

STANDARD SUMMARY PROJECT FICHE

Neighbourhood Programme BG-FYROM

1. Basic information

- 1.1. CRIS number: 2004/016-786.01.02
- 1.2. Title: **PEOPLE TO PEOPLE ACTIONS (JSPF)**
- 1.3. Sector: Regional Development/CBC
- 1.4. Location: Cross-border region between Bulgaria and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia

2. Objectives

2.1. Overall Objective(s):

- Creation of viable cross-border contacts at different levels and sector of activities
- To support local development activities of a cross-border nature by involving local actors from the border regions
- To enhance the capability of local communities and NGOs to develop and implement joint projects within the border region

The scheme will strongly support concrete cross-border projects, which will promote "people-to-people" communication and enhance mutual understanding.

2.2. Project purpose

Encourage cross-border contacts and cooperation at regional and local level in the fields of cultural, educational and sports cooperation.

2.3. Coherence with the Joint Programming Document 2004-06 BG-FYROM

The project is related to Priority 3 ("People-to-people actions") of the Joint Programming Document (JPD) of the Phare CBC/CARDS Neighbourhood Programme between the Republic of Bulgaria and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia for the period 2004-2006..

2.4. Accession Partnership (AP) and NPAA priority

The people to people actions play a key part in the process of preparation of Bulgaria and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia for accession, in particular through the improvement of the administrative capacity of local/ regional actors. The project represents thus an important element in the preparations for implementation of EU regional policy and coordination of structural instruments. In

addition, the project supports the social and economic integration of the eligible cross-border region not only within the national space, but also within the enlarged Europe.

2.5. Contribution to National Development Plan (and/or Structural Funds Development Plan/SDP)

The proposed grant scheme is in line with the National Economic Development Plan of the Republic of Bulgaria over the 2000-2006 period, and namely with priority 4 "Developing Cross-border Cooperation" under the indicative programme for "Balanced and Sustainable Regional Development". The Bulgarian Government has planned to actively support and complement the EU initiatives and programmes for cross-border cooperation, while seeking to incorporate the latter into the national framework for regional development planning and programming. The NEDP aims at achieving sustainable development of the entire border region rather than of some individual border areas. The main goal pursued under the above mentioned priority area refers to opening up new horizons, fostering the socio-economic development of the border areas and gradually overcoming the problems resulting from their isolated position at the country's periphery.

2.6. Cross-border impact

The JSPF scheme promotes the elaboration of projects with a cross-border impact and encourages the development of linkages between local communities and organisations on both sides of the border. In general, the "people-to-people" aspects of the individual projects and the general direction of the fund guarantee a high degree of cross-border relevance of the scheme.

The proposed grant scheme project will enable development of joint or complementary projects with direct cross-border impact, which should be understood in terms of:

- ✓ joint development of project ideas;
- ✓ joint preparation of project application;
- ✓ joint implementation of project activities;
- ✓ joint co-financing of project activities on both sides of the border (Phare and CARDS) and assured sustainability by both cross-border partners of the results achieved.

3. Description

3.1. Background and justification

The inclusion of flexible funding mechanisms like Joint Small Project Fund (JSPF) aiming at small-scale interventions addressing identified local needs is an efficient instrument due to its popularity among local/ regional actors and a relatively quick implementation period.

The analysis of the border area has already identified the multicultural traditions of the eligible area and the common historical and cultural heritage as a major strength. It has also pointed out that there do already exist cross-border initiatives in the form of joint actions of local communities and NGOs.

Furthermore, the experience of the preliminary project ideas' collection launched in May 2004 among local stakeholders for an evaluation of JPD measures, has clearly demonstrated that there is an abundance of small-scale (below € 50,000) people-to-people cooperation projects seeking support in the eligible cross-border area.

3.2. Sectoral rationale

N/A

3.3. Results

Sustainable partnership between local and regional actors in the border regions will be guaranteed:

- Approximately 10-15 individual small cross-border cooperation measures in line with Priority 3 of the *Joint Programming Document* for the period 2004-2006 completed
- Improved knowledge for the preparation and implementation of cross-border projects within regional and local agencies and communities
- Established links between cross-border actors from both sides of the border as a result of joint preparation and implementation of the Phare CBC/CARDS projects
- Increased awareness among citizens and communities about the positive effects of the cross-border cooperation

3.4. **Activities**

This grant scheme project is primarily aimed at encouraging a wide variety of occasions for the citizens of the eligible border area to get involved in cross-border cooperation primarily in the following **priority areas**:

- Development or establishment of facilities and resources to improve the flow of information and communication between border regions, including support for cross-border radio, television, newspapers and other media; support to improving information/ knowledge for the development of public health and promotion of an integrated approach towards protecting and improving health
- Cultural exchange – those that already exist and that will be newly established between local groups on both sides of the border region; meetings and exchanges among young people; artist and sports activities; folk events and similar actions with the emphasis on the establishment of traditions and long-term cooperation
- Local employment, education and training initiatives, including a wide range of actions, such as promoting the mobility of citizens; innovative teaching and learning projects; networks of academic and professional expertise; designing joint study programmes, establishing networks, exchanging information, thus also promoting life-long learning for all citizens of the border region

Grants will only be available for projects whose immediate objective is non-commercial and strictly non-profit making. Under no circumstances may a grant give rise to profits (i.e. it will be restricted to the amount required to balance income and expenditure for the project).

General criteria for eligibility

Only the projects falling into one of the following categories should be considered eligible to the grant scheme:

- Simple projects with a cross-border effect taking place mostly or exclusively on one side of the border but for the benefit of both partners;
- Complementary projects where an activity on one side of the border is accompanied by a similar activity on the other side;
- Integrated projects where partners on either side of the border contribute different elements to a single project.

In addition, projects should:

- be financially realistic and transparent;
- be ready for implementation;
- Phare/ CARDS contribution have to be between € 10 000 and € 50 000;

- minimum co-financing of 10% for Phare funds and 5% of CARDS funds;
- the same project proposal must not receive more than one EC-funded grant for the same activities
- under no circumstances be in contradiction with the long-term development plans of the municipality or the region (projects that are part of an overall strategy/plan for the development of the region/town/municipality will be prioritised);
- if possible, contain innovative approaches (e.g. pilot projects).

Eligible applicants should be non-profit-making legal persons and might include local and regional authorities; associations of local and regional authorities; Euroregions; chambers of commerce, industry or agriculture; professional associations; trade union associations; non-governmental organisations; schools, colleges, universities etc.

The types of eligible expenditures as well as the list of organisations, which are entitled to apply for JSPF support will be defined in the Joint Guidelines for Applicants – in accordance with the rules of PRAG and the Vademecum on Grant Management.

The grant scheme will be implemented through joint Call for Proposals and in compliance with the provisions laid down in the JPD. **The maximum project duration** of a single project under this grant scheme will be **12 months**.

The joint Call for Proposals will use funds, which are allocated to the NP under the EU Phare and CARDS programmes, and which will cover the respective eligible activities from the both sides of the border. The eligible applicant should prepare a joint application form in accordance with the requirements set out in the Guidelines for Applicants.

The minimum grant for a single application to be contracted (under Phare) is **€ 10,000** while the maximum one is **€ 50,000**. Moreover, a grant may not exceed 90 % of the total project costs. The balance must be financed from the applicant's or partners' own resources, or from sources other than the European Community budget.

3.5. Linked activities

Bulgaria carries out cross-border cooperation with Greece (since 1994, € 20 million Phare funds per year) and Romania (since 1999, € 8 million Phare funds per year) in the framework of programmes Phare-CBC/INTERREG. In anticipation of the future EU external borders, an External Border Facility Programme of € 3.12 million was allocated in 2003 to prepare new cross-border cooperation programmes from 2004 onwards between Bulgaria and Turkey, Serbia & Montenegro and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia has also significant experience in the development of cross-border cooperation with its Greek neighbour (€ 37 million during the period 1996-1999),

At the local level, there is a strong political will to develop cross-border projects and create new sustainable structures like "Euroregions" across the borders of Serbia, Greece, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Bulgaria, between the cities of Nish, Skopje and Sofia and their neighbouring regions. Also, more regular meetings of some local officials exist, there are concrete projects or ideas but need a better frame to implement them.

3.6. Lessons learned

The project is the first of this type to be implemented between the two neighbouring countries with joint EU funding (Phare and CARDS). In regard to that no specific lessons could be reported which to be closely linked with the present project, and the respective Neighbourhood Programme. However, the

previous experience of both countries under various other programmes could provide enough evidence for the achieved up to now.

Experience obtained from past and ongoing projects, especially experience from implementation of cross-border actions (and mostly those with grant schemes implementation), will be applied as much as possible. Experience gained from such programmes has shown that in-depth preparation of the Call for Proposals is needed. Further attention should be paid with the present NP, when this should be done jointly between the two countries. The successful utilization of funds under grant scheme type of operation depends mostly on the efficient capacity built not only at central level, but also at local and regional level where the actual implementation is carried out.

The outcomes of the assessment of CBC programmes in Bulgaria (recently carried out by the EMS) were also taken into account. The need for coordination (preparation and publishing the timely adjusted joint Call for Proposal, joint evaluation of applications received and Contracting) and supervision of project implementation has been taken into consideration during the programming phase and will be carefully watched in the course of programme implementation.

4. Institutional framework

Key elements in the Neighbourhood programme (NP) are the joint programming process, the combination of Phare CBC and CARDS funds, the joint management structures, the joint call for proposals and the joint selection process.

The JSPF institutional framework is based on the principle of both countries being equal partners and with both countries having an equal role in the management structures. The joint management will ensure local ownership, wider involvement, better planning and will create the base for genuine cross-border activities.

As described in the JPD, the management structures will include: (a) the national authorities responsible for Programme coordination (Implementing Agency in Bulgaria, and Project Coordination Unit (PCU) in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia; (b) the Joint Co-operation Committee and the Joint Steering Committee; (c) assisted by a Joint Technical Secretariat.

On the Bulgarian side, the responsibilities for Phare-CBC Programme are laid down with the Implementing Agency Phare – ESC/ CBC at **the Ministry of Regional Development and Public Works**. It will be acting as a Contracting Authority with the overall responsibility for the programme implementation, as well as administrative, technical and financial management of the grant scheme. MRDPW as a coordinator for CBC programme is obliged also to monitor the physical and financial implementation of this project including Phare and co-financing payments, and report to the EC in regularly reports.

The MRDPW will ensure necessary human resources for the technical management of the JSPF and may delegate specific tasks to the **Joint Technical Secretariat** established in accordance with the JPD provisions and strictly following the PRAG rules.

5. Detailed budget (in €)

Year 2004	Phare Support			National Co-financing *	Other sources (IFI, beneficiary)*	TOTAL
	Investment Support	IB	Total Phare (=I+IB)			
JSPF		400,000	400,000		*	400,000
TOTAL		400,000	400,000		*	400,000

. (*) co-financing is needed and will be a criterion for eligibility of projects. Minimum co-financing of 10% of the projects' costs will be provided by the beneficiaries, not by the Bulgarian National Fund

With regard to the NP requirements for joint development, implementation and co-financing, the joint project ideas will be financed through both Phare and CARDS for the respective activities of the both sides of the border. The indicative CARDS allocations for this grant scheme are as follows:

Year 2004	CARDS Support			IFI*	TOTAL
	Investment Support	IB	Total CARDS (=I+IB)		
JSPF		€ 200,000	€ 200,000		€ 200,000
TOTAL		€ 200,000	€ 200,000		€ 200,000

*The minimum co-financing requirements for CARDS are as follows:

- 10% co-financing for projects between € 50,000 – € 300,000
- 25% for more than € 300,000
- 5% for less than € 50,000

6. Implementation Arrangements

The Republic of Bulgaria

Implementing Agency

Ministry of Regional Development and Public Works

Address: 17-19 Cyril and Methodius St. 1202 Sofia

Director: Tzvetomira Lacheva – Deputy PAO

Contact Person: Silvia Teneva, acting Head of Phare CBC Department

Phone: +359 2 9405-280, +359 2 9405-377

Fax: +359 2 987 0737

E-mail: steneva@mrrb.government.bg

It acts as Contracting Authority for the Phare funds.

The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia

Contracting Authority

European Agency for Reconstruction

Makedonija 11/I, 1000 Skopje

Tel: + 389 2 328 6782

Fax: + 389 2 312 4760

The Grant Scheme will operate on the basis of single call for proposals and single selection process covering both sides of the border. **The Grant Scheme will be implemented according to the NP Implementing Guidelines issued by the Commission.** Except when provided differently in the Implementing Guidelines, the award procedures provided in the PRAG will be implemented.

The standard and basic selection, implementation and monitoring process will be as follows:

PREPARATION OF THE PACKAGE OF CALL FOR PROPOSAL, GUIDELINES FOR APPLICANTS AND APPLICATION FORM ACCORDING TO THE PRACTICAL GUIDE

- The JTS, under the supervision of the JSC, drafts the Call for proposals, the Guidelines for applicants and the Application form and other documents related to the implementation of the grant schemes.
- BG IA and FYROM PCU submit the final version of the documents to the respective EC Delegation/EAR for approval

PUBLICATION OF THE CALL FOR PROPOSAL

The BG IA and the FYROM PCU, with the assistance of the Joint Technical Secretariat, take all appropriate measures to ensure that the nationally and regionally publicised call for proposals reaches the target groups in line with the requirements of the Practical Guide.

PROJECT SELECTION PROCESS

- The Joint Technical Secretariat collects and registers incoming project proposals.
- The BG IA and the FYROM PCU designate a joint Evaluation Committee for the assessment of administrative compliance, eligibility and assessment of technical and financial quality of proposals.
- Members of the joint Evaluation Committee come from both countries. A balanced membership from either side of the border is required. Members of the joint Evaluation Committee are designated exclusively on the basis of technical and professional expertise in the relevant area.
- The EC Delegation and EAR endorse the composition of the joint Evaluation Committee. The EC Delegation and EAR will participate as observer in the proceedings of the joint Evaluation Committee. Prior approval is needed from the Delegation/EAR for the participation of other observers.
- If necessary, the Evaluation Committee could be assisted by Assessors designated by the BG IA and the FYROM PCU and endorsed by the EC Delegation and EAR.
- The joint Evaluation Committee assesses each proposal on the basis of the published evaluation grid, draws up its recommendations and decisions in the form of an evaluation report and transmit it to the Joint Steering Committee
- The Joint Steering Committee formally ratifies the evaluation report and the award proposals and transmits them (with recommendations, as appropriate) to the BG IA and the FYROM PCU for onwards transmission to the EC Delegation and EAR. The JSC is not entitled to change the Evaluation Committee's scores or recommendation and must not alter the evaluation grids completed by the evaluators.
- The EC Delegation and EAR approve the evaluation report on the selection process and the final list of grants to be awarded.
- The JTS notifies each applicant in writing of the result of the selection process.

CONTRACTING

- The format of the grant contract is drafted according to the Practical Guide using the standard grant contract format and its annexes.
- The format of the grant contract is to be approved by the EC Delegation and EAR.

Given the different financial rules applicable to each side of the border (decentralised versus centralised), the contracting procedures will be different for the projects (or part of them) co-financed by Phare CBC or Cards:

In the Republic of Bulgaria:

- The EC Delegation only approves the evaluation report, the list of proposed projects (budget, duration, beneficiaries etc as per Practical Guide), and the standard contract format, not the contracts themselves irrespective of their budget.
- The IAs sign the grant contracts with the selected beneficiaries based on the final list of Phare CBC grants approved by the EC Delegation. The language of the grant contract is English.
- The grant contracts should normally be issued within 3 months of the decision of the Joint Steering Committee/IA
- Copy of the signed grant contracts will be available at the Bulgarian IA

In the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia:

- The EAR formally confirms the decision of the Joint Steering Committee/PCU.. In all cases, the EAR retains the right of final approval of projects (or part of projects) co-financed by Cards. In doing so, it will ascertain that the conditions for Community financing are met.
- The EAR issues the grant contracts with the selected beneficiaries from the side of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia , normally within 3 months of the decision of the Joint Steering Committee/PCU

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE SELECTED PROJECTS BY THE BENEFICIARIES

- Beneficiaries subcontract suppliers of goods or services, in line with Phare procurement regulations annexed to the Grant Contract and under the Practical Guide (PRAG).
- The projects will be subject to ex-post control by the EC Delegation and EAR pursuant to the Practical Guide.

FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT OF THE SELECTED PROJECTS

The JTS will collect and verify the technical reports and requests for payments from the beneficiaries and forward them to the relevant Contracting Authority for payment (Bulgarian IA for Phare CBC and EAR for CARDS).

MONITORING OF THE PROJECTS IMPLEMENTED BY THE BENEFICIARIES

Project implementation will be monitored through the Joint Steering Committee. The project monitoring and reporting process will be harmonised so that all projects will be monitored according to standard procedures. Project monitoring and evaluation will be based on periodic assessment of progress on delivery of specified project results and towards achievement of project objectives. All reporting and evaluation must differentiate between Phare CBC and Cards expenditure, although in the framework of a single reporting structure. Monitoring reports are submitted to the Joint Co-operation Committee. Attention is drawn to the special duty of the Joint Technical Secretariat with regard to the day-to-day monitoring of the selected projects.

The EC Delegation and EAR reserve the right to organise field visits and to monitor on a case-by-case basis the projects selected under the grants schemes.

6.1 Twinning

N/A

6.2 Non-standard aspects

There are no non-standard contracts or tender procedures envisaged within this project.

6.3 Contracts

The grant scheme will be implemented via one single (joint) Call for Proposals simultaneously launched in Bulgaria and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. The number of the individual grant-contracts to be signed will vary depending on the number of the proposals received for each component and the respective grant amounts approved for funding.

7. Implementation Schedule

7.1 Start of tendering/call for proposals

February 2005

7.2 Start of project activity

May-June 2005

7.3 Project completion

May-June 2006

8. Equal Opportunity

Being focused on cohesion, interactions and networking, the project is also concentrated in widening the range of development opportunities in favour to those categories of people that have a scarce access to them: women, young people, weaker sphere of population, minorities and groups.

9. Environment

The border area between Bulgaria and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia is renowned for the presence of well-preserved natural environment. On one hand, the wilderness of the territory represents an obstacle to cross border communication and transports, on the other the natural resources are a significant potential for development still only partially exploited. The common exploitation of such potential is to be taken into serious consideration especially in terms of the possible impact that actions can have on the environment and especially when the environment itself represents a resource for industry, rural economy, agriculture and tourism.

10. Rates of return

N/A

11. Investment criteria

N/A

12. Conditionality and sequencing

The project will start after signing of the Financial Memorandum between Bulgaria and the European Union for 2004. All documentation required for launching joint Call for Proposals (Application Pack) will be prepared by the JTS by December 2004 and will be submitted to the respective EC Delegation/EAR for approval. After obtaining the formal endorsement of the Application Pack the grant scheme implementation will start.

Annexes to Project Fiche:

1. Logical Framework in standard format
2. Detailed implementation chart
3. Contracting and disbursement schedule

ANNEX 1

LOGFRAME PLANNING MATRIX FOR Project Title: PEOPLE TO PEOPLE ACTIONS (JSPF)		Programme name and number	
		Contracting period expires	Disbursement period expires
		Total budget: € 400,000	Phare budget: € 400,000
Overall objective(s)	Objectively verifiable indicators	Sources of Verification	
- Creation of viable cross-border contacts at different levels and sector of activities - To support local development activities of a cross-border nature by involving local actors from the border regions. - To enhance the capability of local communities and NGOs to develop and implement joint projects within the border regions.	- Greater awareness of Phare CBC/CARDS NP - Positive attitude towards cross-border co-operation to solve common concerns and to utilise potentials	- National/Regional Reports - Implementing Agency reports - Special pre and post surveys - Independent EU evaluations	
Project purpose	Objectively verifiable indicators	Sources of Verification	Assumptions
Encourage cross-border contacts and activities at regional and local level in the fields of cultural, educational and sports cooperation.	Number and types of formally constituted partnerships and other long-term cooperation arrangements across the border increasing (at least 20 %)	- Monitoring Reports - Progress Reports	Continued Government commitment to developing cross-border cooperation
Results	Objectively verifiable indicators	Sources of Verification	Assumptions
- Approximately 10-15 individual small cross-border cooperation measures in line with the priorities of the <i>Joint Programming Document</i> for the period 2004-2006 completed - Improved knowledge for the preparation and implementation of projects of cross-border projects within regional and local agencies and communities - Established links between cross-border actors from both sides of the border as a result of joint	- Number and type of projects successfully carried out. - Meeting of socio-economic and cultural organisations - Published and disseminated information on cross border activities, etc.	- Individual project progress reports - Monitoring and evaluation reports	Sufficient project management skills on behalf of the beneficiaries

preparation and implementation of the Phare CBC/CARDS projects Increased awareness among citizens and businesses about the positive effects of the cross-border cooperation			
Activities	Means		Assumptions
Funding for eligible actions: cultural exchanges, youth and sports, training, conferences and seminars, planning and development studies, etc.	Implementation of the grant scheme in line with the provisions of the PRAG and the JSPF Guidelines for Applicants; At average 10-15 individual grant contracts signed.		- Sufficient number of good quality project proposals - Co-finance contributions available when required
			Preconditions The documentation, necessary for the launching of the grant scheme prepared by the signing of the FM

ANNEX 2 IMPLEMENTATION CHART

Project title: PEOPLE TO PEOPLE ACTIONS (JSPF)

ACTIVITIES	2004												2005												2006												2007											
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	#	#	#	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	#	#	#	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	#	#	#	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	#		
Draft of Guidelines for Applicants, Application Forms																																																
Guidelines for Applicants, Application Forms and Internal Procedures Guide Approved																																																
Preparing Action Plan for Publicity and Awareness																																																
Publicity and Information Strategy/Action Plan Approved																																																
Launching joint Call for Porposals																																																
Launching Publicity and Information Campaign																																																
Collection of grants proposal																																																
Evaluation of grant application																																																
Finalizing the list of selected individual grants																																																
Approval from ECD/EAR on the individual grants to be funded																																																
Contracting individual grant projects – start of activities under the selected grants																																																
Contiunuous monitoring actions																																																
End of Project																																																

ANNEX 3
CONTRACTING AND DISBURSEMENT SCHEDULE BY QUARTER

Project title: PEOPLE TO PEOPLE ACTIONS (JSPF)

CONTRACTING	Cumulative contracting schedule by quarter in € m (provisional)												
	2005				2006				2007				Total
	I	II	III	IV	I	II	III	IV	I	II	III	IV	
Grant Scheme		0.400											0.400
DISBURSEMENT	Cumulative disbursement schedule by quarter in € m (provisional)												
	2005				2006				2007				Total
	I	II	III	IV	I	II	III	IV	I	II	III	IV	
Grant Scheme			0.320				0.080						0.400