

HUMAN SECURITY AND CROSS-BORDER COOPERATION

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Abstract: Cross-border cooperation (CBC) is a unique and effective instrument of European Union that has the potential to influence on human security in a positive way. This paper analyses the role of CBC between Bulgaria and Greece in the context of human security. The analysis is focused on the Right to Life, and especially, on the right to health and social welfare. The comparative analysis represents CBC results and benefits from two programming periods: 2007-2013 and 2014-2020. The expected outcomes of cross-border projects (by 2023) are also being explored, outlining the main trends and prospects for developing the cross-border partnership.

Keywords: HUMAN SECURITY, CROSS-BORDER COOPERATION, HEALTH AND SOCIAL WELFARE, BULGARIA, GREECE

1. Introduction

Cooperation is a prerequisite for success. Actually, it gathers together knowledge, experience, skills and abilities of different participants to achieve common goals [1]. Protection and better condition of human security [2] is such a common and very important goal. Furthermore, quality of life is highly correlated with the level of security for all people and for each individual. In conditions of a sufficient level of security, the development of a human personality is better and more effective. [3]

As one of the three types of European territorial cooperation, cross-border cooperation (CBC) takes an important place in the Cohesion Policy of the European Union (EU). Its main goal is to promote a harmonious economic, social and territorial development of the Union as a whole. Admittedly, CBC is a key factor for sustainable growth. It facilitates the effective capacity building (including managerial, administrative and material) of the involved countries. Moreover, CBC offers a wide range of opportunities to enhance human security, and in the context of this paper, Right of Life, or the right to health and social welfare, in particular.

For the 2014-2020 programming period Greece-Bulgaria CBC includes seven Prefectures in Greece and four Districts in Bulgaria (Fig. 1). By November 2019, a total of 51 projects are awarded a total of €92,2 million (€78,4 million ERDF funding). These are 85% of the total €130,3 million (€110 million ERDF funding) budget for the Cooperation Programme INTERREG V-A "Greece-Bulgaria 2014-2020" [4].



Fig. 1 Map of the Cooperation area [4]

First and most importantly, in this report, the main object is the Bulgarian-Greek CBC, and the main subject is its effectiveness in improving human security, in the context of health and social living conditions. The main purpose is to create an appropriate research

environment for the partnership to be compared (by November 2019) and to outline its future development in the long term (by the end of 2023). To achieve this, a comparative analysis is structured, incorporating specific criteria. It can be used to trace the trends of the CBC development, to bring out the main benefits, and to outline the prospects for development.

At the same time, there are some limitations in this study by:

- territorial limitations – Greek-Bulgarian cross-border cooperation area;
- time limitations – from 2007 to 2023;
- a number of good practices – three cross-border projects for programming periods 2007-2013 and 2014-2020;
- a number of comparison criteria – two criteria: number of projects and project budget;
- number of projects with expected benefits - two projects in implementation by 2023.

The applied methodology includes the following approaches: deep, complex, structural-functional and dynamic. Also, it is applied data processing and analysis method and comparative analysis.

2. Good Practices

The Cooperation Programme INTERREG V-A "Greece-Bulgaria 2014-2020" enables beneficiaries from the Greek-Bulgarian cross-border cooperation area to implement projects in four priority axes (PA) [3]:

- PA 1: A Competitive and Entrepreneurship Promoting Cross-Border Area;
- PA 2: A Sustainable and Climate Adaptable Cross-Border Area;
- PA 3: A Better Interconnected Cross-Border Area;
- PA 4: A Socially Inclusive Cross-Border Area.

According to the Programme document [5] Greek-Bulgarian cross-border cooperation area health status indicators has not been satisfactory for a long time despite the satisfactory levels (in terms of quantity) of healthcare infrastructure in the area. It is indicated a lack of effectiveness in the application and/or distribution of such resources. The rise of poverty has placed more pressure on health care systems. Improving their effectiveness is hence of paramount importance.

Also, the Programme document underlines that the rise of poverty has placed vulnerable groups at increased risk of peril. Social entrepreneurship has been successfully used to alleviate such problems in other EU regions/Member States but has not been sufficiently developed in the Greek-Bulgarian cross-border cooperation area. Social entrepreneurship can address issues of reduced service delivery to special populations subject to or threatened by social exclusion and – at the same time - provide a vehicle for these populations to gain access to employment.

Turning to these health and social issues, it could be positively changed by investment priorities and specific objectives of the fourth PA A Socially Inclusive Cross-Border Area:

- Investing in health and social infrastructure which contributes to national, regional and local development, reducing inequalities in terms of health status, promoting social inclusion through improved access to social, cultural and recreational services and the transition from institutional to community-based services. Specific objective: to improve access to primary and emergency health care (at isolated and deprived communities);

- Providing support for social enterprises. Specific objective: to expand social entrepreneurship.

Besides, PA 4 A Socially Inclusive Cross-Border Area has a total budget of €18,4 million ERDF support. During the current programming period 2014-2020, by November 2019, the total number of finalized projects is 22, with a total budget of €16,7 million (€ 13,5 million ERDF funding or 73% implementation).

The first good practice, which results enhance the right to health and social welfare, is “e-Social Health Care”. The project budget is approximately €0,8 million (€ 0,65 million ERDF funding). Lead partner is Municipality of Nestos, and the co-partners are Municipality of Topeiros and Municipality of Zlatograd. The e-SOHECA project idea stems from the fact that the partners are located in remote locations and far away from large medical centers, thus the habitants of those areas face severe difficulties regarding the accessibility and quality of fundamental healthcare. The issue amplifies especially when it comes to disabled citizens and habitants who reside in areas that are located away from the urban centers of the municipalities of Nestos, Topeiros and Zlatograd (such as villages and remote settlements), thus increasing the risk of those people to be left without proper healthcare in case of emergency. Overall, the habitants of the cross-border locations often become victims of social discrimination and are excluded of their social rights. This project is tackling these challenges by establishing a responsive e-social health care system which includes advanced medical equipment connected to a web based system, in order to provide ad-hoc healthcare to anyone in need. The overall objectives are summarized as follows:

- to create web medical files for the habitants of the area, where all of the data from the measurements be uploaded and stored, and made accessible at any time via the system by doctors, volunteers etc.;

- to provide health and social care services to elderly habitants and disabled people;

- to give incentives to network participants, which will guarantee project success and sustainability;

- to eliminate social discrimination and promote equal treating and social inclusion of people no matter where they live.

The e-SOHECA system has an indirect effect which facilitates the prevention of medical emergencies and will also contribute to any studies regarding the medical situation of the area, as it will have the capacity to store the measured data (securely, anonymously) in order to provide vital demographic measurements and data for future use. [6]

The second example of a good practice is “Receive Emergency/Daily needed HEALTHcare through innovations in the cross border area”. Its total budget is €1,4 million (€1,2 million ERDF contribution) and beneficiaries are Center for emergency care Kardzhali (Lead Partner), General Hospital of Kavala and Medical Association of Kavala. The E/HEALTH project offers improved healthcare across the border region through the application of new technologies. Telemedicine equipped in mobile road vehicles and in hospitals can help overcome the problem of distances and difficult access routes to health care and provide adequate capacity for a number of medical professionals to respond to emergencies caused by transport and/or natural disasters. Some of the goals achieved are:

- Delivery of early diagnostics and therapy equipment and a mobile diagnostic center;

- Supply of specialized equipment for reaction life-threatening emergencies and emergency situations caused by transport and/or natural disasters.

- Specialized seminars for doctors, nurses and paramedics and for emergency management;

- Establishment of a network for exchange of experience and cross-border cooperation to minimize the consequences of incidents in these regions;

- Surveys for Consumer Satisfaction Survey Studies and Analysis Using Advanced Methods;

- Standards for Health and Safety of Workers in Healthcare Structures;

- Campaigns for healthy lifestyle prevention and prevention with early diagnosis measures and exercise/simulation for emergency preparedness. [7]

Another successful project is “Improving quality and accessibility of social health care services in cross-border regions” with a total budget of €1,1 million (€ 0,96 million ERDF funding). Lead Partner is Regional health inspection - Blagoevgrad and the other partners are: “Papageorgiou” General Hospital Center for emergency medical care – Blagoevgrad; Office of Social Protection, Solidarity and Sports and Education of Lagadas Municipality; Organisation of Social Protection and Solidarity of Municipality of Chalkidona. The main objective of the project is to improve the accessibility and quality of medical services to the population in restricted areas and vulnerable populations in order to increase the capacity and effectiveness of the primary care system for better territorial and social coverage for deprived from high quality health services and isolated communities. Project activities focus on actions that promote the quality and efficiency of value-added primary health services and activities such as telemedicine and mobile health services, enhancing cooperation capacities, efficiency and effectiveness for emergency response in the cross-border area, and increased access to healthcare for vulnerable groups (specific to cross-border areas) and/or residents of hard-to-reach border areas.

What is more important, some of the tangible (increased capacity) and visible results (facilitated access for vulnerable groups) are:

- Improving the quality and effectiveness of primary health care for the most deprived areas;

- Enhanced access to healthcare for vulnerable groups in disadvantaged areas with high cross-border mobility;

- Delivery of: 1 pc. mobile unit for healthcare with mobile medical equipment and apparatus, 1 pc. telemedicine equipment; 1 pc. car; laboratory equipment for Regional Health Inspectorate;

- Organization of: seminars for capacity building; programs for training of personnel resources; training modules on telemedicine and on the “Emergency Response Plan and Protocols in Crisis Situations”. [8]

Similarly, during the 2007-2013 programming period, the following three projects [9] can be indicated as examples of good practice for protection of the right to health and social welfare:

- Investment in the health and the prosperity of the children in the Bulgarian - Greek region - total budget: €1,8 million (€1,5 million ERDF contribution). Partners: Municipality of Belitsa (Lead) and Region of Eastern Macedonia -Thrace. The project focuses on prevention of the disease among children and youths where it is necessary to build up strong healthy habits and to replace the "online game" with a real sport game. *Outputs:* Building and equipment of a sports hall in the village of Kraishte, with capacity of 50 athletes, 150 seats; joint cross - 10000 parents and 10000 children from the Drama-Blagoevgrad district; 50 municipal and district servants in 2 cross-border seminars. *Results:* ensuring of access to sport facilities for 3500 youths from the Belitsa, Yakoruda and Garmen; ensuring the participation of 100 youths in international sport contest and promoting sports as a prerequisite for physical education and strengthened health;

- Voluntary Blood Donation in Rhodope - total budget: €0,9 million (€0,76 million ERDF contribution). Partners: Region of Eastern Macedonia - Thrace (Lead), District Administration of Haskovo and Region with administrative Centre city of Kardzhali. The project concerns the development of cross border co-operation on the great issue of preventing the transmission of diseases derived from blood transfusion. Two mobile units are purchased in the framework of the project, in order to implement voluntary blood donations, but also to raise awareness on safety issues, through brochures, audio visual materials, seminars and public campaigns. *Outputs:* Purchase of equipment and staffing of two mobile information units, a scientific congress, workshops, actions for informing/sensitizing the local population, informative events in places of education and work, voluntary blood donation, study of best practices, etc.

- Targeted Interventions for the Prevention and treatment of Tuberculosis (TB) and Hepatitis B – total budget: €0,4 million (€0,34 million ERDF contribution). Partners: Region of Eastern Macedonia - Thrace (Lead) and Regional Inspectorate for Protection and Control of Public Health – Smolyan. The main objectives are to define demographical and risk factors that affect and influence the distribution of TB and Hepatitis B, to gather knowledge on the magnitude of the problem and implement preventive measures for the population, to get diagnosis and therapy by case of TB and Hepatitis B, to observe the effectiveness of therapy, to investigate epidemiologically for limiting the spread to family, work, social and extended environment of these diseases, to implement prevention activities. *Outputs:* upgrade scientist interest and obtain technological know-how which will allow for the implementation of activities in general social groups; improve the access and provide health care to individual; improve the effectiveness and efficiency of Public Health Services; protect the health of the individuals; develop common scientific activities towards a continuous exchange of data in the spread of diseases and take joint actions.

3. A Comparative Analysis

Then, in order to research the Greek-Bulgarian CBC effectiveness in enhancing the right to health and social welfare, a comparative analysis is made, containing specific comparison criteria. Therefore, the first criterion is the number of contracted projects - $K1_{projects}$, and the second criterion is the budget needed for the implementation of the projects - $K2_{project\ budget}$.

To illustrate, the collecting and processing data results from the two programming periods 2007-2013 and 2014-2020 are presented at Diagram 1. As a result, the emerging trend is an increase of 14%.

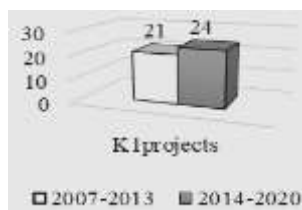


Diagram 1 Number of contracted projects [4;9]

In the same way, Diagram 2 shows the effectiveness development of CBC between Bulgaria and Greece, in the context of $K2_{project\ budget}$. On the contrary, there is a negative trend of 27% decreasing of the cross-border initiatives total budget, as well as the ERDF funding, contracting for project implementation in the present programming period.

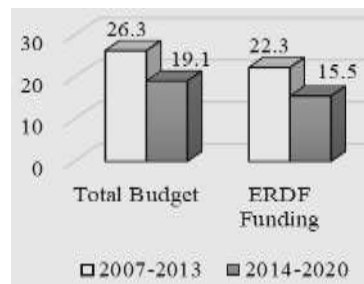


Diagram 2. Project Budget [4;9]

4. Expected Results and Benefits

The next task is to summarize the expected results and benefits of the cross-border projects that will be completed by 2023. After all, only 8% of the 2014-2020 cross-border projects are still ongoing its activities. Its budget represents 13% of the total budget and of the ERDF funding for the implementation of all 24 projects with the potential to enhance the Right to Life, and especially, on the right to health and social welfare. (see Diagram 3).

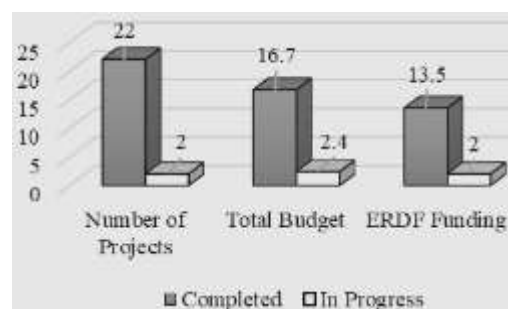


Diagram 3. Expected results by 2023 [4;9]

For instance, one of these two cross-border projects is “Reducing access inequalities in primary healthcare for socially significant diseases at CB Area’s deprived communities”. The Lead Beneficiary is General hospital of Thessaloniki “G. Papanikolaou” - Organic Unit Psychiatric Hospital of Thessaloniki. The other beneficiaries are Cardiology Society of Northern Greece, Diagnostic and Consulting Center “Aleksandrovska” Ltd, Intermunicipal Agency of Western Countryside of Thessaloniki “Nefeli”; Multispecialty Hospital for Active Treatment Devin JSC and Regional Health Insurance Fund of Blagoevgrad. The total budget is €1,2 million (€1 million ERDF funding). The general objective is to reduce health inequalities in cross-border area by protecting citizens from socially sensitive diseases, promoting health prevention, foster supportive environments for healthy lifestyles and encouraging innovation in health. The project will focus on the following categories of diseases:

- main non-communicable diseases (NCDs) mainly cardiovascular diseases (including cholesterol), chronic respiratory diseases and diabetes 40% of the population affected;
- Psychiatric (mental) diseases.

Both of the above categories of diseases are related to deprivation, poverty, inequality and other social and economic determinants of health. Some main delivered outputs are:

- 1 joint “Observatory equal2health for socially significant diseases”;
- 2 mobile units for providing medical exams and prevention awareness campaign;
- awareness campaign to main target population and to Medical Staff and Authorities;
- policy recommendation on reducing health inequalities and dealing with the commonly and socially significant diseases. [10]

Likewise, the other one project in progress is “SMART MEDICINE” with the same total budget as the project above. Beneficiaries are: Municipality of Dimitrovgrad (Lead), Eastern

Macedonia and Thrace Institute of Technology and Department of Nursing Paranesi Municipality Legal Entity of Social Solidarity, Pre-school and Education.

The overall objective of the project is to invest in health infrastructure which contributes to regional and local development, reducing inequalities in terms of health status. The purpose of the Project is to improve the effectiveness of the primary health care system and indirectly manage to provide better health coverage to deprived communities shifting from the institutional to community-based services.

The cross-border primary healthcare initiative encompassed in the project will cover the broad range of primary prevention and primary care services within the community. The networked health care providers will have a common base on health promotion and disease prevention, diagnoses, treatment and management of chronic and episodic illness and rehabilitation support. The project involves the coordination and provision of integrated care provided by a range of health providers, including nurses, social workers, pharmacists, dietitians, public health practitioners, physicians and others in a range of community settings including people's homes, healthcare clinics, physicians' offices, public health units, hospices, and workplaces. It is delivered in a way that is person- and population-centered and responsive to economic, social, language, cultural and gender differences. [11]

5. Results of discussion

In brief, the comparative analysis results indicate that the Greek-Bulgarian CBC's effectiveness is not sufficient in the context of K2_{project} budget. Nevertheless, the outputs, results and benefits of the cross-border projects have a substantial impact on the on the Right to Life, and especially, on the right to health and social welfare.

As follows, three main tasks are implemented in this paper:

- Examining CBC achievements in two programming periods;
- Comparing these achievements by two criteria;
- Outlining CBC effectiveness development in a long term period.

6. Conclusion

To sum up, by implementing these tasks, the main goal is achieved. Even more, it does focus attention on good practices with added value in terms of the right to health and social welfare. Moreover, Greek-Bulgarian CBC has a proven European added value in terms of building critical mass, strengthening excellence and exercising a catalytic effect on human security.

In particular, this study provides a methodology that could be used and applied to other cross-border cooperation programmes, on the one hand, and to other human rights, on the other hand.

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[2] "...to protect the vital core of all human lives in ways that enhance human freedoms and human fulfillment. Human security means protecting fundamental freedoms – freedoms that are the essence of life. It means protecting people from critical (severe) and pervasive (widespread) threats and situations. It means using processes that build on people's strengths and aspirations. It means creating political, social, environmental, economic, military and cultural systems that together give people the building blocks of survival, livelihood and dignity." Commission on Human Security. 2003. Human Security Now: Final Report, New York, p.4

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