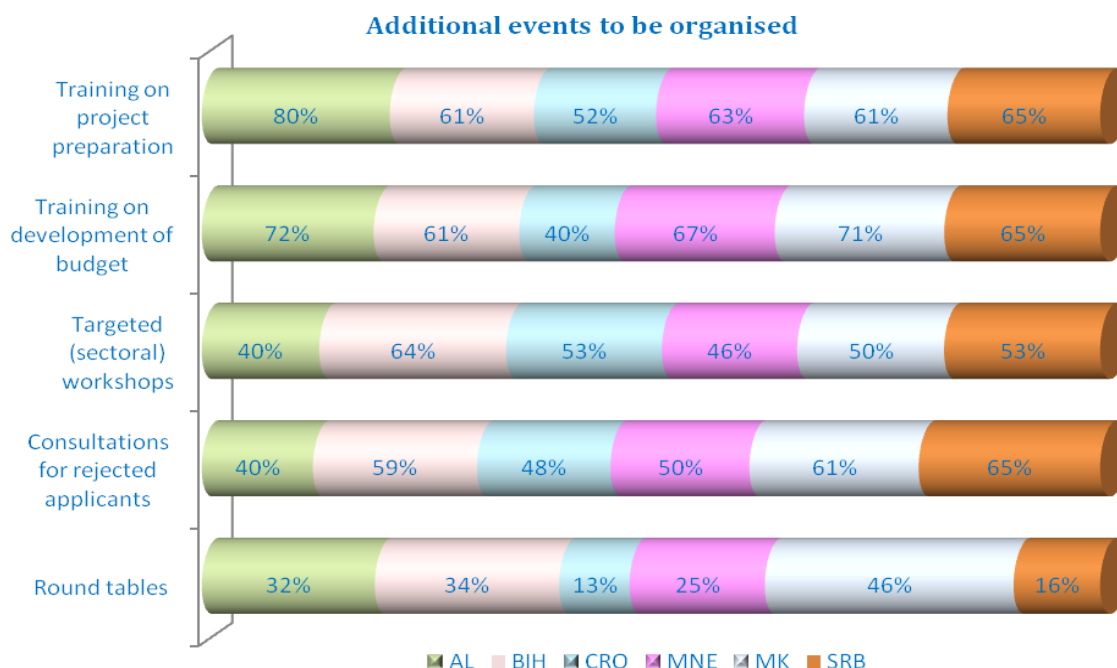


Most difficult parts of the Application form



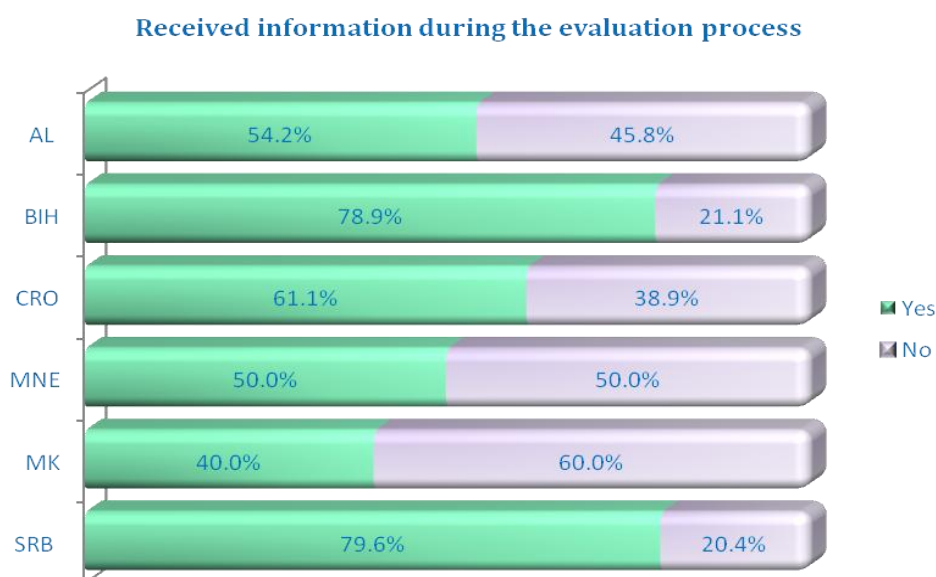
The collected findings clearly show that there is still a need for further capacity building measures and events that would assist potential applicants in the preparation of cross-border projects. Regarding the most difficult parts of the application form, the majority of respondents (64%) selected training in project preparation as the most needed. Even though the interest for this type of training is high in all countries, in BIH and CRO the highest interest is for targeted (sectoral) workshops (64% and 53%). In addition, there is also a high regional interest (63%) for budget development training, particularly in AL (72%) and FYROM (71%). The next event recognized as the most needed in future is consultations for unsuccessful applicants (54%), for which the highest interest is in FYRoM (61%) and BIH (59%). It is interesting to note that though consultations for unsuccessful applicants in the past period have only been organised in Montenegro, there is still high interest for more of this type of event (50%). Also, at a regional level, a lower percentage was expressed for sectoral workshops (51%), and the lowest was for round tables (28%), though the respondents from FYROM (46%) seemed to be the most interested in comparison to all the other WB countries.





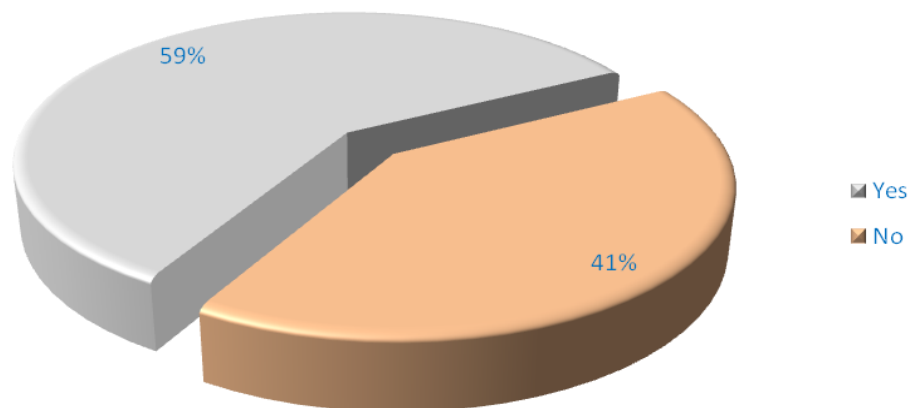
6.5 Information on the results of the 1st CFP and interest expressed for future CFPs

Although the notification of applicants of the evaluation results is the responsibility of the CA, in most cases the JSCs and/or JTSs prepared and sent the notification letters following signature by the CAs. At the regional level, 60.6 % of applicants claimed that they were regularly informed about the success of their project applications during the evaluation process, while 39.4% said they were not. The percentage of those who say they were not informed is slightly higher in FYRoM (60%), while in MNE (50%) the opinion is equally divided between the two options.



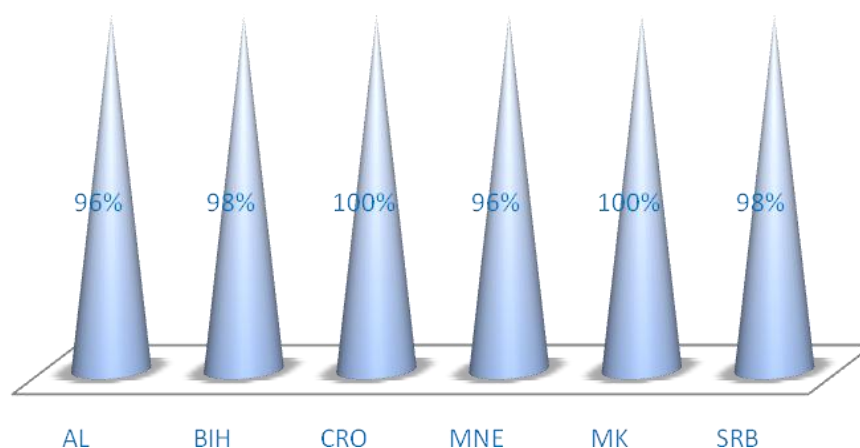
Moreover, according to data collected, not all applicants were familiar with the results of the 1st CfP. In fact, at the regional level, around 41% of survey respondents did not know where the CfP results are published.

Information on the results of the 1sts CfP



Moreover, regardless of the success of their project proposals, 98 % of applicants plan to re-apply for a CBC grant in the next Call for Proposals. The chart below shows the interest expressed by each country, which is almost equally high.

Planning to apply for the next CfP



Level of involvement in the preparation of the CBC projects

Main Findings

- In line with their capacities, 39% of institutions/organisations have used the assistance/services of external experts/consultant during the project preparation under the 1st CfP.
- At the regional level, of the 39% of those who used external assistance in the 1st CfP, the percentage of those who are planning to do so in future CfPs increased to 65%. In countries such as BIH and SRB, this number doubled while in others the percentage is up to 50%.

Recommendations:

- The capacities of potential applicants must be strengthened so that the level of involvement in the preparation of CBC projects is increased and ownership of cross-border projects ensured.

Cross-border partnerships

Main Findings

- 66% of the applicants participating in the survey had found their project partners through personal contacts while 45% had previously worked together with their partners on other occasions;
- The percentage of those who met through partner search forums is to a certain degree higher in Albania (33%) and in Montenegro (36%), while at the regional level only 20% found partners through PSF organised by Programme Structures;
- The online database of contacts (4%), established by CBC Programme Structures, proved to be the least used tool;
- Overall, the partner search was not too difficult for the majority of applicants (57%), and in some countries such MNE 42%, CRO 34%, SRB 32%, this was in fact quite simple. However, it has to be underlined that there is still 18% of applicants who found partner searches very difficult, particularly applicants from AL (42%), FYRoM (21%) and BIH (19%);
- The level of satisfaction with the cooperation between project partners during their joint development of cross-border projects was assessed to be very good in most cases by the respondents from all the WB countries, and at the regional level as well (51.3%). Nevertheless, 4.3% of applicants were not satisfied with their partners' cooperation in project development;
- Regionally, a high percentage of respondents believe that joint cross-border workshops (74.4%) and a regional network of potential applicants would additionally assist potential



applicants in finding suitable partners (60.7%). It is interesting to note that more applicants would prefer joint CBC trainings (57%) to partner search forums (40.7%).

Recommendations:

- In addition to the specific partner search events, the CBC Programme Structures and CBIB should organise additional cross-border events such as workshops, trainings, seminars and networks in order to create more opportunities for new potential partners to exchange ideas and establish partnerships;
- Partnerships between different types of institutions should additionally be encouraged.

Possibility to receive additional information on published CfP

Main Findings

- Out of the total number of applicants who participated in this assessment, 77% asked for additional clarification from the JTSs during the open CfPs. This percentage is quite high per country and the number of respondents ranges from 58% in AL to 91% in SRB.
- In all six countries, those who received answers stated that this assistance enabled them to continue developing their project proposals, and as a result, from the regional level, 36% of applicants were very satisfied, while 60% were rather satisfied with received replies.
- Regionally, around 4% of respondents were not satisfied with the answers provided and those are only applicants from FYRoM (21%) and SRB (3%). Unsatisfied applicants, through their comments, mainly referred to the lack of detailed explanations of the received clarifications, the very general answers quoting GfAs, as well as the long time lapse in receiving replies from the JTSs.

Recommendations

- Implementation of the established Procedures for additional clarifications must be ensured and the time period for providing answers to the applicants should be reduced.

Main problems encountered during the preparation of cross-border projects

Main Findings

- 60% of applicants feel that the procedures related to project preparation in general are too complex. In addition, 51% of the respondents lack the funds to cover the beneficiary contribution (co-financing), while around 41% of applicants claim the main problems are in the lack of knowledge of project preparation in line with EC procedures;
- Furthermore, 31% does not possess the human resources for project preparation within their



organization, while 22% of respondents emphasized difficulties in writing the project proposal in English and in finding a partner from the other side of the border;

- On a positive note, the lowest percentage of respondents experienced problems in defining good cross-border project ideas (19%) and in finding and understanding the relevant information (11%) for project preparation;
- 50% of applicants consider budget development to be the most difficult part of the application package. Next is the preparation of the logical framework matrix with 45%, closely followed by developing an adequate methodology and sustainability of the CBC projects (34%). It is interesting to mention that more respondents had difficulties in gathering supporting documents (30%) than in filling in the application form (18%).
- Project preparation training was thought to be the most needed (64%).
- Even though the interest for this type of the training is high in all countries, in BIH and CRO the highest interest is for targeted (sectoral) workshops (64% and 53%).
- In addition, there is also an important regional interest (63%) in budget development training, particularly in AL (72%) and FYROM (71%). The next events recognized as the most needed in future are consultations for unsuccessful applicants (54%), for which there is the most interest in FYRoM (61%) and BIH (59%).

Recommendations

- The collected findings clearly demonstrate a need for further capacity building measures and events that would assist potential applicants in the preparation of cross-border projects;
- The trainings should more be focused and targeted, based on the level of knowledge of the applicants, and with emphasize on budget development, LFA, development of adequate methodology and sustainability of CBC projects;
- Required supporting documents should be more clearly listed in the published CfP, so that the applicants can gather them in time;
- Once the CfPs are closed, consultations for unsuccessful applicants should be held in order to create an opportunity for the rejected applicants to discuss what should be improved and to motivate them to apply in future CfPs.



7. IMPLEMENTATION OF CROSS BORDER PROJECTS

95 projects from the region have been awarded with IPA CBC grants. The first contracts were signed in October 2010, while some beneficiaries signed contracts in the first quarter of 2011 and just recently initiated the implementation of their CBC projects.

Even though the implementation of IPA projects began recently and a full assessment of their effects can only be carried out at a later stage, the findings outlined in this report should shed some light on the problems typically faced in the initial phases of project implementation.

The questions addressed in this section assess the budgetary clearing process, support and tools provided by the JTS/A staff and problems encountered by grant beneficiaries in the implementation. The findings of this section will also be used for further discussions and eventual improvements prior to the initiation of grant awards for next Call for proposals.

Importantly, out of the 95 projects contracted under the 1st CFP, 91 grant beneficiaries provided input for this assessment.

7.1 Budgetary clearing process

Following the selection of applications for financing and prior to the signing of contracts, the CAs conducted budgetary clearing of submitted budgets in order to further bring them in line with EC requirements. The procedure was undertaken for all 8 CBC Programmes and according to data gathered in the 2nd Assessment report, the budgetary clearing process was completed by the responsible CAs with JTS staff support for most of the programmes.

When analysing the budgetary clearing process it is important to have in mind that the CAs requested a large number of clarifications for almost all provisionally selected applications. As identified in the 2nd Assessment report, the majority of budget headings needed some correction. More specifically, depending on the application, corrections varied from a few arithmetical errors to the need to re-design the whole budget. Issues that stood out were: the definition of human resources, per diem, equipment and supplies, unit costs, unit rates, other costs and services.

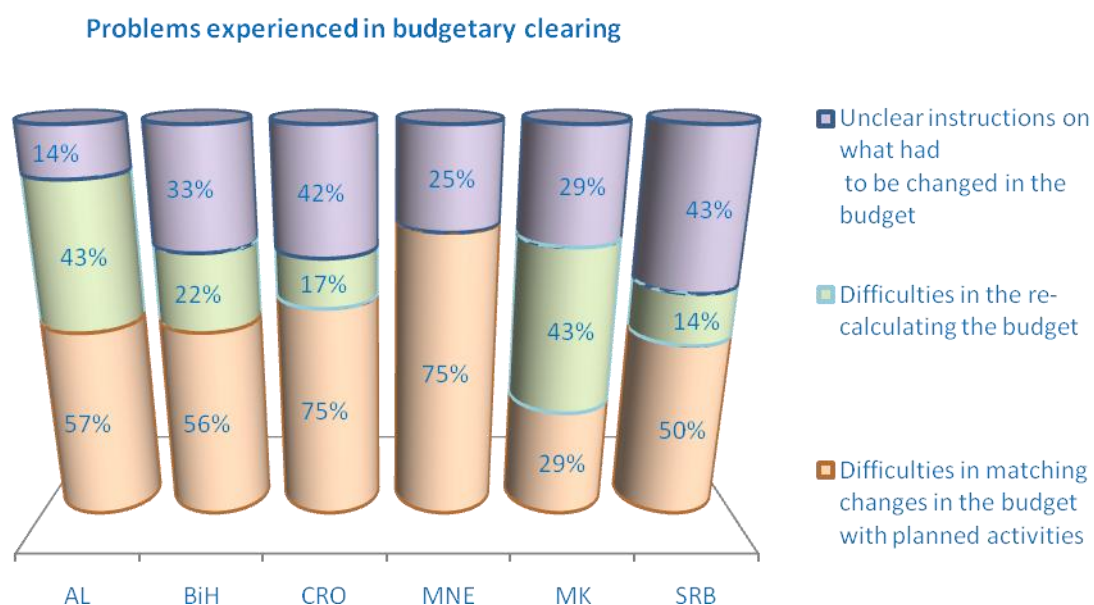
During the 2nd Assessment, the respondents (mainly the CAs) highlighted the different constraints and bottlenecks experienced during the budgetary clearing process. It seems that in many cases the grant beneficiaries did not understand the comments made by the CAs in connection to the submitted budgets and that the budgetary clearing process through written procedure had taken a very long time because the applicants rarely understood what they were being asked. It also seems that applicants did not seek much assistance from the JTSs.



To improve the quality of the budgets prepared by applicants, the respondents of the 2nd Assessment suggested the organisation of additional budget preparation trainings, focussing on the definition and use of correct budget lines.

The main findings and key issues identified in the 2nd Assessment report were the reason for posing several questions to the grant beneficiaries regarding their perception of the budgetary clearing process.

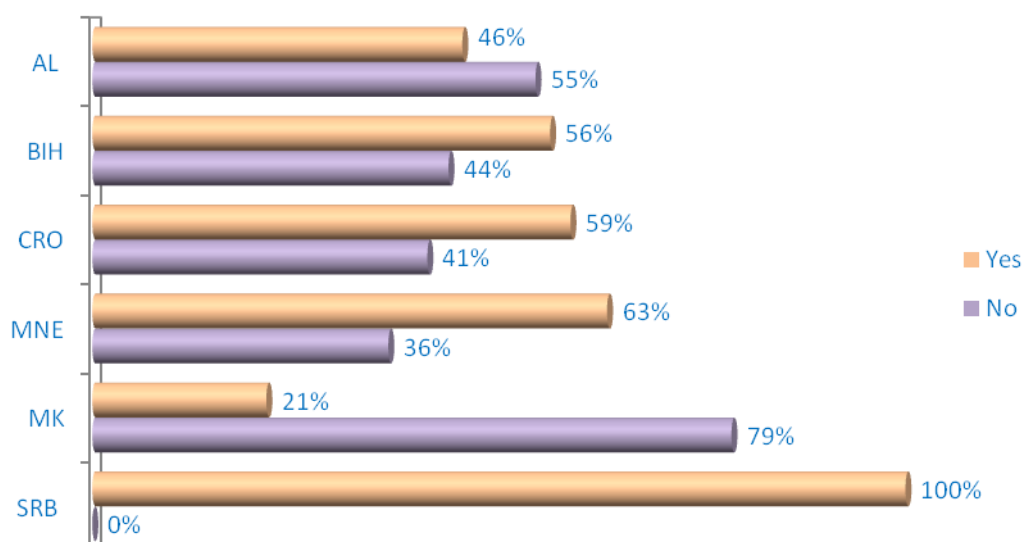
From the regional point of view, 56.9% respondents had trouble in matching changes in the budget with planned activities, while 31% had problems in understanding instructions on what had to be changed. Only 23.2% of respondents had actual difficulties in re-calculating the budgets.



According to survey inputs, 57.6 % of grant beneficiaries received support from the JTS/A staff during the budgetary clearing process. The percentage of those who did not receive support is to a certain degree higher only in AL (55%) and FYRoM (79%). In general, the majority of respondents were very satisfied with the support provided by the JTS/A staff, while they were rather satisfied with the results of budgetary clearing.

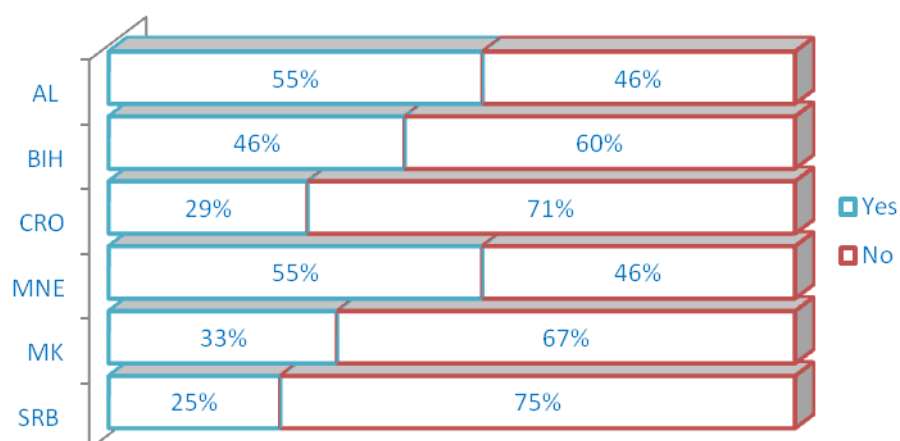


Support by JTS/A staff during the budgetary clearing



Though in most cases the CAs from other countries organised meetings for grant beneficiaries, according to survey participants only the majority from Montenegro and Albania (55% each), claimed that they had received additional clarifications from the Contracting Authority. Moreover, in SRB (75%), CRO (71%) and FYROM (67%) the percentage of those who did not participate in clarification meetings is to a certain degree higher.

Additional clarification meetings or consultations with CAs



7.2 Training and Implementation Package for grant beneficiaries

In agreement with the EUD Technical Working Group, for most of the CBC Programmes the CBIB organised training on secondary procurement and grant implementation for the grant beneficiaries. In fact, 11 training sessions were organised in the region from November 2010 to the end of May 2011 for more than 225 participants awarded with a grant for CBC Programmes AL-MNE, BIH-MNE, CRO-BIH (only for BIH grant beneficiaries), SRB-MNE, SRB-BIH and FYROM-AL.

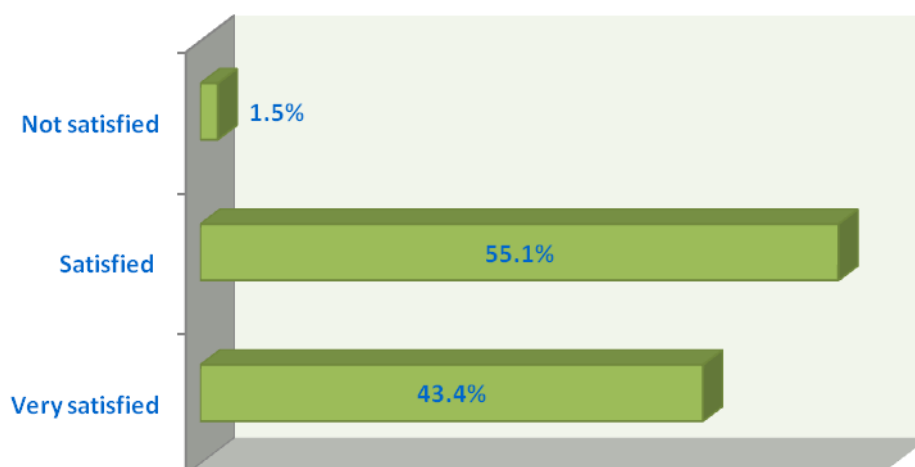
In addition, upon the request of the EUD TWG, the CBIB merged the Project Implementation Guidelines, originally prepared by the Serbian national TA, with the document on Good Budgetary Practice into a user-friendly and detailed Project Implementation Manual for Grant Beneficiaries/Implementation Guide with Annexes. In October 2010, the first draft was submitted to the EUD TWG for comments and in February 2011 the CBIB distributed the final version of the Implementation Guide with Annexes to EUD and RDA in Croatia, incorporating comments received from all Contracting Authorities. The latest version of the Implementation Guide and Annexes was distributed to the OSs, JTSs and grant beneficiaries one week later.

Please note that the Agency for Regional Development, as the accredited CA in Croatia, decided to organise a one-day workshop only for grant beneficiaries from Croatia from all 3 CBC Programmes in which Croatia participates, and to develop an Implementation Package for Croatian grant beneficiaries. Because of this, the analysis of respondents' satisfaction with CBIB training and the Implementation Guide does not include input from Croatia. The assessment of respondents' satisfaction with the training organised by the CA from Croatia and Implementation Guide can be found in Annex III of this report. In addition, please note that the CBIB did not organise the training for grant beneficiaries of the CBC Programme SRB-CRO.

Out of 91 grant beneficiaries that participated in the survey, 48 were trained by the CBIB and had the opportunity to express their level of satisfaction with the training provided. It is apparent that in all the WB countries training participants were rather satisfied. From the regional point of view, 43.4% was very satisfied while 55.1% was rather satisfied. Only 1.5% was dissatisfied with the training and gave their opinions on their dissatisfaction.

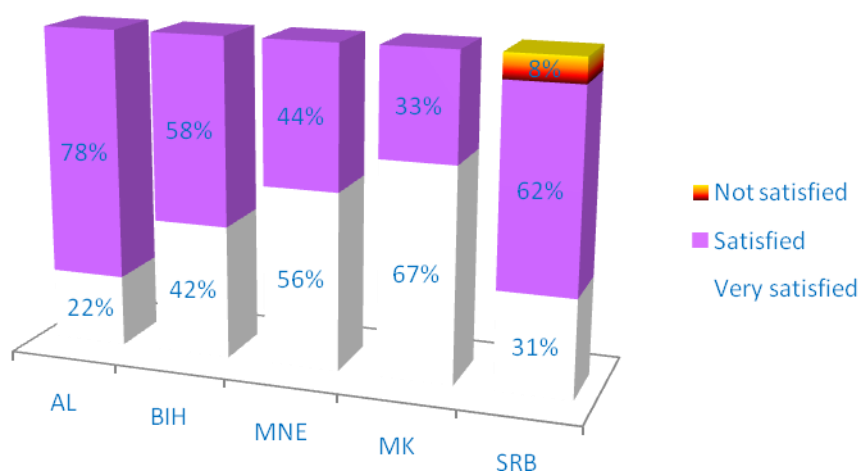


How satisfied were grant beneficiaries with provided training on project implementation



However, prior to assessing in detail the reasons for dissatisfaction, and as can be seen from the chart below, it is important to note that in fact only the grant beneficiaries from Serbia (8%) were dissatisfied with the training provided.

Satisfaction with the training on implementation per country



One of the reasons for dissatisfaction expressed by respondents from Serbia is that the training was overly based on the use of PRAG while some grant beneficiaries would have preferred to have more explanation of local laws. Moreover, in one CBC programme, the interpretations of CBC grant contracts differed from one CA to another.

In relation to regional satisfaction with the Implementation Guide and Annexes content, it can be seen that 54% of grant trainees were satisfied, 39% were very satisfied while 5.8% claimed

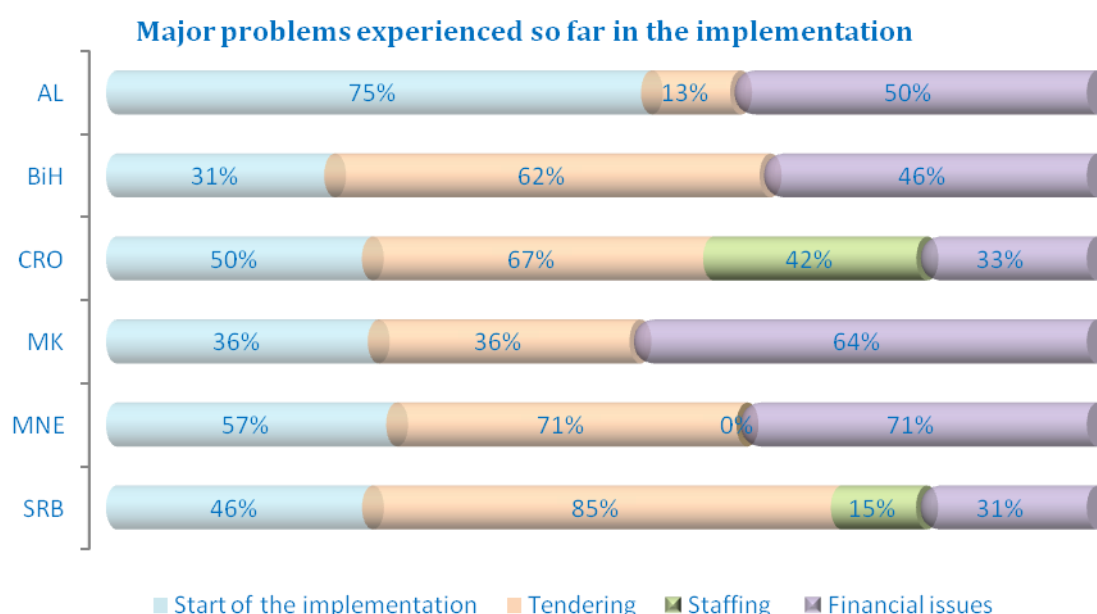


not to be satisfied with the content. It has frequently been suggested that the Implementation Guide be translated into the local languages to be more user friendly to the grant beneficiaries.

7.3 Problems in the implementation of CBC projects and support required

Though it is still early for the majority of grant beneficiaries to list problems experienced in their CBC project implementation, they did, however, have the opportunity to select some initial and/or eventual problems.

First, it should to be noted that only in two countries, CRO (42%) and SRB (15%), did the respondents experience staffing problems, while in AL (75%) and MNE (57%) more grant beneficiaries experienced problems with the start of project implementation. At the regional level, on average 55.5% of grantees encountered problems when carrying out tendering procedures, while an even number of 49% of respondents faced some problems with the financial issues and the start of implementation.



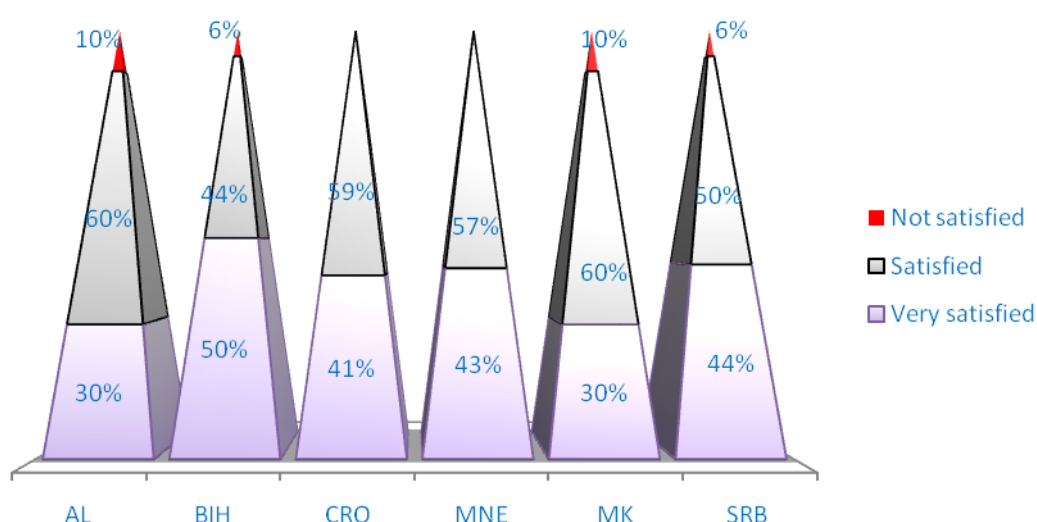
In addition to the above-listed potential problems, the grantees mentioned some other problems as well. They mainly relate to the PRAG and its complexity, to unclear EU procedures for the realisation of certain project activities, to the slow starting process in the project and, in their opinion, to unnecessary and complicated bureaucracy. Moreover, the grantees are facing difficulties in obtaining VAT exemption, in receiving co-funding, and in defining their relationships with local partners.

During the implementation of their projects, in almost all CBC Programmes the grant beneficiaries could benefit from JTS/A support. So far, the grant beneficiaries communicate with JTS/A staff only when necessary and on average 55% are satisfied and 40% very



satisfied with the support received. However, in four countries (AL and FYROM with 10% and BIH and SRB with 6%) the grant beneficiaries are to a certain degree dissatisfied with the support provided by the JTS/A staff. The reasons for this dissatisfaction are to do with the grantees' lack of understanding what kind of assistance they can expect from the JTS/A, as their work seems to be quite confusing. Moreover, the grantees do not deem it necessary to communicate with the JTS/A in English.

Satisfaction with the JTS/A support in the implementation of projects



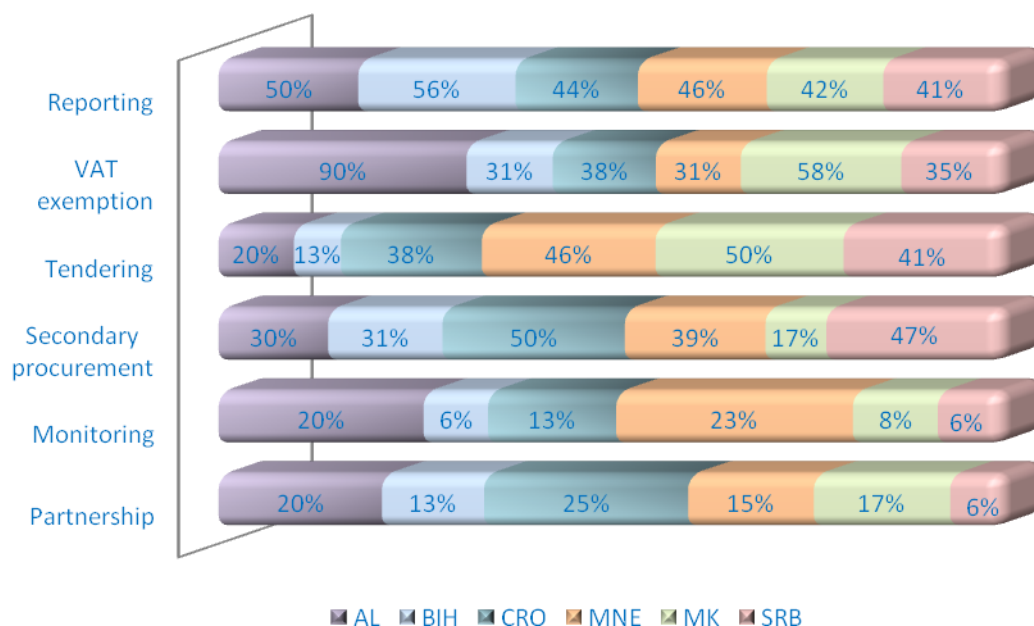
Even though it is still early to address certain problems in the project implementation phase, the grant beneficiaries had the opportunity to express what type of problems they foresee. In order to provide data that could be of use to the OSs and CAs, the foreseen problems have been presented at both country and regional level.

At the regional level, the majority of grantees are equally concerned about the upcoming reporting and VAT exemption (47%), while there is also a significant percentage of those who foresee problems in secondary procurement (36%) and tendering procedures (35%). A small but not negligible number of grant beneficiaries is concerned with monitoring (13%) and partnerships processes (16%).

As shown in the chart below, in AL (90%) and FYRoM (58%), most grant beneficiaries are concerned with VAT exemption procedures, while in BIH (56%) and MNE (46%) their concern is reporting. While in FYRoM (50%) and MNE (46%) respondents foresee problems with tendering procedures, in CRO (50%) and SRB (47%) grantees are mainly concerned with upcoming secondary procurement procedures. Additionally, the grant beneficiaries are expecting difficulties in the timely and balanced spending of the funding/budget by both lead applicants as grantees, and in writing/reporting on activities in English.



Foreseen problems in the implementation



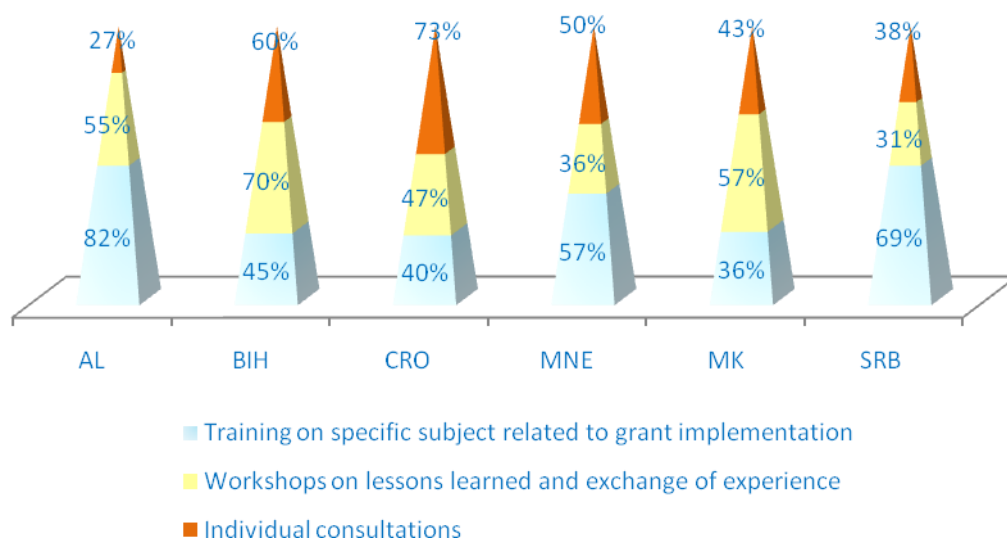
The grant beneficiaries gave their opinions as to what type of support they would like to receive during the implementation of their cross-border projects.

Regionally, there is an equal interest for all three events, though the highest is for grant implementation trainings (55%), followed by workshops on lessons learned and the exchanges of experience, and lastly, for individual consultations (49%).

At the country level, in AL (82%), MNE (57%) and SRB (69%) grant implementation training seem to be the most needed, while workshops on lessons learned and exchanges of experience are thought to be necessary in BIH (70%) and FYRoM (57%). It is interesting to note that in CRO there is the highest interest in individual consultations (73%).



Type of additional support for grant beneficiaries



Budgetary clearing process

Main Findings

- From the regional point of view, during the budgetary clearing process 56.9% of respondents experienced difficulties in matching changes in the budget with planned activities, while 31% had difficulties in understanding the instructions about necessary changes. Only 23.2% of respondents had actual difficulties in re-calculating the budgets;
- According to the inputs, 57.6 % of grant beneficiaries received JTS/A staff support during the budgetary clearing process;
- The percentage of those who did not receive support is to a certain degree higher only in AL (55%) and FYROM (79%);
- In general, the majority of respondents were very satisfied with the support provided by the JTS/A staff, while with the results of the budgetary clearing they were rather satisfied;
- According to survey participants, only the majority from Montenegro and Albania with 55% claimed that they received additional clarifications from the Contracting Authority. In SRB (75%), CRO (71%) and FYRoM (67%) the percentage of those who did not participate in clarification meetings is to a certain degree higher.

Recommendations:

- The applicants' project preparation capacities, particularly in budget preparation, should further be improved in order to increase the quality of submitted budget proposals and to minimize changes during the budgetary clearing process;



- During the budgetary clearing process, the JTS/A staff should provide hands-on support to the grantees to help them to better understand the CAs instructions on changes needed;
- All the CAs should organise additional clarification meetings for grant beneficiaries.

Training and Implementation Package for grant beneficiaries

Main Findings

- The CBIB developed a Project Implementation Manual for Grant Beneficiaries/Implementation Guide with Annexes;
- Delegated by the EUD TWG, the CBIB organised 11 training sessions for more than 225 participants awarded with a grant for CBC Programmes AL-MNE, BIH-MNE, CRO-BIH (only for BIH grant beneficiaries), SRB-MNE, SRB-BIH and FYROM-AL;
- CBIB training participants were rather satisfied with the training provided. From the regional point of view, 43.4% was very satisfied while 55.1% was rather satisfied. Only 1.5% was dissatisfied, providing opinions on their dissatisfaction.
- In fact, only grant beneficiaries from Serbia (8%) were dissatisfied with the training, claiming it was overly based on the use of the PRAG, while some grant beneficiaries would have preferred to have more explanation of the relevant local laws for project implementation. Also, in one CBC programme, the interpretations of CBC grant contracts differed from one CA to another;
- In relation to the regional level of satisfaction with the Implementation Guide and Annexes, it can be observed that 54% of grant trainees were satisfied with the Guide content, 39% were very satisfied, while 5.8% claimed not to be satisfied. It was frequently suggested that the Implementation Guide be translated into the local languages to be more user friendly to the grant beneficiaries.

Recommendations:

- The trainings for grant beneficiaries should be more tailored to their needs and cover the relevant local laws on project implementation;
- The Implementation Guide with Annexes should be translated into local languages.



Problems in the implementation of CBC projects and support required

Main Findings

- In CRO (42%) and SRB (15%) the respondents experienced problems with staffing, while in AL (75%) and MNE (57%) more problems related to the start of project implementation were experienced. From a regional point of view, on average 55.5% of grantees encountered problems when applying tendering procedures, while an even number of 49% of respondents already faced some problems with financial issues and the start of implementation;
- The grantees also emphasized additional problems related to the PRAG and its complexity, to unclear EU procedures for the realisation of certain project activities, to the slow process in starting the project, and, in their opinion, unnecessary and complicated bureaucracy. Moreover, the grantees are facing difficulties in obtaining VAT exemptions, in receiving co-funding, and in defining their relationships with local partners;
- In almost all CBC Programmes the grant beneficiaries can benefit during their project implementation from JTS/A support;
- The grant beneficiaries communicate with JTS/A staff only when needed. 55% is, on average, satisfied, and 40% very satisfied with the support received. However, in four countries (AL and FYROM with 10% and BIH and SRB with 6%) the grant beneficiaries are to a certain degree dissatisfied with the support provided by the JTS/A staff;
- The reasons for dissatisfaction are connected to grantees not knowing the type of assistance they can expect from the JTS/A. Moreover, the grantees do not deem it necessary to communicate with the JTS/A in English.
- Regionally, the majority of grantees are equally concerned with upcoming reporting and VAT exemption (47%), while there is also a significant percentage of those who foresee problems in secondary procurement (36%) and tendering procedures (35%). A low but not negligible number of grant beneficiaries are concerned with monitoring (13%) and partnerships (16%) processes;
- Additionally, the grant beneficiaries are expecting difficulties in the timely and balanced spending of funding/budget by both lead applicants as grantees, and secondly, in writing/reporting on their activities in English;
- At the regional level, there is an equal interest in additional assistance during project implementation, the highest being for grant implementation training (55%), followed by workshops on lessons learned and exchanges of experience, and individual consultations (49%);
- At a country level, in AL (82%), MNE (57%) and SRB (69%) the training on grant



implementation seems to be the most needed, while workshops on lessons learned and exchanges of experience are thought to be necessary in BIH (70%) and FYRoM (57%). It is interesting to note that in CRO there is highest interest in individual consultations (73%).

Recommendations:

- The level and type of assistance provided by the JTS/A should clearly be explained to the grant beneficiaries from the beginning of the implementation process;
- In order to ensure the grantees' absorption capacities, the CBC Programme Structures should tailor their support through grant implementation training and individual consultations.

8. CONCLUSION

Having in mind the aims and findings of the first and second Assessment reports, the main objective of this third Assessment report was to provide an opportunity for a wide range of institutions and organizations (as potential applicants, applicants and grant beneficiaries) to express their views on the benefits of CBC and on difficulties and obstacles experienced during the 1st CfP.

Over 1100 people from the WB countries devoted time to participate in the survey. The number of respondents, the input and details provided on the specific issues related to different cross-border cooperation grant scheme phases, have not only been used as the basis for this Report but have also confirmed how high the interest in CBC in the WB is.

Through the mutual development of project ideas, cross-border cooperation has become a tool for partners on different sides of a border to establish and strengthen “people-to-people” contacts, increase common understanding and enhance regional cooperation. In addition, the first CBC project proposals being prepared according to the project cycle management approach and in line with EC requirements have significantly contributed to improvements in strategic thinking for local development actions.

It is apparent that cross-border cooperation in the Western Balkans holds an equally important role for the national authorities as for potential applicants, for whom it is an opportunity to jointly address shared challenges by ensuring a sustainable development of the cross-border areas.



Considering this was the very first opportunity for most of the applicants to prepare cross-border cooperation project proposals with a limited number of staff, knowledge and relevant skills, it can be concluded that the survey participants, i.e. grant beneficiaries, have successfully managed to overcome much of the demanding and complex EC procedures.

In line with the above and according to the results of the second and this third Assessment report, there is a clear need to further improve and strengthen cross-border cooperation among WB countries. With additional capacity, building at all levels and with strengthened coordination among the stakeholders, particularly at the regional level, it is certain that the positive results achieved so far and the impact of cross-border cooperation will be even higher in the targeted regions. Moreover, the heightened demand for funding and a clear growing interest in cross-border cooperation, accompanied by increased available funds and enhanced local absorption capacities, will contribute to an even greater impact in the WB region.

Last but not least, the major actors, relevant stakeholders and potential applicants and IPA CBC grant beneficiaries, as can be seen from the findings of all three Assessment reports, speak in favour of a growing awareness of the importance of the CBC process as a vital step to success in achieving a more balanced and harmonious WB region which, as such, can only advance closer to the EU.

