15 October 2026

Positive preliminary assessment of the satisfactory fulfilment of milestones and targets related to the fourth payment request submitted by Bulgaria on 16 September 2026, transmitted to the Economic and Financial Committee by the European Commission

Executive summary

In accordance with Article 24(2) of Regulation (EU) 2021/241, on 16 September 2026, Bulgaria submitted a request for payment for the fourth instalment of the non-repayable support. The payment request was accompanied by the required management declaration and summary of audits.

To support its payment request, Bulgaria provided due justification of the satisfactory fulfilment of milestone 176 and target 308 of the fourth instalment of the non-repayable support, as set out in Section 2.1.4 of the Council Implementing Decision of 4 May 2022 on the approval of the assessment of the recovery and resilience plan for Bulgaria[1].

For target 308, covering a large number of beneficiaries, in addition to the summary documents and official listings provided by Bulgaria, Commission services have assessed a statistically significant sample of individual files. The sample size has been uniformly set at 60, which corresponds to a confidence level of 95% or above in all cases.

In its payment request, Bulgaria has confirmed that measures related to previously satisfactorily fulfilled milestones and targets have not been reversed. The Commission does not have evidence of the contrary. Upon receipt of the payment request, the Commission has assessed on a preliminary basis the satisfactory fulfilment of the relevant milestones and targets. Based on the information provided by Bulgaria, the Commission has made a positive preliminary assessment of the satisfactory fulfilment of all 25 milestones and targets.

One milestone (M208) has previously been subject to a negative assessment and a partial suspension of disbursement adopted by the Commission pursuant to Article 24(6) of Regulation (EU) 2021/241. Following the revision of the Council Implementing Decision of 27 August 2026, milestone 208 has been moved to the fifth payment request, which led to the cancellation of the partial suspension of disbursement adopted by the Commission pursuant to Article 24(6) of Regulation (EU) 2021/241 of 24 July 2026 with regard to milestone 208. The assessment of milestone 208 will take place in the fifth payment request.

For milestone 176 and target 308, the assessment follows a previous negative assessment and a partial suspension of disbursement adopted by the Commission pursuant to Article 24(6) of Regulation (EU) 2021/241. In line with Article 24(6) of that Regulation, Bulgaria took the necessary measures by 31 August 2026 and submitted evidence thereof in the context of a subsequent payment request. On the basis of the information provided, the Commission has carried out a new assessment of the milestone and target concerned and concluded that they are now satisfactorily fulfilled.

[1] ST 8091/22; ST 8091/22 ADD1 as amended by ST 15837/2023 INIT;ST 15837/2023 ADD 1; ST 11242/2025 INIT;ST 11242/2025 INIT ADD1, ST 15108/25; ST 15108/25 ADD 1; ST 8819/26, ST 8819/26 ADD1 and ST 12334/26; ST 12334/26 ADD 1; ST 12334/26 ADD 1 COR 1.

The milestones and targets positively assessed as part of this payment request demonstrate significant steps in the implementation of Bulgaria's Recovery and Resilience Plan. They notably highlight the continuation of the reform momentum in key policy areas. This includes, among others, the entry into force of legislation concerning the set-up of a politically independent anti-corruption body, the entry into force of legal acts in the field of vocational education and training, the establishment of a National Fund for Decarbonisation, the signature of new public service contracts for public rail transport services, and the entry into force of legislation on electric mobility. The milestones and targets also confirm progress towards the completion of investment projects related to financial support to small and medium sized companies, the establishment of a geothermal tool and an electronic information system in agriculture, investments in the field of digitalisation of administrative justice and renewable energy installations, as well as the signature of contracts for medical equipment and the construction of outpatient care units.

By the transmission of this positive preliminary assessment and in accordance with Article 24(4) of Regulation (EU) 2021/241, the Commission asks for the opinion of the Economic and Financial Committee on the satisfactory fulfilment of the relevant milestones and targets.

Contents

Non-repayable support 4

Number and name of the Milestone: 176 Entry into force of legal act(s) on public transport 4

Number and name of the Target: 308 Support for the cultural sector 8

Non-repayable support

Number and name of the Milestone: 176 Entry into force of legal act(s) on public transport

Related Measure: C8.R4 Integrated public transport

Qualitative Indicator: Provision in the legal act(s) indicating the entry into force

Time: Q4 2025

1. Context:

The objective of the reform is to increase the quality and efficiency of the public transport service. The reform consists in the entry into force of legal act(s) relating to public transport.

The milestone requires the entry into force of legal act(s) on public transport that provide for: (i) rules for the provision of real-time travel data, (ii) the establishment of a transport scheme with coordinated timetables, (iii) rights and/or obligations of operator(s) and passenger(s), (iv) principles for tariff policies for public passenger services, and (v) principles for planning and management of public transport. The National System for a Single Transport Document including the clearing system for the distribution of the revenues from the sale of the single transport documents as well as the development, implementation and subsequent update of the Intelligent Public Transport Management System and of the National Access Point System are not part of the RRF measure.

Milestone 176 is the first and only step of this reform.

2. Evidence provided:

	Name of the evidence	Short description
1	Summary document	Summary document duly justifying how the milestone (including all its constitutive elements, as set out in the description of the target and of the corresponding measure in the CID Annex) was satisfactorily fulfilled
2	Copy of the publication of the Law for public transport in the State Gazette (SG No.32/01.04.2026)	The Law for public transport was adopted by the 51st National Assembly on 19 March 2026. In line with paragraph 10 of its final provisions, the law entered into force 14 days after its promulgation in the State Gazette on 1 April 2026; therefore, on 16 April 2026.

3. Analysis:

The justification and substantiating evidence provided by the Bulgarian authorities cover all constitutive elements of the milestone.

Entry into force of legal act(s) on public transport

The Law for public transport was published in the State Gazette on 1 April 2026. According to §10 of the Final Provisions of the Law for public transport, the Law enters into force within 14 days of its promulgation in the State Gazette. The Law for public transport entered into force on 16 April 2026.

Furthermore, in line with the description of the measure**, the National System for a Single Transport Document including the clearing system for the distribution of the revenues from the sale of the single transport documents as well as the development, implementation and subsequent update of the Intelligent Public Transport Management System and of the National Access Point System are not part of the measure**.

The National System for a Single Transport Document including the clearing system for the distribution of the revenues from the sale of the single transport documents as well as the development, implementation and subsequent update of the Intelligent Public Transport Management System and of the National Access Point System have not been taken into account for the assessment of the milestone as they are not part of the measure.

The legal act(s) on public transport shall provide for:

- rules for the provision of real-time travel data,

Article 13 of the Law for public transport (Evidence No. 2) provides for rules for the provision of real-time travel data, in particular the Law for public transport stipulates that the Minister for Transport and Communications shall establish and maintain a 'National Access Point', which is defined as an in-service open real-time routing and planning information system, including point-to-point routing, which allows for the combination of road, rail, air, inland waterway and maritime transport. Article 13 (3) of the Law for public transport defines that real-time travel and traffic data on different modes of public transport shall be included in this National Access Point system, such as data on delays, cancellations, expected departures and arrivals, closed sections and traffic disruptions. In accordance with Article 13(5) of the Law for public transport, the travel and traffic data shall be provided by the State and local government bodies, the local administration, contracting entities for transport services, carriers, providers of travel information services, and infrastructure managers. Article 13(6) of the Law for public transport stipulates that the persons referred to in Article 13(5) shall provide and publish the travel data referred to in Article 13(3) through the National Access Point in such a way as to ensure that users have access to real-time travel data. The development, implementation and subsequent update of the National Access Point System are not part of the measure and have therefore not been taken into account for the assessment of the requirement.

- **establishment of a transport scheme with coordinated timetables,**

Article 20 (1) of the Law for public transport (Evidence No. 2) stipulates that a national transport scheme shall be established and shall include coordinated timetables for regular passenger transport services by rail, road, air, inland waterway or maritime transport. Pursuant to Article 20 (2) of the Law for public transport, the national transport scheme consists of train schedules, a general transport scheme (Articles 22-23 of the Law for public transport), inter-municipal transport schemes (Articles 24-28 of the Law for public transport), municipal transport schemes (Article 29 of the Law for public transport), timetables for passenger air transport and timetables for passenger transport by inland waterways or maritime transport. According to Article 20 (3) of the Law for public transport, the train schedules in the national transport scheme are the basis for the layout and preparation of the general, inter-municipal and municipal transport schemes. Passenger schedules

shall be drawn up in such a way as to enable passengers to be transferred with a stopping time of no more than 15 minutes at connecting points in line with Article 20(4) of the Law for public transport. According to Article 22 of the Law for public transport the general transport scheme includes the timetables of bus lines connecting localities in one or more districts and the timetable of the general transport scheme are drawn up in compliance with the requirements for connection with another mode of transport. In addition, municipalities cooperate to co-plan, procure, finance and manage integrated public passenger transport services locally for an inter-municipal transport schemes pursuant to Article 24 of the Law for public transport. Pursuant to Article 29 of the Law for public transport, the municipal transport scheme includes timetables by: 1. urban lines within the boundaries of a built-up area defined by an existing spatial plan, which include bus, tram and metro lines; 2. inter-urban bus lines connecting two or more localities in the town of the municipality; 3. inter-urban bus lines connecting one or more localities in a county with an administrative centre located outside its territory with its administrative centre located in another municipality; 4. bus lines for passenger transport-on-demand. The development, implementation and subsequent update of the Intelligent Public Transport Management System are not part of the measure and therefore have not been taken into account for the assessment of the requirement

- rights and/or obligations of operator(s) and passenger(s),

Chapter 6, Articles 55 to 80 of the Law for public transport (Evidence No. 2) establish rights and obligations of passengers using road, rail, air, inland waterway and maritime transport, and the related rights and obligations of the operators of the respective mode of transport.
In particular,

- the obligations of the operators in terms of liabilities for damages to life, bodily and mental injury suffered as a result of accidents, loss or damages of luggage are defined in Articles 59-62 (for the road transport operators), Articles 69-71 (for rail transport operators), Articles 75-78 (for inland waterway and maritime transport operators) and Article 80(1)-(4) (for air transport operators) of the Law for public transport.
- the right of operators for the recourse in cases where damage is caused by the fault of a third party are defined in Article 65 and Article 70(3) of the Law for public transport.
- the right of the passengers to ask for compensation in case of delayed luggage are defined Article 63 of the Law for public transport.
- the obligation of the passengers to carry a valid transport document and present it for inspection at the request of the control authorities, as well as to comply with the rules on safety are defined in Article 66 (road transport), Article 73 (rail transport), Article 79 (inland waterway/maritime transport), Article 80(5) (air transport) of the Law for public transport.

- principles for tariff policies for public passenger services,

Article 82 of the Law for public transport provides for principles for tariff policies for passenger services. In particular, it provides that tariff policies for public passenger services shall be (1) fair and avoid direct or indirect discrimination of passengers; (2) transparent, clear and easily understandable for passengers, with information about them accessible in a personal manner and in an appropriate manner; (3) aimed at encouraging the use of public transport as an alternative to a private vehicle; and (4) oriented towards covering a reasonable share of the cost of providing the transport service, taking into account the need for public funding to ensure accessibility and quality.

- principles for the planning and management of public transport.

Article 5 of the Law for public transport establishes principles for the planning and management of

public transport. In particular, it provides that the planning and management of public transport shall be carried out in accordance with the principles of (1) equal treatment, free competition, publicity and transparency; (2) non-discrimination between passengers as regards the conditions for PRM and the provision of transport documents, including persons with disabilities and persons with reduced mobility; (3) safety and ensuring the personal security of passengers; (4) digital and interoperability of information systems; (5) transport quality standards; (6) accessibility of infrastructure for the provision of public transport; (7) protecting the social rights of public transport workers and employees and ensuring decent working conditions in the provision of public services; (8) ensuring affordable mobility and reducing transport poverty by ensuring access to public transport for all population groups; and (9) decentralised management of physical transport through the division of powers between the State and municipalities.

Article 12 of the Law for public transport further provides that public transport shall be planned and managed at national, inter-municipal and municipal level in accordance with the principles to (1) promote the use of public transport; (2) ensure that the supply of essential transport meets demand; (3) create conditions for the effective and efficient provision of a public transport and the mutual cooperation of the State and municipalities in this activity; (4) guarantee the right of movement for all citizens as an element of social cohesion and economic development; and (5) enabling the provision of integrated public transport.

On this basis, the Commission has reasonable assurance that this milestone has been satisfactorily fulfilled by 31 August 2026.

4. Commission Preliminary Assessment: Satisfactorily fulfilled.

Number and name of the Target: 308 Support for the cultural sector

Related Measure: C11.I6 Support of the cultural sector

Quantitative Indicator: Number

Baseline: 0

Target: 460

Time: Q4 2025

1. Context:

The objective of the investment is to support the cultural sector in Bulgaria. The measure consists of the entry into force of legal act(s) and provision of grant support.

Target 308 requires support to 460 beneficiaries via grant schemes operated by the National Cultural Fund.

Target 308 is the second and last target of the investment, and it follows the completion of milestone 307, related to entry into force of legal act(s) on the National Culture Fund.

2. Evidence provided:

	Name of the evidence	Short description
1	Summary document	Summary document duly justifying how the target (including all the constitutive elements) was satisfactorily fulfilled.
2	Table with 481 final payments to 481 final recipients.	A spreadsheet of all 481 payments made to final recipients
3	60 sampled proofs of grant payments and the associated 60 extracts from the Information system for management and monitoring of the EU funds in Bulgaria.	Proofs of payments from the Information system for management and monitoring of the EU funds in Bulgaria.
4	Council of Ministers Decree No. 157 of 7 July 2022 on determining the bodies and structures responsible for the implementation of the Recovery and Resilience Plan of the Republic of Bulgaria, and their main functions, published in State Gazette No. 54 of 12 July 2022	An official document certifying that the grant schemes are operated by the National Culture Fund
5	Council of Ministers Decree No. 114 of 8 June 2022 on	An official document certifying that the grant schemes are operated by the National Culture

	determining detailed rules for providing funds to final recipients from the Recovery and Resilience Mechanism, published in State Gazette No. 43 of 10 June 2022	Fund
6	Order PVU-SND-112 from 16 October 2024 of the Executive Director of the National Cultural Fund	Official document launching application procedure “BG-RRP-11.016" of grant scheme “Support for Development and Audience Access” and approving application conditions for the procedure
7	Order PVU-SND-25-189 from 27 June 2025 of the Executive Director of the National Cultural Fund	Official document launching application procedure “BG-RRP-11.024" of grant scheme “Support for Development and Audience Access” and approving application conditions for the procedure
8	Order PVU-SND-115 from 24 October 2024 of the Executive Director of the National Cultural Fund	Official document launching application procedure “BG-RRP-11.017" of grant scheme “Support for Development and Audience Access” and approving application conditions for the procedure
9	Order PVU-SND-25-188 from 27 June 2025 of the Executive Director of the National Cultural Fund	Official document launching application procedure “BG-RRP-11.025" of grant scheme “Support for Development and Audience Access” and approving application conditions for the procedure
10	Order PVU-SND-89 from 29 August 2024 of the Executive Director of the National Cultural Fund	Official document launching application procedure “BG-RRP-11.019" of grant scheme “Support for European Cultural Cooperation” and approving application conditions for the procedure
11	Order PVU-SND-88 from 29 August 2024 of the Executive Director of the National Cultural Fund	Official document launching application procedure “BG-RRP-11.020" of grant scheme “Support for European Cultural Cooperation” and approving application conditions for the procedure
12	Order PVU-SND-25-169 from 13 June 2025 of the Executive Director of the National Cultural Fund	Official document launching application procedure “BG-RRP-11.021" of grant scheme “New Generation of Local Culture Policies” and approving application conditions for the procedure
13	Order PVU-SND-25-170 from 13 June 2025 of the Executive Director of the National Cultural Fund	Official document launching application procedure “BG-RRP-11.022" of grant scheme “New Generation of Local Culture Policies” and approving application conditions for the procedure
14	Application conditions for	Official document with the application

	the procedure for the selection of proposals for the implementation of investments by final recipients BG-RRP-11.016 "Grant scheme "Presentation to Bulgarian audience of contemporary European productions from the cultural and creative sectors" from 16 October 2024	conditions for grant scheme "Support for Development and Audience Access" BG-RRP-11.016
15	Application conditions for the procedure for the selection of proposals for the implementation of investments by final recipients BG-RRP-11.024 "Grant scheme "Presentation to Bulgarian audience of contemporary European productions from the cultural and creative sectors" from 27 June 2025	Official document with the application conditions for grant scheme "Support for Development and Audience Access" BG-RRP-11.024
16	Application conditions for the procedure for the selection of proposals for the implementation of investments by final recipients BG-RRP-11.017 "Grant scheme "Presentation to Bulgarian audience of contemporary Bulgarian productions from the cultural and creative sector" from 24 October 2024	Official document with the application conditions for grant scheme "Support for Development and Audience Access" BG-RRP-11.017
17	Application conditions for the procedure for the selection of proposals for the implementation of investments by final recipients BG-RRP-11.025 "Grant scheme "Presentation to Bulgarian audience of contemporary Bulgarian productions from the cultural and creative sector" from 27 June 2025	Official document with the application conditions for grant scheme "Support for Development and Audience Access" BG-RRP-11.025
18	Application conditions for the procedure for awarding	Official document with the application conditions for grant scheme "Support for

	funds to final recipients under BG-RRP-11.019 - a two-session grant scheme "Bulgarian productions of the cultural and creative sector in the platforms on open art markets in the EU" from 29 August 2024	European Cultural Cooperation", BG-RRP-11.019
19	Application conditions for the procedure for awarding funds to final recipients under BG-RRP-11.020 - a two-session grant scheme "Development of Bulgarian productions and co-productions in the cultural and creative sectors and their promotion in the European and international art markets" from 29 August 2024	Official document with the application conditions for grant scheme "Support for European Cultural Cooperation", BG-RRP-11.020
20	Application conditions for the procedure for awarding funds to final recipients through a call for proposals (BG-RRP-11.021) – Grant scheme "New Generation Local Cultural Policies for Large Municipalities" from 13 June 2025	Official document with the application conditions for grant scheme "New Generation of Local Culture Policies" BG-RRP-11.021
21	Application conditions for the procedure for awarding funds to final recipients through a call for proposals (BG-RRP-11.022) – Grant scheme "New Generation Local Cultural Policies for Small Municipalities" from 13 June 2025	Official document with the application conditions for grant scheme "New Generation of Local Culture Policies" BG-RRP-11.022
22	On-the-spot check carried out on 24 September 2026	On-the-spot check to verify that the information in the sampled screenshots is identical to the information in the payment system SEBRA.
23	8 evaluation reports from the work of the evaluation committees for each of the 8 grant schemes dated between 30 April 2025 and 21 November 2025	Formal Evaluation reports from the work of the evaluation committees for each of the eight grant schemes signed by the Head of the Monitoring and reporting structure

3. Analysis:

The justification and substantiating evidence provided by the Bulgarian authorities cover all constitutive elements of the target.

Target 308 is named “Support for the cultural sector”

Council of Ministers Decree No. 157 of 7 July 2022 on determining the bodies and structures responsible for the implementation of the Recovery and Resilience Plan of the Republic of Bulgaria, and their main functions, published in the State Gazette No. 54 of 12 July 2022 (evidence No. 4) provides that the culture sector is supported via investment C11.I6 "Development of the Cultural and Creative Sectors", through provision of funding to state and municipal cultural institutes, cultural organizations, independent artists, and municipalities.

As explained below, evidence No. 6 to evidence No. 13 provide that the instruments for supporting the cultural sector under investment C11.I6 "Development of the Cultural and Creative Sectors" are the grant schemes as listed.

Grant support via grant schemes operated by the National Cultural Fund shall be provided as follows:

Council of Ministers Decree No. 157 of 7 July 2022 on determining the bodies and structures responsible for the implementation of the Recovery and Resilience Plan of the Republic of Bulgaria, and their main functions, published in the State Gazette No. 54 of 12 July 2022 (evidence No. 4) designates the National Cultural Fund as the Monitoring and Reporting Structure (hereinafter referred to as "MRS") for Investment C11.I6 "Development of the Cultural and Creative Sectors". According to Council of Ministers Decree No. 114 of 8 June 2022 on determining detailed rules for providing funds to final recipients from the Recovery and Resilience Mechanism, published in the State Gazette No. 43 of 10.06.2022 (evidence No. 5), the MRS is responsible for operating the grant schemes under Investment C11.I6 "Development of the Cultural and Creative Sectors".
To demonstrate that the support provided is of grant nature, the Bulgarian authorities submitted the following pieces of evidence:

- Order PVU-SND-112 from 16.10.2024 of the Executive Director of the National Cultural Fund (evidence No. 6) launches application procedure through selection of investment proposals from final recipients “BG-RRP-11.016 – Grant scheme “Presentation to Bulgarian audience of contemporary European productions from the cultural and creative sectors”, which is part of Investment C11.I6 "Development of the Cultural and Creative Sectors" (art.1) and approves application conditions for the procedure (art.2).

- Order PVU-SND-25-189 from 27.06.2025 of the Executive Director of the National Cultural Fund (evidence No. 7) launches application procedure through selection of investment proposals from final recipients “BG-RRP-11.024 – Grant scheme “Presentation to Bulgarian audience of contemporary European productions from the cultural and creative sectors”, which is part of Investment C11.I6 "Development of the Cultural and Creative Sectors" (art.1) and approves application conditions for the procedure (art.2).

- Order PVU-SND-115 from 24.10.2024 of the Executive Director of the National Cultural Fund (evidence No. 8) launches application procedure through selection of investment proposals from final recipients “BG-RRP-11.017 – Grant scheme “Presentation to Bulgarian audience of contemporary Bulgarian productions from the cultural and creative sector” which is part of

Investment C11.I6 "Development of the Cultural and Creative Sectors" (art.1) and approves application conditions for the procedure (art.2).

- Order PVU-SND-25-188 from 27.06.2025 of the Executive Director of the National Cultural Fund (evidence No. 9) launches application procedure through selection of investment proposals from final recipients “BG-RRP-11.025 – Grant scheme “Presentation to Bulgarian audience of contemporary Bulgarian productions from the cultural and creative sector” which is part of Investment C11.I6 "Development of the Cultural and Creative Sectors" (art.1) and approves application conditions for the procedure (art.2).

- Order PVU-SND-89 from 29.08.2024 of the Executive Director of the National Cultural Fund (evidence No. 10) launches application procedure through selection of investment proposals from final recipients “BG-RRP-11.019 – Grant scheme with two sessions “Bulgarian productions of the cultural and creative sector in the platforms on open art markets in the EU” which is part of Investment C11.I6 "Development of the Cultural and Creative Sectors" (art.1) and approves application conditions for the procedure (art.2).

- Order PVU-SND-88 from 29.08.2024 of the Executive Director of the National Cultural Fund (evidence No. 11) launches application procedure through selection of investment proposals from final recipients “BG-RRP-11.020 – Grant scheme with two sessions “Development of Bulgarian productions and co-productions in the cultural and creative sectors and their promotion in the European and international art markets” which is part of Investment C11.I6 "Development of the Cultural and Creative Sectors" (art.1) and approves application conditions for the procedure (art.2).

- Order PVU-SND-25-169 from 13.06.2025 of the Executive Director of the National Cultural Fund (evidence No. 12) launches application procedure through selection of investment proposals from final recipients “BG-RRP-11.021 – Grant scheme “New generation of local cultural polices for large municipalities” which is part of Investment C11.I6 "Development of the Cultural and Creative Sectors" (art.1) and approves application conditions for the procedure (art.2).

- Order PVU-SND-25-170 from 13.06.2025 of the Executive Director of the National Cultural Fund (evidence No. 13) launches application procedure through selection of investment proposals from final recipients “BG-RRP-11.022 – Grant scheme “New generation of local cultural polices for small municipalities” which is part of Investment C11.I6 "Development of the Cultural and Creative Sectors" (art.1) and approves application conditions for the procedure (art.2).

To demonstrate that the grant support has been provided, the Bulgarian authorities submitted a list of 481 final payments made to beneficiaries (evidence No. 2). According to this list:

- 31 final payments have been made to beneficiaries under the grant scheme BG-RRP-11.016
- 52 final payments have been made to beneficiaries under the grant scheme BG-RRP-11.017
- 10 final payments have been made to beneficiaries under the grant scheme BG-RRP-11.019
- 145 final payments have been made to beneficiaries under the grant scheme BG-RRP-11.020
- 16 final payments have been made to beneficiaries under the grant scheme BG-RRP-11.021

- 64 final payments have been made to beneficiaries under the grant scheme BG-RRP-11.022
- 48 final payments have been made to beneficiaries under the grant scheme BG-RRP-11.024
- 115 final payments have been made to beneficiaries under the grant scheme BG-RRP-11.025

Following the selection of a random sample of 60 units, Bulgaria submitted screenshots of 60 proofs of payments (evidence no. 3), which represented:

- 5 final payments have been made to beneficiaries under the grant scheme BG-RRP-11.016
- 10 final payments have been made to beneficiaries under the grant scheme BG-RRP-11.017
- 1 final payment have been made to beneficiaries under the grant scheme BG-RRP-11.019
- 18 final payments have been made to beneficiaries under the grant scheme BG-RRP-11.020
- 4 final payments have been made to beneficiaries under the grant scheme BG-RRP-11.021
- 6 final payments have been made to beneficiaries under the grant scheme BG-RRP-11.022
- 3 final payments have been made to beneficiaries under the grant scheme BG-RRP-11.024
- 13 final payments have been made to beneficiaries under the grant scheme BG-RRP-11.025

Each screenshot of the proof of payment had a unique identifier and included data for the date and time of payment execution, beneficiary and contract ID, grant scheme name, amount paid, status of the payment. Each payment was executed in the RRF eligibility timeframe, i.e. after 1 February 2020 and before 31 August 2026. Each proof of payment contained information that the payment was executed for a project under one of the following grant schemes: (i) Support for European Cultural Cooperation, (ii) Support for Development and Audience Access, and (iii) New Generation of Local Culture Policies. The Commission services conducted an on-the-spot check on 24 September 2026 to verify that the information in the screenshots for the 60 sampled units is identical to the information in the payment system SEBRA (evidence no.22). The check was completed successfully, confirming that all sampled screenshots depict correct information regarding the respective payments, and that all payments have been made before 31 August 2026. The evidence provided for a sample of 60 units confirmed that the requirements of the target have been met, thus exceeding the goal of the target 308 by 21.

The Bulgarian authorities have performed checks on whether each applicant complies with the selection criteria of the relevant grant scheme, including co-financing requirements. For each grant scheme, criteria have been adopted for evaluating investment implementation proposals in accordance with the criteria in the application guidance for each grant scheme, called “Criteria and methodology for evaluating investment implementation proposals”. These include both criteria for assessing administrative compliance and eligibility of projects, as well as criteria related to their technical and financial assessment. The results of the evaluation of these criteria have been recorded in evaluation sheets.

Moreover, the results of the selection process of each grant scheme have been recorded in a separate evaluation report (evidence No.23). Each of these reports state that, after the chairperson and the secretary of the evaluation committee reviewed the evaluation sheets completed by the members and verified that their comments were reflected and that the investment proposals met all requirements based on the criteria in the “Criteria and methodology for evaluating investment implementation proposals” (with positive ratings assigned for all criteria), instructions were given to finalize the evaluation sheets, i.e. to rank the proposals and select the successful applicants.

- grant scheme “Support for European Cultural Cooperation” requiring at least 10% co-financing from beneficiaries.

Section 2 of the application conditions for grant scheme BG-RRP-11.019 (evidence No. 18) provides that the support is provided under programme “Support for European Cultural Cooperation” of investment C11.I6 "Development of the cultural and creative sectors", Component 11 "Social inclusion" of the National Recovery and Resilience Plan.

Section 2 of the application conditions for grant scheme BG-RRP-11.020 (evidence No. 19) provides that of the support is provided under programme “Support for European Cultural Cooperation” of investment C11.I6 "Development of the cultural and creative sectors", Component 11 "Social inclusion" of the National Recovery and Resilience Plan.

Order PVU-SND-89 from 29 August 2024 of the Executive Director of the National Cultural Fund (evidence No. 10) launches application procedure through selection of investment proposals from final recipients “BG-RRP-11.019 – Grant scheme “Bulgarian productions of the cultural and creative sector in the platforms on open art markets in the EU” (art.1) and approves application conditions for the procedure (art.2).

Section 12 of the application conditions for the procedure (evidence No. 18) states that the procedure provides grant funding in the amount of 90% of the value of eligible costs, with mandatory co-financing by the beneficiaries in the amount of at least 10% of the value of eligible costs. The evaluation report (evidence No. 23) confirms for each selected applicant that the amount of co-financing meets the grant scheme requirement.

Order PVU-SND-88 from 29 August 2024 of the Executive Director of the National Cultural Fund (evidence No. 11) launches application procedure through selection of investment proposals from final recipients “BG-RRP-11.020 – Grant scheme “Development of Bulgarian productions and co-productions in the cultural and creative sectors and their promotion in the European and international art markets” (art.1) and approves application conditions for the procedure (art.2).

Section 12 of the application conditions for the procedure (evidence No. 19) states that the procedure provides grant funding in the amount of 90% of the value of eligible costs, with mandatory co-financing by the beneficiaries in the amount of at least 10% of the value of eligible costs. The evaluation report (evidence. 23) confirms for each selected applicant that the amount of co-financing meets the grant scheme requirement.

- grant scheme “Support for Development and Audience Access” requiring at least 10% co-financing from the beneficiaries.

Section 2.6 of the application conditions for grant scheme BG-RRP-11.016 (evidence No. 14) provides that the support is provided under programme “Support for Audience Development and Access” of investment C11.I6 "Development of the cultural and creative sectors", Component 11 "Social inclusion" of the National Recovery and Resilience Plan.

Section 2.6 of the application conditions for grant scheme BG-RRP-11.017 (evidence No. 15) provides that the support is provided under programme “Support for Audience Development and Access” of investment C11.I6 "Development of the cultural and creative sectors", Component 11 "Social inclusion" of the National Recovery and Resilience Plan.

Section 2.6 of the application conditions for grant scheme BG-RRP-11.024 (evidence No. 16) provides that the support is provided under programme “Support for Audience Development and Access” of

investment C11.I6 "Development of the cultural and creative sectors", Component 11 "Social inclusion" of the National Recovery and Resilience Plan.

Section 2.6 of the application conditions for grant scheme BG-RRP-11.025 (evidence No. 17) provides that the support is provided under programme “Support for Audience Development and Access” of investment C11.I6 "Development of the cultural and creative sectors", Component 11 "Social inclusion" of the National Recovery and Resilience Plan.

The grant scheme "Presentation to Bulgarian audience of contemporary European productions from the cultural and creative sector" has been implemented in two sessions. The first one with a reference number BG-RRP-11.016 and the second session with a reference number BG-RRP-11.024.

Order PVU-SND-112 from 16 October 2024 of the Executive Director of the National Cultural Fund (evidence No. 6) launches application procedure through selection of investment proposals from final recipients “BG-RRP-11.016 – Grant scheme “Presentation to Bulgarian audience of contemporary European productions from the cultural and creative sectors” as per Article 1 and approves application conditions for the procedure as per Article 2.

Section 11 of the application conditions for the procedure (evidence No. 14) states that the procedure provides grant funding in the amount of 90% of the value of eligible costs, with mandatory co-financing by the beneficiaries in the amount of at least 10% of the value of eligible costs. The evaluation report (evidence. 23) confirms for each selected applicant that the amount of co-financing meets the grant scheme requirement.

Order PVU-SND-25-189 from 27 June 2025 of the Executive Director of the National Cultural Fund (evidence No. 7) launches application procedure through selection of investment proposals from final recipients “BG-RRP-11.024 – Grant scheme “Presentation to Bulgarian audience of contemporary European productions from the cultural and creative sectors”, as per Article 1, and approves application conditions for the procedure, as per Article 2.

Section 11 of the application conditions for the procedure (evidence No. 15) states that the procedure provides grant funding in the amount of 90% of the value of eligible costs, with mandatory co-financing by the beneficiaries in the amount of at least 10% of the value of eligible costs. The evaluation report (evidence. 23) confirms for each selected applicant that the amount of co-financing meets the grant scheme requirement.

The grant scheme "Presentation to Bulgarian audience of contemporary Bulgarian productions from the cultural and creative sector" has been implemented in two sessions. The first one with a reference number BG-RRP-11.017 and the second session with a reference number BG-RRP-11.025.

Order PVU-SND-115 from 24 October 2024 of the Executive Director of the National Cultural Fund (evidence No. 8) launches application procedure through selection of investment proposals from final recipients “BG-RRP-11.017 – Grant scheme “Presentation to Bulgarian audience of contemporary Bulgarian productions from the cultural and creative sector” (art.1) and approves application conditions for the procedure (art.2).

Section 11 of the application conditions for the procedure (evidence No. 16) states that the procedure provides grant funding in the amount of 90% of the value of eligible costs, with mandatory co-financing by the beneficiaries in the amount of at least 10% of the value of eligible costs. The evaluation report (evidence. 23) confirms for each selected applicant that the amount of co-financing meets the grant scheme requirement.

Order PVU-SND-25-188 from 27 June 2025 of the Executive Director of the National Cultural Fund (evidence No. 9) launches application procedure through selection of investment proposals from final recipients “BG-RRP-11.025 – Grant scheme “Presentation to Bulgarian audience of contemporary Bulgarian productions from the cultural and creative sector” (art.1) and approves application conditions for the procedure (art.2).

Section 11 of the application conditions for the procedure (evidence No. 17) states that the procedure provides grant funding in the amount of 90% of the value of eligible costs, with mandatory co-financing by the beneficiaries in the amount of at least 10% of the value of eligible costs. The evaluation report (evidence. 23) confirms for each selected applicant that the amount of co-financing meets the grant scheme requirement.

- grant scheme “New Generation of Local Culture Policies” with two calls for proposals. The first call shall target municipalities which are district centres and the grant amount shall be between BGN 170 000 and BGN 2 000 000, with 50% co-financing from the beneficiaries. The second call shall target municipalities which are not district centres with 25% co-financing from the beneficiaries.

Order PVU-SND-25-169 from 13 June 2025 of the Executive Director of the National Cultural Fund (evidence No. 12) launches application procedure through selection of investment proposals from final recipients “BG-RRP-11.021 – Grant scheme “New generation of local cultural polices for large municipalities” (art.1) and approves application conditions for the procedure (art.2).

Section 12 of the application conditions for the procedure (evidence No. 20) states that the procedure provides grant funding in the amount of BGN 170,000.00 to BGN 2,000,000.00, with mandatory co-financing by the beneficiaries in the amount of 50% of the grant funding.

Section 2 of the application conditions for procedure BG-RRP-11.021 “New generation of local cultural polices for large municipalities” states that “the eligible candidates - municipalities specified in item 6 of these Terms of Application, which are district centers”.

The evaluation report (evidence. 23) confirms for each selected applicant that the amount of co-financing and the type of municipality meet the grant scheme requirements.

The second call consists of Order PVU-SND-25-170 from 13.06.2025 of the Executive Director of the National Cultural Fund (evidence No. 13), which launches application procedure through selection of investment proposals from final recipients “BG-RRP-11.022 – Grant scheme “New generation of local cultural polices for small municipalities” (art.1) and approves application conditions for the procedure (art.2).

Section 12 of the application conditions for the procedure (evidence No. 21) states that the procedure provides grant funding with mandatory co-financing by the beneficiaries in the amount of 25 % of the grant funding.

Section 2 of the application conditions for procedure BG-RRP-11.022 “New generation of local cultural polices for small municipalities” states that “the eligible candidates - municipalities specified in item 6 of these Terms of Application, which are not district centers”.

The evaluation report (evidence. 23) confirms for each selected applicant that the amount of co-financing and the type of municipality meet the grant scheme requirements.

On this basis, the Commission has reasonable assurance that this target has been satisfactorily fulfilled by 31 August 2026.

4. Commission Preliminary Assessment: Satisfactorily fulfilled.