

“Preparation of a Proposal for an Area Based Development in the Western Balkans”

Fourth Meeting of the Project Steering Group (PSG) of the SWG EC Project Preparation Facility

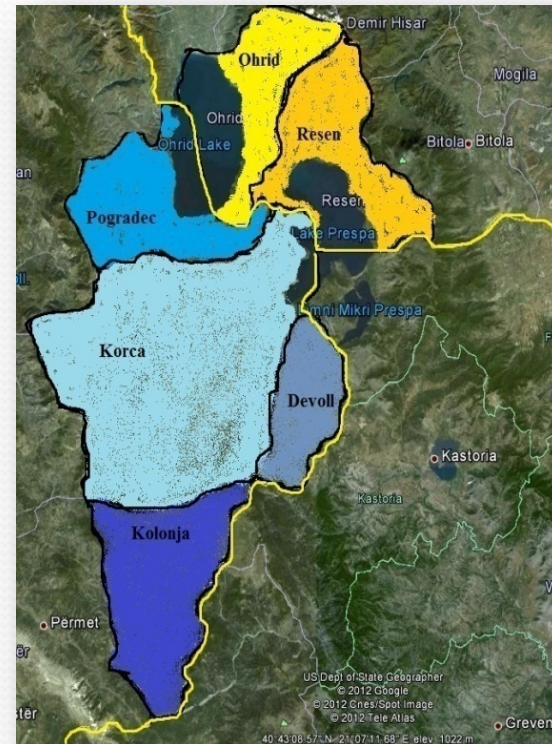
Strategic Frameworks and the Action Plans for regional cooperation for implementation of the ABD
Prespa and Shara Cross – Border Regions

September 14 , 2012
Vodice, Croatia



Geographical area covered by the plan - Prespa

Map of Prespa region

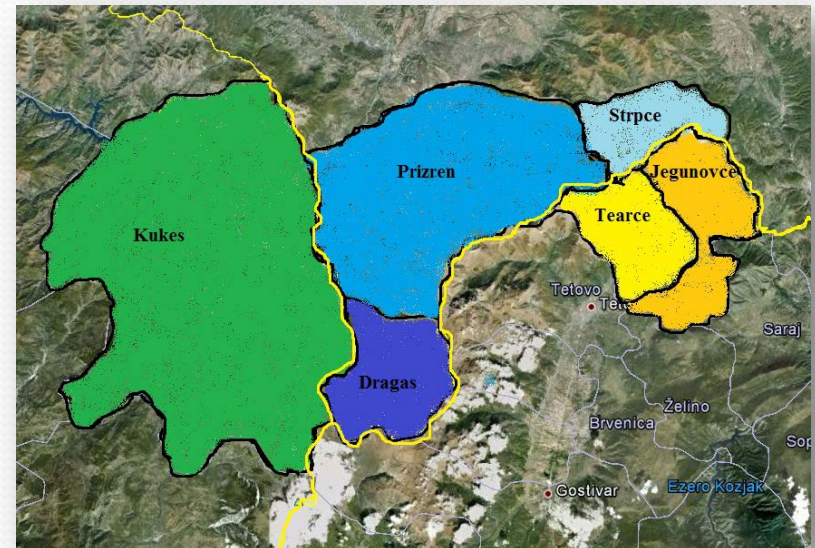


Prespa Cross-Border Region

- Placed in the Western Balkans, occupying the territory of Macedonia and Albania.
- It covers the region of South-West Macedonia and South-east Albania.
- Macedonian part -2 municipalities :Municipality of Ohrid and Municipality of Resen.
- Albanian part consists of Korca County (4 districts)

Geographical area covered by the plan - Shara

Map of Shara region



Shara Cross-Border Region

- Placed in the Western Balkans, occupying the territory of Macedonia, Kosovo and Albania.
- It covers the region of North-West Macedonia, South Kosovo and North- East Albania.
- Macedonian part -2 municipalities :Municipality of Jegunovce and Municipality of Tearce.,
- Kosovo part – 3 municipalities: Municipality of Strpce, Municipality of Prizren and Municipality of Dragash
- Albanian part: District of Kukes (consists of 15 municipalites – 1 urban and 14 rural)

Strategic Planning Process

- Four meetings (workshops) in each Region were organized
- **1st meeting** (1-15 April) – organized at micro level with group of municipalities from each country (4 meetings) – aim: to present the Project before local representatives and to create local (stakeholders)groups as a first step of creation of Regional Stakeholders group
- **2nd workshop** (25-30 April) – organized at regional basis with RSG
aim: to discuss and identify priority areas for development of the Region, SWOT analysis of each priority and development of Vision.

Strategic Planning Process

2nd workshop (25-30 April)

- Priority areas identified and thematic groups derived from RSG - to prepare SWOT
- Developed DRAFT Vision statement
- Developed DRAFT Strategic Goals for each priority area
- The results of the workshop:
 - Priority areas identified
 - SWOT analysis drafted
 - Vision and Strategic Goals drafted

Strategic Planning Process

3rd workshop (8-10 May, 2012) – organized at regional basis with RSG

- aim: finalize the structure of the Strategic Plan
- The results of the workshop:
 - The Vision Statement finalized
 - Priority areas finalized
 - Strategic Goals finalized
 - Activities developed

Strategic Planning Process

4th workshop (8-10 May, 2012) – organized at regional basis with RSG

- aim: to finalize the Strategic Framework and the Action Plan as well as to prioritize the actions and project ideas which can be further developed
- The results of the workshop:
 - Strategic Framework drafted and the Action Plan (Activities for each strategic goal) discussed and prioritized
 - Project ideas for further development identified at basic level

Strategic Frameworks and the Action Plans

- Draft documents – Baseline Study and Strategic plans developed by the Regional Expert, after the completion of the meetings follow the general
- Documents submitted to International Experts (Gert Guri and Kaj Mortensen) for comments
- Final version developed after integration of the comments from the International Experts
- Documents follow general recommendation of the ABD methodology (developed by IPTS) and the Guidelines for the elaboration of ABD programming documents (developed by

Strategic Frameworks and the Action Plans

The documents (Baseline Study and Strategic and Action Plan) consist of five chapters:

1. Introduction
2. The Area
3. Strategic
4. Action Plan
5. publicity and visibility

Strategic Frameworks and the Action Plans

- **Geographical area** - introduces the geographical cross border area. It gives a quantified description of the current situation within the region, assessing the situation of the socio-economic sectors, showing disparities, shortcomings and potentials for development.
- **Strategic Framework** - It includes the description of the overall strategic planning process, the Vision of the strategic plan, the chosen priority areas, the potential and critical needs for development and the SWOT analysis,.It also includes strategic goals, objectives and activities for each priority area.
- **Action Plan** – It includes the identified actions, potential beneficiaries, the eligibility criteria and the monitoring indicators. Second part - Project Description part – a Project per Priority area is presented
- **Publicity and visibility** - requirements needed to ensure that the document is publicised and describes actions which are foreseen to inform potential beneficiaries of the possibilities offered by the Strategy

Strategic Framework and the Action Plan - Prespa

Structure:

- Vision
- 6 Priority areas : Environment, Agriculture, Economic growth and tourism , Social cohesion, Regional infrastructure and Energy efficiency
- 12 Strategic Goals for each Priority area
- 26 Objectives (objectives for each goal)
- 116 activities (set of activities for each objective)

Strategic Framework and the Action Plan - Shara

Structure:

- Vision
- 5 Priority areas : Environment, Regional Economy, Tourism and Culture, Regional Infrastructure and Agriculture and Rural Development
- 10 Strategic Goals for each Priority area
- 20 Objectives (objectives for each goal)
- 83 activities (set of activities for each

Challenges met during the planning Process

- Formation of the RSG – followed instructions of the methodology but requires more field work and support from local experts
- The Group represents the interests of the three sectors from the region but their presence was not equally balanced
 - Business sector did not respond in proactive manner – representatives with stronger ties with local governments participated but not regularly
 - NGOs not always informed by LGs – representation of this sector questionable in regards of quality and activity
 - LG and Regional Authorities – partially replied to the requests for participation – not all municipalities involved (Prespa) and not all of them supported the process through provision of data

Challenges met during the planning Process

- Data Collection and research – one of the biggest challenges
- Data collection and processing turned from identification, research and analysis into detective investigation
 - Old data from national statistic offices (census data 2001 (ALB), 2002 (MK))
 - Municipalities ,in general ,not responsive to the request to submit their data and to support the experts in identification of additional national/regional data (not the entire data needed can be found through internet)
 - Municipalities did not support the process of surveying the stakeholders
 - NGO sector was not interested enough to cooperate without clear material benefits – some support in the surveying process
 - Business sector did not react at all to the requests from the experts to provide information

Challenges met during the planning Process

- Participatory planning meetings – proposed and financially feasible up to 4 one day meetings
- Length of the meetings – too short to secure effective information/results which can be further utilized (in reality there was enough time to organize a half day meeting)
- Usually, additional correspondence and communication had to be engaged after the end of each meeting but these methods not always gave results (not everybody who was contacted responded)
- There was not permanent presence of the RSG members at the meetings (half of them) did not attend all 4 meetings – replaced by someone else or their position remained empty
- Once the meetings were completed, there was no response from the RSG members regarding the support for finalization of the documents

Challenges met during the planning Process

- More preparatory steps regarding RSG formation have to be undertaken in future
- Even though RSG members were proposed as representatives with experience, most of them showed lack of knowledge and skills to deal with the issue
 - They have to be trained if we want them to contribute. Otherwise, the meetings might turn into trainings due to the need to explain the methods of work and what results we want to achieve
- Additional involvement of local experts who would assist Regional experts and become the champions of the RSG is needed (especially in the regions where different languages are spoken)



Strategic Framework - Prespa

Vision

Cross - Border region of Prespa through joint efforts and programs will grow in economically developed area with a clean and healthy environment, reduced unemployment; it will be a region with sustainable development of tourism and agriculture and high level of energy efficiency in all sectors, a place where diversity of culture and tradition is respected and promoted and a region ready for EU integration.



Priority areas:

1. Environment
2. Agriculture
3. Economic growth and tourism
4. Social cohesion
5. Regional infrastructure
6. Energy efficiency



Strategic goals for the priority area: Environment

Strategic Goal 1: Establishment of a functional system for integrated regional protection of environment and natural resources

Objective 1: Improve Regional cooperation for Regional protection of environment and natural resources

Activities

- 1.1 Preparation of Regional Ecological Action Plan in order to improve protection and conservation of biodiversity
- 1.2 Improve joint lake protection
- 1.3 Improve river and springs protection
- 1.4 Finalize the process of establishment and formalize functioning of the joint – Trilateral Natural Park of Prespa
- 1.5 Strengthening of regional institutions for integrated regional protection of the environment and natural resources
- 1.6 Promote regional public, private and civil sector cooperation for protection of the environment
- 1.7 Develop common-joint methodology for protection of natural resources
- 1.8 Integrated regional protection and management of forests



Objective 2: Increase regional public awareness about the benefits of protection of environment

Activities:

- 2.1 Initiate regional public awareness campaigns for protection and preservation of the environment and natural resources
- 2.2 Develop environmental monitoring programs to protect the environment



Strategic Goal 2: Improvement of systems of waste water and solid waste management.

Objective 1: Improvement of systems of waste water management.

Activities:

- 1.1 Creation and /or upgrade of collector system of waste water for Prespa lake
- 1.2 Completion of the Ohrid Lake collector system of waste water around the entire lake
- 1.3 Reconstruction and building new waste water collection systems in the region

Objective 2: Improvement of systems of solid waste management.

Activities:

- 2.1 Improve regional cooperation for solid waste management
- 2.2 Establishment of regional centers for solid waste management and expand solid waste services
- 2.3 Support to municipalities to strengthen their capacities for cooperation in the selection, recycling and waste incineration
- 2.4 Improve collection, disposal and management of the construction waste
- 2.5 Enhance the capacity of the people, public institutions and private sector to manage solid waste
- 2.6 Exploring opportunities to manage regionally the municipal, commercial and industrial waste, and to contribute to energy supply by developing energy from waste alternatives through PPP

Strategic goals for the priority area: Agriculture

Strategic Goal 1: Development of agriculture in the Region through support in adding values to traditional agricultural products

Objective 1: Improve regional cooperation for production of healthy food



Activities:

- 1.1 Increase the production, protection and post-harvest management of traditional agricultural product and branding of the most distinguished ones
- 1.2 Increase the quality and quantity of agricultural product through introduction of new technologies
- 1.3 Training of farmers to implement EU standards and systems in agricultural production (EUREPGAP/GLOBALGAP)
- 1.4 Support the reintroduction of traditional crops at regional level

Objective 2: Protection and branding of traditional agricultural products

Activities:

- 2.1 Support of standardization of agricultural products and increase the value of their product
- 2.2 Educating farmers to add value to their product by improving the packaging, design, transport and storage of product
- 2.3 Improve the existing ways of producing and processing fruit through introduction of agro-technical innovations
- 2.4 Improve the existing ways of plant protection products and use of fertilizers
- 2.5 Joint promotion of the traditional agricultural products



Strategic Goal 2: Increase the production of healthy food and organic farming

Objective 1: Creating the conditions for organic farming and production of healthy food

Activities:

- 1.1 Establish basis for transitioning to organic production through institutional, legal and financial support
- 1.2 Preparation of Study for identification the barriers for farmers transitioning to organic production;
- 1.3 Establish Transition Advisory Services at Regional basis



Objective 2: Technical support in introducing planned organic production and marketing organic products

Activities:

- 2.1 Support farmers through technical assistance for the use of organic fertilizers;
- 2.2 Support farmers to use biological methods to combat diseases, pests and weeds
- 2.3 Provide support for organic search
- 2.4 Provide support to farmers to plant crops and plants that have increased resistance to diseases and pests
- 2.5 Provide support to enhance regional market linkages between organic producers, processors, and traders.
- 2.6 Joint marketing of the organic products from the Region

Objective 3: Support the development of regional businesses with wild gathered products - herbs in rural areas in accordance to the EU standards and practices

Activities:

- 3.1 Training of WGP collectors for sustainable gathering of gathering of wild gathered products in accordance to the best practices and EU standards
- 3.2 Creation of communication and cooperation networks between WGP collectors and traders
- 3.3 Joint promotion of wild gathered products from the Region

Strategic goals for the priority area: Economic Development and Tourism

Strategic Goal 1: Creating conditions for economic development and increasing competitiveness of the region

Objective 1: Creating a favorable climate for further development of existing businesses



Activities:

- 1.1 Preparation of studies on the potentials for economic growth
- 1.2 Preparation of studies for rational use of regional natural resources for the economic growth
- 1.3 Preparation of studies to determine the priority sectors for development of the Region
- 1.4 Preparation of studies for identification and applying of modern methods for rapid retraining of the workforce
- 1.5 Promotion of PPP as a form of Regional Economic Development

Objective 2: Strengthening the capacity of the institutions within the Region in regional development and project management

Activities:

- 2.1 Training of regional and local administration in local and regional planning
- 2.2 Training of regional and local administration in the area of project management
- 2.3 Completing the organizational structure of the Region (PMU) for efficient and professional monitoring of the implementation of Strategic Plan
- 2.4 Establishing systems and procedures for providing support to business entities

Objective 3: Development of infrastructure support and business networks to support existing and new businesses

Activities:

- 3.1 Establish regional information and advisory centers for support of micro and small enterprises
- 3.2 Support the introduction of international standards by small and medium size enterprises
- 3.3 Facilitate linking of academic/research institutions with the regional economy
- 3.4 Establishment and upgrading of business networks – regional clusters for exchanging information and joint appearance and presentation at regional and global market
- 3.5 Support local businesses in preparation of project proposals and project applications for national and foreign funds/EU Funds
- 3.6 Establishment of regional labor market

Strategic Goal 2: Support the development of integrated tourist offer as a basis for sustainable tourism

Objective 1: Utilization of natural resources and cultural and historical heritage for tourism development

Activities:

- 1.1 Development of Studies for mapping the tourist potentials of the Region
- 1.2 Preparation of strategic documents and action plans for tourism development in the Region
- 1.3 Preparation of technical and project documentation for development of regional tourist sites
- 1.4 Construction of tourist infrastructure and infrastructural arrangements of tourist sites
- 1.5 Joint approach for development of project applications for renovation of old cultural - historical monuments on the territory of the Region

Objective 2: Promote authenticity and comparative advantages of the Region

Activities:

- 2.1 Identification of regional authentic values, products and services for development of regional tourist products
- 2.2 Introduction and promotion of tourist offer and products from alternative, rural, agro, cultural, weekend, event, wellbeing and other types of tourism
- 2.3 Preparation and publication of a Touristic Offer Catalog with accommodation, restaurants, coffee bars, tourist sites and routes
- 2.4 Promotion of traditional kitchen and food products



Objective 3: Development of sustainable tourism and catering industry by providing quality products and services

Activities:

- 3.1 Establishment of Regional Tourist Information Center and its branches within the Region as form of institutional support for development of tourism
- 3.2 Capacity building of interested economic entities and citizens for provision of high quality tourist services and customer care
- 3.3 Training of the local population for utilization of national/EU (IPARD) and international funds for development of rural tourism
- 3.4 Support of business entities and citizens from rural areas in opening/reconstruction/adjusting of accommodation capacities in rural areas
- 3.5 Categorization of the private accommodation capacities

Strategic goals for the priority area: Social cohesion

Strategic Goal 1: Raising the level of social protection of the entire population, with special emphasis on vulnerable and marginalized groups of people.

Objective 1: Improve services in social care by developing programs and establishment of appropriate mechanisms



Activities:

- 1.1 Assess the needs and wants of elderly, vulnerable and marginalized groups of people
- 1.2 Analysis of the situation with unemployment and social structure of the unemployed within the Region
- 1.3 Develop Strategic and Action Plans for social care at local/regional level
- 1.4 Provision of training support for unemployed people through development and delivery of programs for entrepreneurship and self-employment
- 1.5 Preparation of cross-border projects for vulnerable social groups between partners from the Region



Activities:

- 1.6 Support and provision of capacity building of the NGO sector for fostering support and care of socially disadvantaged persons
- 1.7 Provision of training for volunteers to provide home care to elderly people
- 1.8 Establishment of centres for free legal aid to vulnerable groups
- 1.9 Reintegration of immigrants – returners into the society



Objective 2: Construction of new and conversion of existing infrastructure for the needs of vulnerable groups, by creating partnerships and use of domestic and international funds

Activities:

- 2.1 Preparation of cross-border projects for construction/reconstruction/conversion of public infrastructure into facilities for provision of social care and protection
- 2.2 Reconstruction/conversion of available public infrastructure (buildings) in care centers for socially disadvantaged persons.
- 2.3 Construction of access ramps in institutions for persons with disabilities



Strategic Goal 2: Raising the capacities of the existent institutions, associations and NGOs as well as creating new in order to address adequately the burning social issues.

Objective 1: Regional networking of regional and municipal institutions and NGO sector working in the field of social protection



Activities:

- 1.1 Training for networking with interested partners at regional level and networking with partners from the Region
- 1.2 Establishment of regional network between regional and municipal institutions and NGO sector working in the field of social protection
- 1.3 Establishing cooperation with international organizations and institutions
- 1.4 Strengthening capacity of public and NGO sector to utilize national/ EU IPA/International funds which are available for social protection



Objective 2: Raising public awareness and stimulating social solidarity and philanthropy

Activities:

- 2.1 Promote the volunteer movement and social solidarity among young population
- 2.2 Organize campaigns to stimulate public opinion and improve the social solidarity and philanthropy
- 2.3 Support social solidarity and philanthropy through non-formal education activities in high schools and universities
- 2.4 Support campaigns that raise awareness regarding multiethnic and religious tolerance and building of democratic societies



Strategic goals for the priority area: Regional infrastructure

Strategic Goal 1: Improved local and cross-border connections of the municipalities in the region through development of modern infrastructure.

Objective 1: Construction of regional road infrastructure

Activities:

- 1.1 Preparation of technical documentation for cross – border and regional road connectivity between municipalities within the region
- 1.2 Reconstruction of regional road infrastructure

Objective 2: Increasing the capacity of border crossings and cross – border transportation

Activities:

- 2.1 Preparation of technical documentation for increasing the capacity of border crossings
- 2.2 Reconstruction of border crossings and expansion of their operational capacities
- 2.3 Establishment of lake traffic and transportation of passengers and goods



Strategic Goal 2: Improvement of the communal infrastructure in the region.

Objective 1: Development of water supply and waste water infrastructure

Activities:

- 1.1 Preparation of a Feasibility Study for regional reconstruction/construction of water supply and waste water networks
- 1.2 GIS mapping of water supply and waste water networks in the Region
- 1.3 Preparation of technical documentation for reconstruction of regional/local water supply and waste water networks ,



Activities:

- 1.4 Reconstruction of old water supply infrastructure in residential areas
- 1.5 Construction of new water supply infrastructure in residential areas
- 1.6 Reconstruction of old waste water networks in residential areas
- 1.7 Construction of new waste water networks in residential areas
- 1.8 Construction of regional plants for purifying waste water
- 1.9 Construction/reconstruction of sewerage networks in urban areas

Objective 2: Regulation of river basins

Activities:

- 2.1 Preparation of technical documentation and regulation of river-beds in the Region,
- 2.2 Cleaning of river basins especially in areas with identified risk of flooding
- 2.3 Construction of river reservoirs – manmade lakes
- 2.4 Construction/Reconstruction of sewerage network and drainage systems and improvement of management of atmospheric waters

Strategic goals for the priority area: Energy efficiency

Strategic Goal 1: Use of renewable energy sources in the region.

Objective 1: Creating conditions to attract investors to build investments/plants for renewable energy sources



Activities:

- 1.1 Development of Regional Feasibility Study for utilization of renewable energy sources
- 1.2 Support the inclusion of public private partnership in construction of plants for production of electricity based on incineration of solid waste and construction of combined heat plants based on renewable energy sources such as biogas, biomass, etc.
- 1.3 Preparation of technical documentation for connecting the Region to the nearest and most rewarding gas pipeline



Strategic Goal 2: Building of energy efficient public facilities and promote energy saving in the region.

Objective 1: Improving the energy efficiency of public facilities

Activities:

- 1.1 Upgrading and reconstruction of heating systems in public facilities
- 1.2 Upgrading and reconstruction of thermal insulation of public buildings

Objective 2: Promote energy saving measures in the region

Activities:

- 2.1 Support to municipalities for introduction and implementation of energy efficiency and energy saving days
- 2.2 Preparation and implementation of local and regional campaigns to raise awareness about the benefits of energy savings
- 2.3 Raising awareness and training of citizens and legal entities to improve energy efficiency and energy saving in private facilities
- 2.4 Support inclusion of PPP in public lighting based on energy efficient lamps



Strategic Framework - Shara



Vision

Sharra will be economically developed region with rich tourist and cultural tradition in rural areas through a modern infrastructure in a clean environment and integrated communities.

Priority areas:

1. Environment
2. Regional Economy
3. Tourism and Culture
4. Regional Infrastructure
5. Agriculture and Rural Development

Strategic Goals for the priority area:

Environment

- **Strategic Goal 1:** Creation of an integrated approach for protection and management of natural resources for the purposes of economic development based on sustainable principles.
- **Objective 1:** Protection of environment and management of natural resources through regional institutional cooperation.

Objective 1: Activities

- 1.1 Strengthening the capacities of public sector institutions in the Region for regional cooperation for protection of the environment and management of natural resources.
- 1.2 Development of Regional Ecological Action Plan for the Region and definition of management body for its implementation
- 1.3 Development of Local Ecological Action Plan for each municipality – member of the Region and/or revision of the old LEAPs for the municipalities who already have developed such documents
- 1.4 Identify capital and endangered natural resources and develop common methodology for protection and management of these resources
- 1.5 Support the process of declaration and establishment of national Park Sharra on the entire territory of the mountain and support the process of declaration of it as a Cross – Border National Park Shara



Objective 1: Activities

- 1.6 Improve the protection of water resources at local level and establish regional approach of protection of river basins
- 1.7 Establish mechanisms for regional protection of forests and regional fire fighting system
- 1.8 Establish regional protection of the endangered species of flora and fauna
- 1.9 Support public private partnership for protection of the environment and management of natural resources

Objective 2: Involve citizens in protection of environment

- Activities:

- 2.1 Increase regional public awareness about the benefits of protection of environment
- 2.2 Support to NGOs to strengthen their capacities for protection of environment, regional cooperation and networking
- 2.3 Introduce Community Based Natural Resource Management at local level in order to involve local communities in activities designed to ensure their own participation and contribution the processes of decision making and management of environment and natural resources
- 2.4 Support schools and teachers to integrate environmental issues concerning the Region in their course syllabus and/or extracurricular activities.

Strategic Goal 2: Development of an effective system for waste management

- **Objective 1:** Improvement of cooperation for waste water management for protection of water basins with regional character.
- **Activities:**
 - 1.1 Improve regional approach in protection of man - made lakes
 - 1.2 Construction of waste water collector/filter stations for Lake Fierza
 - 1.3 Reconstruction of old and construction of new waste water filter stations in the region
 - 1.4 Development of cross-border strategies/action plans for waste water management

Objective 2: Improvement of regional cooperation for solid waste management.

- **Activities:**

- 2.1 Improve local capacities for collection, disposal and management solid waste
- 2.2 Support establishment of inter municipal cooperation for establishments of joint mechanisms and practices for management of solid waste
- 2.3 Development of cross-border strategies/action plans for solid waste management
- 2.5 Explore opportunities to establish regional centres for management of solid waste

Strategic Goals for the priority area: Regional Economy

- **Strategic Goal 1:** Create conditions for use of the existing natural and economic potentials for economic development of the region
- **Objective 1:** Establishment of a basis for regional economic development
- Activities:
 - 1.1 Development of regional studies for sustainable use of natural resources for the purpose of economic development
 - 1.2 Assessment of the potentials for economic growth through identification and prioritization of the economic sectors
 - 1.3 Development of strategy for marketing and promotion of regional economic potential
 - 1.4 Support cooperation and networking between public institutions, education-research centres and businesses



Objective 2: Development of regional infrastructure for support of the regional economy

- **Activities:**

- 2.1 Establishment of business support centres – incubators to support small and medium size enterprises in the Region
- 2.2 Strengthening capacities of public institutions in local/regional planning and project management
- 2.3 Support establishment of Regional business chamber – a cluster organized network that will facilitate exchange of information and joint marketing
- 2.4 Support businesses in identification of funds and preparation of project proposals and applications

Strategic Goal 2: Increase the competitiveness of the region and providing a skilled and educated workforce to the needs of the economy

- **Objective 1:** Promoting comparative business advantages of the Region
- Actions:
 - Development of a Study for identification of the comparative business advantages of the Region
 - Development of a Marketing strategy for investment in order to familiarize potential investors with macro-economic framework of the region, the existing technical infrastructure, resources and advantages and tendencies for improving the work of local and state administration in the region.
 - Intensification of cooperation and coordination with national institutions in charge of finding foreign investment

Objective 2: Capacity building of the regional workforce to the needs of the economy

- **Actions:**

- 2.1 Assessment of the current education and training provision with job requirements
- 2.2 Assessment of the knowledge and skills needs of new entrants to a variety of business entities
- 2.3 Support to Regional development agencies and other training institutions to provide training or retraining of the workforce in accordance to the needs of the economy

Strategic Goals for the priority area: Tourism and Culture

- **Strategic Goal 1:** Promotion of authentic and comparative advantages of the Region in creating an integrated tourist offer.
- **Objective 1:** Development of tourist products based on the authentic and comparative advantages of the Region
- **Actions:**
 - 1.1 Assessment of the natural and anthropogenic/cultural resources for the purposes of development of tourism
 - 1.2 Preparation of Regional Study for mapping the touristic potentials of the region through assessment of the authentic values and comparative advantages
 - 1.3 Development of regional tourist offer based on integration of the common values and comparative advantages

Objective 2: Creating an integrated tourist offer

- Actions:

- 2.1 Institutional support for development of tourism through creation of a Regional Tourist Information Center and its branches within the Region
- 2.2 Development of Regional Strategy for promotion of touristic potentials and offer
- 2.3 Provision of trainings for customer care and development of quality touristic services to interested stakeholders from the Region
- 2.4 Development of touristic offer based on the regional traditional food and cultural heritage



Strategic Goal 2: Support of the development of sustainable alternative (eco, rural, transit and cultural) tourism and tourism infrastructure

- Objective 1: Support to development of sustainable alternative tourism
- Actions:
 - 1.1 Development of regional touristic products that integrate rural, eco and cultural activities
 - 1.2 Development of regional thematic tourist routes
 - 1.3 Support local population through training for utilization of national/EU (IPRAD) and international funds for development of rural tourism
 - 1.4 Secure networking and exchange of information between tour operators, hoteliers, restaurateurs and farmers
 - 1.5 Identification of potentials for provision of services to transit tourists

Objective 2: Support to development of tourism infrastructure

- Actions

- 2.1 Preparation of technical and project documentation for development of touristic sites
- 2.2 Construction of tourist infrastructure and infrastructural arrangements at touristic sites
- 2.3 Identification of locations and construction of tourist info points for transit tourists
- 2.4 Joint approach for development of project applications for renovation of old cultural - historical monuments on the territory of the Region

Strategic Goals for the priority area: Regional Infrastructure

- **Strategic Goal 1:** Improve the infrastructure and energy potentials in the region through support from national and European funds
- **Objective 1:** Improve regional road and interconnection infrastructure
- **Actions:**
 - 1.1 Development of feasibility study for increasing the interconnection of the Cross –Border Region and opening additional border crossing
 - 1.2 Preparation of technical documentation for cross – border and regional road connectivity between municipalities within the region

- Actions:

- 1.3 Reconstruction of local infrastructure that have capacities to impact the economic development of the Region
- 1.4 Reconstruction of regional road infrastructure
- 1.5 Construction of new road infrastructure that will interconnect the Region
- 1.6 Reconstruction of the existing border crossings and construction and opening of new ones

Objective 2: Improve regional communal infrastructure

- Actions:

- 2.1 Preparation of technical documentation for reconstruction of regional water supply and waste water networks,
- 2.2 Reconstruction of old water supply infrastructure and construction of new in residential areas
- 2.3 Construction of waste water and sewerage filter stations
- 2.4 Preparation of technical documentation and regulation of river-beds in the Region

Strategic Goal 2: Sustainable use of renewable energy sources (wind, sun, water and biomass)

- **Objective 1:** Create conditions for investments in renewable energy sources
- **Actions:**
 - 1.1 Development of Regional Feasibility Study for utilization of renewable energy sources
 - 1.2 Lobbying in front of national authorities for harmonization and alignment of legislation related to renewable energy sources
 - 1.3 Develop measures to support public private partnership in production of energies based on renewable energy sources.

Strategic Goals for the priority area: Agriculture and Rural Development

- **Strategic Goal 1:** Creating the conditions for regional sustainable agriculture based on production of healthy traditional products
- **Objective 1:** Protection and branding of traditional agricultural products
- **Actions:**
 - 1.1 Identification of agricultural and food products that have potentials for branding as traditional products with regional origin
 - 1.2 Support businesses to brand their agricultural and food products
 - 1.3 Support farmers to standardize the production of agricultural products and food by using traditional methods

Objective 2: Enhance efforts for production of competitive healthy food through regional cooperation

- Activities:
 - Introduce new technologies in production of agricultural products
 - Support reintroduction of traditional crops
 - Training of farmers to implement EU standards and systems in agricultural production (EUREPGAP/GLOBALGAP)
 - Improve the existing methods of plant protection and use of fertilizers
 - Support to farmers and economic subjects while introducing /reintroducing and increasing the herds of indigenous breeds
 - Training of farmers for creation of modern conditions for livestock breeding.

Objective 3: Increase the capacities for organic farming in the region

- **Activities:**

- 3.1 Assist farmers to start with organic production through institutional, legal and financial to transition to organic production
- 3.2 Establish Organic Production Advisory Services at Regional basis
- 3.3 Create network between organic producers, processors, and traders

Strategic Goal 2: Creating conditions for rural development in the region through sustainable utilization of natural and anthropogenic resources.

- **Objective 1:** Support diversification of rural economies through improvement of the conditions for development of small businesses
- Activities:
 - 1.1 Coordination of the process and development of local policies for attracting investments in rural areas.
 - 1.2 Creating a competitive workforce in the rural areas through training qualification and requalification
 - 1.3 Support the introduction of international standards by small and medium enterprises working in rural areas
 - 1.4 Institutional support for establishment of family and small businesses in rural areas
 - 1.5 Development of entrepreneurial capacities of the rural population with focus on youth and women
 - 1.6 Training of local population for utilization of national/EU (IPRAD) and international funds for rural development

Objective 2: Developing trade and buy-out of wild gathered products - herbs in rural areas in accordance to the EU standards and practices

- **Activities:**

- 2.1 Raising awareness and educating the population about the qualities of the Region and its comparative advantages for gathering of wild herbs for food production, pharmaceuticals and cosmetics through employment of old and new technologies, systems and standards.
- 2.2 Educating people about proper treatment and gathering of wild gathered products, due to sustainable utilization of natural resources
- 2.3 Supporting the organizational development and performances of entities dealing with the collection and trade of wild gathered products by creating an association of collectors and traders of wild gathered products.
- 2.4 Support the entities dealing with the collection and trade of wild gathered products to participate at fairs and other related events