Interreg VI-A Romania-Bulgaria Programme

Strategic Environmental Assessment

- Environmental statement -

December 2022

Cuprins

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# Introduction

## Legal background

This statement is prepared and presented jointly by the Managing Authority (Ministry of Development, Public Works and Administration of Romania) and the National Authority (Ministry of Regional Development and Public Works of Bulgaria), for the “Interreg VI-A Romania-Bulgaria Programme”, according to the provisions of Art. 9 (1-b) of SEA Directive 2001/42/EC[[1]](#footnote-1).

In compliance with SEA Directive’s requirements, the statement is summarizing:

* how environmental considerations have been integrated into the plan or programme and how the environmental report prepared;
* how the environmental report, the opinions expressed by the public and consulted authorities and any other consultations’ results have been taken into account;
* the reasons for choosing the programme as adopted, in the light of the other reasonable alternatives dealt with and,
* the measures decided concerning monitoring.

The Romanian legislation transposing SEA Directive introduced an additional requirement to be answered to in the statement, referring to:

* how environmental report’s preparation comply with provisions contained in Art. 19 and 20 of the national SEA specific legislation[[2]](#footnote-2).

This requirement mainly refers to the content of the report and to the consultation of concerned authorities during its preparation. In order to comply with this specific requirement, appendices describing the SEA procedure’s steps in Romania and, for similar reasons in Bulgaria, are attached to this statement (appendices 1 and 2).

## SEA approach

The Programme structures decided to follow the same approach as for Interreg V-A Romania-Bulgarian and to elaborate a **joint environmental report**

that was subject to:

* **separate consultations** – in each country - of the environmental authorities and of the public, according to the national specific SEA legislation’s requirements.

The **Article 9(1-b) [[3]](#footnote-3) statement** was prepared jointly by the Programme‘s Managing Authority (Ministry of Development, Public Works and Administration of Romania) and the National Authority (Ministry of Regional Development and Public Works of Bulgaria), The Interreg VI-A Romania-Bulgaria Programme was adopted on the 30th of November 2022.

# Short description of the Interreg VI A Romania - Bulgaria ProgramMe

Interreg VI-A Romania-Bulgaria Programme is financed by the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) under the European Territorial Cooperation goal of EU Cohesion Policy 2021-2027.

Interreg VI-A Romania-Bulgaria Programme stretches over seven counties in the Southern part of Romania (Mehedinți, Dolj, Olt, Teleorman, Giurgiu, Călărași and Constanţa) and eight districts in the Northern part of Bulgaria (Vidin, Vratsa, Montana, Veliko Tarnovo, Pleven, Ruse, Dobrich and Silistra). All 15 NUTS 3 regions are situated along the 630 km of Romanian-Bulgarian border. The programme area is shown in the following figure.

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Figure 2‑1 Program area

The Programme is organized along 4 priorities, which are broken down into 5 specific objectives (SOs).

Figure 2‑2 Programme’ structure

**Interreg VI-A Romania-Bulgaria Programme**

**Priority 1**

A well connected region (PO 3)

**Priority 2**

A greener region

(PO 2)

**Priority 3**

An educated region (PO4)

SO 3.2 Developing and enhancing sustainable, climate resilient, intelligent and intermodal national, regional and local mobility, including improved access to TEN-T and cross-border mobility

SO 2.4. Promoting climate change adaptation and disaster risk prevention, resilience, taking into account ecosystem-based approaches

SO 2.7. Enhancing protection and preservation of nature, biodiversity and green infrastructure, including in urban areas, and reducing all forms of pollution

**Priority 4**

An integrated region (PO5)

SO 4.2. Improving equal access to inclusive and quality services in education, training and lifelong learning through developing accessible infrastructure, including by fostering resilience for distance and on-line education and training

SO 5.2 Fostering the integrated and inclusive social, economic and environmental local development, culture, natural heritage, sustainable tourism and security, in areas other than urban areas

# Integration of environmental considerations into the programme AND PREPARATION OF the environmental report

The integration of environmental considerations into the programme is reflected by the summary of the assessment of the Programme’s likely significant effects, as well as by its own content, particularly for the types of actions related to *Priority 2 A greener region.*

The programme makes a positive contribution to achieving the relevant environmental objectives for: Biodiversity, Water, Air, Climatic Factors, Material assets, Risk Management, Sustainable Transport and Population Awareness.

Based on the analysis of the relationship with other plans and programmes of the Interreg VI-A Romania-Bulgaria Programme, no situations were identified that could lead to significant negative cumulative effects. Situations have been identified in which the analysed programme contributes to the fulfilment of the objectives of some plans, programmes or strategies, thus resulting in potential cumulative positive effects.

Following the implementation of the types of actions of the programme, a cumulative positive effect on environmental aspects is expected: population and human health, water, climatic factors, material assets, risk management, landscape, sustainable transport and population awareness.

The environmental report has been prepared in accordance with Annex 1 of the SEA Directive which has been transposed into national law.

The preparation of the Environmental Report took into account the information and recommendations obtained in the working group (cf. art. 14-19 of GD no. 1076/2004) and the recommendations regarding the Scoping Report received during the public consultation period (August 13 - September 17, 2021) in Bulgaria.

The Environmental Report was prepared by EPC Environmental Consultancy (listed in the Expert List of Environmental Studies under heading 747) and the part of the report on the programme area in Bulgaria was prepared by Ассоc. Prof. Petar Petrov, PhD and his team.

# How the Environmental Report and the opinion expressed by the public and consulted authorities have been taken into account?

## To what extent have the consultation responses been considered in the SEA process?

### Consultation response to the Scoping report

The process referred to as “scoping” consists in establishing the scope and the level of detail of the information to be included in the environmental report. These are determined in conjunction with the environmental authorities.

According to the “Report (COM 2009/469) from the Commissions to the Council, the European Parliament, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions on the application and effectiveness of the Directive on Strategic Environmental Assessment on the implementation SEA Directive (Directive 2001/42/EC)”, the SEA Directive sets limited requirements for the scope of the environmental report. As a result, Member States apply different methods for "scoping", as well as for consultation of the authorities concerned. In a few Member States, the "scoping" procedure requires consultation of the public, even though this is not an obligation under the Directive.

The scoping report was prepared and submitted to the national environmental authorities.

In **Romania**, according to the Article 14 of the Government Decision no. 1076/2004 (transposing SEA Directive) “the scope and level of detail of the information to be included in the environmental report, as well as the assessment of significant effects of the plan or programme on the environment” were established within a **SEA Working-Group**, which was specifically set-up for this purpose. The SEA Working-Group included representatives of the programme’s title-holder, competent authorities for environment and public health and representatives of other authorities concerned about the programme. The scoping report was presented to the working-group and the completion of the environmental report started after all presented issues were agreed. The Romanian legislation does not require public consultation on the scoping phase of the SEA process. Comments on the scoping report received from consulted authorities were accepted without exception and included/ used for the completion of the environmental report.

In **Bulgaria**, consultations on the scope of the Strategic Environmental Assessment with the population, stakeholders and third parties likely to be affected by the programme were performed according to the art. 19 and 19a of the EA Ordinances[[4]](#footnote-4). The consultations involved the competent authorities (Minister of Environment and Water, Ministry of Health, Regional Inspectorate of Environment and Water, Danube River Basin Management Directorate and Black Sea River Basin Management Directorate), specialized agencies, public authorities and interested third parties that are likely to be affected by the SEA. The results of the consultations were included into the elaborated SEA report.

### Consultation responses to the Environmental Report

In **Romania**, the consultation of environmental and health authorities, as well as of other authorities concerned on the effects of the programme’s implementation was organised in two rounds: firstly, within the SEA Working-Group during three meetings where all concerned authorities were represented and secondly during the 30 days when the public consultation took place.

The public consultation of the draft Environmental Report took place from 17 February 2022 to 18 March 2022 (30 days).

In **Bulgaria**, consultation of authorities concerned about the programme’s implementation effects took place in 13 August – 17 September 2021 and was followed by a public consultation of 30 days between 21 February – 23 March 2022. A public debate was organised online on 25 March 2022.

All comments received, as well as comments and recommendations from SEA evaluators are presented in Annexes 1 and 2 to this SEA statement.

The majority of the comments received can be grouped in the following themes:

* The level of detail in the Environmental Report - specifically related to Chapter 3, Chapter 7 and Chapter 9;
* The relationship of the Interreg V-A Romania – Bulgaria Cross Border Cooperation Programme with other relevant plans and programmes;
* Recommendations on the Strategic Environmental Objectives.

In addition to these themes, other considerations related to different versions of the programme were submitted during the consultation’s sessions organized by the Programme structures. These considerations were analysed by the programme structures and considered, if the case.

## To what extent have the environmental report and the results of consultations been considered in the Programme’s completion?

### To what extend has the environmental report been considered

During the preparation of the programme, SEA team offered recommendations which have been taken into account while completing its further versions.

Some of these recommendations aimed measures for programme’s implementation, including:

* completion of the environmental impact assessment and appropriate assessment, when necessary, at project’s level;
* accurate environmental monitoring shall be performed during projects’ implementation, and, when necessary, new monitoring indicators should be added and updated monitoring plan should be drafted.

The environmental report was taken into consideration while completing the Interreg VI-A Romania – Bulgaria Programme and will continue to be taken into account during its implementation.

### To what extend the consultation results have been considered in the programme’s preparation

As mentioned in section 4.1.2 above, most of the comments received during SEA and programme’s consultation were related to the Programme content.

# Reasons for choosing the programme, in the light of alternatives

From the first to the last version of the programme, various changes were made to the types of actions that will be financed by the Interreg VI-A Romania Programme. Some of these changes are represented by:

* Eliminating the types of actions that involve the improvement and expansion of road infrastructure under PO 3;
* Replacing the types of actions that involve dredging activities on some parts of the Danube, with actions that propose the integration of marking systems on the Danube, equipment, signalling, etc.;
* Eliminating the action “Promoting efficient waste management: waste separation and recycling; raising awareness of sustainable waste management”.

The first two changes lead to the avoidance of significant negative effects, particularly on biodiversity (REO1) and air quality (REO6). Expansion of road infrastructure and support of hard interventions for navigability purposes could also have led to potential significant effects on Natura 2000 sites.

The elimination of the action on waste management excludes the possibility of the Programme to address the environmental relevant objective related to Circular economy. However, contributions for circular economy can be integrated at the level of individual subsequent projects (see Chapter 9, measure M7).

Comparing alternative 0 (the situation in which the programme is not implemented) and the variant in which the programme is implemented, it can be concluded that choosing option 0 loses the opportunity to invest and improve the current state of the environment and meet the relevant environmental objectives (potential significant and insignificant positive effects identified following the evaluation of the types of actions of the programme).

In conclusion, by choosing the alternative to implement the programme, significant positive contributions are made to the following environmental aspects: biodiversity, soil and land use, water, climate factors, risk management, sustainable transport and public awareness.

# Measures decided concerning monitoring

The programme for monitoring the effects of the implementation of the programme aims to identify, respectively prevent potential negative effects on environmental issues and allows the proposal of additional measures to reduce the impact on the environment or to remedy possible affected areas. The monitoring programme is based on the relevant environmental objectives considered in the assessment. The proposed set of indicators mainly targets relevant environmental objectives that could be adversely affected but also preventive measures. The table below shows the monitoring indicators.

Given that there are several authorities and institutions involved in the sectors covered by the programme, the programme owner will collect data on the proposed indicators based on the results of the implemented projects, its main responsibility being to centralize and present the proposed indicators in an appropriate way.

Table 6‑1 Proposed indicators for monitoring the effects of the programme

| **Environmental objective** | **Indicator** | | **Actions to be monitored** | **Target** | **Unit of measurement** | **Observations** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| General | MON1 | The share of environmental measures costs in the total value of projects | All actions, particularly A1 | > 0 % | Percentage | Environmental measures represent M1-M9 (see Table 9-1 above) |
| REO 1 Biodiversity | MON2 | Number of environmental analyses to assess the impact of different options for the implementation of navigability project | A2 | > 0 | Number | To ensure that any decision is based on an environmental analysis |
| MON3 | Share of rehabilitated buildings for which the presence of nests / shelters of birds and bats was previously verified | A1, A13, optional A3 and A11 | 100 % | Percentage | Applies only to the projects started after the programme approval |
| MON4 | Number of situations in which it was necessary to protect / relocate nests / shelters of birds and bats and / or to install artificial shelters / nests | > 0 | Number | - |
| REO 4 Soil | MON5 | Total soil area lost as a result of the implementation of the proposed actions | A1, A3, A12 and A13 | As small as possible | Square meters | It is equal with the total new constructed area |
| MON6 | The total area of newly created green spaces as a result of the implementation of the proposed actions | As large as possible | Square meters | It is equal with the total area with vegetation inside each project site |
| REO 6 Air | MON7 | Number of charging stations for electric vehicles carried out within the projects aimed at arranging sites with tourist potential | A13 | > 0 | Number |  |
| REO 14 Circular economy | MON8 | Share of projects in which Waste Management Plans have been developed | A1, A12 and A13 | > 0 % | Percentage | From the total number of projects containing construction works |

1. Transposed in Romania by the “Decision of Romanian Government no. 1076/ 2004 regarding the procedure for undertaking the environmental assessment (SEA) for plans and programmes” and in Bulgaria by the “Ordinance for the conditions and order for preparation Environmental Assessments of plans and programmes” – promulgated in SG, issue 57/ 2004, last amended in SG 94/2012. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Decision of Romanian Government no. 1076/ 2004. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Under SEA Directive 2001/42/EC [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. See footnote 1 [↑](#footnote-ref-4)