



Enhancing Cooperation - Newsletter

of the IPA CBC Programmes
Montenegro-Albania and Montenegro-Kosovo 2014-2020 and 2021-2027

April 2025

PARTNER SEARCH FORUM IPA III MNE-ALB – SHKODRA, ALBANIA

CONTENT

The twenty-second issue of the newsletter brings you information on activities and events implemented within both IPA Cross-border Cooperation (CBC) Programmes Montenegro - Albania and Montenegro – Kosovo* 2014-2020 and 2021-2027. Programmes and project activities are funded by the European Union.

Please find below more information on the programmes.

IPA III CBC Programme Montenegro - Albania

2021- 2027

The global objective of the programme is to promote good neighbourly relations, foster Union integration and contribute to social, economic and territorial development by improving the quality of life of the population in the programme cross-border area by tourism development based on cultural/natural heritage and by protecting the environment.

Click [here](#) for more information.

IPA III CBC Programme Montenegro - Kosovo

2021-2027

The global objective of the programme is to promote good neighbourly relations, foster Union integration and contribute to social, economic and territorial development of the programme cross-border area by improving employment, labour mobility and social and cultural inclusion across borders; and developing sustainable tourism.

Click [here](#) for more information.

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* This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo Declaration of Independence.

CBC ZOOM

Partner Search Forum held within the IPA III Programme Montenegro - Albania

On 14th February 2025, a Forum for establishing project partnerships within the IPA III Cross-Border Cooperation Programme between Montenegro and Albania 2021–2027 was organised in Shkodra.

More than 120 participants, including representatives of organisations, institutions, and companies from both Montenegro and Albania, had the opportunity to establish contacts, exchange ideas, and explore possibilities for cross-border cooperation. The forum resulted in new partnerships, innovative project ideas, and strong foundations for future initiatives that will benefit both countries.

Nada Pejović, Head of the Directorate for Bilateral Cross-Border Programmes in the Ministry of European Affairs, emphasised the importance of this event as the official start of the IPA III Programme.



She reminded participants that cooperation between the two countries began in 2008 through the IPA I and II Programmes, during which more than 49 projects were implemented, valued at over €13.9 million, in areas such as economic development, environmental protection, social cohesion and infrastructure.



As she noted, through cooperation with Albanian partners and with financial support from the European Union, €11.9 million has been secured for the new phase of the IPA III Programme. These funds will be directed toward projects that promote sustainability, environmental protection, tourism development and increased competitiveness. She added that the first call for project proposals is expected to be published soon. "Projects implemented under the IPA I and II Programmes are clear evidence of how European cooperation delivers tangible results. This is reflected in the ongoing interest of beneficiaries in developing and implementing joint initiatives. Today's event represents another step forward in that direction. I am confident that by the end of this forum, we will establish new partnerships and generate fresh ideas for improving the quality of life in our cross-border region," **Pejović** highlighted.



Valbona Kosova from the State Agency for Strategic Programming and Aid Coordination of the Republic of Albania expressed gratitude to participants for their strong interest in cross-border cooperation projects, emphasising that such enthusiasm is a key driver of successful regional collaboration. She highlighted the importance of events like this forum in fostering mutual understanding, trust and long-term partnerships between institutions and civil society organisations from both Albania and Montenegro. **Kosova** commended the participants' openness to engage in meaningful dialogue, share experiences and

explore joint solutions to common challenges facing the cross-border region. She also underlined that the willingness to collaborate across borders reflects a shared commitment to sustainable development and European integration, encouraging all present to continue building on this momentum through concrete project initiatives under the IPA III Programme.

Sanja Todorović, Head of the Joint Technical Secretariat, presented the new IPA III Montenegro–Albania Cross-Border Cooperation Programme, including the opportunities it offers, key information on project collaboration, and a general overview of the application package.



Following this, participants had the opportunity to take part in thematic workshops focused on environmental protection and climate change adaptation, as well as tourism and the preservation of cultural and natural heritage.

The forum concluded successfully, with a clear aim of strengthening cooperation and creating projects that will contribute to the sustainable socio-economic development of the cross-border region.



Ambassador Sattler visited Plav

As part of ongoing efforts to support regional development and environmental sustainability, EU Ambassador to Montenegro Johan Sattler visited Plav, Montenegro to learn more about the projects the municipalities in the North are implementing, including the projects the funded under the IPA Cross-Border Cooperation Programme Montenegro–Albania and their positive impact on local communities.

During his visit, Ambassador Sattler was introduced to the project *Promoting Sustainable Use of Medicinal and Aromatic Plants for Livelihood Improvement and Biodiversity Conservation*. This initiative, co-financed through the Montenegro-Albania programme aims to enhance

economic opportunities in rural areas while preserving the region's rich natural heritage.



In addition to project discussions, the Ambassador met with key local stakeholders to explore broader themes including infrastructure development, environmental protection and future cross-border cooperation. His visit highlights the EU's continued commitment to supporting sustainable, community-driven development in the Montenegro–Albania cross-border region.



News on projects financed under the 3rd and 4th CfPs IPA CBC Programme Montenegro - Albania

Mentoring sessions under No Borders for Work project

The project *No Borders for Works* is actively supporting local entrepreneurs in Fushë-Arrëz through ongoing mentoring sessions filled with positivity and practical value. These sessions aim to strengthen the capacities of local businesses by offering tailored support in areas such as legal compliance, financial administration and effective business management. Entrepreneurs are also gaining tools to navigate labour market challenges and manage unexpected crises, helping them stay competitive in a fast-changing economic environment. With a combination of individual and group mentoring, the initiative is fostering a collaborative and resilient business community, contributing to the long-term economic development and sustainability of the region.

The project is being implemented by the Municipality of Cetinje in collaboration with NGO ProAct Hub from Podgorica, the Municipality of Fushe-Arrez, and Institute for Sustainable Policies from Albania, with the

aim of promoting employment and socially inclusive economic development.



Seminar on cultural route interpretation held in Old Town Bar

The seminar *Interpretation Content of the Revitalised Cultural Route of the Old Town Bar and Tropoje* was successfully held at the Creative Hub in the Old Town of Bar, Montenegro. The event gathered 20 participants, including tourist guides and cultural heritage professionals.



The seminar, organised under the *New Reality of the Heritage Sites* project, focused on improving the interpretation and touristic presentation of revitalised cultural routes. Esteemed archaeologists Goran Pajović and Dejan Drašković led informative sessions covering the historical and cultural significance of the Old Town, as well as interesting facts and stories tied to key landmarks.

Additionally, participants were introduced to a newly developed map and mobile application, both designed to enhance the visitor experience. The seminar concluded with a guided tour through the Old Town, offering attendees the chance to explore the site first-hand alongside expert archaeologists. The event successfully empowered stakeholders to contribute to a more engaging and informative interpretation of cultural heritage in the region.



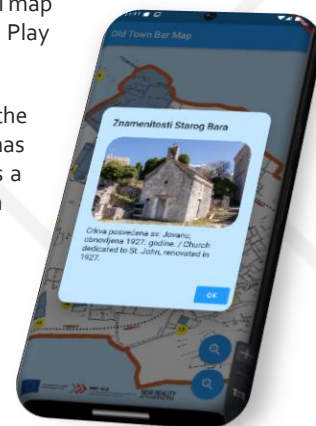
Moreover, as part of project activities, vertical signalisation was set up in Tropoje.



Finally, as part of ongoing efforts to enrich visitor experiences, the Municipality of Bar has launched a digital map application now available on Google Play under the name [Old Town Bar Map](#).

This interactive app is closely based on the revitalised cultural route itinerary and has been adapted for online use. It features a detailed graphic display of the Old Town of Bar, including all historical buildings and clearly marked movement routes.

The app offers users informative textual explanations for key sites, making it a valuable tool for tourists and guides alike.



Final conference of the project Skills for jobs - Montenegro -Albania

On 22nd January 2025, the Albanian Investment Development Agency (AIDA), within the framework of implementing the project *Skills for Sustainable Employment and Inclusive Economic Growth of Cross-Border Region of Albania and Montenegro – Skills for Jobs Albania – Montenegro*, in cooperation with Foundation Business Start Center Bar and Chamber of Economy of Montenegro, organised the closing conference of the project in Shkodra.

The conference participants included representatives from the Municipality of Shkodra, Vau i Dejës and Malësia e Madhe. This closing event marked the successful conclusion of the cross-border project, which has been implemented for 22 months in the cross-border area between Albania and Montenegro. The representatives presented the results achieved by the project, as well as the continuation of joint cooperation initiatives to achieve sustainable development goals and strengthen economic ties between the two countries.



Capacity building for firefighting teams

In April 2025, a capacity building event for the firefighting teams of the municipalities of Shkodra and Bar took place in Bar, Montenegro, within the framework of the *Building Smart Forests* project.



The training aimed to increase response capacities in emergency situations and exchange experiences between teams for extinguishing forest fires. The training represents an important step towards strengthening cooperation and coordination for the efficient management of forest fires in the cross-border areas of Shkodra and Bar.



This training contributed to increasing professionalism and exchange of experiences between firefighting teams, building a strong technical and human cooperation network, familiarisation with modern firefighting technologies and ensuring a faster and more efficient response in cases where emergencies cross borders.

In addition to the theoretical part, real-time exercises were held during the training, where firefighting teams from both municipalities collaborated in complex emergency scenarios. Participants had the opportunity to work side by side, building trust, share experience and build capacities to face any challenge.

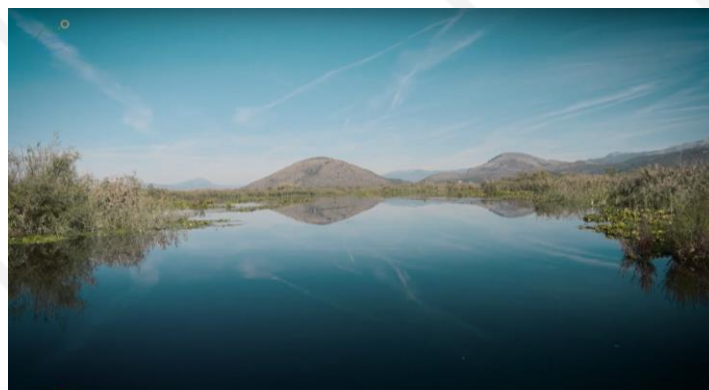


Through practical exercises and professional discussions, this training contributed to the cooperation and increased readiness and efficiency of firefighting teams in both municipalities.

Inspiring event advances Skadar Lake Watershed Transboundary Biosphere Reserve initiative

The project *Skadar/Shkoder Lake Watershed – a Transboundary Biosphere Reserve* intends to bring positive impact to the important transboundary ecosystem shared between Albania and Montenegro to sustainably and collaboratively manage the area for the benefit of communities and of nature itself, in line with UNESCO Man and Biosphere Programme conditions.

Check out the promotional video [here](#).



The project is implemented by Environmental centre for Development, Education and Networking (EDEN center), Environment Programme – EnvPro, National Agency of Protected Areas in Albania and Public Enterprise National Parks of Montenegro.

Launch of cross-border employment project for youth and unemployed

On 6th March 2025, Lezha hosted the official launch of the EU-funded project *Boosting decent employment for youth and unemployed people in the cross-border area of Montenegro and Albania*. The initiative aims to empower young people and unemployed individuals through soft skills and digital training, professional internships, and entrepreneurial support.

Implemented by World Vision Albania, the Employment Agency of Montenegro, and the Albanian National Employment and Skills Agency, the project will support 30 vocational school students, 140 unemployed youth and 40 women artisans and men craftsmen in family-based economies.



The launching event brought together stakeholders to align on goals and strengthen collaboration for impactful outcomes.



Cross-border project for the development of women's entrepreneurship officially launched in Ulcinj

On 12th February 2025, the project *Women microenterprise development in cross-border area* was officially launched in Ulcinj. The aim of the project is to empower women entrepreneurs and contribute to sustainable economic development in the border regions of Montenegro and Albania.

This cross-border initiative is supported through the Fourth Call of the IPA II Montenegro – Albania Cross-border Cooperation Programme 2014–2020, with a total allocation of €1.5 million.



Nada Pejović, Head of the Directorate for Bilateral Cross-border Programmes at the Ministry of European Affairs, emphasised the significance of this initiative, stating that the project will enable women to develop their business ideas, enhance their knowledge, and access markets with the necessary support. *"The project not only encourages economic growth but also contributes to the greater visibility and promotion of women's entrepreneurship. By strengthening entrepreneurial skills and establishing business advisory services, we are providing concrete opportunities for the development of women-led micro and small enterprises. The Ministry of European Affairs, with the support of the European Union, will continue to support such projects that contribute to the prosperity of the cross-border region and the improvement of the quality of life of its population,"* Pejović noted.

The Mayor of Ulcinj, **Genci Nimanbegu**, thanked the partners from Ulcinj and Albania for their dedication, highlighting that the project focuses on women, their empowerment, and the improvement of their quality of life through support for sustainable businesses.



Sanja Todorović, Head of the Joint Technical Secretariat, expressed satisfaction with the continued support for women's entrepreneurship, noting that the project is an example of best practices in the use of EU funds and in strengthening the capacity of local partners.

In addition to supporting women's entrepreneurship, cross-border cooperation will continue through the new IPA III Montenegro – Albania Programme for the period 2021–2027, with a total budget of €13.79 million. The programme will focus on environmental sustainability, tourism development and strengthening competitiveness.



News on projects financed under the 3rd CfP IPA CBC Programme Montenegro - Kosovo

Successful completion of the NERA project

On 28th March 2025, the NERA – New Environment Revitalization Approach project, jointly implemented by the Municipality of Tuzi and the Municipality of Peja, officially concluded with a closing conference held in Peja.

The event gathered representatives from both municipalities, project partners and community members to celebrate the achievements and impact of this cross-municipal collaboration.



Follow the project [page](#) for more updates and information on results achieved.



Conference held in Kolašin

During March, a two-day conference on the topic *Improving Solid Waste Management* was held in Kolašin, organised as part of the project *Cross-Border Green Deal*, implemented by FORS Montenegro, ECMI Kosovo and the Municipality of Berane. The aim of the conference was to exchange experiences, opinions, models of good practices and lessons learned in the field of solid waste management, as well as to raise awareness about this issue and the importance of international cooperation in this area.



The conference gathered representatives of institutions and services involved in environmental protection, civil society organisations, national and local governments, media, etc., from Montenegro and other countries. The topics discussed in more detail during the conference included strategies and policies in the field of waste management, major challenges, examples of good practices and new technologies, sustainable solid waste management, implementation of projects in this area, as well as education on proper waste management.



The *Cross-Border Green Deal* project aims to improve the quality of services in the environmental protection and waste management sectors and to raise public awareness about the importance of environmentally responsible behaviour in preserving the environment and natural resources.

New generation of Eco-Label Auditors certified

In a significant step toward promoting sustainable development in the tourism sector, the *Tourism for Future* project has proudly certified 15 new Eco-Label Auditors.

These professionals, now officially equipped with the tools and knowledge to assess and guide tourism businesses toward eco-certification, will play a vital role in shaping the region's green tourism future. Their certification marks a milestone in fostering environmentally responsible travel, promoting green practices, and encouraging transnational tourism collaboration across the Western Balkans.

The certification process was carried out through intensive training modules focused on eco-label criteria, auditing processes, and sustainability principles tailored to the region's unique ecological and cultural assets.



Opening Ceremony of the Dukagjini Creative Hub

On 12 February 2025, the Dukagjini Creative Hub officially opened its doors in Peja, Kosovo. The hub has been established as a space for creativity, strengthening the role of cultural heritage in sustainable development. With the guidance and support of the Creative Hub in Bar, Montenegro, this space has become a model of cross-border cooperation, combining resources and knowledge to foster regional development.



The creation and development of this centre have been implemented by CHwB Kosovo as part of the *C.L.O.S.E.R.* project that is being implemented in cooperation with the municipality of Bar.



Cross-border business fair boosts regional cooperation between Montenegro and Kosovo

As part of the *Skills for Sustainable Employment in the Cross-Border Region of Montenegro and the Republic of Kosovo – No Borders!* project, a dynamic Cross-Border Business Fair was successfully held in the city of Peja, bringing together 21 businesses from municipalities on both sides of the Montenegro–Kosovo border. The event served as a vital platform to strengthen economic cooperation, foster partnerships and encourage regional trade. With a shared vision of breaking down barriers and building sustainable ties, businesses from diverse sectors showcased their products and services, explored new markets and engaged in valuable networking opportunities aimed at expanding their reach beyond national borders.



The fair was complemented by holding the closing conference of the *No borders* project. The conference highlighted the project's tangible impact, particularly in empowering youth and supporting local businesses through capacity-building initiatives. The project was implemented by Chamber of Economy of Montenegro, Chamber of Commerce of the Republic of Kosovo, Berane RBC and Education, Training and Research Institute Kosovo.



Final conference of the project Evocation and attraction of cultural heritage held in Berane

The final conference of the project *Evocation and attraction of cultural heritage – Christian antiquity and Turkish bath for cultural tourism* was held in Berane on 13th February 2025. The €400,000 project aimed to enhance the economic competitiveness of the cross-border area

between Montenegro and Kosovo by improving its cultural tourism potential. The project was implemented by the Polimlje Museum in Berane and the NGO Marimangat e Pejës from Kosovo. The two-day event brought together representatives from ministries involved in archaeology, culture, science, research and tourism, as well as local government representatives, civil society, professionals from the fields of culture and tourism, museum staff and other interested stakeholders.



Opening the conference, **Violeta Folić**, Director of the Polimlje Museum in Berane, thanked the partners for their effective cooperation. *"This project has strengthened cooperation between Montenegro and Kosovo in the fields of culture and tourism, while also opening the door to collaboration in other areas,"* said **Folić**. **Nada Pejović**, Head of the Directorate for Bilateral Cross-Border Programmes at the Ministry of European Affairs, emphasised the great appreciation for the efforts of all project beneficiaries working to improve the economic competitiveness of border regions. *"The results of this project are of great importance for increasing the tourism competitiveness of the cross-border area between Berane and Peja through the development of culture and tourism, as well as through the use of modern scientific tools for the study, conservation, and valorisation of cultural assets in this region,"* **Pejović** noted.



Mayor of Berane, **Đole Lutovac**, congratulated the partners on their dedication and cooperation within the project, as well as on the results achieved. *"I am pleased that significant projects are actively being implemented and invested in the north of Montenegro. The Municipality of Berane will always support similar initiatives to jointly develop and valorise our local potential,"* stated **Lutovac**. **Xheneta Syka Kelmendi**, Director of the Directorate for Culture, Sports, and Youth in the Municipality of Peja, emphasised the importance of this project for the cultural heritage of the cross-border area. *"This project has contributed to the promotion of Peja's culture and has enabled the valorisation of local heritage for cultural-tourism purposes,"* said **Kelmendi**.

Sanja Todorović, Head of the Joint Technical Secretariat, stated that the project made it possible to create the conditions for preserving valuable cultural assets for future generations. This was achieved through excavation and conservation at the Tumbarice site, the conservation of the Hadži Bej Turkish Bath in Peja, and the collection of a large volume of 3D digital data from various sources, in higher resolution and with richer content, both before and after conservation. *"I hope that the municipalities where these cultural heritage sites are located will ensure the sustainability of the project results by continuing to invest in their further valorisation, improving accessibility, and promoting them. This will enhance the tourism offer and, in turn, improve the economic situation of their citizens and the municipalities themselves,"* **Todorović** added.

The project focused on the archaeological site of Tumbarice in Berane and the restoration of the Turkish bath in Peja. These sites are envisioned as pivotal centres for research, education, and the promotion of cultural heritage. Modern approaches, including the application of 3D technology, were employed to process, preserve, and present selected data on immovable cultural heritage, thereby providing a solid platform for further research and raising awareness about the significance of cultural heritage for society.

Capacity building for project beneficiaries

During the period February – April 2025 Operating Structures with the support of the JTS organised a series of capacity building events for beneficiaries of the 4th CfP Montenegro - Albania.



Namely, the JTS provided administrative and technical assistance to the CFCU and external expert for the *Training on secondary procurement and Implementation Seminar* that took place in Podgorica. The training focused on EU secondary procurement rules and the requirements of the Grant Contract's Annex IV, as well as on project planning and management and internal monitoring.



The Reporting, Publicity and Visibility Training for the beneficiaries was held in Shkodra, Albania.



The JTS delivered the trainings sessions where detailed instructions on filling out the Interim or Final report were given to the beneficiaries, as well as information on proper methods and techniques for publicity and visibility in line with EU rules.



Capacity building activities for potential applicants within IPA III Montenegro - Albania

The Joint Technical Secretariat, in cooperation with the Ministry of European Affairs of Montenegro, Ministry of Finance of Montenegro - Directorate for Finance, Contracting and Implementation of EU Assistance Funds (CFCU) and State Agency of Strategic Programming and Aid Coordination of the Republic of Albania (SASPAC), organised three-day training course on Project cycle management for potential applicants from the eligible programme area of Albania.



In February 2025, as part of the preparatory activities before the publication of the 1st CfP within IPA III CBC Programme Montenegro - Albania, one training on drafting of project proposals in line with the EU rules was organised in Shengjin, Albania and was dedicated to other potential applicants than local and regional authorities from Albania and was held in period 3rd – 5th February 2025.

5th Regional Meeting of the IPA-IPA Joint Technical Secretariats

The 5th Regional Meeting of the IPA-IPA Joint Technical Secretariats took place, organised by Cbib Plus took place from 8 to 10 April in Skopje.



The event brought together representatives from the region to discuss AI in communication, improvements in the IPA III Monitoring System, as well as updates related to the implementation of the IPA II and IPA III bilateral programmes.



Operating structures of the programmes (click on the icon to visit the website)



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