
Dear CBC Friends,

With the festive season quickly approaching, we are beginning to see the signs of celebration all around us. This is the perfect moment for all of us to embrace the joyful spirit, and we would like to contribute to it by highlighting some of the **opportunities created for the citizens** in the Programme area, which is home to 850,000 people across 30 municipalities.

The implementation of the **IPA III programme** for the period 2021-2027 has begun. The total value of the programme is **€9,734,117.65**, with the **EU contributing €8,400,000**. The overall objective of the programme is to promote good neighbourly relations, support Union integration, and contribute to the social, economic, and territorial development of the cross-border area. This will be achieved by enhancing social and cultural inclusion, improving health, and fostering the development of sustainable tourism.

There have been numerous opportunities where we presented the CBC Programme Serbia-North Macedonia. Our **support for potential applicants and grant beneficiaries** goes beyond financial assistance. Before sharing the achievements of our grant beneficiaries and their projects, let's take a look at what we have done.

The support provided to potential applicants included training on **Project Cycle Management**, held in Vranje in June 2024. During this session, 42 participants had the opportunity to learn about PCM and ask various questions regarding the programme.

The **first Call for Proposals (CfP)** was launched in September 2024, and we are optimistic that many innovative project proposals will emerge to fully utilize the available **funding of €5.4 million**. The CfP was promoted during the [Kick-off conference](#) in Vranje, attended by over a hundred participants, media representatives, and officials.



The Minister of European Integration of the Republic of Serbia, Dr. Tanja Mišćević, and the Minister of Local Self-Government of the Republic of North Macedonia, Mr. Zlatko Perinski, emphasized that, together, we have the opportunity to turn our vision into reality and improve the quality of life for our citizens.

The Head of Delegation of the European Union to Belgrade, Mr. Emanuele Giaufret conveyed the message that *“The EU is fully committed to Serbia’s and North Macedonia’s membership in the EU and therefore, we remain equally committed to supporting cross-border cooperation between Serbia and North Macedonia as a testament to the power of partnership in addressing shared challenges and advancing common goals for the benefit of citizens”*.

The Kick-off conference was followed by an **Information Session**, where over 120 potential applicants had the opportunity to hear presentations about the CfP and guidelines for applicants from the CFCU. This session was complemented by a **Partner Search Forum (PSF)**, where representatives from national institutions, ministries, local governments, regional development agencies, NGOs, tourism organizations, public utility companies, social welfare services, and educational institutions from both countries had the chance to present their interests and seek project partners across the border. The complementary Info Session and PSF were held in Skopje in October, where Minister Perinski greeted the 55 potential applicants and expressed his satisfaction that more than half of them were representatives from local self-governments.

During the **Opportunity Week** in Niš, nine grant beneficiaries from the 2nd Call for Proposals under IPA II were presented with Certificates of Appreciation by Mr. Giaufret and Dr. Miscević. We also shared important information with the audience about the [IPA CBC programmes](#) and upcoming calls for proposals. In addition, we provided helpful advice to potential applicants on available support, key points to consider, and guidance for grant beneficiaries as they move into the implementation phase of their projects.



We had the chance to talk about projects, too, since **two calls for proposals** were launched under the IPA II CBC Programme Serbia- North Macedonia 2016- 2020, **resulting in 16 contracted projects**.

Last year, we shared the outcomes of **7 projects** in our [First Newsletter](#) and we are glad that some partnerships successfully continued in the second call.

We are pleased to share with you the results and progress of the **nine projects** funded under the 2nd Call for Proposals (CfP) of the IPA II Cross-Border Cooperation Programme between Serbia and North Macedonia.

C4EE - Coaching for Employment and Entrepreneurship- [C4EE](#)

The outcomes of the project include enhanced competencies and social skills for NEET (Not in Education, Employment, or Training) youth and young people in disadvantaged positions, increased employment potential among NEET youth and those at risk of social exclusion, achieved through vocational education and training for 30 participants.

*"The **benefits of the project** are reflected in a shift in mindset. Initially, many individuals saw leaving the country in search of employment as their only option. However, now they believe their communities can remain their home and a place for their future. The individual plans we developed help them assess where they are today, where they aspire to be, and what is possible for them in the future."* said one of the project partners, Mr. Igor Stajic. The project developed the foundations for new employment and self-employment services, established efficient partnerships among key stakeholders to promote tailored services for target groups that support employment and self-employment. 6 new training programs have been developed, out of 200 interviewed candidates, 160 participants were selected and received appropriate training, while 60 took part in reciprocal study visits. Additionally, 20 individuals are undergoing personalized training and mentoring programs to improve their social and economic inclusion.



The project was implemented by Educational Centre, Leskovac, RS and Co-applicants from MK: Foundation for Development of Education and Culture Albiz and Center for Sustainable Development ALKA, with total value of €204,902.86 (85% EU contribution).

Rural tourism- a new perspective of youth mobility- [Rural tourism](#)

The aim of the cooperation established between two schools was the mobilization of cultural and natural resources for the joint development of sustainable tourism products and destinations. It involved increasing accommodation capacity and providing resources for tourist activities and youth education. Two student dormitories were opened and fully equipped, with management entrusted to partner schools in the project. Additionally, the professional competencies of 198 teachers and more than 1,000 students were enhanced through 6 teacher training sessions and 32 student training sessions in tourism activities. A branding strategy was developed to improve the visibility of the destinations of Vučje (Leskovac Municipality, Serbia) and Kratovo, North Macedonia, in the context of youth tourism, along with the creation of recognizable promotional materials for the developed brands. The project aimed to raise awareness of the importance of youth tourism in both regions through student exchanges, roundtables, and promotional events.

Do not hesitate to **explore more about these destinations** and the project, as [Kratovo](#) and [Vučje](#) are among the very first destinations with developed brand strategies.

As Professor Dr. Jelena Lukić Nikolić, leader of the research team stated *"As someone who had not been to either Vučje or Kratovo before this project, I was drawn to the research results and the way residents and visitors described these places. When I visited both places, I was convinced that these they are truly endowed with natural beauty, and that they are hospitable and authentic."*



The project was implemented by high schools "Svetozar Krstić- Toza, Vučje, and partners "Mitko Pendžukliski", Kratovo, MK, and "Limitless", RS with total value of €234.790,10 (78.32 % EU contribution).

Opportunity for you- [Opportunity4You](#)

The goal of the project was to improve the mechanisms that support employment and labor mobility in the cross-border area. Project partners have been involved in several activities aimed at developing a cross-border study on trends, opportunities, and key stakeholders in the region's critical sectors. To achieve this goal, a cross-border network has been established, as well as a joint platform for organizing educational and informational campaigns. The network of partners from local governments and other stakeholders has been strengthened through a joint study trip to Slovenia, 2 informational events, 2 training sessions, and direct mentoring involving approximately 30 participants from vocational education centers. The final project conference was also held, as well as the first cross-border job fair, where employers and potential employees from both countries had the opportunity to meet.

We highly recommend **visiting the project website**, which offers a wealth of useful information and data, including the "Joint Comparative Study on Employment and Cross-Border Mobility in the Cross-Border Area of Serbia and North Macedonia," the Career Development Program, a platform for job offers and seekers, regional data for investors, and much more- available at [Почетна](#).



The project was implemented by Centre for development of Skopje planning region North Macedonia, MK and partners from RS: The Centre for the development of Jablanica and Pcinja districts and Municipality of Vlasotince, with total value of €231,157.3 (EU contribution 84.89%).

Strengthening international relations between the Republic of North Macedonia and the Republic of Serbia with a common goal of improving the environment- [Improving the environment](#)

The project contributes to sustainable development by strengthening the capacity for timely and efficient management of emergencies in the cross-border region. The goal is to improve the technical capacities of systems for early and efficient crisis management, natural disasters, and emergencies. This includes protecting human lives and property, promoting sustainable cooperation in the cross-border region, and building human capacities for disaster prevention and mitigation, both natural and human-made. As part of the project, machinery and equipment necessary for the efficient operation of public utility companies in Vranje and Kumanovo were procured, including a cistern for washing and maintaining the sewer system under high pressure and specialized machines for preventive and emergency interventions on watercourses.



This was enhanced by capacity building of PUCs staff and project partners formulated **Flood Prevention Plans** for Kumanovo and Vranje.

The project was implemented by public utility companies „Vodovod“ from Vranje, RS and „Vodovod“ Kumanovo, MK, with total value of €317.406,04 (EU contribution 85%).

Flood Prevention – From Risk to Benefit- [From Risk to benefit](#)

The goal of the project is to create conditions for sustainable management of natural resources and achieve neutrality regarding land degradation. Through the project, the technical capacity of public utility companies in Bujanovac and Lipkovo has been enhanced by providing equipment and tools for the **prevention of land degradation and flood prevention**. Additionally, reforestation of highly degraded areas has been carried out as a measure against soil erosion, with the provision of local plants and species for the most vulnerable areas affected by land erosion and flooding, accompanied by study visits for the exchange of experiences and best practices among the project partners.



The project was implemented by public utility companies „Komunalac“ Lipkovo, MK and „Komunalac“ Bujanovac, RS, with total value of €346,703.5 (EU contribution 85%).



Land of Legends- [Land of Legends](#)

This is the second project from the partners who previously cooperated in the 1st CfP of the Programme. As part of their capacity building, they swapped the roles of lead partner and co-applicant in this project, and established connections with other stakeholders in their municipalities. [CBC as a chance for establishing partnerships and cooperation](#)

The "Land of Legends" project is a storytelling initiative aimed at promoting tourism attractions through the rich local legends and cultural heritage of specific regions. By sharing these captivating tales, the project seeks to enhance the appeal of natural and cultural sites, creating a deeper connection between visitors and the destinations they explore. In this context, storytelling serves as both a method of preserving local traditions and as a tool for attracting tourists. It emphasizes the importance of local identity while integrating modern tourism practices to attract visitors seeking authentic and enriching experiences.



The project highlights key attractions such as the natural site Sokolica in Leskovac and the cultural-historical site Gradec in Kriva Palanka. These locations, steeped in history and folklore, become more than just points of interest; they are transformed into living stories that invite visitors to engage with their history, myths, and traditions.

The storytelling is carried out by skilled narrators, such as actors Ivana Žigon and Aleksandar Dunić, who bring these legends to life through their performances, adding an immersive and emotional layer to the tourism experience.

The project was implemented by Municipality of Kriva Palanka, MK and City of Leskovac, RS, with total value of €198,667.59 (EU contribution 78.32%)

Green Energy - Fostering social entrepreneurship by establishing pilot energy cooperatives in the cross-border region- [Green Energy](#)

The idea of the project was to strengthen neighborly relations and cooperation in the green energy sector through the development of social entrepreneurship and the enhancement of capacity and knowledge to create new employment opportunities by establishing energy cooperatives in the cross-border region. The pilot activity included the procurement of equipment for renewable energy production for schools and municipal buildings in the partner municipalities. Additionally, a market analysis was conducted regarding the needs for renewable energy production and investment plans for renewable energy sources at the municipal level were developed. During the study visit to Vienna, Austria, the representatives from partner municipalities and organizations explored combined heat and power production, waste-to-energy processes and biomass energy. Some new doors and windows were installed in schools, and useful analysis made.



This project stands out also in the way it communicated to the wider public and presented all the key project activities on Facebook: [Facebook](#)

The project was implemented by Municipality of Kriva Palanka, MK and City of Leskovac, RS, with total value of €198,667.59 (EU contribution 78.32%)

Saraj and Lebane together for green tourism - GREEN TOUR- [Green Tour](#)

The project aimed to enhance tourism offerings and develop sustainable joint tourism products and destinations in Saraj and Lebane. This included rehabilitating hiking and cycling trails in both municipalities, removing informal dumpsites at 10 locations, providing bins for waste sorting, collecting and recycling, and developing a cross-border tourism map with integrated offers. Additionally, a website for JTC and two Electronic Tourist Terminals were installed. Mapping the cultural, historical, and natural resources in both municipalities, with input from local stakeholders, will support future tourism planning in Saraj and Lebane.

The project's importance lies in its ability to foster sustainable tourism development, enhance local economies, and improve environmental awareness.



The collaboration between the public and NGO sector in this project is commendable. Their joint efforts have strengthened community engagement and ensured that local needs were prioritized. By working together, they have contributed to sustainable tourism development, fostering an environment that supports both environmental conservation and economic growth. This partnership not only enhanced project outcomes but also promoted a sense of shared responsibility for the region's future, laying the groundwork for continued cooperation and progress. ZIP institute also communicated with general public successfully on Facebook.

This project was implemented by Municipality Saraj, MK in partnership with Municipality of Lebane, RS and NGO ZIP Institute, MK with total value of € 185,675.74 (EU contribution 85%).

Bridging the gender and age gap on the labour market through capacity building and promotion of new job opportunities in cross border region - CBC job gender and age equalizer- [Job,gender and age equalizer](#)

This project is important as it addresses gender inequality in sectors traditionally dominated by men, such as ICT, metalworking, and construction. By offering training on gender stereotypes, field visits, and a mentoring program, the project aims to break down barriers and create opportunities for women in these industries. Empowering women to pursue careers in these fields can lead to more inclusive workplaces, increase diversity, and contribute to closing the gender and age gap in the labor market, fostering both economic and social progress.



We are pleased that the Deputy Head of the EU Delegation to Serbia, Ms. Plamena Halaceva, visited this project and learned about the efforts being made to address labor market gaps by creating more inclusive opportunities for further inclusion, regardless of gender or age.

This project was implemented by Association of Business Women in Serbia with partners: Foundation for Management and Industrial Research, MK, Association of Business Women Vranje, RS and Citizens Association „Pravedni i Profesionalni“MK, with total value of € 170.929.33 (EU contribution 85%).

Visit our website at and follow us at [Facebook](#)

The contacts of the Joint Technical Secretariat of the Programme
are [JTS contact](#)



***We wish you a successful end to the year and
look forward to more dynamic communication in
the 2025!***

This is our second newsletter and we want to acknowledge your contribution and interest in the CBC Programme Serbia- North Macedonia (RS-MK) by sharing all the good news with you.