



REPUBLIC OF BULGARIA  
Ministry of Finance

# NATIONAL REFORM PROGRAMME

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# 2024

# NATIONAL REFORM PROGRAMME

# 2024

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Ministry of Finance of the Republic of Bulgaria

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## List of Abbreviations

EA - Employment Agency	ICT - Information and Communications Technology
PPA - Public Procurement Agency	IECP - Integrated Energy and Climate Plan
RIA - Road Infrastructure Agency	IPA - Institute of Public Administration
UMBE - Updated Mid-term Budget Estimate	IPA - Innovation Promotion Act
AFCOS - "Protection of the Financial Interests of the European Union" Directorate	CIP - Climate Investment Programme
BDB - Bulgarian Development Bank	MWIP - Mineral Waters Investment Programme
GDP - Gross Domestic Product	ISSS - Innovation Strategy for Smart Specialisation
GVA - Gross Value Added	CAIS EPP - Centralized Automated Information System Electronic Public Procurement Public Procurement Information System
RS - (State Agency) Road Safety	ISCCMR - Information System for the Centralized Creation and Maintenance of Registers
AG - Awarded Grant	ITI - Integrated Territorial Investments
IEAS - Internal Electronic Administrative Services	ITS - Intelligent Traffic Systems
RES - Renewable Energy Sources	AAQ - Ambient Air Quality
WSS - Water and Sewerage System	FR - Final Recipient
HEI - Higher Education Institutions	CSO - Criteria for selection of operations
WPS - Wind Power Stations	IBRD - International Bank for Reconstruction and Development
MDFSPP - Main Directorate "Fire Safety and Protection of the Population"	MoI - Ministry of Interior
GIS - Geographic Information System	MoFA - Ministry of Foreign Affairs
SACP - State Agency for Child Protection	RRF - Recovery and Resilience Facility
SB - State Budget	MEG - Ministry of Electronic Governance
EAD - Employment Agency Directorate (Labour Bureau)	MIG - Ministry of Innovation and Growth
SG - State Gazette	ICD - International Statistical Classification of Diseases and Related Health Problems
KG - Kindergarten	MOEW - Ministry of Environment and Water
GAEC - Good Agricultural and Environmental Conditions	MV - motor vehicle
SME - State Matriculation (school leaving) Examination	MW - minimum wage
SES - State Educational Standard	MRDPW - Ministry of Regional Development and Public Works
EEMSK - Energy Efficiency of Municipal Schools and Kindergartens	CM - Council of Ministers
EC - European Commission	SMEs - Small and Medium-sized Enterprises
EU - European Union	MTC - Ministry of Transport and Communications
ESIF - European Structural and Investment Funds	MLSP - Ministry of Labour and Social Policy
ESM - European Stability Mechanism	MF - Ministry of Finance
EPSR - European Pillar of Social Rights	NRA - National Revenue Agency
ERDF - European Regional Development Fund	NLAB - National Legal Aid Bureau
ESMF - European Shared Management Funds	NEA - National External Assessment
EDIHs - European Digital Innovation Hubs	NTEF - National Trust Eco Fund
BDA - Biological Diversity Act	NHIF - National Health Insurance Fund
RTA - Road Traffic Act	RDA - Research and Development Activities
ERSA - Energy from Renewable Sources Act	NCCRS - National Coordination Center for Road Safety
EGA - Electronic Government Act	NSP - National Science Programme
ASA - Amending and Supplementing Act	NSSI - National Social Security Institute
SMR - Statutory management requirements	NRRP - National Recovery and Resilience Plan
MPHMA - Medicinal Products in Human Medicine Act	NAPCP - National Air Pollution Control Programme
EPA - Employment Promotion Act	NRP - National Reform Programme
IPA - Innovation Promotion Act	NA - National Assembly
CCMA - Climate Change Mitigation Act	NSI - National Statistical Institute
PPA - Public Procurement Act	NSSTDRB - National Strategy for Sustainable Tourism Development in the Republic of Bulgaria 2014-2030
LULUCF - Land use, land-use change, and forestry	ECEC - Early childhood education and care
PFA - Public Finance Act	UN - United Nations
BSMEPA - Bulgarian Small and Medium Enterprises Promotion Agency	CAP - Common Agricultural Policy
AI - Artificial Intelligence	
UAA - Utilised agricultural area	

RIEW - Regional Inspectorate of Environment and Water  
PSHPP - Pumped Storage Hydro Power Plant  
VS - vocational school  
UGS - Underground Gas Storage  
PCOS - primary care and outpatient settings (primary outpatient health care)  
PIROs - Plans for the integrated development of municipalities  
CIEP - "Competitiveness and Innovations in Enterprises" Programme 2021-2027  
MFAP - "Maritime, Fisheries and Aquacultures" Programme  
CMP - "Climate Microprojects" Programme  
GDCM - Government decree of the Council of Ministers  
RIDSTP - "Research, Innovation and Digitization for Smart Transformation" Programme  
VET - vocational education and training  
EP - "Environment" Programme  
PTV - road transport vehicle  
PDR 2021-2027 "Programme "Development of Regions"2021-2027  
RDP - Rural Development Programme  
HRDP - "Human Resources Development" Programme  
WWTP - Waste Water Treatment Plants  
TAP - Technical Assistance Programme  
EMEPa - Enterprise for Management of Environmental Protection Activities  
RBMP - River Basin Management Plans  
FRMP - Flood Risks Management Plans  
RCM - Resolution of the Council of Ministers  
FP - Framework Programme  
RFS - Regional Feasibility Studies  
RWMA - Regional Waste Management Associations  
SOMC - Specialized outpatient medical care  
SMR - Structure for Monitoring and Reporting  
CAW - Construction and assembly works  
SR - Specific Recommendation  
LPVET - List of professions for vocational education and training  
SPDARA - Strategic plan for the Development of Agriculture and Rural Areas  
SEDS - Secure Electronic Delivery System  
UNSC - United Nations Security Council  
CBC - Cross-Border Cooperation  
TPS - Thermal power station  
SCRA - a section with a concentration of road accidents  
FI - Financial instrument  
FMFIB - Fund Manager of Financial Instruments in Bulgaria  
EEA FM - European Economic Area Financial Mechanism  
FPM - fine particulate matter  
JTF - Just Transition Fund  
CE - Center of Excellence  
CC - Competence Center  
SDGs - UN Sustainable Development Goals  
NEETs - young people who are "not in employment, education or training"

## Introduction

The 2024 National Reform Programme (NRP) update is prepared within the annual cycle of the European Semester.

The document is aligned with the 2024 Annual Sustainable Growth Strategy and the 2024 Alert Mechanism Report, which give the start of the 2024 Semester. The focus of the NRP is on the areas of the 2023 Country Report, on the findings of the 2023 Joint Employment Report, and the progress in addressing the 2023 Country Specific Recommendations (CSR) of the Council. This is necessary due to the fact that the European Commission (EC) will publish the report on Bulgaria for 2024 in June.

This year's update of the NRP will be the last, as the reformed fiscal framework for economic governance in the EU is expected to enter into force in May 2024. Pursuant to the new framework, a medium-term fiscal structural plan, covering a period of 4 or 7 years, will replace the Stability Programmes/Convergence Programmes and the National Reform Programmes (NRP), which each member state shall be obliged to send to the European Commission by the end of April each year. This means that this year the countries should present both Stability Programmes/Convergence Programmes and the National Reform Programmes (NRP), and a medium-term fiscal structural plan by the end of the year.

The 2024 NRP update was developed in accordance with the Convergent Programme of the Republic of Bulgaria (2024-2027).

The commitments and measures set out in the programme are also consistent with the implementation of the principles and rights from the European Pillar of Social Rights (EPSR). Measures in implementation of the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are also presented, as well as summary information on the implementation of measures and reforms from the National Recovery and Resilience Plan (NRRP).

The National Reform Programme includes five sections. The first one contains a short review of the macroeconomic expectations. The second section includes measures in response to the CSRs and the identified gaps in the 2023 Country Report for Bulgaria. For the first and third CSRs, specific information is presented in table format of the measures by which the commitments and policy targets will be realized within the framework of the current semester. Summarized information on the progress of the implementation is presented for the second CSR. The third section presents information on the implementation of the milestones and targets of the NRRP from the EC's FENIX reporting system. The fourth section reviews the progress of the UN's SDGs. The relation between the priorities in financing from the European Structural and Investment Funds for the period 2021-2027 and the challenges identified in the 2023 Country Report for Bulgaria and the 2023 CSRs is briefly presented in the last section.

# 1. Macroeconomic Context and Scenario

## Macroeconomic perspectives for the period covered by the Programme

in the last four years, Bulgaria has maintained a stable fiscal and external position in the times of unprecedented global crisis, caused initially by the COVID-19 pandemic, and since 2022, by Russia's war in Ukraine. The country managed to recover and overcome the negative consequences of the pandemic in terms of GDP at constant prices already in 2021.

In 2023, a deterioration of the economic activity in the EU was observed, in an environment of restrictive monetary policy and withdrawal of the fiscal stimulus. In 2023, the Bulgarian economy recorded a lower real GDP growth of 1.8% compared to 3.9% in 2022. Driven by the deteriorating external demand, exports of goods and services reported a decline, however the decline in imports was greater and net exports along with consumption contributed positively to GDP growth. After the significant accumulation of inventories in the economy in 2021-2022, in 2023, driven by the weak external demand, companies did not invest in inventories, which led to their significant reduction and had a strong negative contribution to GDP growth. At the same time, the use of available inventories, mostly of materials, limited the need for imports to some extent.

Bulgaria will return to its relatively high growth path of 3.2% in 2024 due to stronger growth in public investment and consumption spending. The rebound in private investments is expected to be attuned with the stronger external demand. Households consumption will continue to be supported by the real growth in disposable income. The improvement of the external environment will favour the growth of exports.

In 2023, the annual employment growth in the Bulgarian economy stood at 1%, which was mainly influenced by the increase in the number of jobs in services and construction. In 2024, the economic activity is expected to accelerate and in the next years will vary slightly below the rate of 3%. Nevertheless, our projection for the annual growth rate of employment dynamics during the period 2024-2027 is expected to decline to 0.5% in 2024 and to 0.3% in the remaining years of the forecast period. The main argument for the slowdown in employment growth is the negative demographic development in the country and the running out of opportunities to increase labour supply.

The unemployment rate is expected to decline from 4.3% in 2023 to 4.0% in 2027. The opportunities for transition from unemployment to employment are increasingly limited and our main assumption is that in the next years the increase in employment will occur predominantly by attracting some of the inactive people back into the workforce or by attracting labour from other countries.

The nominal growth in compensations per one employee reached 13.3% in 2023. Higher wage costs in the public sector also contributed to the growth in compensation per employee. The growth of labour income managed to fully compensate the inflation in the country. In 2024, the growth of the compensations per employee is expected to ease off, following the slowdown in inflation, employment dynamics, and the acceleration of the growth of the real labour productivity. In nominal terms, the growth rate of the indicator is estimated at 9.3%. A higher contribution is expected due to the tight labour market conditions and the growing labour

shortage, as well as to the increase in the minimum wage, in compliance with the adopted normative changes. The nominal income growth will continue to decelerate during the period 2025-2027, following the slowdown in the inflation, economic activity and employment growth in the country. Also, the public sector will have a smaller contribution to the growth in the compensations per employee.

The disinflation process in the country, which has been observed since October 2022, is expected to persist. The annual average inflation for 2024 is projected at 2.4%, while the end-of-period inflation will slow down up to 2.3%. The Core inflation components and in particular services will have the highest appreciation and the greatest contribution to the headline rate. In the coming years, the inflation at the end of the year will continue to gradually decelerate, mainly in line with the expected dynamics of international commodity prices.

The annual growth of private sector credit remained strong and stood at 12% at the end of 2023. Despite the measures to withdraw liquidity from the banking system, the transmission of the ECB's monetary policy in Bulgaria remained relatively weak, especially with regards to interest rates on mortgage loans, which in turn continued to contribute to the higher demand of dwellings. In 2024, the growth of total claims from the private sector is projected to be around 9.7%. Households credit is expected to slow down, but its growth will remain relatively high, supported by still strong growth in nominal income. The annual growth of claims on corporations will be nearly 8.1% at the end of 2024, compared to 9.4% at the end of 2023. By the end of the forecast period, the credit to households is expected to continue to slow down.

In 2023 the government fiscal balance remained within the approved limits of the fiscal rules, and debt as a percentage of GDP was the second lowest among the EU countries.

The global geopolitical situation continues to be dominated by a high degree of uncertainty, which creates significant risks to the realization of the macroeconomic forecast. A risk of limited supply of certain raw materials is still existing. The worsening of the financing conditions may have a stronger negative effect on investments and consumption than projected. The forecast also incorporates some positive outcomes. During the recent two years, growth in household consumption has surpassed expectations, and if this trend continues in 2024, higher GDP growth would be observed. After a significant decline in inventories in 2023, a positive change is possible in 2024, instead of the zero contribution is anticipated.



## 2. Policy response to major economic challenges

Challenges identified in the 2023 Country Specific Recommendations of the Council, in the 2023 Country Report of the EC for Bulgaria and in the 2023 Joint Employment Report

### Implementation of the 2023 Country Specific Recommendations of the Council

#### I Specific Recommendation 1

Wind down the emergency energy support measures in force, using the related savings to reduce the government deficit, as soon as possible in 2023 and 2024. Should renewed energy price increases necessitate new or continued support measures, ensure that such support measures are targeted at protecting vulnerable households and firms, are fiscally affordable and preserve incentives for energy savings. Ensure prudent fiscal policy, in particular by limiting the nominal increase in nationally financed net primary expenditure in 2024 to not more than 4,6 %. Preserve nationally financed public investment and ensure the effective absorption of grants under the Facility and of other Union funds, in particular to foster the green and digital transitions. For the period beyond 2024, continue to pursue a medium-term fiscal strategy of gradual and sustainable consolidation, combined with investments and reforms conducive to higher sustainable growth, in order to achieve a prudent medium-term fiscal position.

#### – Summary of the Policy

The preparation of the 2024 Budget, within the second stage of the budget procedure for 2024, was affected by the late adoption of the State Budget Act of the Republic of Bulgaria for 2023, which reflected annual effects of policy changes and the main assumptions adopted with the Budget 2023.

The objectives of the fiscal policy that the deficit for the medium-term period to be within the framework of the fiscal rules and restrictions pursuant to national and European legislation are kept, upon ensuring the required financial resources for the implementation of the priorities set forth in the government programme focused on social policies, investment programmes and the reforms financed from both the national budget and the EU funds accounts.

The budget balance under the Consolidated Fiscal Programme (CFP) is a deficit of around 3.0% of GDP for the period 2024-2026 and is within the rules and restrictions of the Public Finance Act (PFA). Sustained nominal revenue growth is expected, including of tax and insurance, and a slight decrease in aid received from abroad, which is due to the stages of implementation of the programmes co-funded by the EU Relative to the nominal GDP forecast from the Spring Macroeconomic Forecast the total revenue as a share of GDP is in the range between 37.7-38.3%. The same trend is observed in the total expenditure (total expenses and contribution to the general budget of the EU), which as a share of GDP are within the range of 40.8-41.5% respectively.

National budget expenditures are within the 40<sup>th</sup>% rule as per Art. 28, para. 1 of the PFA.

In 2024, the government envisages the implementation of the capital budget under the national programmes, the European Union programmes and mechanisms, as well as pursuant to other international programmes and agreements. For this purpose, the capital expenses as per the separate budgets of the first-level spending units under the State budget for the period 2024-2026 have been allocated to a detached resource in the central budget. The purpose is to achieve better planning and spending of capital expenses, as well as higher efficiency and transparency in the implementation of investment programmes.

The parameters of the 2024 Budget and the Updated Medium-term Budget Forecast (UMBF) for the period 2024-2026 have been developed within the framework of the Maastricht criteria, and for the 'General Government' sector the deficit is respectively 3.0% of GDP for 2024; 3.0% of GDP for 2025, and 2.8% of GDP for 2026.

The planned deficit of the 'General Government' sector by 2026 is achieved despite the significant effect of the reflection in the expenditure part of the expected deliveries in the defence sector in 2025, upon cash expenses already reported in previous years. In this way, one of the significant criteria for joining the Eurozone has been covered.

According to the PFA at the beginning of 2024, the budget procedure for 2025 was also started, and within the first stage, the government should approve the medium-term budget forecast for the period 2025-2027, simultaneously with the NRP and the Convergent Programme, according to the deadlines of the European Semester, which should be prepared on the basis of current legislation and the development of policies and investments laid down in the 2024 Budget, and the undertaken revenue and expenditure consolidation measures with the corresponding effects and the proposals for legislative changes should also be included.

As a result of the rise in prices of natural gas, electricity and liquefied petroleum gas (LPG), an emergency package of anti-crisis measures was adopted in 2022 to support business and households, including exemption from excise duty on electricity, LPG and natural gas, pursuant to art. 15 of the Council Directive 2003/96/EC as of 27 October 2003 on the restructuring of the Community legal framework for the taxation of energy products and electricity, with a period until 30.06.2025. In response to the 2023 Council recommendation for the gradual termination of the current emergency measures for energy support, the measure was prematurely terminated with the adoption of the 2023 State Budget Act of the Republic of Bulgaria, promulgated in the Official Gazette on 01.08.2023.

In § 3 of the Transitional and Final Provisions of the 2024 State Budget Act of the Republic of Bulgaria, it is provided that electricity producers with facilities for the production of electricity with an installed capacity of more than 1 MW, whose market income is received from the sale of produced by these facilities electricity from wind energy, solar energy (solar thermal and photovoltaic solar energy), geothermal energy, biomass fuels (solid and gaseous biomass fuels, excluding biomethane), waste, nuclear energy, lignite, petroleum products and peat and for energy produced by coal and hydro power plants, to make targeted contributions to the Power System Security Fund representing the positive difference between the market revenue without value added tax and the specified revenue ceiling calculated by applying values for the relevant type of producer, with a delivery period from January 1, 2024 to December 31, 2024, with the exception of transactions with balancing energy needed for balancing the electricity system by Electricity System Operator (ESO EAD).

The values, in BGN per MWh, which are used to calculate the revenue ceiling for the relevant type of electricity producer, are determined by an act of the Council of Ministers and are identical to those approved by the Decision No. 580 of the Council of Ministers dated 30.08.2023. Planned continuation of the revenue ceilings implementation in effect during the second half of 2023 by types of producers is a proven sustainable solution, balancing the interests of producers and the need to accumulate resources in the Power System Security Fund to cover costs as adopted by the Council of Ministers compensation programmes related to electricity

and/or natural gas prices. The compensation measure is in line with Council Regulation (EU) 2022/1854 of 6 October 2022 on an emergency intervention to address high energy prices and the Commission Guidelines as of 03.03.2023 on recovery and resilience plans within the context of the REPowerEU plan, providing additional flexibility under cohesion policy through the SAFE (Support for Affordable Energy - affordable, secure and sustainable energy for Europe) measures related to the provision of direct support to vulnerable families and small and medium-sized enterprises to compensate for rising energy prices, as well as the Temporary Crisis and Transition Framework for State Aid measures to support the economy following the aggression against Ukraine by Russia (last amended on November 21, 2023).

Upon implementation of the European political programme 'Digital Decade' until 2030, an updated strategic document 'Digital transformation of Bulgaria for the period 2024-2030' has been prepared, with annexes thereon - Analysis of the state of digital transformation, and National road map for digital transformation until 2030, which was adopted officially by a Decision of the Council of Ministers № 264/04.04.2024. The strategic document and the National Road Map reflect the strategic vision of our country for digital transformation, determine the level of national objectives in compliance with the European ones, and contain priorities for Bulgaria concerning the period up to 2030.

In compliance with the development trends in the new decade, as an essential priority in the digital transformation of the public sector, data defined as a key capital for society, has been identified. The digitization of data, the construction of unified data spaces and the application of unified, common data models and a common standardized tools for working with data in the public sector are a prerequisite for the functioning of a data-based economy and management.

Another priority is secure cyberspace and trust as drivers of demand and use of ICT-based products and services and as key factors for successful digital transformation.

On September 19, 2023, the Amending and Supplementing Act to the Electronic Government Act was promulgated (ASA of EGA, SG, issue No. 80 as of 2023). The changes are aimed at significantly acceleration of the development process of electronic government in the Republic of Bulgaria, as well as real benefits for citizens and enterprises to reduce the administrative burden and stimulation of the electronic administrative services use. The preparation of the ASA of EGA is a milestone of the implementation of the C10.R6 reform: 'Registry reform for deploying the potential of electronic governance to improve the business environment' as per Component No. 10 'Business Environment' of the NRRP.

For the purpose of promoting resource efficiency and the circular economy through sustainable waste management, investments with means from the European funds for shared management under the EP 2021-2027 in the amount of 611.5 million are mainly aimed at: construction, expansion and/or upgrading of municipal/regional systems for separate collection and recycling of biodegradable waste, construction of systems/centres for separate collection and preparation for reuse and repair, waste recycling - permissible in combination with separate collection and preliminary treatment of separately collected waste, optimization of the municipal waste management process, etc. With the projects implementation, it is planned to provide additional waste recycling capacity of up to 330,000 t/year, as well as separately collected waste of the same volume. Interventions also cover reclamation of landfills and/or ensuring the safety of existing landfills without increasing their capacity.

Bulgaria does significant efforts to build the necessary sewerage networks and WWTPs in order to increase the degree of compliance of agglomerations within the requirements of the Directive 91/271/EEC, while at the same time is investing in renewing water supply systems and increasing the number of residents connected to improved public water supply. A significant financial resource is planned under the EP 2021-2027 in the amount of BGN 1.399 milliard for: infrastructural measures for the collection, removal and purification of wastewater and for water supply with a contribution to reducing water losses in the water supply network and

improving the quality of drinking water, development of RFS for future financing for newly consolidated regions - the last 6 regions in the country, etc. Due to the interventions, is expected approximately 1.7 million inhabitants to have improved public water supply and nearly 209 thousand inhabitants to be connected to at least secondary wastewater treatment.

Through the NRRP funds for the implementation of the project 'Program for construction/finishing/reconstruction of water supply and sewage systems, including waste water treatment plants for agglomerations between 2,000 and 10,000 p.e.' for water supply infrastructure in smaller agglomerations.

As part of the national policy to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and adapt to climate change, financial support for projects to reduce greenhouse gas emissions continues under the Climate Investment Programme (CIP) and the Climate Micro-Projects Programme and Investment programme 'Mineral waters', performed by the NTEF. At this stage, the CIP has made the most progress, as under the programme measures have been implemented to reduce energy consumption in 119 public buildings and 98 electric vehicles have been purchased for the administration needs. In 2023, in connection with the signed Agreement with the Federal Republic of Germany for the sale of the surplus of Annual emissions allocations (AEAs) until 2022, a Subprogramme 'Energy Efficiency of Municipal Schools and Kindergartens' was created at the CIP, which started with the first call for projects.

Within the frameworks of the EP 2021-2027 support in the amount of BGN 441.3 million is provided for measures to promote climate change adaptation, disaster risk prevention and resilience, taking into account ecosystem approaches, incl. measures for the prevention and management of the risk of floods and droughts, adverse geodynamic processes - landslides, collapses, erosions, abrasions, increasing the readiness of the population for an adequate response and improving resilience by providing land capacity to fight forest fires, building new and optimizing and/or expanding existing warning, monitoring, reporting systems, forecasting and signaling, development of digital models, analyses and forecasts in relation to climate change, etc. More than 2.5 million inhabitants are expected to benefit from flood protection measures.

Interventions in the field of protection, maintenance and restoration of ecosystems and their inherent biological diversity under the EP 2021-2027 with a financial resource in the amount of BGN 259.1 million are aimed at measures related to the development of the Natura 2000 network, improving the nature conservation status of natural habitats and species subject to protection in the network Natura 2000, protection/restoration of ecosystems and their inherent biological diversity outside Natura 2000, etc. A project is also being implemented within the framework of the NRRP: 'Integration of the ecosystem approach and application of solutions based on nature for the protection of protected areas in the Natura 2000 network'.

The investments under the EP 2021-2027 in the amount of BGN 773.5 million are aimed at improving the cleanliness of the ambient air and addressing the two main sources of pollution - domestic heating and transport, including also for measures to deal with secondary dispersion - green infrastructure in an urban environment; improving the monitoring of ambient air quality (AAQ), etc. As a result of the interventions, it is expected more than 2.7 million inhabitants to benefit from the measures for AAQ, the saved emissions of fine particulate matter FPM10 to be 1,435 t/year, and to replace the solid fuel heating devices of more than 88,000 dwellings.

To contribute to policies promoting the ecological and digital transition, in 2024 the HRDP 2021-2027 will provide funding under three procedures aimed at increasing the skills, qualifications and competences of unemployed, inactive and employed persons, in order to overcome the challenges of the dual labour market transition and better compliance with new workforce requirements (Operations 'Starting Work - Component 2 Training', 'Digital Skills' and 'Qualification, Skills and Career Development of Employed Persons'). The executor of the projects

under the procedures is the Employment Agency (EA), with which contracts have been concluded. During the programme period 2021-2027, more than 160,000 people are expected to receive new digital competences with the support of the HRDP.

### – Policy Response

The implementation of data-based governance and the transition to a data-based knowledge economy are supported by measures under the Programme 'Research, Innovation and Digitization for Smart Transformation' (PRIDST) 2021-2027, Priority 2 'Digital Transformation of the Public Sector'. At the same time, the national cyber security ecosystem is being built, thus the various public institutions adapt to the risks, threats and constantly changing environment. With the active participation of all strategic sectors, the aim is to increase security and significantly improve the quality of services provided to citizens and businesses.

EP 2021-2027 is the main and most important instrument to address the findings of the 2023 EC Report for Bulgaria, as interventions are aimed to challenges in areas such as the circular economy, climate change adaptation, biodiversity and ambient air quality. In relation to the implementation of the hierarchy in waste management, with a key role are the investments in municipal/regional systems for separate collection and recycling of biodegradable waste, systems/centres for separate collection and preparation for reuse and repair, waste recycling, separate collection and preliminary treatment of separately collected waste. In order to protect, maintain and restore ecosystems and their inherent biological diversity, significant support is provided for measures related to the development of the 'Natura 2000' network, improvement of the conservation status of natural habitats and species subject to protection in the Natura 2000 network, protection/restoration of ecosystems outside 'Natura 2000', measures from protected area management plans and species action plans. Concerning the terms of AAQ issues, interventions have been launched aimed at reducing air pollution from domestic heating by gradually replacing solid fuel heaters with environmentally friendly alternatives, and a small pilot procedure is planned to promote the use of RES, green hydrogen and other innovative alternatives, measures to reduce air pollution from transport by introducing low-emission zones, measures to cope with secondary dispersion - green infrastructure in urban environments, etc.

### – 2023 Country Report for Bulgaria and/or the 2023 Joint Employment Report for.

#### Findings

The results regarding the digitization of public services in Bulgaria are very low. The result is much below the average for the EU concerning digital public services for citizens (60 vs. 77), but it is close to the EU average for enterprises (81 vs. 84). The rate of electronic government users has also stagnated during the recent years at 32% compared to the average of 74% for the EU. One electronic identification (eID) scheme in the

#### Response of the Policy

The development of horizontal and centralized systems of electronic government and the imposition of the Unified Model for requesting, paying and providing electronic services (the Unified Model) provides an opportunity to offer more and more electronic services entirely online through a single entry point.

In the beginning of 2024, 502 administrations provide centralized electronic services through the portal of electronic government ([www.egov.bg](http://www.egov.bg)), of which 49 central, 303 municipal and their regional structures, 27 regional and 123 specialized territorial administrations.

In 2023, 83 new electronic services for centralized application through [www.egov.bg](http://www.egov.bg) were developed. Information on a total of 1,846 electronic services has been

country is available, which has been notified under the Regulation on electronic identification and authentication services.

Bulgaria has reported slow progress in the digital transformation of its administration.

published on the portal, of them 1,231 have been implemented through a centralized application according to the Unified Model. Nearly 100,000 users are registered at [www.egov.bg](http://www.egov.bg), in the 'My space' section.

The services requested electronically via [www.egov.bg](http://www.egov.bg) by citizens and enterprises in 2023 were 91,591 compared to 68,385 in the previous year, and 35,020 in 2021. The most frequently requested services are provided by municipal administrations, the Social Assistance Agency (SAA) and the Employment Agency (EA).

The development of the environment for inter-registry exchange continues through the addition of new registries, inquiries and data, which ensures the 'once only' principle application. 85 registries are included in the RegiX system, and for 2023 only, nearly 120 million internal electronic administrative services (IEAS) were requested and provided, out of a total of 364.3 million provided for the period 2018 - February 2024.

The upgrade of the Secure Electronic Delivery System (SEDS) provides the ability to create message templates that may be used to send specific messages from one target group to another, thus the ability to request IEAS is used and to receive a result in electronic form.

The development and implementation of an information system for the centralized creation and maintenance of registers (ISCCMR) will provide an opportunity to create and maintain registers entirely in electronic form in accordance with the requirements for security, reliability and interoperability, which allow automated exchange of data and electronic documents.

By CMD No. 232 as of November 20, 2023, a schedule for bringing into compliance with the EGA the registers of administrative bodies through the use of ISCCMR was approved.

In 2023, after a partner review by the member states was passed, the Bulgarian scheme for electronic identification was recognized as national within the meaning of Art. 7, (a) (iii) of the Regulation (EU) No. 910/2014, with CMD No. 390 as of 25.05.2023. The scheme was published in the Official Journal of the EU on 05.07.2023, after its notification to the EC. The scheme meets the requirements for 'substantial' and 'high' insurance levels, it provides an opportunity for Bulgarian citizens for reliable electronic identification upon applying for electronic services both on the territory of Bulgaria and in other EU member states.

At the same time, a second Bulgarian scheme for electronic identification applied for notification under the procedure.

The NRRP foresees measures to support the digitization of public services and the development of e-government, including the digitization of information arrays in the administration, containing register data and e-authentication from registers, which will create the



prerequisites for the widespread provision of electronic and internal electronic administrative services, as well as complex administrative services, proactive services and 'life events' type services.

A widespread distribution of digital infrastructure on the territory of the Republic of Bulgaria will be implemented with financing of the relevant investment under the NRRP. The investment is a prerequisite for unlimited access to public services, regardless of place and time, to support social inclusion and expand opportunities for the development and use of services based on digital technologies, including the electronic government services.

Efforts aimed at improving legislation to overcome obstacles to the efficient, secure and easy provision of electronic administrative services for citizens and businesses continue.

With the adopted changes in the EGA, an explicit obligation has been introduced for administrative bodies to keep the registers assigned to them by law in electronic form, as well as general rules for keeping registers and a general procedure for entry, deletion and authentication.

In order to stimulate the use of electronic administrative services, it is introduced an explicit obligation to provide electronically administrative services with a reduced fee compared to the fee for applying and providing them in person.

By a new provision of the law, an explicit prohibition is introduced for a by-law act to require citizens and businesses to provide certification documents to prove to an administrative body facts and circumstances that are available in registers, and to carry out an official check for this.

The circular use of materials in Bulgaria is among the weakest in the EU. Bulgaria is among the Member States who fall behind the most in the application of the measures for circular economy.

The measures pursuant to the Environment Programme 2021-2027 are mainly aimed at building, expanding and/or upgrading municipal/regional systems for separate collection and recycling of biodegradable waste, systems/centres for separate collection and preparation for re-use and repair, waste recycling measures and models for optimizing the municipal waste management process in Bulgaria. Measures to raise awareness of sustainable consumption and the circular economy, as well as information and clarification campaigns for stakeholders and the public, will also be supported.

In order to succeed in meeting its current targets for reducing greenhouse gas emissions by 2030 in the sectors not covered by the emissions trading scheme, Bulgaria needs to take additional measures.

Climate change mitigation and adaptation measures are financed under the NTEF and EP 2021-2027, including to promote climate change adaptation, disaster risk prevention and resilience, taking into account ecosystem approaches.

**Regarding the biodiversity and health of ecosystems there are possibilities for improvement.**

In relation to the management of protected sites of the Natura 2000 ecological network, efforts are aimed at introducing a new approach to the management of the 'Natura 2000' ecological network. There is also an ongoing development of specific and detailed nature protection goals for a number of protected sites. Interventions in the field of protection, maintenance and restoration of ecosystems and their inherent biological diversity under the EP 2021-2027 are aimed at measures related to the development of the Natura 2000 network, improving the nature conservation status of natural habitats and species subject to protection in the network 'Natura 2000', protection/restoration of ecosystems and their inherent biological diversity outside 'Natura 2000', etc.

**Regarding the pollution, the air quality in Bulgaria continues to raise serious concern.**

Investments under the EP 2021-2027 are aimed to improve the cleanliness of the ambient air and addressing the two main sources of pollution - domestic heating and transport, including for measures to deal with secondary dispersion - green infrastructure in an urban environment, improving the monitoring of ambient air quality, etc.



**Table 2-1: Measures addressing SR 1, part of Appendix 1**

Policy Field	Name of the Measure	Information regarding Measures Planned and Taken					Expected Effect including Budgetary	Indicators for Effect with Current and Target value
		Short Description of the Measure	Initial Date	Current Status (As of April 2024)	Upcoming Stages in the Implementation of the Measure until its Final Date for Execution (after April 2024)	End Date		
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	9	10
Grants from the EU funds are used effectively, in particular to stimulate the green and digital transition	Improved information systems for management and monitoring of funds from European funds under shared management in Bulgaria'	Support for improving the electronic environment for management and monitoring of Partnership Agreement programmes, including for the collection, processing and analysis of data necessary for evaluations of EU programmes/investments.	01.11.2023	A contract was concluded for the provision of AG under the project 'Digital transformation in the management of EU funds' with the one eligible specific beneficiary, Central Coordination Unit Directorate, Ministry of Finance	Draft for amendment to the CSO in connection with a request made by the RTA, which is to be consulted with the interested parties and the EC offices.	31 December 2029	BGN 38,7 million, Technical Assistance Programme	New functionalities of ISMM - 75 pcs.; Reduced administrative weight for applicants (share) - 30%; Reduced administrative weight for beneficiaries (share) - 40%; <sup>1</sup>
Targeted support for households and enterprises most vulnerable to rising energy prices	Shortening the period of excise duty exemption for certain energy products	Exemption from excise duty on electricity, liquefied petroleum gas and natural gas pursuant to Article 15 of Council Directive 2003/96/EC of 27 October 2003 restructuring the Community legal framework for the taxation of energy products and electricity	July 9, 2022	The measure was early terminated.  Pursuant to item 12 of § 27 of the Transitional and Final Provisions to the 2023 State Budget Act of the Republic of Bulgaria (SG, issue No. 66 as of 01.08.2023, in force as of 01.01.2023), §§ 6a and 6b of the Transitional and Final Provisions of the Excise and Tax Warehouse Act are repealed.  Pursuant to § 46, item 1 of the Transitional and Final Provisions to the 2023 State Budget Act of the Republic of Bulgaria. § 27 of it is in force as of August 1, 2023.		31.07.2023		

<sup>1</sup>The indicators are related to the concluded contract for the provision of AG under the project 'Digital transformation in the management of EU funds' with the one eligible specific beneficiary, Directorate of the Central Committee, Ministry of Finance

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	9	10
<p>To terminate existing emergency energy support measures, using the associated savings to reduce the budget deficit in 2023 and 2024. If further increases in energy prices require the introduction of new or continued measures for support - to ensure that these measures are aimed at protecting vulnerable households and entities, that they are fiscally affordable and that they maintain incentives for energy savings.</p>	<p>Coverage of expenses under national programmes adopted by the Council of Ministers for compensating the end customers' expenses for electricity and/or natural gas pursuant to Art. 36b, para. 1, item 4 of the Energy Act (EA).</p>	<p>Continuation of the revenue ceilings implementation in effect in the second half of 2023 by types of producers that proved to be a sustainable solution balancing the interests of producers and the need to accumulate resources in the Power System Security Fund to cover expenses of adopted by the Council of Ministers compensation programmes related to the prices of electricity and/or natural gas.</p>	<p>01.01.2024</p>	<p>§ 3, para. 2 in connection with § 29 of the Transitional and Final Provisions of the 2024 State Budget Act of the Republic of Bulgaria(promulgated SG, issue No. 108 as of December 30, 2023)</p>	<p>Adopted Decision of the Council of Ministers No. 167 as of March 14, 2024 to determine the values using to calculate the revenue ceiling concerning the relevant type of electricity producer under § 3, para. 1 of the Transitional and Final Provisions of the 2024State Budget Act of the Republic of Bulgaria.</p>	<p>2024</p>	<p>The estimated revenues in the ESSF budget for the period from January 1 to June 30, 2024 in the amount of approximately BGN 65 million. The calculations for the assumed income were made at an average estimated price of electricity for the free market for the price period January 1, 2024 - June 30, 2024 of BGN 160/MWh.</p>	<p>Covering expenses for programmes adopted by the Council of Ministers upon implementation of 36(b), para. 1, item 4 of the EA.</p>

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	9	10
Increasing the public investments in digital transition	Centralized creation, maintenance and digitization of registers kept by the administrative bodies, in accordance with the requirements of Art. 52(a) of the EGA and the CMD No.232 as of 20.11.2023.	Implementation of centralized creation, maintenance and digitization of registers kept by the administrative bodies, in compliance with the requirements of Art. 52a of the EGA (promulgated SG, issue No. 80 as of 2023) and the CMD No.232 as of November 20, 2023 for the adoption of a schedule for bringing the registers of administrative bodies in compliance with the EGA through the use of the CAIS EPP	2023	On 29.12.2023, a request was assigned under order No. 1 'Centralized construction, maintenance and digitization of registers kept by the administrative bodies, in compliance with the requirements of Art. 52(a) of the Electronic Government Act' from the Updated schedule 2023 of the Framework Agreement No.Д-5/25.07.2022, concluded with IS AD.  'Data and Requirements Analysis' document submitted and approved.  Accepted document 'Detailed Technical and Functional Specification (System project)'.	Building of a CAIS EPP system  Bringing registers in compliance with the EGA through the use of CAIS EPP	2025	BGN 11,718,000, own budget  Registers in accordance with the requirements of security, reliability and interoperability, which are kept entirely electronic way through a modern information system, allow automated exchange of data and electronic documents and application of the 'only once' principle	CAIS EPP system built  Current Value: 0 (2023)  Target value: 1 (2024)  Registries brought into line with the EGA through the use of CAIS EPP  Current Value: 0 (2023)  Target value: 305 (2025)
To keep nationally funded public investments and to ensure that grants under the Mechanism and other EU funds are utilised effectively, in particular to promote the green and	Applying the waste management hierarchy, preventing its generation, promoting its reuse and recovery through recycling, reducing landfilling and limiting its harmful impact on the environment and human health.	Investments in facilities, systems and business models for use of waste as resource in support of circular economy.  Investments to ensure the necessary infrastructure to treat household waste, generated in the country.	2023	Announced procedures under EP 2021-2027: 'Models for optimizing the municipal waste management process in Bulgaria' (the project proposal is under evaluation) in the amount of BGN 5 million;  'Reclamation of regional landfills/cells of regional landfills for household waste' (deadline for application - in 2 stages: 25.11.2023 and 15.04.2024), in the amount of BGN 87.7 million.	Preparation and announcement of procedures under EP 2021-2027 for the support of: construction, expansion and/or upgrading of municipal/regional systems for separate collection and recycling of biodegradable waste - for RWMA according to Appendix No.8 of the 2021-2028 National Plan for the Management of Household Waste ; building of systems/centers for separate collection and preparation for reuse and repair; waste recycling - permissible in combination with separate collection and preliminary treatment of separately collected waste; optimization of the municipal waste management process; reclamation of landfills and/or ensuring the safety of existing landfills without in-	2029	EP 2021-2027: BGN 611.5 million	Additional capacity for waste recycling, t/year: 0 (2023); 330,000 (2029)  Waste collected separately, t/year: 0 (2023); 330,000 (2029)  Area of rehabilitated land (resulting from the

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	9	10
digital transition.					<p>creasing their capacity, raising awareness of practices and behaviour related to sustainable consumption, circular economy, waste monitoring, etc.</p> <p>Preparation of an analysis for the selection of a specific model and parameters for the introduction of a deposit system for packages in Bulgaria, incl. proposed scope of the deposit system - type of packages and products; determining the factors to be considered in determining the scope; justification of choice; quantitative assessment of the flows/types of packages and products, according to the analyses and forecasts.</p> <p>Performing a survey to introduce a new model for the separate collection of packaging waste in Bulgaria.</p> <p>ASA of the Waste Management Act, with the aim mainly to achieve the set national goals for recycling packaging waste by covering the majority of the population with separate collection systems. Requirements are also introduced for local government bodies to set aside at least one site for the free transfer of waste generated by households on the territory of each municipality, as well as to create an organization for the separate collection of waste from shoes and textiles generated by households on each municipality territory.</p> <p>Amendments to the subordinate legislation, which mainly provide for the specification of the obligations of the persons placing tobacco products on the market in relation to the payment of the due product fees, the setting of specific norms regarding the fulfilment of the objectives for the collection and utilization of used oils and waste oil products, as well as unification and updating of the methodology for determining the</p>			<p>reclamation of landfills) for which support is granted, ha: 0 (2023); 80 (2029)</p>

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	9	10
					<p>quantitative goals for collection and utilisation of different types and categories of motor vehicles, which will prevent the implementation of unregulated activities.</p> <p>Implementation of the Programme 'Monitoring, control and disposal of obsolete pesticides and preventive measures' under the Framework Agreement between the Government of the Republic of Bulgaria and the Federal Council of the Swiss Confederation regarding the implementation of the second Swiss contribution to selected EU member states, to reduce the economic and social differences in the EU.</p>			
	<p>Introduction and implementation of an integrated approach to realize priority investments in WSS infrastructure and water management.</p>	<p>Investments in construction, rehabilitation and modernization of WSS infrastructure for agglomerations with more than 10,000 p.e. and agglomerations between 2,000 and 10,000 p.e..</p> <p>Implementation of the launched overall reform in the WSS sector with the aim of achieving consistency and sustainability in determining and implementing investment priorities in consolidated WSS areas.</p>	2023	<p>Announced procedure under EP 2021–2027: 'Construction of water supply infrastructure for 7 water supply operators' (application deadline - 15.07.2024), in the amount of BGN 807.99 million.</p> <p>The implementation of projects for the construction of sewerage networks and WWTP continues with financing by the EMEPA, as implemented projects are 18 in the total amount of BGN 55.5 million. 22 projects for water supply facilities in the total amount of BGN 39.3 million are being implemented.</p>	<p>Preparation and announcement of procedures under EP 2021-2027 for:</p> <p>Infrastructural measures for the collection, removal and treatment of waste water;</p> <p>Infrastructural measures for water supply with a contribution to reducing water losses along the water supply network and improving the quality of drinking water;</p> <p>Development of RFS for future financing for newly consolidated regions - the last 6 districts in the country;</p> <p>Support for the development of RBMP - assessments, data collection, etc.;</p> <p>Measures for monitoring and assessment of water quality for drinking and domestic water supply.</p> <p>Continuation/completion of the started and financing of new projects implementation by EMEPA/SB.</p> <p>Implementation of a project within the NRRP: 'Programme for construction/finishing/reconstruction of water supply and sewage systems, including waste</p>	2029	<p>EP 2021 - 2027: 1,399 milliard BGN</p> <p>EMEPA/SB: BGN 94.8 million</p> <p>NRRP: BGN 300 million from the RRF and BGN 92.8 million own participation</p>	<p>Citizens connected to improved public water supply, number: 0 (2023); 1 679 270 (2029)</p> <p>Citizens connected to at least secondary wastewater treatment, number: 0 (2023); 208 977 (2029)</p> <p>New or improved wastewater treatment capacity, p.e.: 0 (2023); 340 000 (2029)</p>

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	9	10
					<p>water treatment plants for agglomerations between 5,000 and 10,000 equivalent inhabitants (p.e.)' (investment C9.I1 from the NRRP).</p> <p>Update of the four 2022-2027 RBMP, including the Programmes of measures - completion of the activities carried out under the Agreement by the IBRD for RBMP projects for the four basin management regions, including public consultations conducting hereof.</p>			
	<p>Financing of measures for decreasing the GHG (greenhouse gas) emissions and adaptation to climate changes.</p>	<p>Financial support for projects to reduce greenhouse gas emissions within the Climate Investment Programme (CIP) with the sub-programme 'Energy Efficiency for Municipal Schools and Kindergartens' (EEMSK), the 'Climate Micro-Projects' Programme (CMPP) and the 'Mineral waters' Investment Programme (MWIP) of NTEF.</p> <p>Financial support for climate change adaptation projects under the EP 2021-2027.</p>	2023	<p>The following results were achieved under the CIP:</p> <p>'Energy Efficiency' Scheme</p> <p>Up to now measures to decrease energy use are implemented on 119 objects, including: 41 schools, 22 daycares and kindergartens, 17 administrative buildings, 9 community centers, 6 public buildings, 6 universities, 7 health services, 4 street lights and 7 municipal hospitals/clinics.</p> <p>Sub-programme EEMSK ('Energy Efficiency for Municipal Schools and Kindergartens')</p> <p>The first call for projects was launched in connection with the signed Agreement with the Federal Republic of Germany for the sale of surplus Annual emissions allocations (AEAs) until 2022. 9 application forms have been approved. The projects are under preparation for financing (preparation and review of the investment projects and technical documentation).</p> <p>Electric Vehicles Scheme</p> <p>Up to now, 98 electric vehicles for the public administration have been delivered.</p> <p>In 2023, the acceptance of project proposals under CMPP was completed. As per this programme two types of</p>	<p>CIP, 'Energy Efficiency' (EE) Scheme - announcement of a new call for projects, implementation of energy saving measures (ESM) in the approved objects;</p> <p>CIP, 'Electric vehicles' Scheme - new calls for projects collection, delivery of new electric vehicles for the state and municipal administrations;</p> <p>CIP, Sub-programme EEMSK - new call for projects collection, implementation of ESM in municipal schools and kindergartens, approved for financing.</p> <p>Realisation of new projects under CMPP.</p> <p>Realisation of investment activities under the approved projects under the MWIP.</p> <p>Preparation and announcement of procedures under EP 2021-2027 for:</p> <p>prevention and management of the risk of floods and droughts;</p> <p>risk analysis, monitoring and implementation of prevention and protection measures in adverse geodynamic processes - landslides, collapses, erosions, abrasions;</p> <p>increasing the readiness of the population for an adequate response and improving resilience by providing land capacity to fight forest fires;</p>	2029	<p>Under EP 2021-2027: 441,3 million BGN</p> <p>Under CIP: BGN 8,29 million from the NTEF</p> <p>Under CMPP: BGN 0,8 million from the NTEF</p>	<p>Citizens who benefit of flood protection measures, number: 0 (2023); 2,505,000 (2029)</p> <p>Green infrastructure built or improved to adapt to climate change, ha: 0 (2023); 280 (2029)</p>

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	9	10
				<p>small projects are being financed by supporting the mitigation of unfavourable climate changes and adaptation thereon:</p> <p>a) Small infrastructure projects (supply of equipment, software, construction of small infrastructure) leading to direct or indirect reduction of greenhouse gas emissions or adaptation to climate change and</p> <p>b) 'Soft' projects - activities related to mitigation and adaptation to climate change and consisting in the development of strategies/programmes/reports/analyses.</p> <p>Up to now 24 projects have been realized, including: 14 projects for construction of small infrastructure and 10 'Soft' projects.</p> <p>9 projects have been successfully completed under the Pilot Scheme of the MWIP with achieved specific results: more than 15 km of constructed or restored water pipelines; 6 built or reconstructed pumping stations; 5 built or reconstructed collection tanks for mineral water; 1 sanitary and security zone A. In 2023, the admission of projects under the MWIP was resumed. 3 new projects have been approved for financing. The projects are under preparation for financing (preparation and review of the investment projects and technical documentation).</p> <p>Announced procedures under EP 2021-2027 are:</p> <p>'Ensuring the land capacity to fight forest fires and preparing the population for response' with the direct beneficiary MDFSPP - Ministry of Interior - a contract in the amount of BGN 169.96 million has been concluded. (AG)</p>	<p>building new and optimizing and/or expanding existing warning, monitoring, reporting, forecasting and signalling systems;</p> <p>development of digital models, analysis and forecasts in relation to climate change.</p>			

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	9	10
				'Monitoring and implementation of prevention and protection measures in adverse geodynamic processes' with a direct beneficiary RIA under the MRDPW in the amount of BGN 30.76 million. (Deadline for apply documents - 22.06.2024)				
	Protection, maintenance and recovery of ecosystems and their inherent biodiversity.	Investment and legislative activities directed to effective protection of natural habitats and species of European and national importance in the National Eco Network and beyond it.	2023	<p>Announced procedures under EP 2021–2027 are:</p> <p>'Implementation of measures 28 and 61 of the Prioritised Action Framework for Natura 2000 (under evaluation procedure), in the amount of BGN 1.6 million;</p> <p>'Implementation of measures 54, 55 and 56 of the Prioritised Action Framework for Natura 2000 (application deadline: 20.3.2024), in the amount of BGN 4.7 million;</p> <p>'Optimization of the infrastructure of networks (with monitoring sites) for the implementation of forest ecosystem monitoring schemes in the country' (under evaluation procedure), in the amount of BGN 4.7 million;</p> <p>'Technical assistance for investments in zoos' (under evaluation procedure), in the amount of BGN 3.6 million.</p> <p>10 projects are being implemented with funding by the EMEPA with a total amount of BGN 1.34 million.</p> <p>The process of issuing orders for announcement and orders for amending and supplementing the orders for announcement of protected sites for habitats continues, as the announcement of orders for the last 18 protected areas for habitats remain to be issued.</p> <p>A total of 215 orders were issued according to the Directive 92/43/EEC on the conservation of natural habitats</p>	<p>Preparation and announcement of procedures under EP 2021–2027 for:</p> <p>measures related to the development of the Natura 2000 network;</p> <p>measures aimed at improving the environmental protection status of natural habitats and species subject to protection in the Natura 2000 network;</p> <p>measures to protect/restore ecosystems and their inherent biological diversity outside of Natura 2000, measures from management plans for protected areas and action plans for species, etc.</p> <p>Implementation of the reform under the NRRP for the creation of bodies for the management of the protected areas of the Natura 2000 network by amending the zoning regulations of the MOEW and the territorial structures and functional provision of the bodies for the management of the protected areas under the Natura 2000 network.</p> <p>Issuing of orders for declaring 18 protected areas for habitats.</p> <p>Adoption of specific and detailed nature protection goals and measures for their protection for another 26 protected areas and issuance of orders to amend and supplement the orders for their announcement, through which the corresponding specific and detailed protection goals are introduced.</p>	2029	<p>EP 2021–2027: 259,1 million BGN</p> <p>NRRP: 30,5 million from the RRF and 1.8 million national co-funding</p>	<p>Area of Natura 2000 protected sites covered by conservation and restoration measures, ha: 0 (2023); 59 770 (2029)</p> <p>Habitats with improved conservation status (or with a tendency to improve), %: 0 (2023); 14.7 (2029)</p> <p>Species with improved conservation status (or with a tendency to improve), %: 0 (2023); 10.8 (2029)</p>



1	2	3	4	5	6	7	9	10
				<p>and of wild fauna and flora. Site-specific conservation objectives for 64 protected sites have been defined. For all 64 sites, site-specific conservation objectives are available, as the same are introduced in the orders for amendment and supplementing the orders for their announcement under Art. 12 of the Biological Diversity Act (BDA). After public consultations held site-specific conservation objectives are being finalized for another 22 protected sites. Specific objectives for 4 more protected sites are being developed.</p>	<p>Implementation of a project under the NRRP: 'Integration of the ecosystem approach and application of solutions based on nature for the protection of protected areas in the Natura 2000 network'.</p> <p>Completion of the process of determining national commitments of Bulgaria on the territorial protection objectives (including in the marine environment) and improving the state of habitats and species in relation to the EU Biodiversity Strategy until 2030 and a proposal for a Natural Restoration Regulation. Preparation of a National Plan for the restoration of nature.</p> <p>Adoption of the Strategy for Biological Diversity in the Republic of Bulgaria and the National Plan for Conservation and Sustainable Use of Biological Diversity and Genetic Resources.</p> <p>Development of a National Strategy for Medicinal Plants, a National Strategy for Pollinators and adoption of three action plans on priority paths for the unintentional introduction and spread of invasive foreign species affecting the EU through: release/escape from a controlled environment; transportation; corridors and natural spread.</p> <p>Continuing the implementation of the measures included in the current national action plans for protection of endangered species.</p> <p>Approval of 6 new Action Plans for protection of endangered species.</p>			
	Reduction of pollutant levels and reaching established standards	Investments in activities for the implementation of the 2018-2024 National Programme for the Improvement of Ambient Air Quality.	2023	Announced procedures under EP 2021-2027: 'For cleaner air!' and 'For cleaner air! (2)': replacement of solid fuel heating	Preparation and announcement of procedures under EP 2021-2027 for:	2029	EP 2021-2027: BGN 773.5 million	Citizens who benefit of AAQ measures, number:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	9	10
	in areas with impaired air quality.	The National Air Pollution Control Programme (2020–2030) and municipal programmes for AAQ, with the aim of reducing the total emissions of certain pollutants and achieving and maintaining the levels of controlled ambient pollutants corresponding to the norms stipulated by the national legislation.		<p>appliances with environment-friendly alternatives; dismantling and delivery of the dismantled old heating devices for subsequent treatment in accordance with Art. 39, para. 3 of the Waste Management Act, etc., with a total amount of about BGN 611 million. (under the evaluation procedure, 2 contracts in a total amount of BGN 46 million have already been concluded (AG);</p> <p>Improving the monitoring of ambient air quality at the national level: investments in replacing equipment with modern alternatives; modernization and upgrading of the control and dynamic monitoring in the part of automatic measuring stations for AAQ; including the information system for reporting AAQ data, amounting more than BGN 14 million. (under evaluation procedure);</p> <p>'National strategic documents in the 'Air' sector - a contract in the amount of BGN 1.96 million has been concluded for updating the 2020-2030 National Air Pollution Control Programme (NAPCP) and support for identifying improvements in the National Inventory of Emissions of Harmful Substances, as well as improving emission forecasts.</p>	<p>a small pilot procedure to promote the use of RES, green hydrogen and other innovative alternatives;</p> <p>reduction of air pollution from transport – introduction of low emission zones;</p> <p>dealing with secondary dispersion - green infrastructure in an urban environment;</p> <p>improving the monitoring of AAQ, upgrading the National System for monitoring AAQ in real time and the Information System for reporting AAQ data;</p> <p>development/updating of strategic/ programme/ planning/ analytical documents in connection with AAQ, carrying out scientific studies, forecasting, modelling;</p> <p>creation of a National Network of experts in AAQ.</p> <p>Update of the 2020-2030 NAPCP and support for identifying improvements in the National Inventory of Emissions of Harmful Substances, as well as improving emission forecasts.</p>			<p>0 (2023); 2,754,387 (2029)</p> <p>Saved emissions of FPM<sub>10</sub>, t/year: 0 (2023); 1,435 (2029)</p> <p>Dwellings with replaced solid fuel heating devices, number: 0 (2023); 88,163 (2029)</p> <p>The country national obligations set in order to reduce emissions compared to the base year 2005 determined according to Directive (EU) 2016/2284 in percentage reduction, and for 2021: SO<sub>2</sub> – 78%; NO<sub>x</sub> – 41% ; HMLOC – 21%; NH<sub>3</sub> – 3%; FPM<sub>2.5</sub> – 20%.</p>
Supporting the digital transition through skills	Operations under the HRDP 2021-2027 to support the acquisition of skills and competences within the	Providing training opportunities to acquire digital skills for the workforce	09.2023	Contracts with the Employment Agency (EA) for three operations have been concluded and are already being implemented (Operations 'Starting work - Component 2 Training', 'Digital	Implementation of projects for training of unemployed, inactive and employed persons by the Employment Agency to	31.12.2029	BGN 395.7 million for the entire programme period in the entire HRDP	Persons included in courses for acquiring digital skills - 161 thousand for

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	9	10
	context of the digital transition			skills' and 'Qualification, skills and career development of employed persons'). Part of the activities in the operations include the provision of digital trainings. All three operations shall apply CMD 48/2023 adopted in 2023 within the terms and conditions for providing training vouchers.	acquire digital skills as a specific beneficiary under the three operations of the HRDP 2021-2027.		for various operations	the entire programme period throughout the HRDP for various operations

## I Country Specific Recommendation 2

Ensure an effective governance structure and strengthen administrative capacity in order to allow swift and steady implementation of its recovery and resilience plan. Swiftly finalise the REPowerEU a view to rapidly starting its implementation thereof. Proceed with the speedy implementation of cohesion policy programmes, in close complementarity and synergy with the Recovery and Resilience Plan.

### – Summary of the Policy

A regulatory framework and a Management and Control System for the RRP have been provided.

have been planned and are under implementation even at the stage of programming of the RRP aiming to ensure and maintain adequate administrative capacity in the responsible structures, depending on their commitments. In this regard, the statutory possibility for the appointment of additional extra-statutory staff in the SMRs and FRs has been created (art. 12 of GDCM No.157/2022). In addition, with aim of improving the administrative capacity in the responsibilities for the implementation of the RRP in the departments, a project for improving the administrative capacity for the RRP was implemented, prepared by the Ministry of Finance, funded under the Technical Support Instrument of the EC and implemented by DG "Reforms". The trainings covered all elements of the project cycle management with a special focus on the activities of the SMRs, application of the "do not significant harm principle", in the field of environmental protection and protection of the financial interests of the European Union.

As a continuation of the already completed project, trainings on the implementation of the approved Management and Control System of RRP start in 2024 and will be carried out by the Coordinating Unit within the framework of investment C10.I11 'Ensuring adequate information and administrative environment for the implementation of the Recovery and Resilience Plan', which will end in 2025 and includes 12 thematic trainings. The trainings are intended for employees of the departments responsible for the implementation, control and monitoring of investments in order to facilitate the processes of timely reporting of the achieved progress and identification of potential risks and problems for the investments implementation.

Moreover, the employees of the responsible institutions are recommended to include key topics related to the management and control of EU funds in their individual training plans, including in the context of serious irregularities and compliance with the principle of sound financial management.

According to the Commission Guidance on Recovery and Resilience Plans in the context of REPowerEU, it is highly recommended that all amendments in the member states plans be submitted as a whole. The negotiations under art. 18 were separated from rest of the amendments according to the EC recommendation, in view of the time sensitivity (they should have been finalized before the end of 2023), in order to avoid the risk of recommitment. As a result, the amendment of the RRP under Art. 21 is currently being drafted, including the renegotiation of the reform on Decarbonisation of the energy sector in connection with the Decision of the National Assembly as of January 12, 2023, as well as the REPowerEU chapter. According to the EC comment received on REPowerEU proposals sent in advance, the chapter should be complementary to the RRP, therefore it cannot be assessed separately and depends on the content of the renegotiated 'Decarbonisation of the Energy Sector' reform.

The programmes covered by the Partnership Agreement for the programme period 2021-2027, were approved by the European Commission in 2022. Currently, satisfactory progress in their implementation may be reported. Ensuring coherence and complementarity with measures under the RRP is provided for every five Policy targets at the Partnership Agreement level, as well as for each programme. The operational coordination between the projects implemented through shared management and the investments under the RRP is carried out through the established management structures and mechanisms.

**Table 2-2: Measures addressing SR 2, part of Appendix 1**

Field of the Policy	Name of the Measure	Information regarding Measures Planned and Taken					Expected Effect including Budgetary	Indexes for Effect with Current and Target value
		Short Description of the Measure	Beginning Date	Current Status (As of April 2024)	Upcoming Stages in the Implementation of the Measure until its Final Date for Execution (after April 2024)	End Date		
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	9	10
To ensure an effective management structure and strengthen administrative capacity	Development of the Academy for EU Funds	Providing support for achieving higher added value in the management of the EU funds in Bulgaria, where a need for improvements in the stability and quality of the administrative capacity for ESIF implementation <sup>2</sup> and ESMF <sup>3</sup> in Bulgaria, is reported. Administrative capacity building at the system level will be achieved by using various TAP: providing methodological support and specific expertise; organizing horizontal meetings and 'learning by doing' activities; promotion of professionalisation in the field of public procurement; detecting, reporting and following actions related to irregularities and fraud affecting the EU financial interests; exchange of experience and transfer of good practices; strengthening capacity for planning and carrying out assessments, including through data collection and analysis systems, etc.	01.03.2024	Project proposal submitted by the specific beneficiary IPA on March 1, 2024. Assessment pending in accordance with the requirements of Chapter Two, Section II of CMD No.23/2023. <sup>4</sup>	Project proposal submitted by the specific beneficiary IPA on March 1, 2024. Assessment pending in accordance with the requirements of Chapter Two, Section II of CMD No.23/2023. <sup>5</sup>	12/31/2029	BGN 8 million Technical Assistance Programme <sup>6</sup>	Horizontal training modules - 19 units; Number of trained persons/employees - 15,802; Proportion of trained persons/employees who successfully passed a skills acquired test Proportion of trained persons/employees in the EU Funds Academy who successfully passed the skills acquired test - 80% <sup>7</sup>

<sup>2</sup> The European structural and investment funds within the meaning of Art. 1 of the Act for Management of Resources from the European Structural and Investment Funds upon shared management, as amended in SG, issue No. 39 as of 2022, under §70 of the TFP of ASA of the Management of Resources from the European Structural and Investment Funds Act (MRESIFA) (promulgated, SG, issue No. 51 from 2022, in force as of 01.07.2022)

<sup>3</sup> The European funds under shared management within the meaning of Art. 1 of Act for Management of Resources from the European Structural and Investment Funds upon shared management, in its current edition SG, issue No. 51 from 2022

<sup>4</sup> CMD No. 23 as of 13.02.2023 for determining detailed rules for the provision of grants under the programmes financed by the European funds upon shared management for the programme period 2021-2027.

<sup>5</sup> CMD No. 23 as of 13.02.2023 for determining detailed rules for the provision of grants under the programmes financed by the European funds upon shared management for the programme period 2021-2027.

<sup>6</sup> Maximum amount of AG according to the Guidelines for applying under the procedure - will be specified in a subsequent report and after the evaluation of the project proposal is completed

<sup>7</sup> The indicators are relevant to the Guidelines for applying under the procedure - it will be specified in a subsequent report and after the evaluation of the project proposal is completed

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	9	10
To complete quickly the REPowerEU chapter in order to start its implementation quickly	New projects submitted and actions taken to amend the National Recovery and Resilience Plan (NRRP) of the Republic of Bulgaria in relation with the EC plan 'REPowerEU'	<p>Proposed in 2023 and re-confirmed in 2024 for inclusion in the NRRP, within the context of the 'REPowerEU' plan, a number of projects and reform, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Sustainable adaptation of the national electricity transmission network for full integration of the potential for the production of renewable energy - GREENABLER with beneficiary ESO EAD (indicative value EUR 225 million, 90% support under the RRP);</li> <li>- Buildings with close to zero energy consumption (public buildings, educational infrastructure);</li> <li>- Feasibility studies for the construction of the PSHPP next to existing dams (EUR 150 million under the RRP);</li> <li>- 'Establishment of an Observatory for energy poverty in Bulgaria', all interested parties are in dialogue and the competent institutions - central and local authorities are in interaction';</li> </ul>	2023, 2024	Proposed in 2023 and re-confirmed in 2024 for inclusion in the NRRP, within the context of the 'REPowerEU' plan, with letters having our ref. No. E-03-00-136/07.03.2023, No. E-03-00-136/22.03.2023, E-03-00-305/24.04.2023, No. E-04-19-259/07.08.2023 and E-03-00-596/24.08.2023, technical meetings were held with the Central Coordination Unit and the competent offices of the EC, an evaluation of the projects and a possible recommendation for their improvement is expected	It is expected that a standpoint will be received on the proposed projects	31.12.2026	<p>EUR 225 million for the GREENABLER project;</p> <p>EUR 30 million, support under the RRP: 75% grant and 25% interest-free credit that goes back to the National Decarbonization Fund for the Near-Zero Buildings project;</p> <p>EUR 150 million for preliminary project studies PSHPP;</p> <p>EUR 2.3 million to create an Observatory for energy poverty in Bulgaria</p>	Approved projects; performed contractor selection procedures - where applicable; concluded contracts for the assignment of activities - where applicable

### I Specific Recommendation 3

Reduce reliance on fossil fuels and accelerate the energy transition through faster deployment of renewable energy sources, while ensuring storage capacity to improve the flexibility of the energy system. Strengthen the electricity grid infrastructure and improve its management thereof by streamlining the connection procedures and introducing smart grid elements. Continue efforts in increase interconnection with neighbouring countries. Accelerate buildings renovation in order to increase energy efficiency and address energy poverty. Promote new future-proof solutions in district heating and sustainable urban transport, and accelerate development of railway infrastructure. Step up policy efforts aimed at the provision and acquisition of skills and competences needed for the green transition.

#### – Summary of the Policy

In 2023, Bulgaria made its first formal commitment to achieve climate neutrality, with the adopted Road Map for Climate Neutrality (adopted by the Decision of the National Assembly as of October 4, 2023 and updated by CMD No.59 as of January 26, 2024), which sets the objective of achieving climate neutrality of the Bulgarian economy by 2050. This ambition goes beyond the scenarios set out in the Long-Term Strategy for Climate Change Mitigation by 2050 of the Republic of Bulgaria (adopted by CMD No. 809 as of October 21, 2022). The Road map provides setting the long-term national objective of climate neutrality in the Climate Change Mitigation Act (CCMA) and aligning the process of updating the Integrated Energy and Climate Plan (IECP) and subsequently the Long-Term Strategy therein. The formulation of sectoral targets for decarbonization is envisaged, including for the sectors industry, transport, buildings, agriculture and the sector of Land use, land-use change, and forestry (LULUCF). The Road map provides passing of the coal power into strategic reserve mode by 2035, and gradually out from fossil fuels, including natural gas and petroleum-based fuels in transport by 2045.

At the same time, the Road map contains specific commitments for the accelerated development of renewable energy sources and storage systems for 2030, 2035 and 2040. It is planned to reach a RES capacity of 14,000 MW, including 2,500 MW of offshore WPS and 2,000 MW of storage systems, as well as construction of new nuclear power and PSHPP. The indicative annual targets for the development of RES and low-emission capacities are harmonized with the draft 2030 Strategy for Sustainable Energy Development of the Republic of Bulgaria, with a horizon up to 2050, prepared by the Ministry of Energy under Art. 4, para. 2, item 1 of the Energy Act. Their achievement will also be facilitated by the preparation of a Plan for determining priority areas for the development of sites for the production of electrical energy from wind energy, which will be prepared in the first six months of 2024.

Funds from the HRDP 2021-2027 support the policy of providing professional qualifications, skills and competences adequate to the needs of employers in order to help to overcome dynamic changes in production, including for those employed at risk of job loss due to restructuring, closure of non-environmental activities, etc. The support provides opportunities for enterprises to receive funding for specific training also aimed at the circular economy and the green transition, the introduction of low-carbon, resource-efficient and waste-free processes and technologies, digital skills, etc. For this purpose, in 2024 the 'New Skills' operation will be funded as per the HRDP, which is planned to cover at least 38,000 employed persons.

In order to support the smoother and timely implementation of the measures of the policy related to the fair and green transition, the HRDP 2021-2027 will support the establishment of the available skills of those working in TPS and mines in all three affected areas (Stara Zagora, Pernik and Kyustendil regions), as well as research their attitudes towards acquiring new skills and qualifications needed for future employment. Activities to map these skills and attitudes

of 15,100 people directly employed in these industries will be funded under Operation 'Addressing the Challenges of the Labour Market'.

In order to reduce the demand for energy, the PDR 2021-2027 provides a significant resource for investments in energy efficiency of public and residential buildings. All kinds of energy efficiency measures will be supported, including heating and air-conditioning systems, integrated on-site renewable energy installations, electric vehicle charging equipment and digitization of buildings. As a horizontal requirement for all types of interventions in buildings under the programme, regardless of the type of infrastructure, the achievement of a minimum class 'C' of energy consumption and the achievement of at least a 30% reduction in direct and indirect greenhouse gas emissions compared to preliminary emissions is set.

A significant part of the funds under the PDR 2021-2027 will also be directed to measures for sustainable urban mobility, which include the introduction of intelligent transport systems and other measures for the digitization of transport, provision of environmentally clean rolling stock for public transport, charging infrastructure for clean vehicles means, a bicycle and pedestrian network with the aim of promoting alternative methods of movement, improving connections between urban, intercity bus, rail, air, inland water and sea transport, as part of the implementation of intermodal transport, etc. In contrast to the previous programme period, it is planned that measures to promote sustainable urban mobility will also be eligible for financing on the territory of rural municipalities.

By an amendment to the PDR 2021-2027, funding from the Just Transition Fund (JTF) was approved for the three coal regions - Stara Zagora, Pernik and Kyustendil. Measures will be financed in line with the Territorial Just Transition Plans of the regions, which include supporting the creation of hydrogen value chain capacity, the creation of clean technology industrial parks (with zero emissions), photovoltaic parks with electrolysers and/or storage systems, support for the utilization of green hydrogen, support for the production and distribution of biomethane and wind energy, support for the production and distribution of biogas (biomethane), support for the use of geothermal energy for commercial and heating purposes. The measures will address the recommendation to reduce dependence on fossil fuels and accelerate the development of renewable energy sources.

The JTF measures also provide support for energy efficiency and RES in the residential housing with a focus on energy poverty, including support for the implementation of smart and digital solutions in the energy sector - electricity management, solutions and systems for monitoring, analysis and consumption forecasting and production.

As outlined in the 2023 Country Specific Recommendations of the Council, increasing the skills and re-qualification for the environmental transition, including for the people most affected, are key policies of great significance in order to accelerate the transition to net-zero emissions and ensure equity. In this regard, the PDR 2021-2027 provides investments in the three coal regions for re-qualification and increasing the skills of the affected workforce, in accordance with the development trends of the labour market in the direction of the green and digital economy. The investments are intended to facilitate the transition in the labour market to occupations in sectors with high growth potential and occupations related to the green transition, through subsidized employment, internships and on-the-job training. Activities include mapping the competencies and qualifications of the workforce in the affected regions, as well as identifying specific needs for increasing the skills and re-qualification. As a result, the specific directions for trainings, acquisition of new skills of workers, support for vocational training and trainers' tuition will be determined. The development of programmes and the implementation of demand-oriented training (including on-the-job training) for activities in sectors with high growth potential and professions related to the green transition will be supported; increasing technical qualification, targeting the affected industries: providing lifelong learning opportunities to those working in companies/ institutions and who want to adapt to the new



technological changes/ carbon-neutral production; digital/ICT competences: expanding the offer of digital and ICT skills training.

**Table 2-3: Measures addressing SR 3, part of Appendix 1**

Field of the Policy	Name of the Measure	Information regarding Measures Planned and Taken					Expected Effect including Budgetary	Indexes for Effect with Current and Target value
		Short Description of the Measure	Beginning Date	Current Status (As of April 2024)	Upcoming Stages in the Implementation of the Measure until its Final Date for Execution (after April 2024)	End Date		
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	9	10
To increase policy efforts aimed at providing and acquiring the skills and competences necessary for the ecological transition	Conducting trainings	Conducting trainings for experts and managers in the state administration on topics related to the ecological transition	January 2024	Trainings on topics related to environmental protection and ecological transition included in the 2024 Institute of Public Administration Training Catalogue	Collection of requests and formation of training groups	December 2024	Acquiring of skills and competences in the field of ecological transition	Number of trained
To reduce overall dependence on fossil fuels and fossil fuel imports by accelerating the development of renewable energy sources and to diversify gas sources and supply routes by increasing interconnections with neighbouring countries.	Development of a Road map for climate neutrality, approved by the National Assembly  Update of the Integrated National Energy and Climate Plan	Development of scenarios for decarbonization within the framework of the QES and a report with recommendations, based on which, by an act of the Council of Ministers, a Climate Neutrality Road map was adopted and proposed to the National Assembly for approval  Update of the national Integrated Energy and Climate Plan, with contribution from the competent departments and in continuous multi-level dialogue with stakeholders	July 2022  May 2023	A Road map for climate neutrality of the Republic of Bulgaria was adopted, including an accelerated exit from fossil fuels and indicative targets for accelerated development of RES.  An interdepartmental working group with representatives from the competent departments has been established to develop an updated Integrated Energy and Climate Plan. The modelling activities of the decarbonization scenarios are outsourced to a contractor. Received contribution from members of the interdepartmental working group as well as BEH group companies with information on specific projects aimed at reducing dependence on fossil fuels, diversification of natural gas	Harmonization of strategic documents – 2030 Strategy for sustainable energy development of the Republic of Bulgaria, with a timeline until 2050 and Integrated plan in the field of energy and climate (IECP) by June 2024.  Supplementing interim decarbonization targets (in line with the aim proposed by the EC on the emissions reduction target by 2040) and adopting and updating sectoral decarbonization targets, including in the framework of future amendments to the 2050 Long-Term Strategy for Mitigation of Climate Change.  Further updates to the Energy from Renewable Sources Act (ERSA) and the subordinate legislation to further ease the procedures for the construction and connection of RES, and to stimulate renewable energy communities.  Preparation, consultation and adoption of a Plan for determining priority areas	2023  June 2024	Zero net carbon emissions of the Bulgarian economy by 2050.  Stabilization of average electricity prices below EUR 100/MWh by 2040, due to the accelerated penetration of RES and storage systems.	Emissions reduction (in CO2 eq. and % ratio) as interim targets and milestones for achieving the national climate neutrality target by 2050 and within sectoral targets  Reaching a RES capacity of 14,000 MW, including 2,500 MW of offshore WPS and 2,000 MW of storage systems by 2040.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	9	10
	Development of a Strategy for sustainable energy development of the Republic of Bulgaria	Development of a Strategy for sustainable energy development of the Republic of Bulgaria, in dialogue with stakeholders	2023	<p>supply sources and routes, modernization, transformation and digitalization of infrastructure (electric and gas transmission).</p> <p>The Climate Change Mitigation Act (CCMA) is in the process of being amended in order to set the national objective of climate neutrality and a framework for setting sectoral targets for decarbonization.</p> <p>The 2030 Strategy for sustainable energy development of the Republic of Bulgaria, with a time line by 2050, and the Integrated Plan in the field of energy and climate (IECP) are in the process of being updated, with the purpose of specifying part of the set intermediate aims for the development of RES and storage systems, including based on the implementation of the updated Investment C4.I8: National infrastructure for storage of electricity from renewable sources from the NRRP.</p>	for the development of objects for production of electrical energy from wind energy, within the first half of 2024. Creation of a specialized regulatory framework for RES in marine spaces.	2024		
To increase efforts to reduce energy demand by increasing energy efficiency in industry and in the private and public building stock.	Buildings with close to zero energy consumption	The investment envisages the financing of energy efficiency measures in state or municipally-owned buildings, and the same has been proposed for inclusion in the RePowerEU plan	2024	The investment Buildings with near-zero energy consumption is proposed for inclusion in the RePowerEU plan	<p>Announcement of call invitations as follows:</p> <p>1) Invitation 1 - pursuant to Art. 3, para. 2, item 2 of CMD 114/2022 /provision of funds to specific end recipients/ funding of 21 project proposals that passed technical and financial evaluation, approved and included in the list of reserve projects under procedure BGENERGY-2.002 - 'Energy efficiency in buildings' under the Programme 'Renewable energy, energy efficiency, energy security', funded by the Financial Mechanism of the European Economic Area 2014-2021.</p> <p>2) Invitation 2 - pursuant to Art. 3, para. 2, item 1 of CMD 114/2022 /selection of</p>	2026	The total value of the investment is EUR 30 million, support under the RRP: 75% grant and 25% interest-free loan that goes back to the National Decarbonization Fund;	Achieved reduction in energy demand by increasing energy efficiency in the public housing

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	9	10
					proposals for the implementation of investments/ - funding of new project proposals for the implementation of energy efficiency measures in public buildings (state or municipal property), and thus the building meets the definition of a building with close-to-zero energy consumption.			
Increasing the skills needed for the ecological transition	'New skills' operation under the HRDP 2021-2027	Support for the human resources of enterprises to overcome dynamic changes in production and to update the knowledge and skills of employees, including those at risk of job loss, due to restructuring, closure of non-environmental activities, etc.  The support provides opportunities for enterprises to receive funding for specific training also aimed at the circular economy and the green transition, the introduction of low-carbon, resource-efficient and waste-free processes and technologies, etc., as well as training for the acquisition of professional qualifications, key competencies, digital skills.	2024	A written procedure has been launched to change the 'New Skills' operation by the HRDP.  A draft of documents for announcement and application under the procedure has been developed, which is to be updated.	Completion of a package of documents for announcing the selection procedure.  Announcement and collection of project proposals.  Evaluation and contracts conclusion.  Implementation of projects by enterprises.	December 2026	BGN 50 million  from the HRDP 2021-2027 (ESF+ and national co-financing)	38,000 participants (persons) obtained qualification
Increasing the skills needed for the ecological transition	'Addressing labour market challenges' operation under the HRDP 2021-2027	Within the framework of the measure, it is provided to be carried out activities on charted the skills of 15,100 directly employed in TPS and mines in the areas most affected by the ecological transition - the districts of Stara Zagora, Kyustendil and Pernik. The aim is to ensure subsequent easier integration on the labour market with another employer or involvement in other activities to acquire new skills or qualifications in line with what employers are searching for.  The operation also includes other activities: preparing forecasts for	2024	The operation was opened for application on 20.02.2024 to MLSP as a specific beneficiary with partners NSI, EA and the nationally representative organizations of workers and employees. The project proposal was expected to be submitted by March 21, 2024.	Evaluation of the expected project proposal and conclusion of a contract. Organization of implementation and start of activities on charting, according to the approved project of the specific beneficiary.	December 2027 for all operation activities	BGN 3.7 million for the entire operation  from the HRDP 2021-2027 (ESF+ and national co-financing)	Developed 3 reports on the demographic situation and available skills and attitudes for future realization of the persons directly employed in TPS and coal mines

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	9	10
		the development of the labour market and evaluations of labour market policies.						

### **3. Progress in the implementation of major reforms and investments from RRP and perspectives for the next year**

Information on progress in the implementation of key milestones and targets for reforms and investments from the NRRP and perspectives is published on the EC's FENIX platform as part of the bi-annual reporting.

## 4. Progress regarding the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

Bulgaria considers the UN's Agenda 2030 and the SDGs as a long-term political commitment of the country. The 2030 National Development Programme BULGARIA (NDP BULGARIA 2030) is a government instrument for the implementation of the SDGs, as the goals are included in the priorities of the NRP BULGARIA 2030.

During the last year, a national mechanism was created for the organization and coordination of the monitoring and reporting of the implementation of the SDGs, where the Council of Ministers, assisted by the Development Council, had a key role. Lead institutions for each SDG have been identified to lead, coordinate and control the monitoring and reporting of their implementation at the policy level. A National list of indicators was also adopted, as the National Statistical Institute is responsible for updating the values of the indicators included thereon. An Analysis of the progress in the implementation of the UN SDGs was prepared, which was reviewed and adopted by the Development Council in October 2023, and all institutions were assigned to propose measures within their competence to overcome challenges and backlog (where such is observed) upon the SDGs implementation in the Action Plan for the National Development Programme BULGARIA 2030.

The Council of Ministers commissioned the preparation of a Second Voluntary National Review of the Implementation of the UN Sustainable Development Goals in the Republic of Bulgaria by its Decision No.156 as of March 8, 2024, that will be presented in 2025 to the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development of the United Nations.

According to the above analysis, currently the country is making absolute progress compared to the beginning of the period on the majority (between 2/3 and 3/4) of the indicators included in the National List for studying the progress of the SDGs implementation. At the same time, reaching the 2030 targets (where explicitly defined ones are available) or reaching the EU average levels (reviewed as an implicit policy goal in the absence of an explicitly defined target) seems challenging in almost all areas. To a certain extent, this may be explained by the series of shocks and crises observed successively in recent years (the COVID-19 pandemic, energy market shocks, the war in Ukraine, global inflation, etc.). Due to these objective circumstances, having a negative impact on the achievement of the policy goals, corrective actions are imperative (especially in some areas) in the implemented policies to overcome the challenges and the backlog in the SDGs implementation, as well as the national development policies, in general.

Table 4.1 presents measures (already in the process of implementation or with an imminent start of implementation) that address these challenges and backlog.

**Table 4-1: Progress in the implementation of national objectives within the framework of the UN Sustainable Development Goals**

Measures undertaken	Expected impact of the measures (quantitatively and/or qualitative)
<b>Target 1: End of poverty</b>	
<b>Continuation of the reform implementation for the minimum income scheme.</b>	Increasing the scope and amount of aid. For 2024, it is expected that the amount of those supported will grow to 377,036 persons and families, including 54,971 persons and families with monthly benefits.
<b>Helping people in working age by continuing the payment of benefits in the first months after starting work.</b>	Assisted persons are expected to stay longer on the labour market by overcoming their dependence on social assistance. In 2024, the number of people assisted in this way is expected to reach 1,000.
<b>Initial support for young people leaving a social or integrated health and social care service for residential care.</b>	It is expected that these vulnerable persons will not fall out of support and at the same time will be activated on the labour market. In 2024, the number of people assisted in this way is expected to reach 300 young people.
<b>Setting a new level of the poverty line for 2024.</b>	The updated level of the poverty line for the country will contribute to an increase in financial support for people with disabilities, social benefits under the Social Assistance Act, financial assistance and funds (for prevention and reintegration, raising the child with relatives or close relatives and in foster families) under the Child Protection Act, as well as for expanding access to a social pension for old age under the Social Security Code.
<b>Implementation of the 2030 National Strategy for Poverty Reduction and Promotion of Social Inclusion and the Action Plan for the period 2023-2024 for the implementation of the Strategy.</b>	Reducing the share of the population at risk of poverty or social exclusion to 31.0% in 2024; reducing the relative share of the poor people to 21.5% in 2024 and reducing the value of the Gini Coefficient to 37.5% in 2024.
<b>Implementation of the Action Plan in implementation of Recommendation (EU) 2021/1004 of the Council to establish a European Child Guarantee (2030).  Approved Operational Plan for the period 2023-2024 in implementation of the Action Plan upon implementation of Recommendation (EU) 2021/1004 of the Council to establish a European Child Guarantee (2030)</b>	Reducing the share of children at risk of poverty or social exclusion to 26.0% in 2025; reducing the proportion of children at risk of poverty to 22.0% in 2025; expanding the coverage of children aged 0 to 7 years old in early childhood education and care to 22.0% in 2025; reducing the share of early school leave to 10.2% in 2025; reducing the number of children in residential care to 2,600 in 2025; reducing child mortality to 4.8 per 1,000 in 2025; expanding the scope of disabled children using health, social and integrated health and social services - 9,000 covered children; reducing housing overcrowding among children at risk of poverty to 70.0%.
<b>Implementation of the Action Plan for the implementation of the European Pillar of Social Rights.</b>	Reducing the number of people at risk of poverty or social exclusion by 787,000 up to 2030; Reducing the number of children under the age of 18 years at risk of poverty or social exclusion by 196,750 until 2030.
<b>Increasing the technical security and capacity of the structural units of the DG Fire Safety and Protection of the Population(DGFSP) and preparing the population to respond to forest fires.</b>	Replaced forest firefighting equipment of the DG Fire Safety and Protection of the Population(DGFSP).
<b>Carrying out information and explanatory campaigns to popularize the activity of voluntary formations.</b>	Promotion of the activity of voluntary formations.
<b>Training and preparation in the system of preschool and school education for actions in case of fires, disasters and emergency situations.</b>	Formation of the necessary behaviour and actions in the event of fires, disasters and emergency situations of the adolescent population. Increased knowledge and skills for disaster and fire actions and behaviour.
<b>Measures for:</b> - flood and drought risk prevention and management; - risk analysis, monitoring and implementation of prevention and protection measures in adverse geodynamic processes - landslides, collapses, erosions, abrasions; - increasing the readiness of the population for an adequate response and improving resilience by providing land capacity to fight forest fires; - building new and optimizing and/or expanding existing warning systems, monitoring, reporting systems, forecasting and signalling; development of digital models, analyses and forecasts in relation to climate change. (EP 2021-2027)	Citizens who benefit of flood protection measures - 2,505,000 Green infrastructure built or improved in order to adapt to climate change - 280 ha Investments in support of measures to protect against adverse geodynamic processes - new or improved - BGN 79.66 million.



Measures undertaken	Expected impact of the measures (quantitatively and/or qualitative)
<b>Provision of financial support for people with disabilities, designed to compensate for the expenses associated with overcoming the difficulties caused by the type and degree of disability.</b>	665,742 persons who received monthly financial support according to the degree of disability (monthly average) in 2023.
<b>Supporting of citizens who are not able to meet their basic life needs without others help.</b>	54,971 persons and families receiving monthly benefits in 2024. 15,000 persons and families who received one-time benefits in 2024. 265 received targeted rent allowances in 2024. 300 young people aged 18-21 years old who are leaving type of residential services in 2024. 1,000 unemployed persons who are receiving monthly allowance and started work in 2024. 300,000 persons and families who will be granted targeted aid for the 2024/2025 heating season. 5,500 persons for whom targeted funds are allocated for diagnosis and treatment in 2024.
<b>Implementation of measures to ensure long-term care, equal access to quality social services and full life in the community, individualization of support of vulnerable persons, promotion of active participation in public life of every disadvantaged person, support for access to the labour market, etc. (HRDP 2021-2027)</b>	Reducing the number of people at risk of poverty or social exclusion; reducing the number of children under the age of 18 years at risk of poverty or social exclusion.
<b>Implementation of 108 contracts under the Operation 'Future for Children'</b>	25 thousand children and their families will be included in activities for health prevention, family planning, including prevention of early marriages and births, as well as preparation for the education system
<b>Implementation of 229 contracts under the 'Home care' procedure</b>	Provided health and social services to people with disabilities and old people dependent on care
<b>Target 2. Ending famine</b>	
<b>Measures related to support for agricultural holdings and investments in agricultural processing to improve the productivity and incomes of farmers and persons in processing industry, and meet public food needs, including high-quality, safe and nutritious food produced in a sustainable manner, as well as reducing food waste (SPDARA 2023-2027)</b>	Ensuring the production of high quality, safe and nutritious food produced in a sustainable way. Restructuring and modernization, including improving the resource efficiency of agricultural holdings to ensure food security. Increasing productivity and income in the agricultural sector.
<b>Supporting very small agricultural holdings (SPDARA 2023-2027). The aim is to cover the large number of small and semi-market farms that have potential for development in terms of motivation and available family labour.</b>	An increase in the group of medium-sized farms that are more viable, which will have a positive impact on the overall state of the industry.
<b>Starting agricultural activities by young farmers and providing generation renewal (SPDARA 2023-2027).</b>	Increasing the number of young farmers and ensuring continuity between generations.
<b>Ensuring the participation of biological agriculture operators in international exhibitions (Financing with national funds).</b>	Increasing the total areas (Utilised Agricultural Area (UAA) for organic production) on which organic production methods are applied. By 2025, in the CAP and RRP an increase in the share of UAA for organic production to 5% of UAAA in the country is expected
<b>Implementation of initiatives and holding an open day in organic farms, as a measure to popularize organic production.</b>	An increase in the number of operators engaged in organic production.
<b>Supporting of organic farmers, through the intervention 'Biological crop production' from the SPDARA 2023-2027 and Eco scheme for organic farming (farm animals) from the SPDARA 2023-2027.</b>	
<b>Supporting the organic operators through the intervention 'Cooperation for short supply chains' of the SPDARA 2023-2027, aimed at creating and functioning of short supply chains, through which the produced</b>	

Measures undertaken	Expected impact of the measures (quantitatively and/or qualitative)
agricultural products are offered to final consumers directly from their producers.	
<b>It is planned to increase the amount of organic food in the 'school fruit' and 'school milk' schemes</b>	
<b>Initiating measures at the national and regional level for the construction/modernization of aquaculture farms and enterprises for the processing of fish products and for opportunities to diversify the activity and create new forms of income and activity. (MFAP 2021–2027)</b>	Increasing the productivity and income of small food producers from the Fisheries sector, including the women employed in it.
<b>Adoption of the project 'National Plan for the Protection and Sustainable Use of Biodiversity and Genetic Resources' and implementation of the measures regarding inland freshwater ecosystems.</b>	Sustainable use of biological diversity and genetic resources. Ensuring the protection of species and habitats - subject to protection in the respective protected areas.
<b>Target 3. Good health and life</b>	
<b>Adoption of an Action Plan for the period 2024-2026 for the implementation of the National program for improving maternal and child health 2021-2030</b>	Providing access beyond the scope of health insurance to medical consultations and activities related to the organization of complex medical monitoring of children with disabilities and chronic diseases, pregnant women with increased medical risk, with pregnancy pathology or the presence of chronic diseases and disabilities. Introducing new screenings for new-born babies.
<b>Periodic updating of the package of health activities paid by the NHIF and an increase in the relative share of funds for primary outpatient health care (PCOS) and SOMC, with the aim of expanding the volume and scope of preventive activities carried out in primary care.</b>	Increasing the quality and volume of services provided in the primary care and outpatient settings (primary outpatient health care) (PCOS) and developing the capacity of the Specialized outpatient medical care (SOMC). Creation of conditions for introduction of modern diagnostic and treatment methods in outpatient settings.
<b>Updating the National Health Card, optimizing hospital care by increasing the activities carried out in outpatient settings and improving the control mechanisms</b>	Increasing the efficiency of hospital care
<b>Modernization of the facilities of emergency medical assistance, provision of modern medical vehicles, training of personnel and development of a system of emergency medical assistance by air.</b>	Reduction of cases of premature death as a result of the implementation of large-scale investments in the emergency medical care system
<b>Implementation of activities within national programmes for prevention and control, including: provision of second-line medicinal products for patients with multidrug-resistant and extensively drug-resistant tuberculosis and fixed-dose preparations for adults and children; Antiretroviral therapy (ART) to all people living with HIV/AIDS in need; Free diagnostics for HIV/AIDS, viral hepatitis, sexually transmitted infections (STI) and tuberculosis; Studies of pregnant women for the prevention of perinatal transmission of HIV infection, syphilis and other STIs; Annual campaigns for free counselling and testing for HIV, STIs, viral hepatitis and tuberculosis, and to inform the community.</b>	Increasing access to research, timely diagnosis and treatment of HIV, viral hepatitis, AIDS and tuberculosis. Reduction of mortality from tuberculosis, AIDS and hepatitis by type of disease;
<b>Increasing the immunization coverage for adults at the age of 65 years old and over; Carrying out campaigns to inform the population and medical professionals about the risk of influenza and pneumococcal infections in persons at the age of 65 years old and over</b>	Reduction in morbidity and mortality from seasonal influenza and pneumococcal infections and pneumococcal pneumonia
<b>Introduction of new obligations for the participants in the drug supply chain, which are planned to be fulfilled through a Specialized electronic system for tracking and analysing the medicinal products included in the Positive Drug List of the Republic of Bulgaria. Implementation of a mechanism for negotiation and conclusion of framework agreements for the medicinal</b>	Financial protection of the population ensured Improvement of the current regulations in the field of medicinal products - ASA of MPHMA

Measures undertaken	Expected impact of the measures (quantitatively and/or qualitative)
<p>products provided in accordance with the Ordinance 34/2005, for which the value paid from the budget of the Ministry of Health is calculated by grouping, which does not include medicinal products of other holders of permission to use.</p>	
<b>Target 4. Quality education</b>	
<p><b>Introduction and development of quality and affordable integrated services for early childhood education (Action plan until 2024 for the Strategic framework for the development of education, training and learning in the Republic of Bulgaria (2021 – 2030))</b></p>	<p>Improved management and access to services in ECEC</p>
<p><b>1. A National Quality Framework for ECEC has been implemented.</b>  <b>2. An inter-institutional mechanism for monitoring the quality of ECEC has been established.</b>  <b>3. Provided modern material base, equipment and didactic means, including materials for the development of children’s thinking and imagination.</b></p>	<p>Improvement of conditions for upbringing, education, training and socialization of children in preschool</p>
<p><b>Application of an individual approach to the child in all ECEC services (Action plan until 2024 for the Strategic framework for the development of education, training and learning in the Republic of Bulgaria (2021 – 2030))</b></p>	<p>Improved ratio between the number of children and the number of specialists to work with them</p>
<p><b>Construction of Centers for excellence in professional education and training as per the NRRP</b></p>	<p>Provided modern and high-tech material base in PG, which would provide an opportunity for modern vocational training, meeting the public needs and the changing requirements of the labour market.</p>
<p><b>Developed vision and goals for the acquisition of knowledge and skills for sustainable development through training of teachers and non-teaching staff, exchange of good practices and creation of professional learning communities, participation in international networks</b></p>	<p>Development of global education and education for sustainable development.</p>
<p><b>Modernization of VET in relation to the dynamics of the labour market through joint work between schools offering VET, business, universities, etc.;</b></p>	<p>Offering modern and high-quality professional education and training that meets the rapidly changing needs of the labour market.</p>
<p><b>Encouraging interest in VET in priority professions and in specialties with a projected future shortage on the labour market. (Action plan until 2024 for the Strategic framework for the development of education, training and learning in the Republic of Bulgaria (2021 – 2030))</b></p>	<p>1. An increased number of students enrolled in VET in priority professions and in specialties with future shortage on the labour market predicted.  2. Increased percentage of participation in Informational and professional events for priority professions and specialties in VET.</p>
<p><b>Support for the practical training of students who have reached the age of 16 years from schools providing professional training through additional practices in a real work environment. (Action plan until 2024 for the Strategic framework for the development of education, training and learning in the Republic of Bulgaria (2021 – 2030))</b></p>	<p>Increased effectiveness of partnerships between vocational schools and employers to improve students’ practical skills in line with specific labour market needs.</p>
<p><b>Expanding the scope of dual training and practical training in a real work environment, including equipment of experimental work</b></p>	<p>Increased number of students in a dual form of education.  Increased number of dual education schools.  Launched 'DOMINO 2 programme' under the Swiss-Bulgarian cooperation programme</p>
<p><b>Comprehensive integration of dual VET (dVET) into the education system</b></p>	<p>Improved capacity and ensured systematic support of participants by the education in dVET;  Improved administrative and regulatory framework;  Adapted dual training to the expected modernization of the normative framework for VET; Regulated methodology and process for developing and updating curricula and programmes with the participation of business; Development and implementation of educational innovations in dual VET; An integrated model of dual VET with earlier and later degrees; Introduced</p>

Measures undertaken	Expected impact of the measures (quantitatively and/or qualitative)
	systematic professional guidance and counselling and improvement of the public image of VET; Introduced quality assurance system in dVET
<b>Expanding the social and regional scope of dual VET</b>	Expanded access of vulnerable groups to VET; Training and support to strengthen the capacity of local partners in under-developed environments to implement dVET;
<b>Career guidance for students.</b> <b>(Action plan for the implementation of the NRP Bulgaria 2030 for the period 2022 - 2024)</b>	Provided a system of accessible and quality services for systematic career guidance from early childhood, in school and in higher education in connection with the successful implementation of the labour market.
<b>Analysis of the economy requirements of specialists.</b> <b>Development and implementation of a new List of professions for vocational education and training (LPVET) based on updated State Education Standards (SES), curricula and programmes through the use of Sectoral Skills Councils;</b>	Linked VET to the needs of the labour market.
<b>Introduced modernized curricula and vocational training programmes, competence profiles of teachers and vocational training teachers;</b> <b>training in skills specific for profession.</b> <b>Modernization of vocational education and training.</b>	Improved vocational education and training, including improved curricula and programmes.
<b>Creation of conditions for equal access to preschool and school education by defining protected KG and schools.</b> <b>(Action plan until 2024 for the Strategic framework for the development of education, training and learning in the Republic of Bulgaria (2021 – 2030))</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Increased share of children and students included in education and training;</li> <li>2. Reduced share of persons who left early the education system;</li> <li>3. Wider inclusion of children in the education system;</li> <li>4. Better access to quality education for children from vulnerable groups, including Roma</li> </ol>
<b>'Active inclusion in the preschool education system'.</b> <b>It is implemented in the 'Education' Programme 2021-2027</b> <b>(Action plan until 2024 for the Strategic framework for the development of education, training and learning in the Republic of Bulgaria (2021 – 2030))</b>	Expanded access to preschool education for children from vulnerable groups and those who live in poverty.
<b>Additional training in Bulgarian for children from vulnerable groups.</b> <b>It is implemented in the 'Education' Programme 2021-2027</b> <b>(Action plan until 2024 for the Strategic framework for the development of education, training and learning in the Republic of Bulgaria (2021 – 2030))</b>	Additional training in Bulgarian for children from vulnerable groups, including developed specialized methods for teaching Bulgarian for children with another mother tongue/children who do not speak Bulgarian well - for all age groups (3 - 6 years old) and for different age groups.
<b>Support for vulnerable groups to access the higher education.</b> <b>(Action plan until 2024 for the Strategic framework for the development of education, training and learning in the Republic of Bulgaria (2021 – 2030))</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Provided additional training to students from vulnerable groups from the second vocational school stage, with the aim of successfully passing state matriculation exams and applying to higher education institutions.</li> <li>2. Supported students from vulnerable groups for the first year of study</li> </ol>
<b>Creating conditions for access to education by overcoming demographic, social and cultural barriers.</b> <b>(Action plan until 2024 for the Strategic framework for the development of education, training and learning in the Republic of Bulgaria (2021 – 2030))</b>	Increased capacity and qualification of pedagogical specialists and non-pedagogical staff, including the educational mediators for working in a multicultural educational environment;
<b>Caring for vulnerable groups (including foreign) students and students of Bulgarian origin, by supporting students with good educational results from settlements with difficult access or underdeveloped ones, as well as students from vulnerable and marginalized groups, including Roma, from the second high school stage to continue their education at the university.</b> <b>(Three-year plan for the implementation of the Strategy for the Development of Higher Education in the Republic of Bulgaria 2021 - 2030 (for the period 2021 - 2024))</b>	Improving educational success through measurable indicators such as: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Success in academic achievements;</li> <li>2. Increased percentage of completed courses;</li> <li>3. Increased percentage of continuing education.</li> </ol>

Measures undertaken	Expected impact of the measures (quantitatively and/or qualitative)
<p><b>A change in the curricula to relieve the studied material of useless factual matters. Passing to curriculum frameworks structured on competencies</b></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Changed approach for learning in school education - increasing students' practical skills at the expense of less memorization and reproduction of facts.</li> <li>2. Preparation of students for solving tasks with a practical focus on the PISA format, introduction at the entry level in the ninth grade;</li> <li>3. Developed and submitted through the MoF to the General Directorate 'Reforms' of the EC project to receive support under the Technical Support Instrument for the development of a curriculum framework model.</li> </ol>
<p><b>Support for implementing a model for functional assessment of the children and students' individual needs.</b> (Action plan until 2024 for the Strategic framework for the development of education, training and learning in the Republic of Bulgaria (2021 – 2030))</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Trained specialists to apply a model for functional assessment of the children and students' individual needs.</li> <li>2. Developed and implemented programmes for psychomotor, cognitive and language development, for individual and group work with established language and/or emotional-behavioural and/or sensory difficulties.</li> </ol>
<p><b>Overcoming language barriers for children and students who do not speak Bulgarian in the family, as well as children of Bulgarians who return from abroad.</b> (Action plan until 2024 for the Strategic framework for the development of education, training and learning in the Republic of Bulgaria (2021 – 2030))</p>	<p>Increased rate of acquisition of the Bulgarian language by children with language barriers</p>
<p><b>Providing conditions for increasing the achievements of every child and every student and orientation towards key competences.</b> (Action plan for the implementation of the NRP Bulgaria 2030 for the period 2022 - 2024)</p>	<p>Developing the capacity of schools through the competency model and improvements in students' literacy, digital literacy, and social and emotional skills</p>
<p><b>Development and expansion of the adult literacy system.</b> (Action plan until 2024 for the Strategic framework for the development of education, training and learning in the Republic of Bulgaria (2021 – 2030))</p>	<p>Increased participation of the population aged 25-64 in formal education and training and in informal learning - 4 and 12-week period before the survey;</p>
<p><b>Cooperation between organizations and institutions for programmes to access lifelong learning. Expanding and strengthening the lifelong learning network; widespread use of certified electronic forms for distance education</b></p>	<p>Established networks and partnerships between vocational high schools and between them and other institutions, including higher education institutions and businesses to support the relation between education and the labour market.</p>
<p><b>Educational mobility for citizens. Creating programmes to access lifelong learning.</b> (Action plan for the implementation of the NRP Bulgaria 2030 for the period 2022 - 2024)</p>	<p>Increased learning efficiency; Increased employability and improved prospects for professional realization; Initiative and entrepreneurship; improved foreign language and/or digital competences increased motivation to participate in future education/training.</p>
<p><b>Implementation of modern teaching means, supporting the renewal of the schools ICT environment by providing Internet connectivity, purchasing innovative hardware, providing educational electronic resources, electronic diaries, cloud services, etc.</b></p>	<p>Improved access to information and communication technologies, digital learning content and e-textbooks with added reality, aligned with the digital transformation of education.</p>
<p><b>Target 5. Gender equality</b></p>	
<p><b>Project 'Parents in Employment' (HRDP 2021-2027)</b></p>	<p>Provision of childcare for children non-attending nurseries, kindergartens and preschool groups; Creating equal opportunities for both sexes for full participation in the labour market, as well as for professional and career growth; Achieving quality employment and economic independence; Combining professional and personal life.</p>
<p><b>Capacity increase of coordinators on women and men equality by conducting trainings to increase awareness and capacity on protection against all forms of discrimination</b></p>	<p>Trained coordinators who participate in the development and implementation of the national policy on the equality of women and men, coordinate the implementation of measures within the competence of the executive authority, participate in the development of quantitative and qualitative indicators and analyses of the equality between women and men in the relevant field of the institution competence, coordinate the collection and dissemination of information and good practices, the provision of data on the equality between women and men from the competence of the executive authority, etc.</p>

Measures undertaken	Expected impact of the measures (quantitatively and/or qualitative)
<b>Inclusion in training of unemployed women to acquire a professional qualification, training to acquire a qualification in a profession (occupation) part;</b>	Skills development of unemployed women
<b>Conducting events to increase public awareness on the issues of the payment and income differences and gender non-discrimination.</b>	Raising awareness of the gender payment difference
<b>Provision of social services and timely accommodation of children and persons who are victims of violence, trafficking or other forms of exploitation.</b>	Support provision for children and persons who are victims of violence, trafficking or other forms of exploitation
<b>Implementation of inter-institutional cooperation for the care of children, adequate measures for protection and referral to the use of social services.</b>	Improving interaction in cases of children, victims of human trafficking - labour and sexual exploitation
<b>Target 6. Clean water and sewage system</b>	
<b>Implementation of an investment program under CMD No. 711 as of 2022 for approving a list of municipal investment projects by priorities and directions/objects for targeted funding. (state budget; in process of implementation)</b>	111 settlements with newly constructed/reconstructed supply water pipes and/or internal water supply network. 22 settlements with newly-built/reconstructed sewerage network. 2 Waste Water Treatment Plants.
<b>Implementation of an investment programme for municipal projects. The measure is aimed at supporting municipalities for the implementation of priority infrastructure projects for the period 2024-2026. (state budget; in process of implementation)</b>	Improvement of the condition of the water supply and sewage infrastructure, thus creating conditions for sustainable improvement of water supply services to the population, as well as improvement of the ecological condition of water objects.
<b>Construction/finishing/reconstruction of water supply systems in 10 agglomerations from 5,000 to 10,000 p.e. (NRRP; in process of implementation)</b>	Additional number of citizens with access to improved water supply - 52,676 citizens; Fulfilment of obligations under the Directive 2020/2184; Reduction of total losses of drinking water by an average of 10% per settlement.
<b>Construction/finishing/reconstruction of sewage systems in 10 agglomerations from 5,000 to 10,000 p.e. Newly built / reconstructed / modernized wastewater treatment plants (WWTP) (NRRP; in process of implementation)</b>	- Load of pollution, which is collected and purified in full compliance, p.e. - 66,363 p.e.; - Newly built /reconstructed/modernized wastewater treatment plants (WWTP) - 10 units; - Achieved full compliance with Art. 3, 4 and 5 of the Directive 91/271/EEC regarding the collection, removal and treatment of waste water from 10 agglomerations.
<b>Provision of funds for the construction, rehabilitation and modernization of Water Supply and Sewage infrastructure for the collection, removal and purification of wastewater, water supply with a contribution to reducing water losses in the water supply network and improving the quality of drinking water (EP 2021-2027'; in progress)</b>	Citizens connected to improved public water supply; Citizens connected to at least secondary waste water treatment, persons (indicators are calculated according to EP 2021-2027)
<b>Development of the programme of measures for updating the RBMP for the period 2022-2027 and the programme of measures for updating the Maritime Strategy for the period 2022-2027</b>	Developed programmes of measures to achieve the set targets for achieving a good status of water bodies, according to the RBMP and the Marine Strategy
<b>Activities and measures under the 'Biological diversity' Priority of the EP 2021-2027. Priority 'Biological diversity' of the EP 2021-2027 supports measures to fulfil the country commitments arising from the European environmental protection legislation, described in strategic and planning documents at the European and national level:</b> ● Measures aimed at improving the environmental protection status of natural habitats and species subject to protection in the Natura 2000 network. ● Measures for the protection/restoration of ecosystems and their inherent biological diversity outside of Natura 2000 – implementation of measures from the	Improvement of the conservation status of freshwater types of natural habitats



Measures undertaken	Expected impact of the measures (quantitatively and/or qualitative)
<p><b>Strategy for Biological Diversity in the Republic of Bulgaria and the National Plan for the Protection and Sustainable Use of Biological Diversity and Genetic Resources 2020-2024, measures from protected area management plans and species action plans</b></p>	
<p><b>Measure 'Integration of the ecosystem approach and application of nature-friendly solutions in protection of the protected sites of the Natura 2000 network' (NRRP; in process of implementation)</b></p>	
<p><b>Target 7. Affordable and clean energy</b></p>	
<p><b>Full liberalization of the electricity market</b></p>	<p>Emergence of effective price competition. A gradual full deregulation of retail prices for households is ensured, alongside with the provision of opportunity for full switching of supplier.</p>
<p><b>National scheme to support households in the field of energy from renewable sources</b></p>	<p>Reduction of user's bills and development of the electric energy market.</p>
<p><b>Implementation of measures to increase energy efficiency under the following programmes 'Competitiveness and innovation in enterprises', 'Development of regions', 'Transport connectivity', 'Environment' and NRRP</b></p>	<p>Increasing energy efficiency.</p>
<p><b>Construction of an LNG terminal near Alexandroupolis</b></p>	<p>Diversification of gas supply sources.</p>
<p><b>Expansion of the capacity of the UGS 'Chiren'</b></p>	<p>The project envisages an increase in the volume of working gas up to 1 million cubic meters and an increase in the extraction and injection flow rate to 8 - 10 million cubic meters/day.</p>
<p><b>National infrastructure for storage of electricity from renewable sources (the NRRP)</b></p>	<p>The project aims to build a facility to store energy produced by RES and balance of the electricity system</p>
<p><b>Support for new capacities for electricity generation from renewable sources and electricity storage (NRRP)</b></p>	<p>Increasing the share of electricity from renewable energy sources and meeting decarbonization targets.</p>
<p><b>Pilot project for combined production of thermal and electrical energy from geothermal sources (NRRP)</b></p>	<p>Increasing the opportunities for utilisation of geothermal energy in Bulgaria.</p>
<p><b>Modernization of energy networks, including pipelines in urban central heating systems, electricity transmission and gas transmission networks, increasing interconnection with other member states</b></p>	<p>Reduction of losses in transmission networks.</p>
<p><b>Digital transformation of the power grid (NRRP)</b></p>	<p>Reduction of losses in the power grid from transformation and transmission.</p>
<p><b>Target 8. Decent work and economic growth</b></p>	
<p><b>Creation of a financing mechanism for Bulgarian projects in the field of Industry 4.0 and Artificial Intelligence (AI)</b></p>	<p>1. Created mechanism 0 (2023) 1 (2030) A greater share of Bulgarian companies with potential in the development and implementation of innovative products and services, including AI</p>
<p><b>Introduction and development of Industry 4.0 technologies in enterprises (debt instruments in combination with AG): Financial Instrument (FI) for Digitization (CIPEP)</b></p>	<p>1. Enterprises supported through financial instruments 0 (2022) 91 (2029) Improved access of SMEs to credit and grant funding for the development and technologies implementation of Industry 4.0</p>
<p><b>Introduction and development of Industry 4.0 technologies in enterprises (debt instruments in combination with AG): Fund for high-risk projects for digitalization and FI Start-up fund for digitalization (CIPEP)</b></p>	<p>1. Enterprises supported through financial instruments 0 (2022) 130 (2026) 268 (2029) Improved access of SMEs to risk financing for the development and technologies implementation of Industry 4.0</p>
<p><b>Financial Instrument for 'Integrated Territorial Investments' (CIPEP)</b></p>	<p>1. Enterprises that received support through financial instruments in implementation of the Integrated Territorial Investments mechanism 0 (2022)</p>

Measures undertaken	Expected impact of the measures (quantitatively and/or qualitative)
	<p>24 (2029)</p> <p>Improved access of SMEs to credit financing for supporting realization of viable investments aimed at the growth and competitiveness of SMEs established on the territory of industrial parks or in functional proximity around them</p>
<p><b>Grant scheme for ICT solutions and cyber security in SMEs</b></p>	<p>1. SMEs, which achieved first or second level of digitalization 0 (2022) 1,492 (2025)</p> <p>Increasing the capacity of SMEs for implementation of information and communication technologies, solutions for cyber security, and an overall increase in the level of their digitalization</p>
<p><b>Promoting the employment of young people by providing opportunities for training, acquisition of professional qualification and key competences, in accordance with the demand on the labour market (HRDP 2021-2027)</b></p>	<p>Increased employment rate in the age group of 15-29 years old</p>
<p><b>Promoting the employment of young people by providing employment opportunities, including quality paid traineeships and apprenticeships for disadvantaged youth (State budget and 'Youth Employment +' procedure, HRDP 2021-2027)</b></p>	<p>Reduced unemployment rate in the age group of 15-29 years old</p>
<p><b>Promoting the inclusion in education, training and employment of young people who are 'not in employment, education or training' (NEETs) aged 15-29 years, by promoting the outreach and activation of young people from the NEET group, including by strengthening the partnerships of youth organizations with local institutions. Development and implementation of services for social inclusion of young people from the NEETs group</b></p>	<p>1. Percentage of youth included into the NEETs group (15-29 years) 16.7% (2019) 15% (2030)</p> <p>Reduced proportion of young people included into the NEET group</p>
<p><b>Creation of a data exchange mechanism between the institutions for working with economically inactive persons in fulfilment of Art. 7a, para. 3 of the Employment Promotion Act (EPA)</b></p>	<p>Creation of a register of economically inactive persons, through which EA will have information and will be able to identify and reach the economically inactive population (16 - 65 years old) in different regions of the country</p>
<p><b>Implementation of employment programmes, including regional employment and training programmes for unemployed in a disadvantaged position on the labour market, financed by the budget for active labour market policy as per the National Employment Action Plan</b></p>	<p>1. Ensuring employment of unemployed persons from disadvantaged groups 7,748 (2023, report) 5,930 (2024) 5,159 (2025) 4,488 (2026)</p> <p>Increased participation in the labour market of unemployed persons from disadvantaged groups on the labour market. Provision of subsidized employment in regions less developed economically</p>
<p><b>Implementation of incentive measures under the Employment Promotion Act for employment of unemployed persons from disadvantaged groups on the labour market, financed by the budget for active labour market policy as per the National Employment Action Plan</b></p>	<p>1. Ensuring employment of unemployed persons from disadvantaged groups 4,351 (2023, report) 3,981 (2024) 3,463 (2025) 3,013 (2026)</p> <p>Increased participation on the labour market of unemployed persons from disadvantaged groups on the labour market</p>
<p><b>Implementation of the National Programme 'Activation of Inactive Persons', financed by the budget for active labour market policy as per the National Employment Action Plan</b></p>	<p>1. Inactive persons registered in Labour bureaus Directorates as unemployed, as a result of implementation of the programme: 14,345 (2023) 14,000 (2024) 14,000 (2025) 14,000 (2026)</p> <p>Reaching the inactive persons and motivating for active behaviour on the labour market through the work of Roma and youth mediators, community service organizers, psychologists and case managers appointed under the programme</p>



Measures undertaken	Expected impact of the measures (quantitatively and/or qualitative)
<b>Mobile services of the Employment Agency to reach job seekers in small settlements with difficult access to the labour market</b>	<p>1. Provision of services by mobile teams of job seekers and employers from small and/or settlements located out of the way: 2,500 annually</p> <p>Provided access to employment mediation services for unemployed persons and economically inactive persons and employers from small settlements, by providing a comprehensive on-site service</p>
<b>Trainings for employed and unemployed persons to acquire professional qualifications and/or key competences, financed from the budget for active labour market policy as per the National Employment Action Plan</b>	<p>1. Number of trained unemployed persons: 9,463 (2023, report) 9,000 (2024) 9,000 (2025) 9,000 (2026)</p> <p>Increasing the qualifications and skills of the workforce in accordance with the labour market needs and the employers' requirements</p>
<b>Digital skills training and creation of an online adult learning platform</b>	<p>1. Number of people who have acquired digital skills 500 000 (2024-2026)</p> <p>Improvement of qualifications and skills, including of the workforce digital skills. Wider access to adult education provided, including of persons from disadvantaged groups on the labour market</p>
<b>Additional funding of European Digital Innovation Hubs (EDHIs) selected by the European Commission</b>	<p>1. RCO10 Enterprises that cooperate with research organizations 0 (2023) 5 (2026)</p> <p>2. SR 9 Supported SMEs from the EDIH network 0 (2023) 750 (2026)</p> <p>More favourable conditions have been created for the continued development of EDIH projects and the deepening of international cooperation between business and science</p>
<b>Construction of the first Bulgarian petascale super-computer Discoverer, part of the EuroHPC network</b>	<p>1. Number of public and private users 0 (2021) 200 (2026)</p> <p>2. Number of submitted requests 0 (2021) 60 (2026)</p> <p>3. Number of services performed 0 (2021) 40 (2026)</p> <p>Stimulation of research and development activities, including that of business, in order to increase the use of technologies for simulation, modelling and optimization</p>
<b>Funding of EDIH projects that have successfully passed the EC selection procedure and received the Seal of Excellence</b>	<p>1. RCO10 Enterprises that cooperate with research organizations 0 (2023) 5 (2026)</p> <p>2. SR 9 Supported SMEs from the EDIH network 0 (2023) 700 (2026)</p> <p>More favourable conditions for the continued development of EDIH and the deepening of international cooperation between business and science created</p>
<b>Support for the development of green and digital partnerships for smart transformation</b>	<p>1. Enterprises that cooperate with scientific research organizations 0 (2024) 2 (2026)</p> <p>2. Small and medium-sized enterprises introducing innovation in a product, process 0 (2024) 412 (2026)</p> <p>Deep cooperation between businesses and scientific organizations in the field of green and digital solutions and eco innovation</p>
<b>Procedure Production investments in enterprises (Circular and resource efficient economy in enterprises (CIPEP))</b>	<p>1. Supported business 0 (2023) 601 (2025)</p> <p>Improved production capacity of existing SMEs - family business and enterprises of creative industries and crafts, increased competitiveness and improved market presence</p>

Measures undertaken	Expected impact of the measures (quantitatively and/or qualitative)
<b>Procedure Technological modernization in enterprises (CIPEP)</b>	1. Supported business 0 (2022) 665 (2024) Increased efficiency of the production processes of SMEs through the acquisition of new machines, facilities and equipment, as well as specialized software
<b>Guarantee Instrument for Growth (CIPEP)</b>	1. Percentage of operations approved by the Investment Committee 0 (2022) 100 (2026) Alleviating the challenges faced by small and medium-sized enterprises in obtaining credit financing to quickly restore their operations before the COVID-19 crisis and to create opportunities for subsequent growth
<b>Equity growth instruments (CIPEP)</b>	1. Percentage of operations approved 0 (2022) 100 (2026) Alleviating business challenges related to the ongoing economic impact of the COVID-19 crisis on business
<b>Public support programme for the development of industrial parks and improvement of their infrastructure connectivity (NRRP)</b>	1. Providing grants for the development of industrial parks or zones and signing the contracts; 0 (2023) 5 (2026) 2. Signing contracts for the internal and external infrastructure of industrial parks or zones. 0 (2023) 100 (2026) 3. Completed infrastructure projects in selected industrial parks or zones — functioning industrial parks or zones 0 (2023) 100 (2026) Increasing economic growth, creating new jobs and increasing the country export capacity by creating more favourable conditions for investors
<b>Proactive investment marketing - attracting investors from target sectors and countries</b>	1. Conducted events to attract investors with a focus on areas with lower investment activity 0 (2024) 50 (2026) Increased share of foreign investments in Bulgaria
<b>Promotion of investment in industry and in high-tech production and services under the Innovation Promotion Act (IPA)</b>	1. Share of the projects in the high-tech sector compared to all certified projects under the IPA 50% (2023) 60% (2026) Increased share of investments in high-tech production and services
<b>Financial support for training to acquire a professional qualification, for the new jobs occupied on investment projects certified by IPA, class A and class B (only for investments in high-tech activities or in municipalities with high unemployment)</b>	1. Number of encouraged projects (with a minimum of 30 trained people) 0 projects (2023) 1 project each (annually until 2026) Improving the qualifications of employees, including in the high technology and ICT sectors and other priority sectors
<b>Support for employment creation on investment projects certified by ICT (class A, class B or priority).</b>	1. Planned number of new jobs to be opened by the investor 2353 (2023) 2500 (2026) Discovery and maintenance of quality workplaces providing favourable working conditions
<b>Promotion of entrepreneurial activity - creation of new and development of existing enterprises (share instruments): FI Entrepreneurship Fund (CIPEP)</b>	1. Supported business 0 (2022) 93 (2029) Improved SME access to finance aimed to support the creation of new and development of existing business
<b>Creation of new and development of innovative start-ups (share instruments): - FI Fund for innovations in enterprises - FI for risk financing</b>	1. Supported business 0 (2022) 29 (2029) Improved access of SMEs to financing in order to stimulate the innovation activity of the business. Providing support for the creation of new and development of innovative enterprises. Support for ensuring access to RDA and innovations (including by attracting foreign researchers), as well as

Measures undertaken	Expected impact of the measures (quantitatively and/or qualitative)
<b>Share instruments for innovation</b>	<p>their internal implementation in enterprises in order to increase the number of realized on the market so-called 'in-house' innovation</p> <p>1. Approved operations for 100% of funds 0 (2022) 100% (2026) Increased innovation capacity and improved productivity of enterprises, higher levels of business research and development</p>
<b>Small innovative grants (voucher scheme) for SMEs</b>	<p>1. RCO10 Enterprises that cooperate with research organizations 0 (2024) 625 (2026) Extensive cooperation between science and business in support of SMEs in order to improve their innovation performance and capacity, including that of implementing innovative solutions</p>
<b>Preparation and implementation of information campaigns dedicated to the SMEs internationalization</b>	<p>1. Events conducted 0 (2021) 30 (2030) 2. Number of enterprises 0 (2021) 500 (2030) Deepening of international cooperation and increased internationalization of the Bulgarian SMEs</p>
<b>Implementation of marketing measures, analyses and support of SMEs to develop and prepare promotional materials for international and regional trade exhibitions</b>	<p>1. Supported exporting enterprises 0 (2022) 500 (2030) Deepening of international cooperation and increased internationalization of the Bulgarian SMEs</p>
<b>Preparation and implementation of annual programmes by BSMEPA in accordance with the national and regional priorities defined in the Strategy and with the proposals of the interested parties for the participation of SMEs in trade exhibitions, trade missions and other major events</b>	<p>1. Prepared and implemented programmes 2 (2021) 10 (2030) Deepening of international cooperation, increased internationalization of Bulgarian SMEs, improved innovation capacity of enterprises</p>
<b>Conducting and/or supporting SMEs for participation in international exhibitions, trade exhibitions, conferences and participation with an institutional stand in Bulgaria and abroad</b>	<p>1. Number of supported SMEs 1597 - for the country (2021) 70 - abroad (2021) 1000 - for the country (2030) 170 - abroad (per year) Deepening of international cooperation and increased internationalization of the Bulgarian SMEs</p>
<b>Participation of SMEs in official business forums, conferences and trade missions, contact exchanges and business meetings</b>	<p>1. Number of supported enterprises 38 (2021) 200 (2030) Planned number of supported SMEs to participate in business forums, trade missions, etc., aiming to increased internationalization of Bulgarian SMEs</p>
<b>Developed and adopted Strategy for development of the space industry and technologies in Bulgaria</b>	<p>1. Approved strategy 0 (2023) 1 (2024) Increased levels of intelligent space technology specialization in enterprises</p>
<b>Implementation of a guarantee debt instrument Circular and resource efficient economy in enterprises (CI-PEP)</b>	<p>1. Supported enterprises (including micro, small, medium-sized, large enterprises) 0 (2023) 190 (2029) Improved business access to finance in order to promote the transition to a circular and resource efficient economy</p>
<b>Implementation of innovations in enterprises in the area 'Clean technologies, circular and low carbon economy' of ISSS 2021-2027 (AG) (CIPEP)</b>	<p>1. Supported enterprises (including micro, small, medium-sized, large enterprises) 0 (2023) 168 (2026) Increased capacity of enterprises in the field of implementing eco-innovations, resource-efficient, low-carbon and waste-free technologies</p>

Measures undertaken	Expected impact of the measures (quantitatively and/or qualitative)
<b>Support for the transition to a circular economy in enterprises (AG) (CIPEP)</b>	1. Enterprises that have acquired new technologies for introducing circular models 0 (2023) 120 (2025) Increased capacity of enterprises to move to circular models of resource use, production and consumption of the products of their activities
<b>Development of innovations in enterprises in the area 'Clean technologies, circular and low carbon economy' of ISSS 2021-2027 (AG) (CIPEP)</b>	1. Supported business 0 (2022) 72 (2028) Increased capacity of enterprises for developing eco-innovations, resource-efficient, low-carbon and waste-free technologies
<b>Support for the implementation of energy efficiency measures in enterprises (debt instruments in combination with AG) (CIPEP)</b>	1. Supported business 0 (2023) 133 (2029) Improved access of the business for financing to increase energy efficiency and increase the use of energy from RES
<b>Additional funding to support participation of Bulgaria in the European partnership 'Clean Hydrogen' for the construction of a hydrogen valley</b>	1. Attracted private investments supplementing public support (including grants, financial instruments) - in million euros 0 (2023) EUR 16 million (2029) 2. Participation in European partnerships 0 (2023) 1 (2026) 3. Supported enterprises that introduce innovation in products and/or processes 0 (2023) 1 (2026) 4. New workplaces ensured 0 (2023) 90 (2029) 5. A small hydrogen valley built on the territory of the municipality of Stara Zagora 0 (2023) 1 (2029) Extensive cooperation between science and business in the field of hydrogen technologies and their use in the transition to a circular economy
<b>Attracting young scientists for a career in the field of science, as well as creating a new generation of highly qualified specialists</b>	1. number of supported young scientists 250 (2022) 1500 (2025) 2. number of funded grants for post PhD fellows 150 (2022) 1100 (2025) Attracted young scientists for a career in the field of science, as well as creating a new generation of highly qualified specialists
<b>Cooperation programmes for innovation and transfer of knowledge and technology</b>	1. Industrial programmes for technological development and innovation 0 (2024) 5 (2029) Encouraging cross-sector cooperation, developing partnership by using existing scientific potential and creating sustainable industrial programmes for technological development and innovation
<b>Rehabilitation and reintegration of workers and affected of occupational accidents or occupational diseases</b>	1. Number of persons who used the NSSI programme for prevention and rehabilitation during the period 2024-2026 - 183,000 people Improved professional and health status of insured persons through rehabilitation, including for persons with temporarily or permanently reduced working capacity due to work accidents or occupational diseases
<b>Measures to create infrastructure for household waste treatment and reduce the amount of landfilled household waste and increase the share of separately collected and recycled waste, including construction, expansion and/or upgrading of municipal/regional systems for separate collection and recycling of biodegradable waste (ER)</b>	1. Additional capacity for waste recycling, t/year 0 (2021) 330,000 (2029) 2. Waste collected separately, t/year. 0 (2021) 330,000 (2029) Improving waste management. Increasing the amount of recycled and recovered waste. Encouraging their reuse. Transition to an efficient circular economy in terms of resource use

Measures undertaken	Expected impact of the measures (quantitatively and/or qualitative)
<b>Implementation of the reclamation activities of landfills for solid household waste (financing from EP 2021-2027)</b>	1. Area of rehabilitated land (resulting from the reclamation of landfills) for which support is granted, ha 0 (2021) 80 (2029) Reducing the harmful impact of waste and preventing its formation
<b>Tool for accelerated absorption of the European funds</b> <b>• for funding up to 100% of the expenses of submitted project proposal for SMEs approved to sign a contract and up to 85% of the expenses for SMEs in the waiting list.</b> <b>Companies with an investment loan from BDB shall be entitled to use unsecured working funding up to BGN 200,000;</b> <b>• Aimed at projects under the MIG operational programme for energy efficiency of production buildings and technological modernization of SMEs</b>	Encouraging the growth of SMEs by providing new funding opportunities
<b>Encouragement of investment processes in agricultural holdings by providing financial support under Sub-measure 4.1 'Investments in agricultural holdings' of measure 4 'Investments in tangible assets' of the Programme for development of rural areas 2014-2020 (RDP 2014-2020)</b>	1. Index of total factor productivity (TFP) in agriculture, 2005=100 105 (2017) 115 (2030) 2. Labour productivity in agriculture (BGN/GRE) 15,550 (2018) 19,500 (2030) 3. Gross fixed capital formation, % of GDP from agriculture 8.9 (2017) 12.4 (2030) 4. Number of beneficiaries who receive investment support under the measure 1,606 (2020, cumulative) 1,756 (2,025, cumulative) Improved competitiveness and sustainability of agricultural holdings. Increasing factor productivity and labour productivity in agriculture
<b>Stimulating the technical and technological renewal of agricultural holdings by providing investment support under the Intervention 'Investments in agricultural holdings' from the Strategic Plan for the development of agriculture and rural areas (SPDARA 2023-2027)</b>	1. Index of total factor productivity (TFP) in agriculture, 2005=100 105 (2017) 115 (2030) 2. Labour productivity in agriculture (BGN/GRE) 15,550 (2018) 19,500 (2030) 3. Gross fixed capital formation, % of GDP from agriculture 8.9 (2017) 12.4 (2030) 4. Number of beneficiaries who receive investment support under the intervention 0 (2023) 403 (2026, cumulative) 1,100 (2029, cumulative) Improved competitiveness and sustainability of agricultural holdings. Increasing factor productivity and labour productivity in agriculture
<b>Provision of investment support for the technological and ecological transition of agriculture as per the project 'Fund to promote the technological and ecological transition of agriculture' from the NRRP, direction 'Investments in technological and ecological modernization'</b>	1. Index of total factor productivity (TFP) in agriculture, 2005=100 105 (2017) 115 (2030) 2. Labour productivity in agriculture (BGN/GRE) 15,550 (2018) 19,500 (2030) 3. Gross fixed capital formation, % of GDP from agriculture 8.9 (2017) 12.4 (2030) 4. Number of supported farmers 0 (2023) more than 600 (2026) Improved competitiveness and sustainability of agricultural holdings. Increasing factor productivity and labour productivity in agriculture
<b>Promotion of investment processes in processing and marketing of agricultural products by providing financial support under sub-measure 4.2 'Investments in processing/marketing of agricultural products' from</b>	1. Number of beneficiaries receiving investment support under the measure 367 (2020, cumulative) 437 (2025, cumulative) Increasing the productivity and competitiveness of enterprises in the pro-

Measures undertaken	Expected impact of the measures (quantitatively and/or qualitative)
<b>measure 4 'Investments in tangible assets' of the RDP 2014-2020.</b>	cessing and marketing of agricultural products. Improving the overall activity, economic efficiency and competitiveness of enterprises from the food processing industry
<b>Stimulation of the technical and technological renewal of the enterprises related to the processing and marketing of agricultural products, through investment support under the Intervention 'Investments for the processing of agricultural products' from the SPDARA 2023-2027.</b>	1. Number of beneficiaries who receive investment support under the intervention 0 (2023) 484 (2029, cumulative) Increasing the productivity and competitiveness of enterprises in the processing and marketing of agricultural products
<b>Promotion of investment activity and innovations introduction in the Aquaculture sub-sector by providing financial support under measures for productive investments and innovations in aquaculture from the 'Maritime, Fisheries and Aquacultures' Programme (MFAP 2021-2027)</b>	1. Aquaculture production, tons 15,432 (2018) 20,000 (2030) 2. Number of approved projects 0 (2023) 94 (2029, cumulative) Increasing the competitiveness and viability of aquaculture enterprises
<b>Promotion of investment activity and innovations introduction in the processing and marketing of fishery and aquaculture products by providing financial support under the Measure 'Processing of fishery and aquaculture products' from MFAP 2021-2027.</b>	1. Number of approved projects 0 (2023) 31 (2029, cumulative) Increasing the productivity and competitiveness of enterprises in the processing and marketing of fishery and aquaculture products
<b>Productive investments and innovations in aquaculture</b>	1. Indicator CR 17 Entities that improve the efficiency of resources in production and/or processing from MFAP 0 (2023) 28 (2027) Increasing the competitiveness and viability of aquaculture enterprises
<b>Processing of fishery and aquaculture products</b>	1. Indicator CR 17 Entities that improve resource efficiency in production and/or processing from MFAP 0 (2023) 5 (2027) 2. Indicator CR 14 Innovation opportunities created by MFAP (Development of product innovations/Development of process innovations) 0 (2023) 31/5 (2027) Increasing the productivity and competitiveness of enterprises in the processing and marketing of fishery and aquaculture products
<b>Temporary suspension of fishing activities</b>	1. Indicator CR 08 Persons who benefit from the MFAP regime 0 (2023) 60 (2027) The aim is to provide financial compensation to operators engaged in commercial fishing for temporary suspension of fishing activities due to danger for the fishing activities security or economic viability of fishing operations impeding
<b>Implementation of the Action Plan for the Implementation of the National Strategy (NSSTRB) with implementation of measures for the priority types of tourism development and digitization of the sector</b>	Encouraging investments and innovations in tourism, increasing the quality of tourist products and services, continuing to promote abroad the opportunities for tourism in Bulgaria, accelerated digitalization of the tourism sector, reducing the negative effects of tourism on the environment, achieving more favourable results on basic indicators that are used to monitor the development of tourism, balanced development of tourist areas. Creation of even more favourable conditions for sustainable development of tourism, development of a competitive tourist product and even more successful positioning of Bulgaria on the world tourist market
<b>Development and promotion of tourism products and resources within the national and regional scope</b>	1. Number of produced video films for the entire CBC region GR-BG 0 (2021) 1 (2023) 2. Number of videos produced for the CBC region 0 (2021) 8 (2023) 3. Number of commercials produced 0 (2021) 5 (2023) 4. Number of completed information campaigns for the CBC region 0 (2021) 1 (2023)

Measures undertaken	Expected impact of the measures (quantitatively and/or qualitative)
	<p>5. Number of concluded contracts for projects financed under the EU Programmes for the period 2021-2027 for the promotion of specialized types of tourism 0 (2021) 5 (2027)</p> <p>Increasing the quality of the tourist product offered in Bulgaria, higher satisfaction of tourists during their stay, increasing the popularity of tourist destinations in the country and abroad</p>
<b>Providing support for tourist areas</b>	<p>1. Number of contracts concluded on project proposals submitted by municipalities under the relevant programme for advertising and marketing 12 (2023) 50 (2026)</p> <p>2. Number of activities performed according to marketing strategies - online advertising, events, participation in international exchanges; number of project proposals submitted by municipalities along the Black Sea for advertising and marketing 0 (2023) 36 (2026)</p> <p>Increasing the effectiveness of cooperation between interested parties for tourism development, promotion of local natural attractions and culture</p>
<b>Development, improvement, expansion and socialization of tourist areas and related infrastructure. Preservation, development and promotion of public tourism assets and related tourism services and infrastructure</b>	<p>1. Number of cultural and tourist sites that receive support 0 (2023) 80 (2026)</p> <p>Improving the condition and modernization of tourist areas and increasing their attractiveness for tourists, increasing the quality of offered tourist products and services and increasing tourist satisfaction, increasing the efficiency of using public tourist assets and other tourist resources for the development of tourism, conservation of the natural and cultural heritage and its promotion through the development of sustainable tourism</p>
<b>Development of the Action Plan for the Implementation of the National Strategy (NSSTDRB) with implementation of measures for the priority types of tourism development and digitization of the sector</b>	<p>Effective use of new digital technologies to support the achievement of targets related to sustainable tourism development, achieving a higher level of digitalization of the tourism sector, developing skills of tourism workers to work with new technologies</p>
<b>Preparation of an interim assessment of the updated NSSTDRB</b>	<p>Prepared assessment of whether changes are necessary in the NSSTDRB with a view to guaranteeing a maximum effective policy for sustainable development of tourism</p>
<b>Target 9. Industry, innovations and infrastructure</b>	
<b>Support for innovative SMEs awarded with the Seal of Excellence</b>	<p>1. Supported enterprises (small, including micro, medium-sized, large) 0 (2023) 12 (2026)</p> <p>2. Completed projects of innovative SMEs 0 (2023) 13 (2026)</p> <p>Increasing the innovative potential of enterprises and creating conditions for growth and development</p>
<b>Financial instrument 'Technology Transfer Fund' (TTF)</b>	<p>1. Supported business: 0 (2023) 57 (2029)</p> <p>A financial instrument for share and/or quasi-share investments in combination with AG, including within one operation, in order to provide support to spin-off companies, start-up high-tech enterprises and knowledge-based enterprises as part of industrial start-up systems, turning scientific developments into marketable products and technologies, commercialization and intellectual property management</p>
<b>Supporting the research and development of enterprises and organizations for scientific research and dissemination of knowledge</b>	<p>1. Number of contracts concluded for AG 24 contracts for AG (2021) 100 contracts for AG (2026) 200 contracts for AG (2030)</p> <p>2. Number of partnerships created 15 partnerships created (2021) 50 partnerships created (2026) 100 partnerships created (2030)</p> <p>Higher levels of research and development, increased competitiveness of</p>



Measures undertaken	Expected impact of the measures (quantitatively and/or qualitative)
	enterprises, developed new and/or improved existing products, services and processes
<b>Sustainable development of the Centers of Excellence (CEs) and Centers of Competence (CCs)</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Researchers who work in supported research facilities 0 (2023) 300 (2029)</li> <li>2. Research organizations involved in mutual research projects 0 (2023) 69 (2029)</li> <li>3. Par value of research and innovation equipment 0 (2023) EUR 35,448,578 (2029)</li> <li>4. Research jobs created in supported structures (calculated in full-time equivalent) 0 (2024) 80 (2029)</li> <li>5. Publications from the supported projects 0 (2024) 400 (2029)</li> <li>6. Submitted patent requests 0 (2024) 16 (2029)</li> </ol> <p>More favourable conditions have been created for the continued development of CEs and CCs, and extending their cooperation with business</p>
<b>Participation in European partnerships</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Scientific research organizations participating in mutual research projects 0 (2023) 2 (2027)</li> <li>2. Enterprises that cooperate with scientific research organizations 0 (2023) 412 (2027)</li> </ol> <p>Extended cooperation at the European level between business and scientific organisations, offering a new incitement to local enterprises in areas of smart specialization</p>
<b>Direct finance with guarantees as per InvestEU</b> <b>• Launched in 2023</b> <b>• BGN 89 million</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Allocated budget - BGN 89 million. BGN 0 (initial value at programme approval date August 2023) BGN 89 million (target value, deadline until the resource is exhausted, but not later than August 2025)</li> </ol> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Investment and working loans with a guarantee from InvestEU to support: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The competitiveness of SMEs;</li> <li>2. The ecological and sustainable transformation of business;</li> <li>3. Innovation and digital transformation;</li> </ol> </li> <li>• Reductions in the price and reduction in the customer's security amount</li> </ul>
<b>Building, strengthening and developing capacity and raising awareness and promoting data capabilities (d2/d7)</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Users of new and improved public digital services, products and processes 0 (2024) 1,000,000 (2026)</li> <li>2. Share of electronic data sharing 0 (2024) 34% (2026)</li> <li>3. Share of freely available data 0 (2024) 66% (2026)</li> </ol> <p>Specialized training programmes, for instance, on data analysis capabilities and data-driven policies, on data reuse, on the maintenance and provision of data for each of the data spaces by strategic sectors and areas of public interest, to build data sharing partnerships</p>
<b>Building data spaces by strategic sectors and areas of public interest (d3)</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Number of data spaces created 0 (2024) 9 (2027)</li> </ol> <p>Architecture development; purchase and implementation of modern technologies (tools) software solutions for storing, security, sharing, processing, use and reuse of data; implementation of processes and procedures related to data management;</p>



Measures undertaken	Expected impact of the measures (quantitatively and/or qualitative)
<b>Participation in the Framework Programme (FP) of the EU in the sphere of research and innovation 'Horizon Europe' for the period 2021-2027.</b>	1. Ranking of Bulgaria compared to the EU countries by attracted funds per capita 22 <sup>nd</sup> place (2021) 20 <sup>th</sup> place (2026) Strengthening the EU science and technology base, including by developing solutions to meet policy priorities such as the environmental and digital transition. The programme also contributes to the achievement of sustainable development targets and stimulates competitiveness and growth
<b>Implementation of NSP to achieve impact on social and economic challenges</b>	1. Number of implemented NSPs 11 (2018) 12 (2025) Achieving quality scientific results for the benefit of the economy and society, creating a critical mass of scientists to work on societal challenges
<b>Building and developing modern scientific research infrastructure and providing access to Pan-European scientific infrastructure consortia</b>	1. Number of infrastructure objects supported 22 (2023) 30 (2026) Construction, modernization and internationalization of infrastructure complexes in order to meet social and economic challenges. Use of research infrastructures of Pan-European interest between the EU countries and associated ones, as well as creation of regional centers, participation in various experiments and scientific programmes
<b>Providing access to Pan-European scientific infrastructure consortia</b>	1. Number of memberships in Pan-European scientific infrastructure consortia 12 (2021) 13 (2026) Intensification of the process of the internationalization of Bulgarian scientific organizations and higher institutions in European consortia for scientific infrastructure and in general the integration of the Bulgarian scientific and innovation ecosystem in the European Research Area
<b>Creation and development of a network model of research universities in support of industry and society</b>	1. Number of executed strategic scientific and innovation programmes of HEI 0 (2023) 9 (2026) Increasing the quality of research activity, accelerating technology transfer and improving interaction with business
<b>Increasing the administrative capacity and budget of research funding organizations in order to promote and develop scientific research</b>	1. Number of competition sessions 8 competition sessions (2022) 10 competition sessions (2026) Using the financing of fundamental scientific research, conditions will be created for applied scientific research and innovation, as well as for the training of specialists and scientists in various scientific fields, thus will increase the activity of the project activity of scientific organizations and higher institutions in the country in compliance with national priorities with the aim of realization of more and better quality scientific projects under the conditions of competition
<b>Stimulating the publication activity of the scientific research staff and increasing the number of scientific publications in authoritative scientific journals, referenced and indexed in the databases of scientific and scientometric information Web of Science and Scopus, as well as promoting the culture of sharing scientific information in open access</b>	1. % publications by Bulgarian authors, in open access 43% (2022) 50% (2025) Increase in the number of scientific publications of Bulgarian universities and colleges in journals referenced or indexed in the global databases Web of Science or Scopus
<b>'Bulgarian Rose'</b> ● Working capital to finance the current business year for rose processing; ● BGN 20 million	1. Allocated budget - BGN 20 million. BGN 0 (initial value on the programme approval date December 2021) BGN 20 million (target value, deadline until the resource will be exhausted) Stimulation of a local industry of national importance
<b>Financing of Groups and Organizations of producers of agricultural products</b> ● BGN 10 million	1. Allocated budget - BGN 20 million. BGN 0 (initial value on the programme approval date December 2022) BGN 20 million (target value, deadline until the resource will be exhausted) Stimulation of an industry of strategic importance

Measures undertaken	Expected impact of the measures (quantitatively and/or qualitative)
<b>Implementation of Measure 3.1 Financial instruments to support the competitiveness of SMEs from the National Strategy for promotion of small and medium-sized enterprises 2021-2027</b>	1. Number of supported enterprises 0 (2020) 260 (2024) Provision of grant funding and financial instruments to encourage SMEs to introduce new and modern technologies, digital solutions, specialized hardware and software, technological modernization and production of new products, and services into the production process
<b>Implementation of Measure 3.2 Provision of financial instruments and guarantee schemes for investment financing and export activity of SMEs from the National Strategy for the Promotion of small and medium-sized enterprises 2021-2027</b>	1. Number of SMEs supported through guarantee schemes 0 (2020) 2000 (2024) Provision of guarantee schemes for SMEs from the group of Bulgarian Development Bank, FMFIB (Fund manager of financial instruments in Bulgaria), National Guarantee Fund, etc.
<b>Implementation of Measure 3.3 Provision of financial instruments for micro- and small enterprises from the National Strategy for the Promotion of small and medium-sized enterprises 2021-2027</b>	1. Number of micro- and small enterprises supported by credit instruments 0 (2020) 2500 (2024)
<b>Implementation of Measure 3.4 Support for start-ups and growing enterprises to access financing from the National Strategy for the Promotion of small and medium-sized enterprises 2021-2027</b>	1. Number of start-ups supported 0 (2020) 200 (2024)
<b>Provision of investment support for the technological and ecological transition of agriculture under the project 'Fund to promote the technological and ecological transition of agriculture' from the NRRP, the directions 'Investments in technological and ecological modernization' and 'Investments in centers for preparation for marketing and storage of fruits and vegetables'</b>	Recovering from the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic, overcoming the problems hampering the competitiveness and sustainability of the agricultural sector and accelerating its adaptation to climate change, the green production, the digital transformation, the improvement of genetic resources
<b>Increasing the innovation capacity of the Agriculture sector by simulating the cooperation between business and science (Sub-measure 16.1 'Support for the formation and functioning of operational groups within the framework of the European Innovation Partnership' of the Rural Development Programme 2014-2020)</b>	The supported forms of cooperation will provide a favourable environment for strengthening and expanding the connections between farmers, educational, scientific units and business, thus creating appropriate mechanisms for the practical implementation of innovative solutions in practice
<b>Specific equipment of the fishing vessel, activities and innovations aimed at protecting the environment and biological diversity</b>	1. Indicator CR 10 Actions aimed at restoring nature, protecting the environment, protecting ecosystems, biodiversity, health and well-being from MFAP 0 (2023) 20 (2027) Increasing resource and energy efficiency; spare fishing methods; improvement and conservation of biological diversity in the Black Sea and the Danube River; decarbonization of fisheries
<b>Improving the infrastructure of fishing ports, fish markets, uploading sites and boat lots to facilitate the landing and storage of unwanted catches</b>	1. Indicator CR 08 Persons who benefit from the MFAP regime 0 (2023) 200 (2027) 2. Indicator CR 14 Opportunities for innovation created by MFAP 0 (2023) 2 (2027) To achieve the objectives of the Biological diversity strategy, the installation of facilities for the collection of sea litter and lost fishing gear will be supported. Through the mentioned activities, energy efficiency, environmental protection and safety and working conditions will be improved. The modernization of two ports (in Sozopol and in Balchik) is planned, as well as funds are planned for infrastructural investments in indicatively five boat lots aimed at small-scale coastal fishing
<b>Production and marketing offering plans</b>	1. Indicator CR 16 Entities that benefit from activities for promotion and provision of information by MFAP 0 (2023) 50 (2027) Strengthening the market organization through the implementation of the Production and marketing plans activity will contribute to adding value to products and developing new sales objects. Implementation of production and marketing plans will develop vertical integration between fisheries and

Measures undertaken	Expected impact of the measures (quantitatively and/or qualitative)
	aquaculture producers and distributors and retailers. The activities envisaged for support are related to achieving the horizontal principles of the EU sustainability and Green transition
<b>Marine surveillance</b>	1. Indicator CR 21 Datasets and advice made available by MFAP 0 (2023) 4 (2027) Developed integration module for the meteorological situation in the Black Sea region; Developed interface for preliminary data on visiting ships; Ensured access to available ship traffic monitoring systems by including them in the established information exchange platform
<b>Development of a national bicycle network with bicycle routes from European, national, regional and local level</b>	1. National bicycle plan developed 0 (2022) 1 (2023) 2. Developed national bicycle network 0 (2022) 1 (2025) Development of the cycling network and improvement of cycle tourism infrastructure, promotion of cycle tourism as a sustainable form of tourism and cycling as a sustainable form of transport thus helps to achieve targets related to the fight against climate change, achieving the highest possible degree of integration of the Bulgarian bicycle network with the European one
<b>Target 10. Reducing inequalities</b>	
<b>Annual update of the MW and the Poverty Line</b>	Increasing the effectiveness of income policy and anti-poverty policy
<b>Implementation of the new approach for integrated territorial investments at the regional level to reduce social and economic inequalities between the regions of the country.</b> The measure is aimed at developing a partnership model and promoting cooperation between different actors at the local level for effective use of the territory potential in order to achieve a better investment focus, more effective and efficient interventions, enhanced intersectoral dialogue.	The implementation of the measure will help to create vibrant, economically strong and sustainable regions in response to unfavourable demographic trends and the deepening of inter- and intra-regional differences in the country.
<b>Implementation of an investment programme for municipal projects. (State Budget).</b>	With the implementation of the measure, it is expected to create conditions for a sustainable and permanent improvement of the economic, social and ecological condition of the municipal territories through investments in objects of the technical and social infrastructure.
<b>Training of lawyers from the National Register of Legal Aid to the NLAB to increase their qualifications and the approach to providing legal aid to persons from minority groups, as well as on the methods of informing them about the types of legal aid, the order, conditions and methods and forms for its use.</b>	800 trained lawyers from the National Registry for Legal Aid at the NLAB
<b>Training of lawyers from the National Register of Legal Aid to the NLAB to improve their qualifications and the approach to providing legal aid to persons from minority groups with a focus on protecting the rights and interests of persons with physical and mental disabilities, as well as in cases of domestic violence and discrimination.</b>	800 trained lawyers from the National Registry for Legal Aid at the NLAB
<b>Programmes to build social competence, thinking skills, anger management in domestic violence, motivational skills, employability in the labour market and other skills with the support and supervision of trainers.</b>	Increase in the % of persons convicted to probation, included in social impact programmes (including youth representatives of vulnerable groups, as well as Roma). Acquisition of new knowledge and skills related to increasing responsibility for behaviour, changing attitudes towards the offense committed, changing attitudes and overcoming existing deficits in problem solving. The ultimate aim of the measures is prevention of repeat offenses.
<b>A new framework for the social reintegration of offenders was built.</b>	100 incarcerated, who have undergone measures for reintegration in the pilot prison (including representatives of vulnerable groups, as well as Roma)

Measures undertaken	Expected impact of the measures (quantitatively and/or qualitative)
<b>Programmes for social reintegration of vulnerable groups in places of deprivation of liberty.</b>	100 offenders from vulnerable groups who go through social reintegration programs (including youth representatives of vulnerable groups, as well as Roma, distributed by gender, age group, Roma)
<b>Mechanism for mutual work of institutions on coverage, inclusion and prevention of dropping out of the education system from children and students of compulsory preschool and school age</b>	An increased number of children and students of compulsory preschool and school age enrolled as a result of the work of the Mechanism, permanently covered by educational institutions. Improved inter-institutional approach to work with children and students from vulnerable groups.
<b>Trainings to increase the capacity of institutions in the school education system in order to implement inclusive education, including through qualification of pedagogical specialists and non-pedagogical staff, as well as educational mediators and/or social workers</b>	Increased capacity of the institutions in the school education system to implement inclusive education, provided opportunity for continuing professional qualification and personal realization of pedagogical specialists and non-pedagogical staff, including educational mediators and/or social workers.
<b>Additional training in academic subjects to overcome omission in mastering the academic content, as well as for successful presentation of NEA and SME for students from vulnerable groups, as well as Roma</b>	Increased educational results and improved performance of students from vulnerable groups of higher education institutions and higher education institutions in view of the overall orientation of the educational process to the student's interest and motivation, to the social changes and those of age in its life, as well as to its ability to apply the acquired competences in practice.
<b>Activities based on interests, inter-school activities, external activities in a real environment, cultural and educational initiatives, including promoting reading and professional (career) orientation</b>	Strengthening intercultural education by improving intercultural communication in educational institutions with different concentrations of vulnerable groups and promoting the creation of effective multicultural communities in an educational environment, including by carrying out initiatives to stimulate reading or professional orientation
<b>Increasing access to the disadvantaged people to arts and culture, as well as their engagement through various activities. Support of creative projects in various fields of culture, creation of a cultural products aimed at the Roma community, with the participation of representatives of the Roma community.</b>	Creating opportunities for reducing social inequality, raising awareness of arts and culture among minority groups
<b>Implementation of measures to overcome inequalities among different disadvantaged groups (marginalized communities, people with disabilities, children, etc.), as well as through participation in territorial approaches at the regional and local level. (HRDP 2021–2027)</b>	Reducing inequalities.
<b>A draft of the ASA of the Foreigners Act of the Republic of Bulgaria is being prepared. Part of the legislative changes are aimed at full implementation of the EU Directive new EU Blue Card EU 2021/1883 - EU Blue Card.</b>	The measure aims to accelerate the application procedure for a single residence and work permit, and make it more efficient
<b>Target 11. Sustainable cities and communities</b>	
<b>35 sections with a concentration of road accidents (SCRA) to be made safe, established by the Ministry of Interior for the period 01.07.2022 - 30.06.2023 along the republican road network outside the settlements. (national budget)</b>	The application of the measures provides a reduction in the number of traffic accidents and the number of persons injured. Upon applying safety measures outside the national road, the activities to ensure safety are carried out together with the specific municipalities.
<b>Areas with an increased risk of road accidents are made safe by performing the following activities:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- securing the roadside space</li> <li>- updating the signalling with road signs and road markings</li> <li>- physical separation of the movement directions</li> <li>- bringing in line with the current standards of the restrictive systems for roads</li> </ul> <b>(national budget)</b>	
<b>Conducting road safety audits at stages 'Concept design', 'Technical design', 'Before putting into operation' and 'Initial operation' of 37 objects, part of the republican road network (national budget)</b>	

Measures undertaken	Expected impact of the measures (quantitatively and/or qualitative)
<p>Carrying out a road safety impact assessment for 5 objects, part of the republican road network. (national budget)</p>	
<p><b>Improving road infrastructure in level NUTS 2 planning regions</b>  <b>The measure will be implemented through the concepts approval of Integrated Territorial Investments financed under the Programme 'Development of regions' 2021-2027.</b></p>	<p>The measure is expected to contribute to the target values of two indicators under the Programme 'Development of regions' 2021-2027, as the expected impact will be studied by the indicators as follows  Length of new or improved roads - outside the Trans-European Transport Network (TEN-T);  Length of the reconstructed or modernized roads - outside the Trans-European Transport Network (TEN-T).</p>
<p><b>Creation of a standard 'Municipal activities under RS' for municipalities as a delegated activity</b></p>	<p>Financial provision of the fulfilment of the municipalities obligation under the RS</p>
<p><b>Measures related to the regulatory framework in the field of RS, including:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Preparation of a draft of a new RTA; Preparation of a draft of Safe Road Transport System Act;</li> <li>- Amendments in the organization and activity rules of the NCCRS, adopted with CMD 156/27.06.2019;</li> <li>- Update of the Ordinance I-183/04.12.2002 on the terms and conditions for the interaction between the control bodies of the Ministry of Interior and medical institutions upon providing assistance to victims of road accidents;</li> <li>- Introduction of the injury scale MAIS3+ and use of ICD group 8 codes for transport injuries in discharge summary;</li> <li>- Optimizing registration and reporting of road accidents;</li> <li>- Assigning the National Board for Aircraft, Maritime and Railway Accident Investigation to the MTC to investigate serious road accidents;</li> <li>- Regulation of conditions and procedure for supplementary training of certain categories of motor vehicle drivers for actions in road accidents with victims;</li> <li>- Arranging the distribution of the institution commitments in managing and maintaining the sections of republican roads passing through populated areas; Optimizing the terms and conditions for managing funds from the Road Safety Fund to the Minister of Interior;</li> <li>- Regulation of the order and manner of construction of polygons simulating risky situations on the road;</li> <li>- Regulation of the order and manner of construction and management of safe and secure parking areas (buffer parking lots);</li> <li>- Improving regulation upon transportation of: - dangerous goods, oversize goods, strengthening of goods, including as per the transport of a damaged PTV during road assistance, transport of children and school-children;</li> <li>- Improvement of the regulation of overload control during cargo transportation;</li> <li>- Creation of normative regulation for effective implementation of Art. 25, para. 6 of the Road Traffic Act</li> </ul>	<p>Improvement of public relations in the field of RS</p>
<p><b>Inclusion in the national list of indicators for reporting progress on the UN Sustainable Development Goals implementation of an indicator for seriously injured people in road accidents</b></p>	<p>Ensuring full monitoring and reporting of national progress towards the UN Sustainable Development Goals implementation on road traffic fatalities and serious injuries</p>
<p><b>Increasing the range of the measurement of the intensity of the movement by republican road network (RRN) (national budget)</b></p>	<p>Improving data for establishing areas with a concentration of traffic accidents and optimizing investment activity</p>
<p><b>Synchronization of the data in the GIS - the system of the RIA for the republican roads with the systems of the Ministry of Interior.</b></p>	<p>Improvement of the analytical process</p>

Measures undertaken	Expected impact of the measures (quantitatively and/or qualitative)
<p><b>Implementation of the National Program on RS (construction of training sites on RS, development of didactic materials on RS, implementation of activities supporting the process of training and education on RS.</b> (state budget)</p>	<p>Optimized training of children and students on RS in the education system</p>
<p><b>Carrying out a communication campaign to increase the safety of children on the road</b></p>	<p>Creation of knowledge, self-awareness and awareness of the population about the main risks on the road</p>
<p><b>Development of a strategy for implementing ITS on the republican road network</b></p>	<p>Ensuring prevention and predicting ITS installation locations on new and existing roads</p>
<p><b>Implementation of targeted infrastructure measures for road safety on municipal roads and streets, including activities on:</b>  - roadway pavements; sidewalks and banquettes; signalling with traffic signs; signalling with road markings;  - restrictive systems for roads/crash-barriers; cycling infrastructure; public transport stops;  - pedestrian paths and construction of pedestrian infrastructure;  - traffic ease; construction of new streets/municipal roads; output of transit traffic; modernization of public transport; activities on national roads passing through populated areas, on the basis of an Agreement concluded between the municipality and the RIA.</p>	<p>Improving road safety by locations</p>
<p><b>In 2024, control is planned to be carried out in settlements and outside populated areas regarding compliance by drivers of road vehicles for public passenger transport with the norms of the Road Traffic Act and the Road Act, within the competences of the police authorities, in order to guarantee the safety of road users using public transport vehicles.</b></p>	<p>Increasing the security of road users using public transport vehicles as public transport, upon traveling in public transport vehicles of this type</p>
<p><b>Implementation of the new approach in the implementation of the state policy for regional development in the 10 large cities - centers of growth. Project ideas that address the current needs and priorities of local communities will be funded. Measures are foreseen in the following directions - energy efficiency, sustainable mobility, road infrastructure, green urban infrastructure, educational infrastructure, health and social infrastructure, housing, culture, sports and tourism.</b></p>	<p>The implementation of the measures will contribute to a significant improvement of living conditions in the main growth centers in the country through sustainable and balanced development, stimulation of economic growth and strengthening of social cohesion.</p>
<p><b>Implementation of investment 'Eco-friendly mobility - pilot scheme to support sustainable urban mobility' under Component 8 'Sustainable transport' of the National Recovery and Resilience Plan.</b>  <b>The measure is primarily aimed at implementing integrated measures for sustainable urban mobility through activities for the development of ecological, safe, functional and energy-efficient transport systems and reducing energy consumption.</b>  <b>15 investment proposals with a total amount of BGN 98.4 million as per the procedure will be supported.</b></p>	<p>The purchase of new green and innovative rolling stock and accompanying integrated clean charging infrastructure measures will contribute for reducing greenhouse gas emissions and reducing the impact of human activity on climate change.  With the implementation of the measure, 68 new vehicles are expected to be delivered, to be built 27 charging stations/points for the needs of public transport, including to be developed and introduced 10 intelligent transport systems to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of public transport.</p>
<p><b>Implementation of an investment under Procedure BG-RRP-4.020 'Support for sustainable energy renovation of a public building fund for administrative services, culture and sports'.</b>  <b>The measure is primarily aimed at energy renovation of state and municipal buildings for administrative services, buildings for public services in the field of culture and art, and buildings for sports.</b>  <b>Funding source: European funds</b></p>	<p>By the measure implementation, a significant improvement in the energy performance of the national stock of non-residential buildings is expected through the application of sustainable integrated high-efficiency energy measures and the achievement of a 30% primary energy saving for each object of intervention, which in turn will have a direct contribution to reducing greenhouse gas emissions and improving energy security.  The measure provides to be renovated a total of 616 public buildings.</p>
<p><b>Implementation of control to reduce CO<sub>2</sub> emissions from light vehicles and trucks - strengthening control in relation to the environmental categories of vehicles</b></p>	<p>The expected impact of the application of the measures is as follows:  - increasing air cleanliness and reducing harmful emissions;  - not allowing the registration of motor vehicles with high values of harmful</p>



Measures undertaken	Expected impact of the measures (quantitatively and/or qualitative)
<p>during vehicle registration, as far as the control of harmful emissions from vehicle during its registration is within the competence of the Ministry of Interior in compliance with national legislation.</p>	<p>emissions; - monitoring the state of air pollution, with the aim of subsequent planning of measures to increase air cleanliness.</p>
<p>Implemented measures to reduce pollutant levels and reach established standards in areas with impaired air quality (measure addressing SP 1, part of Appendix 1)</p>	<p>Citizens who benefit from air quality measures - 2,754,387 by 2029.</p>
<p>Regular reporting of data on harmful emissions in accordance with the European Regulation 858/2018</p>	
<p>Implementation of investments for green urban infrastructure in public spaces according to the priorities of the Programme 'Development of regions' 2021-2027.</p>	<p>By the measure implementation, it is provided to improve the quality of the urban environment and the citizens' life by creating attractive public spaces for rest and recreation, including green areas and physical elements of the urban infrastructure.</p>
<p>Participation of employees of regional directorates of the Ministry of Interior in the procedures for the coordination of projects for the traffic organization (PTO) and general plans for the organization of traffic (GPTO), to the extent that it is within the competence of employees of the MOI to participate in the expert councils for the approval of the PTO and GPTO</p>	<p>Improving citizens' life quality by giving higher guarantees for their security by implementing mechanisms for a safer infrastructure.</p>
<p>Implementation of the Plans for Integrated Development of Municipalities (PIROs), developed in accordance with the provisions of the Regional Development Act, which within the meaning of Art. 29 of the Regulation 1060/2021 territorial development strategies for the municipal level development are integrated, thus medium-term goals and priorities for sustainable development are determined.</p>	<p>By the investments implementation stipulated in the PIROs, conditions will be created to achieve sustainable and balanced development through permanent improvement of the economic, social and ecological condition of the municipal territories.</p>
<p><b>Target 12. Sustainable consumption and production</b></p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Circular and resource-efficient economy in enterprises (guarantee debt instrument);</li> <li>- Innovations implementation in enterprises in the field of 'Clean technologies, circular and low-carbon economy' of ISSS 2021-2027 (AG);</li> <li>- Support for the transition to a circular economy in enterprises (AG);</li> <li>- Development of innovations in enterprises in the field of 'Clean technologies, circular and low-carbon economy' of ISSS 2021-2027 (AG);</li> <li>- Support for the implementation of energy efficiency measures in enterprises (debt instruments in combination with AG);</li> <li>- Grant scheme for investments to combine renewable sources of electricity with local storage facilities;</li> <li>- Green and digital partnerships for smart transformation;</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Improved business access to finance in order to promote the transition to a circular and resource efficient economy;</li> <li>- Increased capacity of enterprises in the field of implementing eco-innovations, resource-efficient, low-carbon and waste-free technologies;</li> <li>- Increased capacity of enterprises to move to circular models of resource use, production and consumption of the products of their activities;</li> <li>- Increased capacity of enterprises for developing eco-innovations, resource-efficient, low-carbon and waste-free technologies;</li> <li>- Improved access of the business for financing to increase energy efficiency and increase the use of energy from RES;</li> <li>- Increased capacity of enterprises to use renewable energy sources for own consumption, combined with local energy storage facilities;</li> <li>- Deep cooperation between businesses and scientific organizations in the field of green and digital solutions and eco innovation;</li> </ul>
<p>The measures of the Action Plan for the National Programme for Prevention and Reduction of Food Loss (2021 - 2026), adopted with CMD No. 700 as of October 7, 2021, are being implemented. Draft information materials have been prepared to clarify the difference between expiration date and minimum durability period, as well as regarding the proper storage of food in the household. Pursuant to measure 3.1.3. of the action plan, an interdepartmental working group is in the process of being formed to prepare a technical assignment for a public procurement to carry out accompanying measures under the 'School fruit' and 'School milk' schemes in order to provide students with information on preventing food waste.</p>	<p>Increasing the education of the younger generation regarding the formation of behaviour related to the correct consumption of food and reducing its waste.</p>

Measures undertaken	Expected impact of the measures (quantitatively and/or qualitative)
<p>Implementation of a measure from Programme 'Environment' 2021-2027 (EP 2021-2027) for the reclamation of landfills and/or ensuring the safety of existing landfills without increasing their capacity. Monitoring, control and disposal of obsolete pesticides and prevention measures.</p>	<p>Area of rehabilitated land (resulting from the reclamation of landfills) for which support is granted - 80 ha</p>
<p>Investment measures under the EP 2021-2027 to provide the necessary infrastructure for household waste treatment and reduce the amount of landfilled household waste and increase the share of separately collected and recycled waste to support the transition to a circular economy, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- construction, expansion and/or upgrading of municipal/regional systems for separate collection and recycling of biodegradable waste;</li> <li>- construction of systems/centers for separate collection and preparation for reuse and repair;</li> <li>- waste recycling - permissible in combination with separate collection and preliminary treatment of separately collected waste;</li> <li>- optimization of the municipal waste management process.</li> </ul>	<p>Additional capacity for waste recycling - 330 000 t/year Waste collected separately - 330,000 t/year.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Supporting the research and development of enterprises and organizations for scientific research and dissemination of knowledge;</li> <li>- Direct finance with guarantees as per InvestEU - Sustainability window - launched in 2023.</li> <li>- Instrument for accelerated absorption of the European funds</li> <li>• for funding up to 100% of the expenses of a submitted project proposal for SMEs approved to sign a contract and up to 85% of the expenses for SMEs in the waiting list.</li> </ul> <p>Companies with an investment loan from BDB shall be entitled to use unsecured working finding up to BGN 200,000;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Aimed at projects under the MIG operational programme for energy efficiency of production buildings and technological modernization of SMEs</li> <li>• The instrument is in the amount of BGN 60 million</li> </ul> <p>- Programme for financing companies with a contract for the implementation of CAW for the purpose of energy efficiency of buildings;</p> <p>- Green energy funding</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Higher levels of research and development, increased competitiveness of enterprises, developed new and/or improved existing products, services and processes</li> <li>- Investment and working credits guaranteed by Invest EU to support the ecological and sustainable transformation of business. Reductions in the price and reduction in the customer's security amount</li> <li>- Encouraging the growth of SMEs by providing new funding opportunities;</li> <li>- Increasing the energy efficiency of residential buildings. Encouraging the growth of SMEs by providing new funding opportunities;</li> <li>- Financing the construction of green infrastructure. Encouraging the growth of SMEs by providing new funding opportunities;</li> </ul>
<p>Introduction of minimum mandatory environmental requirements for certain products subject to public procurement.</p> <p>Amendments to the Public Procurement Act (PPA) have been adopted (prom. SG, issue No. 88 as of 2023, in force since 01.01.2024). A draft Ordinance on the minimum environmental requirements for certain products subject to public procurement has been developed, which should be issued by the Minister of Environment and Water, together with the Minister of Finance and the Minister of Economy and Industry.</p> <p>In connection with obligation of Bulgaria to report the share of clean vehicles acquired or used by contracting authorities under the Public Procurement Act, two surveys on the Public Procurement Portal, which the agency maintains and develops have been published by the Public Procurement Agency (<a href="https://www2.aop.bg/info-chps/">https://www2.aop.bg/info-chps/</a>). The surveys should be completed by March 31, 2024. In fulfilment of the commitments pursuant to the Directive (EU) 2019/1161, a template approved by the executive director of the Public Procurement Agency is available. It concerns the total number of clean vehicles delivered or used.</p>	<p>Introduction of environmentally friendly public procurement as an effective means of promoting sustainable production and consumption models and an incentive to expand market demand for environmentally friendly products and services, as well as for the development of environmentally friendly technologies and innovations.</p> <p>Quantitative and qualitative aspect: the collection of information through the surveys supports the reporting of progress and the achievement of the target for the first reference period from 02.08.2021 to 31.12.2025 regarding the share of clean vehicles used by contracting authorities pursuant to the Public Procurement Act.</p>



Measures undertaken	Expected impact of the measures (quantitatively and/or qualitative)
<p><b>Providing support from EP 2021-2027 to raise awareness of practices and behaviour related to sustainable consumption, circular economy, waste monitoring, etc.</b></p>	<p>Formation of a reasonable attitude towards the environment and confirmation of sustainable consumption models.</p>
<p><b>Target 13. Actions to combat climate change</b></p>	
<p><b>Vulnerability mapping - determination of regional/local 'red lines' to prevent the reduction or loss of ecosystem services important for adaptation to climate change (State budget, Programmes co-financed by the EU, RRF)</b></p>	<p>Improved knowledge and reduced loss of ecosystem services important for climate change adaptation.</p>
<p><b>Flood and drought risk prevention and management activities with a focus on environmentally friendly measures: creation of manageable polders and small buffer basins in river floodplains; restoration of connections with a water basin or the natural state of the river bed, old meanders, flood zones in order to increase water retention; measures to protect riverbanks against erosion - protection of the bank with gabions, etc. (EP 2021-2027). Update of FRMPs for the period 2028-2033.</b></p>	<p>Increased resilience to climate change; reducing the number of victims and material damage; green infrastructure built or improved to adapt to the climate change.</p>
<p><b>Risk analyses, monitoring and implementation of prevention and protection measures in adverse geodynamic processes - landslides, collapses, erosions, abrasions in and outside urbanized areas and along the republican road network, where they are identified as a threat to the life and health of the population and concerning the road safety, as well as for the environment in terms of biological diversity protection (EP 2021-2027)</b></p>	<p>Increased resistance to the climate change, reducing the number of victims and material damage; investments in protection measures against unfavourable geodynamic processes.</p>
<p><b>Improving resilience by providing capacity to fight forest fires - providing the necessary ground capacity, including specialized technique for carrying out timely, adequate and effective intervention of the responsible structures, as well as increasing the capacity at the national level for prevention and for actions in the event of forest fires by creating and developing the necessary infrastructure and methodological framework for preparing the population on the territory of Republic of Bulgaria for protection and response to forest fires. (EP 2021-2027)</b></p>	<p>Improving resilience to the climate change; reducing the number of victims and material damage; increasing the share of areas covered by measures to protect against devastating fires.</p>
<p><b>Construction of new and optimization and/or expansion of existing warning, monitoring, reporting systems:</b>  - further development and completion of the National Water Management System in real time for the remaining 12 main rivers;  - expansion of the System for early warning and notification scope for the population at the regional level (NUTS 3) for the territory of the country, etc. (EP 2021-2027)</p>	<p>Increased resistance to the climate change, reducing the number of victims and material damage; investments in natural disaster monitoring, readiness, warning and response systems;</p>
<p><b>Measures to manage the risk of natural disasters and to prevent the risk to the population life and health (including increasing the population readiness and response forces in case of floods, fires and earthquakes) - focus on building capacity for actions of the responsible authorities and the population during natural disasters in compliance with the strategic objectives regarding the creation of resilience to climate change and increasing the level of awareness of the population about the specified disasters;</b></p>	<p>Integrated measures against the climate change imply a positive impact in relation to the implementation of the objectives, the achievement of the results and the handling of the challenges stipulated in the policies and strategies. The quantitative and qualitative impact of the measures have a positive effect on the overall policy for dealing with the climate change.</p>
<p><b>Updating of plans, policies and programmes to integrate climate change risks as well as the climate change adaptation responses</b></p>	<p>Integrated measures against the climate change imply a positive impact in relation to the implementation of the objectives, the achievement of the results and the handling of the challenges stipulated in the policies and strategies. Increased resilience to the climate change, readiness and response capacity leads to a reduction in casualties and property damage. Dissemination</p>

Measures undertaken	Expected impact of the measures (quantitatively and/or qualitative)
	of information on the climate change adaptation measures provides the basis for a more comprehensive understanding of the need for action to address the climate crisis.
<b>Development of reporting of national forecasts for anthropogenic emissions and carbon sink of greenhouse gases according to Art. 18 of the Regulation (EU) 1999/2018 (EP 2021-2027)</b>	Integrated measures against the climate change imply a positive impact in relation to the implementation of the objectives, the achievement of the results and the handling of the challenges stipulated in the policies and strategies. The quantitative and qualitative impact of the measures have a positive effect on the overall policy for dealing with the climate change.
<b>Implementation of the Energy Strategy of Bulgaria (2020-2030), which is a key political document with legal and regulatory significance. It defines the core priorities for energy development up to 2030.</b>	Integrated measures against the climate change imply a positive impact in relation to the implementation of the objectives, the achievement of the results and the handling of the challenges stipulated in the policies and strategies. The quantitative and qualitative impact of the measures have a positive effect on the overall policy for dealing with the climate change.
<b>Implementation of the Integrated National Plan for Energy and Climate 2021-2030, which defines the main targets and measures for the implementation of national policies for Bulgaria in the field of energy and climate within the context of EU law, as well as the principles and priorities for the development of the energy sector.</b>	Integrated measures against the climate change imply a positive impact in relation to the implementation of the objectives, the achievement of the results and the handling of the challenges stipulated in the policies and strategies. The quantitative and qualitative impact of the measures have a positive effect on the overall policy for dealing with the climate change.
<b>Implementation of the National Strategy and Action Plan for Adaptation to the Climate Change - 2019-2030 - The document outlines the strategic framework and priorities for adaptation to climate change until 2030. The aim is to reduce the country vulnerability to the effects of climate change and to improve the adaptive capacity of ecological, social and economic systems.</b>	Integrated measures against the climate change imply a positive impact in relation to the implementation of the objectives, the achievement of the results and the handling of the challenges stipulated in the policies and strategies. The quantitative and qualitative impact of the measures have a positive effect on the overall policy for dealing with the climate change.
<b>Implementation of the Strategic Plan for the development of agriculture and rural areas of Bulgaria for the period 2023-2024 under the Common Agricultural Policy (Strategic Plan under the Common Agricultural Policy /CAP/). The plan of Bulgaria aims to respond to a number of environmental and climate challenges facing the agricultural sector. Interventions are aimed at reducing greenhouse gas emissions from agriculture, increasing organic carbon in soils, improving soil and water quality, producing energy from renewable sources, supporting low-intensity agricultural practices and sustainable forest management.</b>	The CAP Strategic Plan introduces eco-schemes under which farmers may receive payments for voluntarily implementing environmentally and climate-friendly practices that go beyond legal requirements.
<b>Implementation of the Armed Forces Climate Change Readiness Strategy.</b>	The Armed Forces Adaptation Strategy - by optimizing their operations, the armed forces may use their resources and technologies for further reducing carbon emissions and promote sustainable development.
<b>Increasing the capacity of the responsible units regarding policies related to risk prevention and management and climate change policies; raising awareness; training and information and educational measures for the formation, implementation and fulfilment of the objectives of these policies. (Under EP 2021-2027);</b>	Integrated measures against the climate change imply a positive impact in relation to the implementation of the objectives, the achievement of the results and the handling of the challenges stipulated in the policies and strategies. The quantitative and qualitative impact of the measures have a positive effect on the overall policy for dealing with the climate change.
<b>Preparation for responding and increasing the awareness of the population regarding the prevention of forest fires by building sustainable and durable knowledge and skills, organizing and conducting information campaigns, etc.:</b> - conducting practical and theoretical trainings to increase readiness and response capabilities in the event of forest fires; - conducting theoretical trainings aimed at increasing the awareness of the target groups regarding the prevention of forest fires; - the development of training materials, programmes, plans for the purposes of conducting theoretical and practical classes;	It contributes to increase the capacity and awareness of the population regarding the prevention of forest fires

Measures undertaken	Expected impact of the measures (quantitatively and/or qualitative)
<p>exchange of experience and good practices for the purposes of the successful implementation of measures related to increasing the awareness and readiness of the population for prevention and protection in case of forest fires and with the adequate and timely response of the responsible structures; - conducting information and explanatory campaigns among the population through the dissemination of information through various channels, sociological surveys, etc.;</p>	
<p><b>Project Implementation of innovative measures for mitigation and adaptation to climate change in municipalities in Bulgaria', financed by the EEA FM</b></p>	<p>Dissemination of information on climate change adaptation measures through local and national media; Discussion with the professional community of the approaches for introducing adaptation measures in an urban environment; Generated ideas and proposals to be developed in 2024. Attracted the local institutions and partners' attention; Improved municipal administration capacity; Positioning the country as an important and reliable partner within the European Union; Guaranteeing children a quality living environment, access to food and education.</p>
<p><b>Project Vision 2045, funded by the European Climate Initiative (EUKI) of the Federal Government of Germany</b></p>	<p>Vision for achieving climate neutrality of schools and municipalities by 2045. Attract the attention of local institutions and school partners (providers of goods and services) and numerous publications in the local media</p>
<p><b>Project 'Energy Manager in Municipalities', funded by the European Climate Initiative (EUKI) of the Federal Government of Germany</b></p>	<p>Acquaintance of the professional community with the concept of an energy manager in municipalities, aimed at helping them to achieve higher energy efficiency</p>
<p><b>Project 'Bulgarian Energy Efficiency Forum for Smart Financing for Smart Buildings' (BeSmart), financed under the Horizon 2020 Programme;</b></p>	<p>Dissemination of information in the media with important messages about the contribution of financial institutions in the direction of energy efficiency for smart financing for smart buildings</p>
<p><b>Annual awards in the contest named after 'Mimi Pramarova', aimed at Bulgarian students</b></p>	<p>Promotion of literature and creativity of students, with a focus on environmental protection.</p>
<p><b>The implementation of the commitments under the Framework Convention of the United Nations Organization on Climate Change, directly related to the goals set and implemented by Bulgaria under the Paris Agreement</b></p>	<p>Integrated measures against the climate change imply a positive impact in relation to the implementation of the objectives, the achievement of the results and the handling of the challenges stipulated in the policies and strategies. The quantitative and qualitative impact of the measures have a positive effect on the overall policy for dealing with the climate change. Positioning the country as an important and reliable partner within the European Union</p>
<p><b>Provide annual financial support to promote capacity building mechanisms to combat climate change</b></p>	<p>Building administrative capacity in developing countries</p>
<p><b>Target 14. Conservation and sustainable use of oceans and seas</b></p>	
<p><b>Implementation of investments in the construction, rehabilitation and modernization of water supply infrastructure for the collection, removal and purification of wastewater, water supply with a contribution to reducing water losses along the water transmission network and improving the quality of drinking water (EP 2021-2027)</b></p>	<p>Citizens connected to improved public water supply; Citizens connected to at least secondary waste water treatment, persons (indicators are calculated according to ER 2021-2027)</p>
<p><b>Development of the programme of measures for updating the RBMP for the period 2022-2027 and the programme of measures for updating the Maritime Strategy for the period 2022-2027.</b></p>	<p>Developed programmes of measures to achieve the set targets for achieving a good state of water bodies, according to the RBMP and the Marine Strategy.</p>
<p><b>Encouraging investment activity and the introduction of innovations in the Aquaculture sub-sector (Measure 'Productive investments in aquaculture + Innovations in aquaculture' from MFAP 2021-2027</b></p>	<p>Reducing carbon footprint and pollution. Facilitating the green transition and development of the bioeconomy.</p>
<p><b>Encouraging investment activity and the introduction of innovations in the processing of fishery and aquaculture products (Measure 'Processing of fishery and aquaculture products' from MFAP 2021-2027)</b></p>	<p>Protection of the environment and biological diversity in the Black Sea; promotion of organic production.</p>

Measures undertaken	Expected impact of the measures (quantitatively and/or qualitative)
<b>Measure 'Specific equipment of the fishing vessel, activities and innovations aimed at protecting the environment and biological diversity' (MFAP 2021-2027)</b>	Protection of the environment and biological diversity
<b>Investments for the construction and renovation of fishing ports, fish markets, landing places and boat lots (MFAP 2021-2027)</b>	Infrastructure improvement
<b>Marine surveillance - foresees the implementation of measures that will contribute to strengthening the international management and sustainable management of the Black Sea, by promoting marine surveillance, knowledge about the marine environment and its protection from the MFAP 2021-2027.</b>	Support is aimed at the delivery of integration hardware and development, installation and testing of applied integration software for: National AIS Server; Vessel Traffic Management System /VTS/; System for monitoring the current meteorological situation; National Center for Electronic Document Flow in Maritime Transport.
<b>Creation of bodies for the management of protected sites from the Natura 2000 network through functional provision of the bodies for the management of protected sites under Natura 2000 and implementation of activities in the 'Biological diversity' sector - supporting funding from the EP 2021-2027 for the implementation of the reform under the NRRP</b>	Functional provision (purchase of equipment and software) of the management authority of the Natura 2000 network at the national level and at 19 governing bodies at the regional level. (measure 4 of the National Framework for Priority Actions)
<b>'Biological diversity' under the EP 2021-2027: Measures aimed at improving the environmental protection status of natural habitats and species subject to protection in the Natura 2000 network, such as:</b> - Improving the nature protection status of species and natural habitats by restoring the hydrological regime, restoring disturbed terrains, improving the state of wetlands, by clearing atypical and invasive species and accumulated dry mass, etc. - Improving the conservation status of species through pilot restoration of existing/potential wetlands and meanders along the Danube and Danube tributaries, etc.	Increased area of Natura 2000 protected sites covered by conservation and restoration measures.  Area of Natura 2000 protected areas covered by conservation and restoration measures - 59,770 ha by 2029.  Habitats with improved conservation status (or with a tendency to improve) - 14.7% by 2029.  Species with improved conservation status (or with a tendency to improve) - 10.8% by 2029.
<b>Investment C5I1 'Integration of the ecosystem approach and implementation of nature-friendly solutions in the protection of the protected sites of the 'Natura 2000' network, part of the NRRP of the Republic of Bulgaria. (RRF Funding)</b>	Within C5I1 - specific and detailed conservation objectives and measures for protected sites from the Natura 2000 network, including and in protected sites including marine and coastal ecosystems; mapped ecosystems in a GIS environment and assessed the status of ecosystems and the ecosystem services they provide.
<b>Implementation of the Maritime Spatial Plan of the Republic of Bulgaria for the period 2021-2035.</b>	Creating conditions for achieving sustainable use of marine resources, preserving the Black Sea ecosystem and ensuring long-lasting conditions for its ecosystem services, including sustainable development of the 14 Black Sea municipalities.
<b>Target 15. Conservation and sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems</b>	
<b>Application of the system for preliminary conditions, as part of the Strategic Plan for the development of agriculture and rural areas of the Republic of Bulgaria for the period 2023-2027.</b>	Preservation of the quality of surface and underground water for irrigation, drinking, domestic and medical purposes; protection of soil resources from erosion from excessive use of chemical substances.
<b>Identification of potential protected areas and conducting procedures for their declaration.</b>	Sustainable use of biological diversity and genetic resources. Ensuring the protection of species and habitats - subject to protection in the respective protected areas
<b>Development of new Management Plans updating of existing ones for protected areas and implementation of measures from existing plans.</b>	Area of 'Natura 2000' protected sites covered by conservation and restoration measures - 59,770 ha by 2029.  Habitats with improved conservation status (or with a tendency to improve) - 14.7% by 2029.
<b>Implementation of measures from the adopted action plans for endangered and protected species.</b>	Species with improved conservation status (or with a tendency to improve) - 10.8% by 2029.
<b>Protection, maintenance and restoration of ecosystems and their inherent biological diversity (measure addressing CSR 1, part of Appendix 1).</b>	
<b>Adoption of the project 'National Plan for the Protection and Sustainable Use of Biodiversity and Genetic</b>	

Measures undertaken	Expected impact of the measures (quantitatively and/or qualitative)
<b>Resources' and implementation of the set measures regarding inland freshwater ecosystems.</b>	
<b>Increasing the capacity to protect forests from pests and diseases (state budget);</b>	Annual preparation of forest pathology forecasts
<b>Conducting forest pedagogy classes with children (state budget, funds of state enterprises under Article 163 of the Forestry Act)</b>	Annually organized events for about 5,000 children
<b>Taking actions to conduct a National Inventory of forest territories, in fulfilment of Art. 17 of the Forestry Act (state budget)</b>	Developed methodology for carrying out a National inventory of forest territories.
<b>Intervention 'Prevention of damage to forests from forest fires, natural disasters and catastrophic events' (Strategic plan for the development of agriculture and rural areas (SPDARA) 2023-2027)</b>	Provided maintenance and modernization of the firefighting infrastructure in the forest territories; Improved base for laboratory and forest monitoring equipment against diseases and pests
<b>Intervention 'Afforestation and reforestation' (Strategic plan for the development of agriculture and rural areas (SPDARA) 2023-2027)</b>	Afforestation of agricultural and non-agricultural lands; Maintenance of newly established crops in protected areas under the Habitats Directive; Recovery of victims of forest fires, natural disasters and catastrophic forest events.
<b>Implementation of the system of preconditions, as part of the SPDARA 2023-2027, which includes the Standards for maintaining the land in good agricultural and ecological condition (GAEC) and the Statutory Management Requirements (SMR):</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Preventing carbon depletion in soils and aboveground biomass;</li> <li>2. Maintaining the level of organic matter in the soil;</li> <li>3. Minimizing soil loss and soil degradation due to erosion by implementing more gentle tillage techniques especially on plots sensitive to erosion;</li> <li>4. Prevention of soil and water erosion, through the presence of plant cover, especially during the winter period;</li> <li>5. Conservation of soil potential by performing crop rotation;</li> <li>6. Preservation and enhancing biological diversity on farms, leaving tree and shrub species in their natural form and range;</li> <li>7. Protecting soils from pesticide residue contamination by complying with requirements for pesticide storage, proper use and handling of pesticide treatment equipment.</li> </ol>
<b>Preventing the occurrence of degradation processes, restoring and preserving soil functions.</b>	Territory with restored and/or preserved soil functions.
<b>Sustainable management of soils as a natural resource and ecological land use - encouraging and compensatory measures.</b>	Territory covered by measures to restore, improve and preserve soil potential.
<b>Intervention 'Forest ecological activities in forests' (SPDARA 2023-2027).</b>	Achieving the objectives of the Biological diversity Strategy of the EU to identify and maintain a minimum of 30% protected and a minimum of 10% strictly protected forest ecosystems
<b>Normatively ensured fair and equal conditions for access to the country genetic resources</b>	Ensured fair and equitable distribution of benefits from the genetic resources use (Full implementation of the Nagoya Protocol). Improved opportunities for conservation in nature of the source species of genetic resources, as well as their habitats.
<b>Normatively ensured mechanisms for control of GR users who carry out their activities on the territory of the country.</b>	
<b>Ensured administrative capacity to implement the provisions of the Nagoya Protocol to the Convention on Biological Diversity.</b>	
<b>Increasing the powers of park rangers to the Directorates of National Parks and RIEW through legislative changes.</b>	Improved qualification and increased powers of employees, which would lead to more effective protection of the respective protected areas. Supporting the activities of customs officers in the application of regulations for international trade in protected species. Participation in international actions to prevent illegal trafficking of protected species (similar to Thunder 2023)
<b>Improving the qualification and efficiency of the employees from the park guard work to the directorates of the national parks and RIEW, through trainings, mutual work with the sector 'Crimes' against the Environment and Wildlife sector, 'Economic Police' Department of the Ministry of Interior. Conducting trainings and seminars with the Customs Agency</b>	



Measures undertaken	Expected impact of the measures (quantitatively and/or qualitative)
<p><b>Implementation of the measures of the three plans for invasive foreign species:</b></p> <p>1. 'National action plan on priority pathways of unintentional introduction and spread of invasive foreign species affecting the EU through release/escape from Controlled Environments, 2023 - 2032';</p> <p>2. 'National action plan on priority pathways of unintentional introduction and spread of invasive foreign species affecting the EU through transport 2023-2032';</p> <p>3. 'National action plan on priority pathways of unintentional introduction and spread of invasive foreign species affecting the EU through corridors and natural spread' 2023-2032;</p> <p>Development of action plans for invasive species and implementation of measures on them.</p>	<p>Maintained good biological diversity status and reduced pressure from the spread of foreign and invasive species.</p>
<p><b>Adoption of the project 'National Plan for the Protection and Sustainable Use of Biodiversity and Genetic Resources' and implementation of the measures thereon regarding forest, marine, etc. types of ecosystems.</b></p> <p><b>Support for ecosystem restoration projects</b></p> <p><b>Improving ecosystem management by assessing the loading capacity of significant ecosystems and their capacity to provide ecosystem services</b></p>	<p>Conserved good status of species and ecosystems</p>
<p><b>Support for the implementation of favourable for the climate and the environment agricultural practices (eco-schemes) under the CAP 2023-2027 - 8 eco-schemes totally included in the SPDARA 2023-2027, which contribute to achieving the targets of the Green Pact.</b></p>	<p>- 'Eco scheme for maintaining and improving biological diversity and ecological infrastructure' with a contribution to the maintenance of ecological infrastructure within agricultural lands; The 'Eco-scheme to reduce the pesticides use' will encourage farmers not to apply total herbicides and plant protection products falling into the first professional category of use; The 'Eco-scheme for preservation and restoration of soil potential' promotes the application of green manuring and organic fertilization.</p> <p>Number of farmers who applied - upon receiving applications for support for Campaign 2023 pursuant to the eco-schemes from the SPDARA 2023-2027, farmers submitted applications as follows:</p> <p>'Eco scheme for maintaining and improving biological diversity and ecological infrastructure' - 6,029 applications; 'Eco scheme for reducing the use of pesticides' - 14,566 applications; 'Eco scheme for preservation and restoration of soil potential - promotion of green manuring and organic fertilization' - 3,845 applications.</p>
<p><b>Stabilization of the income of organic farmers - Eco-scheme for organic farming (farm animals) from the SPDARA 2023-2027.</b></p>	<p>The eco-scheme is aimed at supporting farmers with farm animals (organic and in transition) and farm permanently grassed areas and/or areas with fodder crops (organic and in transition).</p> <p>Number of applied farmers - upon receiving applications for support for Campaign 2023 pursuant to the eco-schemes for organic farming (farm animals) from the SPDARA 2023-2027, farmers submitted 111 applications.</p>
<p><b>Introduction of compensatory payments for forests in Natura 2000, forests in an old phase and forests with strict protection according to the European Biological diversity Strategy (Intervention 'Support under Natura 2000 for forests' - SPDARA 2023-2027)</b></p>	<p>Preservation and increase of the area of forests in old age phase; Protection of the nesting habitats of diurnal and nocturnal raptors and black stork;</p> <p>Increasing the regeneration period of regeneration cuttings by one age class or transformation of plantations into the so-called 'permanent forest'</p>
<p><b>Intervention 'Support under Natura 2000 for forests' from the SPDARA 2023-2027.</b></p>	<p>Supporting 60,000 ha of the forests in Natura 2000</p>
<p><b>Intervention 'Reducing the loss of biological diversity, protecting forest habitats and reducing illegal activities in forest territories' (SPDARA 2023-2027) - the aim is to support the Forestry Executive Agency and the Regional Directorates of Forests and the Directorates of Natural Parks, as responsible for the control in the forest territories regarding the observance of the forest and hunting legislation and the subordinate legislation.</b></p>	<p>Improving control in forest areas.</p>

Measures undertaken	Expected impact of the measures (quantitatively and/or qualitative)
<b>Target 16. Peace, justice and responsible institutions</b>	
<b>The National Programme for the Prevention of Violence and Abuse of Children (2023 - 2026) and the Action Plan for its implementation are being implemented, which were adopted by DCM No. 51 as of January 23, 2023.</b>	Improved mechanism for coordination and communication between government authorities, representatives of civil society and the non-governmental sector, support of the network of professionals who work with children, support of parents, raising awareness of children, improvement of regulations, protection of children from violence and exploitation depending on their needs, support of children, victims of violence, in the process of recovery and rehabilitation. The programme is aimed at preventive measures and services that may reduce violence against children to the greatest extent.
<b>In the plans for conducting trainings and organizing seminars for investigating police officers, topics related to abuse restriction, exploitation, trafficking and all forms of suffering and violence against children will be included, as well as violence prevention, fight against terrorism and crime</b>	The measures aim to build the capacity of investigative bodies and increase their competence in their work on criminal proceedings and crime detection.
<b>Taking measures, including legislative measures, to protect journalists from political, administrative and economic pressures, including strategic lawsuits against public participation (SLAPP)</b>	The measures are aimed to ensure the rule of law and to guarantee public access to information.
<b>Preparing of a concept for regulation of lobbying and adoption of legislative measures</b>	The measure aims to regulate lobbying activities to ensure transparency and integrity in lobbying.
<b>Strengthening the mechanisms for institutional integrity and transparency in Bulgaria</b>	The measure aims to increase the capacity to investigate and prosecute corruption and to recover stolen property; The measure aims to establish transparent two-way communication with citizens regarding public integrity and the fight against corruption.
<b>Provision of information on inquiries regarding the implementation of the Anti-Bribery and Corruption Law through the 'Internet Reception' functioning on the website of the Anti-Corruption Commission.</b>	The measure aims to reduce corruption and develop transparency in the institution work.
<b>The SACP implements the project 'Effective policies for all children'. The project includes activities that are directly related to the following areas of great importance: (1) development and improvement of the skills of those working in the field of children's rights and their protection; (2) strengthening inter-institutional coordination and cooperation; - children's participation; (3) prevention of all types of violence; (4) extensive analysis of the legislative and institutional framework in the country; (5) development of technological solutions for data analysis.</b>	Improving the effectiveness of institutions in relation to policies for children.
<b>Preparing the Law on Strategic Planning and the corresponding subordinate legislation framework.</b>	Increasing effectiveness of the government policy.
<b>Normative determination of the areas of state policy</b>	Increasing effectiveness of the government policy.
<b>Applying innovative approaches to policy development and implementation</b>	Increasing effectiveness of the government policy.
<b>Implementation of a project to strengthen the monitoring of the implementation of public policies</b>	Increasing effectiveness of the government policy.
<b>Creating a strategic, organizational and technical framework for data management</b>	Improving institutional performance by management based on data
<b>Digitization of information arrays in the administration, containing register data and e-authentication from registers</b>	Improving the institutions efficiency by digitalization of the public sector
<b>Development of horizontal and central systems of electronic management</b>	Improving the institutions efficiency by digitalization of the public sector

Measures undertaken	Expected impact of the measures (quantitatively and/or qualitatively)
<b>Building a national cyber security system</b>	Improving the efficiency of institutions by increasing network and information security
<b>The Ministry of Foreign Affairs has developed a new communication and information mechanism for public awareness regarding amendments to the UNSC sanctions lists on the financing of terrorism and the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. The mechanism has been uploaded to the website of the MoFA and allows distribution of the published news about amendments to the sanctions through the RSS format/system to the interested parties.</b>	The measure aims to increase access to information
<b>Increasing the use of the Platform for access to public information</b>	The measure aims to guarantee public access to information and increase the transparency of institutions and the process of access to information.
<b>Target 17. Partnership for Sustainable Development</b>	
<b>1. Implementation of the annual plan for revenue - share of the collected revenue in the total value of the planned income. 2. Implementation of the annual training plan for employees of NRA.</b>	1. - quantitative - 100% completed plan for revenue 2. - quantitative - 100% completed plan for training 2. - qualitative - improved capacity and professional qualities of employees of NRA
<b>Mid-term Programme for Development Assistance and humanitarian aid of the Republic of Bulgaria for the period 2020-2024.</b>	Support for partner countries to achieve sustainable social and economic growth. Dealing with humanitarian crises
<b>Implementation of all free trade agreements and economic partnership agreements concluded by the EU Application of tariff preferences upon admission to free circulation of goods from more than 70 countries included in the EU scheme under the General Scheme of Preferences, as well as on an autonomous basis for goods originating from Overseas Countries and the EU territories</b>	Guaranteeing long-term duty-free and quota-free access to the markets for all least developed countries by applying the tariff preferences established by the EU while allowing the free circulation of goods;
<b>Development of the 'Monitorstat' system as an instrument for better strategic planning</b>	Better strategic planning. Increased policy coherence.
<b>Conducting a Second voluntary national SDGs implementation review</b>	Facilitate the implementation monitoring of the SDGs
<b>Preparation and updating of a National list of indicators for implementation monitoring of the UN SDGs</b>	Facilitate the implementation monitoring of the SDGs



## 5. EU Funds Use

The 2021-2027 Partnership Agreement is a strategic document that substantiates the choice of policy objectives, outlines national priorities in European funding, describes the main focus of interventions and lists the programmes that will address them. Based on the strategic framework laid down in the Agreement, the individual programs detail and further develop the main actions to implement the outlined goals and priorities.

The budget for Bulgaria amounts to approx. EUR 13 billion European and national funding. Within the period since the approval of the programmes, a total of 51 procedures for calls for proposals with a total budget of BGN 4.586 billion have been completed. 33 procedures with a total amount of funding of BGN 5.667 billion are open for applications, including investment projects under the programmes 'Transport Connectivity' and 'Environment', as well as technical assistance under the individual programmes.

PROGRAMME 'DEVELOPMENT OF REGIONS' 2021-2027 supports integrated urban development and integrated territorial development of regions. The programme is implemented through instruments for territorial development, including Integrated territorial investments (ITI). The Just Transition Fund (JTF) will also be implemented through the programme. The budget of the programme is in the amount of BGN 6.5 billion, of which BGN 3.6 billion - co-funding from the ERDF and BGN 2.9 billion - co-funding from the Just Transition Fund. Phase 1 of the implementation of the ITI instrument has started. A total of 165 items were submitted. ITI concepts that are under evaluation by regional development councils. The procedure 'Support for the effective implementation of the integrated territorial approach and the policies from the sectors of PDR intervention' under Priority 3 'Technical assistance pursuant to Art. 37' and the procedure 'Support for the successful implementation of the PDR' pursuant to Priority 5 'Technical assistance'. Within Priority 5, 3 orders for the provision of AG have been approved. A financial agreement was concluded with Fund Manager of Financial Instruments in Bulgaria EAD (FMFIB) for the management of funds for financial instruments under the Programme in the amount of BGN 462 million. An application procedure with project ideas as per Priority 1 'Integrated Urban Development' has been announced. The procedure is aimed at candidates from the 10 largest municipalities in the country.

The PROGRAMME 'TRANSPORT CONNECTIVITY' 2021-2027 implements investments in road and railway infrastructure under the Cohesion Fund and the European Regional Development Fund. In road infrastructure, priority is given to projects in north Bulgaria, with the construction of the tunnel under Shipka Peak and the Ruse-Veliko Tarnovo highway. By the end of the programme period, the completion of lot 3.2 of 'Struma' motorway is expected. Investments in railway transport include the modernization of sections on the Sofia-Plovdiv and Sofia-Dragoman-Serbian border lines, as well as the construction of a railway connection between Bulgaria and North Macedonia. Measures related to road safety are also financed. The programme realizes investments in road and railway infrastructure in the amount of BGN 3.7 billion. Until this moment, 8 application procedures have been announced, related to the development of rail, road and water transport, with information systems in transport, with intermodality in urban conditions and technical assistance. These procedures cover over 95% of the programme budget. Procedures for 'Intermodal Operators' and 'Alternative Fuels' are to be announced.

The PROGRAMME 'ENVIRONMENT' 2021-2027 supports investments that cover sustainable water management policies and infrastructure; promoting the transition to a circular and resource-efficient economy; improving the protection and conservation of nature; promoting cli-

mate change adaptation. Gradual removal of solid fuel heating appliances use and pilot investments in heating systems using hydrogen technologies are taken out as investments of a strategic nature – as an alternative option for domestic heating with solid fuel. The programme covers financing in the amount of nearly BGN 3.56 billion. 9 application procedures have been completed and 5 procedures are currently open. The procedures are prioritized 'Waters', 'Waste', 'Biological diversity', 'Risk and climate change', 'Air' and 'Technical assistance'. 19 project proposals under the programme have been approved. Contracts were signed for the grant provision of financial assistance for the implementation of 8 project proposals, of which 1 is with priority 'Risk and climate change', 3 are with priority 'Air' and 4 with priority 'Technical assistance'.

The PROGRAMME 'COMPETITIVENESS AND INNOVATIONS IN ENTERPRISES' 2021-2027 is directly aimed at achieving intelligent and sustainable growth of the Bulgarian economy, as well as the implementation of industrial and digital transformation. The programme is aimed at enterprises with a focus on small and medium-sized enterprises. The main areas of support are RDA and innovation in enterprises, digitalization, entrepreneurship, growth and competitiveness, as well as energy efficiency and the transition to a circular economy.

The Programme 'Competitiveness and Innovations in Enterprises' is in the amount of BGN 2.93 billion. Four procedures are in progress: Technical support; direct provision for implementation of measures for the internationalization of Bulgarian SMEs; two procedures for developing and implementing innovations in enterprises. A competitive selection procedure 'Support for family businesses, creative industries and crafts' is about to be announced. A financial agreement in the amount of BGN 1.262 billion is being implemented between the MO of PCIE and FMFIB for the assignment of the implementation of the financial instruments under the programme. FMFIB has launched a procedure for the selection of financial intermediaries under the Entrepreneurship Fund.

The PROGRAMME 'RESEARCH, INNOVATION AND DIGITIZATION FOR SMART TRANSFORMATION' 2021-2027 focuses on the sustainable development of the Bulgarian research and innovation ecosystem, the development of technology transfer, improvement of science-business cooperation and the digital transformation of the public sector. Funding under the programme is in the amount of BGN 2.13 billion. A financial agreement was signed with FMFIB for the management of a financial instrument 'Technology Transfer Fund', which is in the amount of BGN 117.4 million, and the value of the announced nine procedures for providing non-refundable financial assistance is in the amount of BGN 129.783 million. Pursuant to priority 1 of the Programme, a total of three procedures for direct provision have been announced, two of them were closed for applications. The funding procedure for selected by the European Commission European Digital Innovation Hubs awarded with the 'Seal of Excellence' is still active for applications. As per priority 2 of PRIDST, five procedures have been announced for direct provision to specific beneficiaries, which are administered by the MEG as an intermediate unit under the programme.

The PROGRAMME 'HUMAN RESOURCES DEVELOPMENT' 2021-2027 supports policies for sustainable employment of the country, including by activation on the labour market of unemployed and inactive persons and youth, as well as those for social inclusion and integration by implementing measures provided for in the Long-Term Care Strategy and the European Child Guarantee. The total number of persons who are expected to improve their qualifications is 212.6 thousand, the persons who are expected to acquire digital skills are 142.3 thousand of them. The budget of the programme is in the amount of BGN 3.84 billion. 20 procedures for collecting project proposals as per the main priorities of the programme have been completed, the procedures 'Sustainable employment for disadvantaged people' and 'Addressing the challenges of the labour market' are open for applications.

The PROGRAMME 'FOOD AND BASIC MATERIAL ASSISTANCE' 2021-2027 contributes to the overall national policy to mitigate and reduce poverty and to overcome social exclusion. Measures under the programme will reach at least 600,000 people who need support to meet basic, main life needs. The programme for food and basic material support has a budget of BGN 411.7 million. The main directions of the support are: 'Assisting with packages of food products and hygiene materials'; 'Hot Lunch'; 'Packages for newborn children' and 'Children's kitchen', as they have launched procedures in all directions.

The PROGRAMME 'EDUCATION' 2021-2027 implements long-term measures to reduce the share of early school leavers, development of key competencies and digital transformation of school education, including vocational education and training. Emphasis is also put on the adaptation of professional education and training to the dynamics of the labour market. Measures to introduce forms of dual education and the professional orientation of students through internships continue. The programme operates with a budget in the amount of BGN 1.88 billion. Two operations of strategic importance are implemented under the programme – to support personal development in school education and to modernize vocational education and training, as well as a technical assistance procedure. The procedure for direct provision of financial aid for personal development in preschool education has been completed. Two procedures for the selection of project proposals are ongoing: for support for project doctoral studies and for the affirmation of intercultural education.

The PROGRAMME 'TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE' 2021-2027 provides support for increasing the added value of the management system for European shared management funds by optimizing the environment for the implementation of the Partnership Agreement, strengthening the capacity of units for coordination, management and control of programmes, beneficiaries and partners, engagement of social partners and civil society organizations for good management of EU funds and increasing visibility and transparency regarding the contribution of these funds. The programme has a total budget of BGN 237.5 million. Five direct award procedures have been opened. A procedure with the Ministry of Finance as the beneficiary is to be announced. Two new application procedures are being prepared, the first of them with direct beneficiaries AFCOS and MOEW, and the second one for selection of project proposals of civil society organizations.