



IPA Cross-Border Programme CCI No: 2007CB16IPO008

PRESS ANNOUNCEMENT

For the third consecutive year on **September 21st, 2014** Bulgaria - Turkey Cross-Border Cooperation Programme, funded by the Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance, celebrated the **European Cooperation Day** (ECD). Joint event under the motto **"Together in the New Programming Period"** was organized in the city of Edirne, Turkey by the Ministry of Regional Development of the Republic of Bulgaria (Managing Authority of the Programme) and the Ministry for EU Affairs of the Republic of Turkey (National Authority) with the assistance of the Joint Technical Secretariat in Haskovo and its Antenna office in Edirne.

Satisfied with the achievements during the current programming period (2007 - 2013) and inspired by the submitted for approval to the European Commission on September 19th, 2014 draft Programme for the next period (2014-2020), the organizers decided to properly reflect this kind of transition in this year's EC Day.

All events as part of the celebration were organized in places constructed, reconstructed or equipped under projects funded by the IPA CBC Programme Bulgaria - Turkey. All activities were performed using means and equipment supplied under projects funded by the Programme. By promoting the achievements of the projects in the current programming period, we decided to emphasize on the priorities and horizontal themes of the Programme proposed for funding in the next period (2014 - 2020).

The opening ceremony took place on the outdoor stage built in the Edirne city park on the Maritsa River, under a project funded by the Programme. Right from the start the refreshing autumn rain proved to be the sign for the success of the event.



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Fortunately, this year the celebration was honoured by the presence of officials with high administration rank from both partner countries - Bulgaria and Turkey. This was an assessment of the Programme implementation so far, and a sign for growing expectations in the oncoming period.

More than ninety people gathered at the opening. They were welcomed by the Mayor of Edirne Mr. Recep Gurkan, the Deputy Governor of Haskovo Mr Yonko Gyudzhenov and the representative of the Ministry for EU Affairs of the Republic of Turkey Mrs. Beyza Turan. All attendees were impressed by the encouraging words of the Deputy Minister of Regional Development of the Republic of Bulgaria Mrs. Yordanka Chobanova and the heartfelt speech of the Governor of the Province of Edirne Mr. Dursun Ali Sahin.



The first of the events to celebrate the ECD was a bike tour starting from the lanes in the City park of Edirne. The bicycle lanes with a total length of 1,800 meters are built under the already mentioned project of our Programme. The ride involved



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students from two schools in Edirne and Svilengrad - also Programme beneficiaries - and representatives of sports clubs from Haskovo, Elhovo and Edirne. Partner organizations from Elhovo (Bulgaria) and Edirne (Turkey) kindly provided the bikes and protective gears. The equipment is delivered under a project also funded by our Programme.



The Bicycle tour ran along the picturesque river banks, the old railway station, and the historic bridges over the rivers Meric (Maritsa) and Tundzha and ended at a settled gathering point nearby.



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The gathering point mentioned above was also an endpoint of the launched at the same time regatta along Tundzha River. The boats provided for the regatta were acquired within a project funded by the Bulgaria – Turkey IPA CBC Programme.



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At the gathering point the participants received bags, gloves and other means for cleaning, which marked the beginning of the next event within the programme for celebration of ECD - cleaning the bank of Tundzha River and the river itself from pollution caused by human activities. The most diligent participants in the cleaning activities were the pupils from both countries. Besides the good deed they have done, the students learned an important lesson - how easy contamination is and what load of hard work is needed to clean up the terrestrial landfill and especially the polluted water.



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The collected waste was loaded and transported by a refuse collection truck purchased under a project funded by the Bulgaria-Turkey IPA CBC Programme.



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After the end of the cleaning the participants visited two tourist sites in Edirne socialized under projects funded by Bulgaria-Turkey IPA CBC Programme, where they were acquainted with the history of the town, its cultural heritage and traditional crafts.



The official closing ceremony of the ECD event took place at Cultural Centre “Ekmekcizade Ahmed Pasa Caravansary”, Edirne (also furnished and equipped under our programme) with closing speeches by Ms. Yordanka Chobanova, Deputy Minister of Regional Development of Bulgaria and Mr. Dursun Ali Sahin – the Governor of Province of Edirne. During the closing ceremony each student was awarded with certificate and promotional materials of Bulgaria - Turkey IPA CBC Programme.



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The Event finished with a music and dance party for the participants with the participation of local folklore dancers.



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More than 90 young people and athletes from Haskovo, Svilengrad, Elhovo and Edirne as well as representatives of program beneficiaries, regional and local authorities, journalists and citizens from the cross-border region took active part in the bike tour, the water regatta and the demonstration cleaning of Tundzha River thus giving their contribution to the presentation to the public of the achievements of the cooperation



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between the two countries during the current programming period and for promoting the main priorities and cross-cutting issues of the Program during the new programming period 2014-2020 and namely:

Environmental Protection priority symbolized through demonstration cleaning; *Sustainable Tourism Development* priority presented through the bike tour, the regatta and the visits to cultural and historical sites; cross-cutting issues as *Youth Inclusion* promoted through engagement of students as participants in all events and *Support to the Entrepreneurship* demonstrated through the participation of waste collection organizations which helped with the transportation, processing and depot storage of the collected refuse.

In this way the organized by our programme event under the motto “Together Again in the New Programming Period” achieved the goals of this year’s campaign for celebrating the European Cooperation Day: “To get out and meet your neighbours at one of the events showcasing project results or highlighting the importance of territorial cooperation”.



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