



DVOKUT ECRO

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Strategic Environmental Assessment for
IPA CBC programme Croatia – Serbia 2014-2020

SCOPING REPORT

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GLOSARY

Term or acronym	Definition
CBC	Cross-Border Cooperation
IPA	The EU Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance
SEA	Strategic Environmental Assessment
SEA Directive	Directive 2001/42/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 27 June 2001 on the assessment of the effects of certain plans and programmes on the environment.
Scoping	Determination of scope of the Strategic Environmental Assessment

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Purpose of the Scoping Report

This document outlines key characteristics of the proposed IPA Cross-border Cooperation Programme Croatia-Serbia for the programming period 2014-2020 (hereafter Croatia-Serbia IPA CBC Programme 2014-2020) which is available at the state of initiation of the strategic environmental assessment (SEA) for this programming document.

The document provides information for relevant environmental authorities in Croatia and Serbia in order to obtain their advice on the scope of the SEA study. The SEA study should be elaborated - based on the decision of the Managing Authority - by mid September 2014.

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2 DETERMINING THE SUBJECT OF THE PROGRAMME TO THE SEA

2.1 The outline of the programme

The scoping document is prepared for 3 draft (25 July 2014) of the Croatia-Serbia IPA CBC Programme 2014-2020.

The programme area covers NUTS III regions in the cross border territory of Croatian – Serbian border. On the Croatian side, programme area includes 4 Counties on the north-east of Croatia (NUTS III regions): Osječko-baranjska, Vukovarsko-srijemska, Brodsko-posavska and Požeško-slavonska, whereas on the Serbian side, programme area covers 5 districts on north-west of Serbia (NUTS III regions): North Bačka, West Bačka, South Bačka, Srem and Mačva district.

2.2 Objectives and areas of intervention

The overall objective of the IPA Cooperation Programme Croatia-Serbia 2014-2020 is to strengthen the social, economic and territorial development of the cross-border area through implementation of joint projects and activities defined in four thematic priorities :

1. Employment, social inclusion, health and social services
2. Environment, risk prevention and energy production
3. Tourism and cultural and natural heritage
4. Competitiveness and SME development

The thematic priorities have been selected by the Task Force members on the basis of the conclusions of the situation analysis (see Annex 6) and in the line with a Partnership Agreement for the European structural and investment fund in the EU financial period 2014-2020 proposed to European Commission from the Republic of Croatia and Country Strategy Paper of Republic of Serbia.

2.3 Sectors that the programme covers

As stated above, the programme covers four thematic objectives with logically corresponding sectoral interventions that are outlined below. For each of use, we have highlighted in those interventions that may possibly have adverse environmental impacts in **red colour (those that warrant increased attention are marked in bold)** and those interventions with the likely positive impacts in **green colour (those that warrant increased attention are marked in bold)**. Other interventions - all the rest of text not highlighted in red or green - are not likely to have significant environmental impacts.

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THEMATIC PRIORITY: Employment, Social Inclusion, Health and Social services (4.500.000 mil €)

Specific objectives	Expected results	Type of actions
1.1 To improve facilities, services and employment throughout the programme area.	Improved labour skills and employability throughout the programme area.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developing and implementing lifelong learning programmes aiming to provide programme area inhabitants the possibility to gain knowledge / experiences / qualifications in line with the labour market needs. • Supporting education for the development of entrepreneurship and self-employment. • Joint vocational / adult (youth) training projects addressing skills needs & sectorial needs. • Joint networking actions and awareness raising actions to improve the employability in the cross-border programme area. • Cooperation actions between employment services, employers, institutions providing educational activities and business support institutions to increase employability.
	Improved social inclusion and services in the area of public health and social welfare	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developing and implementing joint initiatives to improve accessibility to and effectiveness of public health care and social service institutions (e.g. small infrastructure and equipment), including related pilot projects. • Supporting education related actions aiming at increase of skills of vulnerable groups (such as youth, unemployed, disabled, elderly, women, minorities, inactive persons, etc.) in line with the market trends and needs. • Networking of institutions in order to enhance social entrepreneurship: e.g. support to business counselling and setting-up of social enterprises. • Developing and implementing joint community projects: e.g. legal counselling for vulnerable groups, non-discrimination and promoting equal opportunities. • Awareness raising activities in promotion of different types of services available for vulnerable groups. • Joint actions in support of local democracy. • Developing and implementing joint activities on health care: e.g. joint health services delivery, active and healthy aging and disease prevention. • Joint strengthening of health care for vulnerable groups with focus on elderly, palliative care and persons with disabilities. • Small-scale infrastructure for persons with special needs. • Implementing ICT solutions in order to improve public health and social care services.

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THEMATIC PRIORITY: Environment, risk prevention and energy production (8.400.000,00 €)

Specific objectives	Expected results	Type of actions
<p>2.1. To improve management systems for risk prevention (water, soil, air, environmental and biodiversity (including ecosystems and NATURA 2000) protection.</p>	<p>Enforced management for prevention of floods, monitoring of water, soil, air quality, mined-areas, hot-spots and biodiversity protection.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implementing joint actions in the area of water management, for example, actions with aim to get reliable information for improving the quality of the groundwater and the rivers and waste management and water supply systems • Creating joint monitoring and management systems for measurement of soil and air quality, environmental protection and water management. • Developing and implementing joint management initiatives in relation to environment and emergency preparedness with focus on waste management, preservation of biodiversity and responses to flooding. • Developing and implementing pilot and demonstration projects on innovative technologies to enforce management systems for risk prevention. • Developing and implementing joint plans for protection of endangered species and protection and revitalisation of habitats. • Joint valorisation and promotion of ecosystems and NATURA 2000 sites in border area • Developing and implementing joint awareness raising activities, information campaigns, education and training in relation to nature, environment and/or biodiversity protection. • Promoting cross-border cooperation between organisations involved in environmental protection and joint management of protected sites and nature • Establishing and/or improving green infrastructure and ecosystem services
<p>2.2. To promote innovative technologies for sustainable energy production and energy efficiency.</p>	<p>Increased capacities for usage of innovative technologies for sustainable energy production. energy production.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implementing awareness rising, information campaigns, education, training and capacity building on sustainable energy production, utilisation of renewable energy resources and energy efficiency. • Developing and implementing pilot and demonstration projects on innovative technologies in the field of sustainable energy production and energy efficiency. • Improving waste management in order to use it as a resource in production of renewable energy. • Investing in joint infrastructure on sustainable energy production and energy efficiency • Implementing joint incentives in order to improve legal framework in the area of renewable energy resources and energy efficiency (e.g. analyses, comparisons, recommendation, local/regional action plans, etc).

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THEMATIC PRIORITY: Tourism and Cultural and Natural Heritage (7.500.000,00 €)

Specific objectives	Expected result	Type of actions
<p>To strengthen, diversify, integrate the cross-border tourism offer and better manage cultural and natural heritage assets</p>	<p>Strengthened, diversified, better integrated cross-border tourism offer and better managed cultural and natural heritage assets</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Joint development, branding and promotion of tourism niches: e.g. hunting, bird and animal watching, cultural tourism, eco-tourism, sport and cycle-tourism, wine & food tourism, health and wellness, rural tourism, recreation tourism, memorial tourism, nautical tourism, religious tourism, industrial heritage tourism. • Joint development and diversification of the tourism offer and capacity: e.g. standardisation of accommodation support, joint mapping the tourism offer, joint creation of destination management platforms and networks. • Joint development, branding, protection and promotion of new tourism products: e.g. development of thematic routes, joint promotion events and materials, site exploitation. • Improvement of recreational and small-scale tourism infrastructure: e.g. walking paths, cycle routes, equipping visitor centre, information points, networking tourism centres, spatial “beautification”. • Preparing and developing joint tourism strategies and action plans. • Training and other activities to develop the tourism capacity and destination management skills • Enabling joint cultural cooperation between youth, artistic and cultural organisations: e.g. art colonies and festivals, artistic manifestations and events, joint theatre performances or joint/travelling exhibitions, etc. • Developing and implementing joint initiatives on valuation, preservation, restoration and revitalisation of cultural and natural heritage sites • Implementing training programs in quality assurance systems and different types of standardisation (e.g. ISO certification, etc.) of cultural and natural heritage. • Deploying investments in certification including training, equipment supply but also small scale infrastructure on cultural and natural heritage.

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THEMATIC PRIORITY: Competitiveness and SME development (6.600.000,00 €)

Specific objectives	Expected result	Type of actions
<p>To improve competitiveness of the programme area through enhancing research, development, innovation and business support actions</p>	<p>Increased competitiveness of SMEs in the programme area.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establishment of and support to existing and new business related sector networks and organisations in standardisation, product protection, marketing and development of cross-border markets. • Development of cooperation between SMEs, public sector, education, research & development organisations to improve business innovativeness and technology based on smart specialization approach. • Improving knowledge and skills in entrepreneurship, innovation and new technologies. • Development of training programmes on applying innovation and R&D in their industry, including internship and exchange in cross-border area • Establishing laboratories, innovation, technological and competence centres, spin offs and ICT infrastructure for common use of the enterprises in the border region in order to upgrade the existing and develop new products, services, processes or prototypes. • Cross-border development, adaptation and exchange of best practices in application of new technologies, processes, products or services to be directly used by the enterprises between the clusters or groups of business, R&D and education institutions.

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3 DETERMINING THE LIKELY SIGNIFICANCE OF EFFECTS

3.1 Environmental effects at regional and transboundary level

Positive effects

The draft OP proactively aims to promote sustainable development. The chapter 6.1 highlights that sustainable development is one of the key issues for this cross border program because its territory rich in natural and cultural resources has a vast potential to improve the cross-border environmental protection, resource efficiency, climate change mitigation and adaptation, disaster resilience and risk prevention and management. There is also a strong need for this improvement as has been identified in the situation analysis and SWOT.

Therefore, the largest share of the budget is reserved for Priority Axis 2, which is completely focused on sustainable development. Priority 2 is not only focusing on biodiversity and environmental protection, risk prevention and risk management and improved management of water, waste and waste treatment but also on energy efficiency and renewable energy. Operations will have to show clearly how they contribute to the results indicators of Priority Axis 2

- Decrease of km² affected by flooding per flooding
- Increase in % of production and usage of sustainable energy.

Interestingly, the proposed measures in the Priority Axis 2 do not appear to include significant interventions related to flood protection - hence a question arises on the adequacy whether the OP will deliver a significant flood protection results as proclaimed.

During the selection procedure, two questions are going to be to be asked - where appropriate for interventions in all Priority Axes:

- to what extent is the operation contributing to the realization of the EU2020 goals of sustainable development (e.g. decrease of greenhouse gas emissions, the increase in energy efficiency and in renewable energy production)?
- To what extent will the operations stimulate a sustainable development?

For Priority Axis 1 - which focuses on enhancing efficient and effective labour market, social inclusion and improved healthcare – this could be for example through an increase in green jobs, supporting green entrepreneurship and green business principals in general, incorporating elements of sustainability in healthcare and other social sector interventions.

For Priority Axis 2 – which focuses on protecting the environment, improve risk prevention and sustainable energy production - all operations will have to address sustainable development, e.g. through environmental

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protection, energy efficiency, climate change mitigation and adaptation, disaster resilience and risk prevention and management.

For Priority Axis 3 – which focuses on encouraging tourism and preserving cultural and natural heritage – this could for example be through clearly sustainable tourism operations which are not only stimulating economic development but also clearly protecting the cultural and/or natural heritage and/or the environment.

For Priority Axis 4 – which focuses on enhancing competitiveness, development of business environment and investment – this could be for example through green entrepreneurship, business focused on sustainable development, preventions of investments with considerable negative environmental and climate effects and overall sustainability of the investment.

Adverse effects

As evident from the proposed sector interventions outlined in chapter 2.3., the draft OP will likely achieve overall positive environmental impacts. Most of the interventions proposed will have either positive impacts or will have no impacts on the environment. Only two interventions that may have adverse impacts that warrant increased attention have been identified:

- Improving waste management in order to use it as a resource in production of renewable energy.
- Investing in joint infrastructure on sustainable energy production and energy efficiency.

A question arises as to whether these interventions may lead to significant impacts **that could not managed through more detailed studies on project-level)such as EIA, or standard types of permits related to environmental matters that are already in place in Croatia and Serbia) and whether SEA is actually needed. In the view of the author of this report, the none of impacts is likely to be significant effects based on the criteria for determining the likely significance of effects stipulated in the Annex II of the SEA Directive.**

In this regard, it is proposed to undertake a simplified form of SEA and focus it on providing suggestions for detailed planning of each of the intervention in order to reduce possible risks and maximize their environmental benefits.

3.2 Characteristics of the affected territory

The programme area covers NUTS III regions in the cross border territory of Croatian – Serbian border. The programme area covers 18,312 of km² and has a population of approximately 2.3 million persons.

On the Croatian side, programme area includes 4 Counties on the north-east of Croatia (NUTS III regions): Osječko-baranjska, Vukovarsko-srijemska, Brodsko-posavska and Požeško-slavonska.

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On the Serbian side, programme area covers 5 districts on north-west of Serbia (NUTS III regions): North Bačka, West Bačka, South Bačka, Srem and Mačva district.

Out of Croatian part of programme area, Osječko-baranjska has the biggest size and the biggest population. Out of Serbian programme area, Bačka district has the biggest size and is also the most populated. The programme area is mainly rural with a number of small and medium towns. The two largest urban centres are Osijek in Croatia and Novi Sad in Serbia.

3.3 Characteristics of the environmental effects of the programme

The SEA will consider the following key issues of concern:

- Biodiversity and Landscape
- Water quality,
- Flooding (and droughts),
- Sustainable energy

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4 DEFINING THE SCOPE OF THE ASSESSMENT

4.1 Relevant plans, programmes and environmental protection objectives

Croatia-Serbia IPA CBC Programme 2014-2020 has important relationship to two strategic documents that address environmental protection matters related to the study area. These are:

- EU Strategy for Danube Region
- Croatia EU Partnership Agreement
- National Plan for the Adoption of the *acquis communautaire* (2103-2016) of the Republic of Serbia.

The EU Strategy for Danube Region (EUSDR)

The Croatia Serbia CBC Programme contributes to and interacts with, the Macro Regional strategy that the EU has devised for the countries and regions that share common needs and objectives in the Danube Region.

The newly elaborated EU Strategy for the Danube Region (DRS) provides an overall framework for parts of Central and South East Europe area aiming at fostering integration and integrative development. The Danube Region covers 12 countries (Austria, the Slovak Republic, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Slovenia, Croatia and Bulgaria as Member States of the EU as well as , Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and the Republic of Moldova) plus the 'Danubian' regions of Germany and the Ukraine.

Thus, the Danube Region encompasses the entire RO-SR CBC programme area.

The open-ended EU Strategy for the Danube Region was adopted in December 2010. The strategy includes four pillars

- (1) Connecting the Danube Region,
- (2) Protecting the environment in the Danube Region,
- (3) Building prosperity in the Danube Region and
- (4) Strengthening the Danube Region.

The National Plan for the Adoption of the *acquis communautaire* (2103-2016) of the Republic of Serbia.

According to the National plan, the Republic of Serbia is highly motivated to develop relations with immediate neighbours and countries in the region of South-East Europe, thus affirming one of the priorities of its foreign policy – improvement of regional cooperation. In the strategy of Serbia, regional cooperation, especially through regional fora and initiatives, although not replacing the process of integration to the EU, represents a central contribution to strengthening of bilateral relations with the neighbours and the states from the South - East Europe region.

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Republic of Serbia is actively contributing specially to the Danube Macro Region Strategy, thus assigning a special role to the CBC Programme RO–SR, for the contribution to the wider strategy, and the creation of an integrated framework for the achievement of the EUSDR objectives.

4.2 Identified environmental problems

The draft OP outlines the following key environmental strengths and weaknesses of the study area as follows:

Strengths

- Water and natural richness in the programme area.
- Protected area preserved and well monitored on both sides of the border.
- Wide range of buildings and sites of historical, archaeological and artistic importance.
- Rich cultural heritage and unique natural resources. Diversity of natural landscapes;

Weaknesses

- Programme area is still not fully aligned with European standards in waste water and waste treatment.
- Existing environmental hot-spots.
- Existing mine-suspected areas in the programme area.
- Inadequate floods management system
- Eutrophication and heavy metals accumulation in aquatic ecosystems
- Lack of communication between relevant authorities on monitoring water quality and emission reduction activities in the water.

Opportunities

- Programme area has a potential for increasing production of renewable energy – especially from agricultural waste (biomass) and thermal waters.
- Energy efficiency awareness raising among public and relevant stakeholders in the programme area.
- Joint incentives in the areas of water management, prevention of flood and other disasters.
- Joint incentives in the area of biodiversity protection with focus on endangered species and habitats.
- Potential for further development of certain tourism niches: hunting, bird-watching, cultural tourism, eno-gastro tourism, medical, cycle-tourism, memorial tourism, nautical tourism, religious tourism, etc.
- The wide range of buildings and sites of historical, archaeological and artistic interest in the programme area offers plenty of opportunities for cultural exchanges and joint activities.

Threats

- Lack of investment in solid waste, water and air quality management.
- Pollution from agriculture.
- Administrative burden for introducing new plans in renewable energy sector.

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- Vulnerability of the programme area due to high risk of natural disasters and lack of monitoring and managing of risk prevention systems.

4.3 Baseline information

The draft OP states that with the exception of certain areas, **the programme area shows no serious environmental problems**. This is largely due to the absence of heavy industry within the Croatian part, whereas on the Serbian side certain industries (chemical, petrochemical, machinery manufacture, metallurgical, food and oil industries) cause increased pollution levels in certain parts.

A key feature of the environment in the programme area is that for **a large part of its length the border is constituted by the river Danube. The river is a defining and common feature and any environmental issues linked to the Danube clearly require joint action**. In this respect one major common environmental challenge for both sides of the border is the damage caused by serious flooding of the river. In addition there is considerable scope for joint actions to prevent cross-border pollution given that pollutants generated in and beyond the programme region are carried by waterways that ultimately flow into the Danube.

The border region is **rich in protected areas and biodiversity** which need to be further protected and valorised. Fruška Gora (25.525 ha) is the only national park in the programme area. Obedska bara is one of the most famous nature reserves in Serbia, also in Europe. It is a large swamp-forest area and natural reserve stretching along the Sava River in Southern Syrmia. Special nature reserves in the Serbian part of the programming area are: Zasavica, Selvenjske pustare, Ludaš lake, Gornje podunavlje, Koviljsko-petrovaradinski rit, Karadjordjevo and Bagremara. The most important protected area on the Croatian side of the border is the Nature park Kopački rit. It is seen as one of the best preserved fluvial marsh territories in Europe which is characterised by the stunning beauty of its landscape and its bio diversity. The other nature park on the Croatian side is geopark Papuk, it is mountain with a rich forests, swamps and meadows partially situated within the programme area in Požeško-slavonska county.

The border region is **rich in water resources and requires better cross-border cooperation in exchanging information on monitoring water quality** and reduction of water pollution. **The programme area is a high risk area, mainly due to snowmelt and rainfall**. In the period 1965-2011, over 70 major floods occurred in Croatia and Serbia, mainly along the Danube and Sava rivers due to capacity overflows, affecting areas larger than 100 km² and at least 200 households or 500 inhabitants each time. As an EU country, Croatia adopted the Floods Directive (2007/60/EC), integrated with overall water management and pollution prevention and Serbia as an EU candidate country is expected to adopt the same Directive.

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The share of renewable sources in total energy consumption is in the programme area only circa 11% so there **programme area has a potential for increasing production of renewable energy – especially from agricultural waste (biomass) and thermal waters.**

The programme area **has favourable climate, cultural and natural potential for further development of touristic offer**, ecological and cultural tourism, rural tourism, health and recreational tourism, wine tourism, nautical tourism, gastronomic tourism, event tourism, excursions, hunting and fishing and recently also cruising, transit and business tourism.

The rich and unique cultural heritage reflects the programme area's long and eventful history but also the ethnic diversity of its inhabitants. The presence of ethnic territory provides a rich cultural variety. This is partly due to the fact that the programme area has an above average percentage of members of minorities, which have established institutional background, cultural and educational institutions, created organizations, bilingual and minority education, and in general, favourable conditions for cultural exchange.

4.4 Methods of the assessment

The SEA report will be prepared in accordance with the EC-endorsed "Handbook on SEA for Cohesion Policy 2007-2013" which represents a primary reference material for undertaking SEA which is still valid and remains recommended for the programming process 2014-2020. The handbook has been endorsed in 2006 by the two concerned directorates of the European Commission (DG Regional Development and DG Environment) as advisory material that is still being recommended for applying the SEA Directive within the programming of EU Structural Funds¹.

¹ <http://ec.europa.eu/environment/eia/pdf/SEA%20Guidance.pdf>

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5 STRUCTURE OF THE SEA REPORT

The SEA Report will address all items specified in the Annex I of the SEA Directive. It will include the following items:

Executive summary

- (j) a non-technical summary of the information provided under the headings below.

Introduction

- (a) an outline of the contents, main objectives of the plan or programme and relationship with other relevant plans and programmes;

Environmental baseline

- (b) (b) the relevant aspects of the current state of the environment and the likely evolution thereof without implementation of the plan or programme;
- (c) (c) the environmental characteristics of areas likely to be significantly affected;
- (d) (d) any existing environmental problems which are relevant to the plan or programme including, in particular, those relating to any areas of a particular environmental importance, such as areas designated pursuant to Directives 79/409/EEC and 92/43/EEC;

Relevant environmental objectives and appraisal of the proposed strategy pursued in the programming document

- (e) (e) the environmental protection objectives, established at international, Community or Member State level, which are relevant to the plan or programme and the way those objectives and any environmental considerations have been taken into account during its preparation;

Expected likely significant environmental effects, proposed mitigation measures and monitoring arrangements

- (f) (f) the likely significant effects on the environment, including on issues such as biodiversity, population, human health, fauna, flora, soil, water, air, climatic factors, material assets, cultural heritage including architectural and archaeological heritage, landscape and the interrelationship between the above factors;
- (g) (g) the measures envisaged to prevent, reduce and as fully as possible offset any significant adverse effects on the environment of implementing the plan or programme;
- (h) (h) an outline of the reasons for selecting the alternatives dealt with, and a description of how the assessment was undertaken including any difficulties (such as technical deficiencies or lack of know-how) encountered in compiling the required information;
- (i) (i) a description of the measures envisaged concerning monitoring;

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6 SEA PROCEDURE

6.1 Consultations

The Managing Authority for the Croatia-Serbia IPA CBC Programme 2014-2020 wishes to have the SEA report completed in mid-September 2014 and provide it for consultations to the public and relevant environmental authorities in accordance with national legislative requirements in both Croatia and Serbia.

7 EXPECTED ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECTS ON THIRD COUNTRIES

As outlined in the chapter 3.1, the proposed Croatia-Serbia IPA CBC Programme 2014-2020 will likely achieve overall positive transboundary impacts and is not expected to have any significant adverse transboundary impacts that would warrant attention.

---end of report ---