

STANDARD SUMMARY PROJECT FICHE

1. Basic information

Desiré number: **BG 01.06.07**

Title: **“Joint Small Projects Fund”**

Sector: **Socio Economic Development (SO)**

Geographical Location: **Bulgarian and Greek border regions**

2. Objectives:

The Joint Small Projects Fund (JSPF) supports the key objectives of the Greek Interreg III Programme and Bulgarian Phare CBC Programme, namely to help the border regions to overcome specific development problems resulting from their relative isolation in the framework of national economics; the JSPF also supports the establishment and development of co-operative networks on both sides of the border and the creation of linkages between these networks and wider European Union networks.

2.1. Wider Objectives

- Improve cross-border co-operation at local level between the two countries
- Support the further development of the economic potential of the border regions

2.2. Purpose of the project

- Strengthening of local co-operation across the border;
- Stimulation and support to creation of permanent structures among the local and regional organisations in the border regions;
- Building and development of specialist resources of local and regional institutions involved in regional development and cross-border co-operation;
- Development of local/regional economic and employment;
- Development and strengthening of an effective implementation structure.

2.3 Accession Partnership and NPAA priority

The JSPF plays a key part in the process of preparation of the Bulgaria for accession, in particular through the capacity building dimension of local/regional actors. These funds are part of a process of creating “integration-minded” border regions. The project represents thus an important element in the preparation of Bulgaria for the adoption of Structural Funds. In addition, the project supports the social and economic integration between the border regions of the countries.

NPAA (Medium-term priority):

- Promotion of cross-border co-operation

2.4. Cross-border Impact

The Programme will contribute to the removal of existing disparities between regions on both sides of the border and thus to the gradual alignment of economic and social development. This is particularly important in view of future integration into the European Union. Full membership will require the approximation of levels of economic activity and living standards in particular in border regions in order to avoid undue problems connected to the removal of borders and the introduction of the principle of free movement.

The JSPF promotes the elaboration of projects with a cross-border impact and encourages the development of linkages between the communities /organisations/ institutions 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 Regional Steering Committee will be composed of representatives of the relevant Bulgarian and Greek border regions.

3. Description:

3.1 Background and justification

With a view to strengthen the local cross-border co-operation of the two border regions, Greece and Bulgaria decided during the Joint Co-operation Committee (JCC) meeting (Athens, 20 Nov. 2000) to start to implement a JSPF. This scheme will finance "soft" projects: business co-operation, enterprise development, technology transfer and marketing for small and medium size enterprises, training, employment, measures for health and cultural exchanges, improvement of information flow and communications between border regions etc.

In order to reach a sufficient impact, these schemes need to be implemented in a multi annual perspective.

Moreover, this project is fully in line with the priorities that are indicated in the Joint Programming Document (JPD). The JPD constitutes the general framework for the co-operation between the two countries and has been agreed between the Romanian and Bulgarian authorities during the JCC meeting (Athens, 20 Nov. 2000) and within the priorities which are included in the Axis 2 "Economic Development and Employment".

According to the JPD the Axis 2 – Economic Development and Employment of the JPD can be broken down into the following individual goals:

- **Strengthening cross-border entrepreneurship**
- **Collaboration among agencies to promote cross-border cooperation**
- **Development of alternative forms of tourism**
- **Human resources and promotion of employment**

Additionally and according to the JPD, the Joint Steering Committee (JSC) will act as the decision making body for the Joint Phare Small Project Funds. Details of decision-making

procedures that will be set up for this type of actions, will be prepared according to the Phare rules' requirements concerning Small Project Funds.

3.2 Linked Activities

Under the **BG9904 CBC programme**, a contract on the "Preparation of Cross-Border co-operation Plan between Bulgaria and Greece" is previewed to start implementation during March 2001. Under the expected contract, the axes of development for the whole period of CBC will be reviewed. On a more practical level, the selected consultant will assist the Steering Committee in operating the Joint Small Projects Fund (JSPF) and will further elaborate the existing guidelines for the operation of the JSPF. The work will include the development of:

- a set of precise eligibility criteria for projects,
- a set of selection criteria for eligible projects,
- a clear administrative system including appropriate application and other administrative forms and identification of the roles and responsibilities of different institutions involved in the process,
- workshops if necessary to introduce basic ideas of project management and project proposal writing,
- a promotion campaign of the JSPF,
- a clear timetable for implementation and criteria for evaluation of success,
- a first pipeline of project for both border regions.

3.3. Results:

- Financial support to small-scale "people-to-people" actions in the border regions in the field of economic development, environment, tourism, local employment, cultural exchanges, local democracy, planning and development studies etc.

3.4. Activities:

The project will support:

- The financing of the selected small-scale "people-to-people" projects (project located in the Bulgarian border region, or Bulgarian contribution to common Bulgarian-Greek projects)
- Administrative costs for operating the fund. Concerning administrative support for operating the fund, the Phare contribution may finance indirect (overhead) costs up to 7% of total amount eligible costs (maximum 35 000 Euro)

General Criteria for Eligibility

In general terms the eligible actions in the framework of the JSPF should meet the following conditions:

- have a strong and evident cross-border aspect (joint projects, especially where co-financed jointly by Bulgaria and Greece project partners, will be particularly prioritised),
- be financially assessed realistically and transparently,
- be ready for implementation,
- the Phare contribution have to be between € 10 000 and € 50 000,
- availability of co-financing. Minimum co-financing will be 10% of the cost of soft projects (even in kind),

- 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).

On this basis, the Bulgarian Implementing Agency and the Greek Implementing Authority will develop more detailed operational guidelines, including specific project support level/country (minimum/maximum) in consultation with the appointed Regional Steering Committee.

Priority areas

The Fund will support small-scale people-to-people actions across the following priority areas:

- **Economic Development:** Support for small projects focusing on economies, which enhance the economic base of the border region. For example proposals for the development of small-scale enterprise, marketing initiatives, markets, exhibitions and advertising events, and so forth; the creation of cross-border co-operation structures and partnerships among supporting organisations;
- **Environment:** Projects focusing on specific problems of the environment of the region, such as the drafting of studies, assessment of problems, environmental training, actions aiming at increasing public environmental awareness and so forth.
- **Tourism:** The SPF will provide funding for a range of "soft" actions for tourism development - studies, planning, institutional strengthening measures, specific SME training and related HRD programmes.
- **Cultural Exchanges:** Those cultural exchanges that already exist and that are being newly established between local groups on both sides of the border region. Meetings and exchanges among youth; artistic and supporting activities; folk events and similar actions with the emphasis on the establishment of traditions and long-term co-operation;
- **Local Democracy:** Schemes will be supported that help create and intensify the skills of organisational structures in local and regional public administration and other elements of a democratic society (chambers of commerce, trade associations, trade unions, NGOs). Relevant training courses and information will be provided supporting exchange visits, project preparation and procedural matters. Joint projects may also involve the elaboration of materials for distance learning and so forth. Exchange of know-how and experience in education at various levels will also be supported.
- **Planning and development studies:** Projects providing a basis for planning within a border region. Projects can be supported that create the preconditions for joint planning in a border region, for framing joint research programmes, for drawing up joint strategies for regional development in a border area with the aim to jointly define the development priorities and so forth. Development of project applications and feasibility studies are also included;

Selection process

The Steering Committee (joint committee with representatives from both Bulgaria and Greece) will issue a call for proposals that must be open and fair to all eligible organisations. Where every eligible organisations can be identified (e.g. local authorities only), the call for proposals can be undertaken through an individual written invitation to all eligible organisations. Where all eligible organisations can not be pre-defined (e.g. NGOs) the call for proposals may be done by other means (e.g. newspapers / media / networking newsletter). The call for proposals should allow a reasonable deadline for the submission of proposals (a minimum of 2 months is

recommended) and should indicate where additional information and assistance for preparing a proposal can be found.

The project applicants will, in many cases, need considerable development assistance. Training and information workshops may be organised to inform and assist would-be participants, so as to ensure high transparency and encourage good quality proposals. The Secretariat will also appoint experts to visit would-be project applicants in order to provide assistance, especially in relation to matters such as project cost assessment.

The submitted applications will be assessed by an appropriate Panel of Experts appointed by the Steering Committee. The Panel of Experts will use clear and pre-defined evaluation grids, and may take into account recommendations from the Secretariat. The Panel of Experts may include local experts and representatives from the IA and EU Delegation. Applications that do not meet the pre-specified eligibility criteria will be rejected at this stage.

The Steering Committee will take the final decisions on which projects will be financed, based on recommendations made by the Panel of Experts. The process must be seen to be competitive, based on the merit of each application and independent of project applicants. All project applicants will be informed of the decision from the Secretariat in writing about the outcome of their application.

4. Institutional Framework

The JSPF will operate under the General Guidelines for SPF and detailed guidelines that will be developed for the JSPF in Bulgaria and in Greece, and which will have to be approved by the Commission.

1. Call for proposal: the Steering Committee will approve all the necessary guidelines and documentation to prepare the call for proposal (common documentation for both region).
2. Registration of project proposals and checking of formal criteria by counties.
3. The project proposals are evaluated by a Panel of Experts, taking into account the compliance with priorities specified within RDPs (Regional Development Plans) and NDP (National Development Plan); This Panel of Experts is formed by counties' representatives and experts already nominated within the Joint Working Group. The EC Delegation reserves the right to nominate a representative as independent observer to this evaluation.
4. Decision of the Panel of Experts will have to be approved by the Regional Steering Committee (county Presidents, Phare CBC Bulgarian IA and Greek relevant authorities, representatives of each border Development region, experts nominated within the Joint Working Group, and the EC Delegation).
5. The JSPF will be subject to verification and approval by the Commission Delegation, in conformity with relevant provisions of the 2001 Programming Guide-annex 4.

5. Detailed Budget (in MEURO):

Bulgarian allocation	Investment	Institution Building	Total Phare (=I+IB)	Recipient (*)	IFI	TOTAL
Joint Small Project Fund		0.5	0.5	0.05		0.55
TOTAL		0.5	0.5	0.05		0.55

() co-financing is needed and will be one criterion for eligibility of projects. Minimum co-financing will be 10% of the cost of soft projects (even in kind)*

6. Implementation arrangements:

6.1 Implementing Agency

The Bulgarian Implementing Agency is the Ministry of Regional Development and Public Works (MRDPW). A Programme Authorising Officer (PAO) will be nominated for the Programme by the National Authorising Officer (NAO) after consultation of the National Aid Co-ordinator (NAC).

The CBC Implementing Agency retains overall responsibility for the implementation of the whole programme. This includes: approval of terms reference, of tender documents, of evaluation criteria, of evaluation of offers, signature of contracts, authorisation and payments of invoices.

6.2. Non-standard aspects

There are no “non-standards aspects”. The “Practical Guide to Phare, Ispa and Sapard contract procedures” will strictly be followed.

7. Implementation schedule:

Establishment of the Regional Steering Committee	11/2001
First calls for proposals:	3/2002
Completion of projects	11/2003

8. Equal opportunity:

In the whole process of preparation and implementation of the projects no discrimination between men and women will be made.

9. Environment

Environmental aspects will be assessed individually for each of the proposed projects.

10. Rates of return

N/A

ANNEXES TO PROJECT FICHE

1. Logical framework matrix
2. Detailed implementation chart
3. Contracting and disbursement schedule by quarter

ANNEX 1 - LOGFRAME PLANNING MATRIX			Contracting period expires: 30.11.2003
<i>Joint Small Project Fund</i>			Disbursement period expires: 31.01.2004
			Total Budget: 0.55 Meuro Phare Allocation: 0.5 Meuro
Wider Objectives	Indicators of Achievement	Sources of Information	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve cross-border co-operation at local level between the two countries • to support the further development of the economic potential of the border regions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of local projects financed; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CBC Implementing Agency (Bg) and Implementing Authorities (Gr); 	
Immediate Objectives	Indicators of Achievement	Sources of Information	Assumptions and Risks
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strengthening of local co-operation across the border; • Stimulation and support to creation of permanent structures among the local and regional organisations in the border regions; • building and development of specialist resources of local and regional institutions involved in regional development and cross-border co-operation; • development of local/regional economic and employment; • development and strengthening of an effective implementation structure. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Intensity of cross-border links, number of cross-border actions; • increase in regional / local capacities to design and implement development programmes and projects; • growth of tourism sector in border regions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CBC Implementing Agency (Bg) and Implementing Authorities (Gr); • monitoring and assessment reports; • reports of the IA (Bg). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Efficient programme management (implementation, monitoring assessment); • continued commitment of the Government towards the priorities of the programme and regional development; • continued commitment of regional and local actors; • availability of qualified staff and institutional support; • functioning co-operation between all relevant partners; • functioning co-ordination between Interreg -GR and CBC-BG; • sustained interest of the border region population in development and co-operation.

Results of Project	Indicators of Achievement	Sources of Information	Assumptions and Risks
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establishment of Small Projects Fund; • People-to-people cross border links increased and intensified; • enhance the economic base of the border region. • co-operation between local authorities and NGO in border regions strengthened; • institution-building in border regions, qualification in regional development • enhancing cross-border tourism attraction and linkages between the tourism support on either side of the border. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • JSPF in operation and used; • Regional (Development) authorities' personnel trained, regional institutions qualified; • number of people-to-people actions carried out; • number of economic actions carried out • number of tourists/visitors in border regions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IA (Bg) reports; • project completion reports; • monitoring and assessment reports; • programme evaluation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Availability of qualified experts and contractors; • well functioning co-operation and co-ordination between Greek Authorities or IA (Bg), Regional Steering Committee, CBC Regional Office, beneficiaries and other involved parties; • CBC Regional Office well staffed with competent personnel;

Annex 2 – Detailed implementation chart <i>Project title: BG01XX.04.01 - Joint Small Project Fund</i>										
Project	3Q 2001	4Q 2001	1Q 2002	2Q 2002	3Q 2002	4Q 2002	1Q 2003	2Q 2003	3Q 2003	4Q 2003
Joint Small Project Fund		T	C/I/D	C/I/D	C/I/D	C/I/D	I/D	I/D	I/D	I/D

T: Call for Proposal

C: Contracting

I: Implementation

D: Disbursement

Annex 3 – Contracting and disbursement schedule by quarter*Project title:* **BG01XX.04.01 - Joint Small Project Fund**

Components	Cumulative contracting schedule by quarter in Meuro (planned)														Total Phare Allocation
	2001		2002				2003				2004				
	III	IV	V	VI	VII	VIII	IX	X	XI	XII	XIII	XIV	XV	XVI	
Joint Small Project Fund	0	0	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5					500.000
Total contracting:	0	0	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5					500.000
Components	Cumulative disbursement schedule by quarter in Meuro (planned)														Total Phare Allocation
	2001		2002				2003				2004				
	III	IV	V	VI	VII	VIII	IX	X	XI	XII	XIII	XIV	XV	XVI	
Joint Small Project Fund	0	0	0.075	0.15	0.225	0.300	0.375	0.425	0.475	0.500					500.000
Total disbursement:	0	0	0.075	0.15	0.225	0.300	0.375	0.425	0.475	0.500					500.000