

STANDARD SUMMARY PROJECT FICHE

1. Basic information

Désirée number: **RO0103.04**

Title: **Joint Small Project Fund**

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

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

The Small Project Fund will finance small projects for the following NUTS III regions (so-called “judets”): Mehediniti, Olt, Dolj, Teleorman, Calarasi, Giurgiu and Constanta

A mirror Small Project Fund will be financed by the Bulgarian CBC Programme for the following NUTS III regions: Vidin, Vratza, Montana, Veliko Tarnovo, Pleven, Rousse, Silistra and Dobrich.

2. Objectives:

The Joint Small Projects Fund (JSPF) supports the key objectives of the Romanian-Bulgarian 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

The JSPF plays a key part in the process of preparation of the Romania and Bulgaria for accession, in particular through the improvement of the administrative capacity 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 Romania and Bulgaria for the adoption of Structural Funds. In addition, the project supports the social and economic integration between the border regions of candidate countries.

2.4. Cross-border Impact of the Project

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 JSPF Committee will be composed of representatives of the relevant Romania and Bulgaria 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, Romania and Bulgaria decided in early 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.

The inclusion of the JSPF into the programme is a logical step forward in the *overall* context of Romania and Bulgaria future accession to the EU, and in the *specific* context of the development of cross-border co-operation and evolution of the Phare CBC Programme in the pre-accession context.

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 was agreed between the Romanian and Bulgarian authorities in early 2000. Under the priority 4 “Economic Development”, the proposed measure is the creation of a JSPF.

3.2 Linked activities

This project is a continuation in a multi-annual perspective of the first JSPF, which was financed under the **Phare CBC RO/BG 2000 programme** (Phare allocation of 0.5 MEUR for each border region). Since the implementation of this project has not started yet, it is too early to draw any conclusion.

Under the **BG 9916 CBC programme**, a contract on the “Preparation of Cross-Border co-operation Plan between Bulgaria and Romania” is currently in the phase of tendering. 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 JSPF 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....

3.4 Activities

The project will support:

- The financing of the selected small-scale “people-to-people” projects (project located in the Romanian border region, or Romanian contribution to common Bulgarian-Romanian projects)
- Administrative costs for operating the fund. Up to 7% of the PHARE contribution (maximum 35 000 EUR for each country) may be used for expenditure relating to the preparation, selection, appraisal and monitoring of the assistance.

The grants will only be made for projects whose immediate objective is non-commercial and strictly non profit-making. Under no circumstances may 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

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 Romanian and Bulgarian 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 projects (in cash or 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 Romanian Implementing Authority and the Bulgarian Implementing Agency will develop more detailed operational guidelines, including specific project support level/country (minimum/maximum) in consultation with the appointed JSPF 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 JSPF Committee (joint committee with representatives from both Bulgaria and Romania) will issue a call for proposals that must be open and fair to all eligible organisations. The submitted applications will be assessed by an appropriate Team of Assessors for each country. On the basis of these recommendations, a joint evaluation will be performed and the final decision will be taken.

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.

4. Institutional Framework

The JSPF will operate following the Specific Guidelines developed for the 2000 JSPF and approved by the Commission Services (EC Delegations) and the Practical Guide to Phare ISPA and SAPARD. Relevant services of the Commission and in particular DG Agriculture will also have the opportunity to comment on the guidelines. On this basis, the different steps of the Selection process as well as the final Selection of the projects will have to be endorsed by both EC Delegations in Bulgaria and in Romania.

Operation of the JSPF

1. The JSPF Committee (county Presidents, Bulgarian CBC Implementation Agency and Romanian PCU Directors, representatives of each border Development region, experts nominated within the Joint Working Group, and the EC Delegation) will approve all the necessary guidelines and documentation to prepare the call for proposal (common documentation for both region).
2. Call for proposal: on the Bulgarian side, the CBC Implementation Agency and on the Romanian side the regional office of the Implementing Agency will be in charge of launching and advertising the call for proposals. Synchronised calls for proposals will be launched in the eligible Bulgarian and Romanian border region. 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 in preparing a proposal can be found.

3. The submitted project proposals will be register and their formal criteria will be checked at appropriate level by each country.
4. The submitted project proposals will be assessed by an appropriate Team of Assessors (one for each country). The Teams of Assessors will use clear and pre-defined evaluation grids to assess the administrative compliance, the eligibility and the technical and financial quality of the proposals.
5. After a joint evaluation based on recommendations made by the two Teams of Assessors, the final decisions will be taken. 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 Regional Office in writing about the outcome of their application.

Eligible beneficiaries

It will in principle, it will include all non-profit-making decentralised , local organisations, such as :

- Municipalities and Communities within the defined border region
- County and district level organisations
- Inter-communal co-operation organisations
- Euro-regions
- Chamber of Commerce
- Professional associations
- Trade Union Organisations
- NGOs, etc ...

Profit making organisations and national organisations without a distinctive role in the border region will not be eligible.

5. Budget (in MEUR):

Romanian 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 Implementing Agency will be the Ministry of Development and Prognosis, through its Cross Border Co-operation Directorate, which will retain overall responsibility for the implementation of the programme, including: approval of tender documents, evaluation criteria, evaluation of offers, signature of contracts, authorisation of invoices. The payments of invoices will be made by the Payments Directorate within the same ministry.

The CBC Directorate also includes a unit for the National Co-ordination of CBC programmes nominated as CBC Programme Co-ordination Unit (CBC - PCU). This unit will liaise with the beneficiary institutions and with the line Ministries to prepare Terms of Reference, tender documents, evaluation criteria, evaluation of offers, negotiation of contracts, invoices for payment etc.

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.

6.3. Contracts

Grant Contracts will be signed according to the Practical Guide to Phare, Ispa and Sapard.

7. Implementation schedule

Co-ordination with the Bulgarian authorities will be ensured so that the call for proposals are launched in the same time with identical deadlines.

Establishment of the JSPF Committee	11/2001
First calls for proposals:	3/2002
Completion of projects	12/2003

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 <i>Joint Small Project Fund</i>			Contracting period expires: 31.11.2003
			Disbursement period expires: 31.1.2004
			Total Budget: 0.55 MEUR Phare Allocation: 0.5 MEUR
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 Authority (Ro); 	
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 Authority (Ro); • monitoring and assessment reports; • reports of the PCU (Ro) and PMU (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 CBC-RO 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"> • PCU (Ro) and PMU (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 PCU (RO) or PMU (Bg), JSPF Committee, CBC Regional Office, beneficiaries and other involved parties; • CBC Regional Office well staffed with competent personnel;

ANNEX 2 - Implementation Time Chart

Joint Small Project Fund

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 - Cumulative Quarterly Commitment Schedule in EUR*Joint Small Project Fund***Cumulative Quarterly Contracting Schedule in EUR**

	Project	Phare Allocation										
			III/2001	IV/2001	I/2002	II/2002	III/2002	IV/2002	I/2003	II/2003	III/2003	IV/2003
	Joint Small Project Fund	500.000	0	0	500.000	500.000	500.000	500.000	500.000	500.000	500.000	500.000
TOTAL		500.000	0	0	500.000	500.000	500.000	500.000	500.000	500.000	500.000	500.000

Cumulative Quarterly Disbursement Schedule in EUR

	Project	Phare Allocation										
			III/2001	IV/2001	I/2002	II/2002	III/2002	IV/2002	I/2003	II/2003	III/2003	IV/2003
	Joint Small Project Fund	500.000	0	0	75.000	150.000	225.000	300.000	375.000	425.000	475.000	500.000
TOTAL		500.000	0	0	75.000	150.000	225.000	300.000	375.000	425.000	475.000	500.000