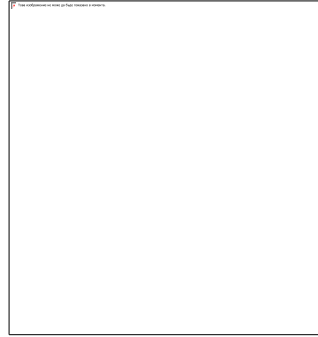




Funded by
the European Union
NextGenerationEU



National Recovery and Resilience Plan



OF THE REPUBLIC OF BULGARIA

Sofia University - Marking Momentum for Innovation and Technological Transfer (SUMMIT)

END OF THE STORY

Prof. Vasil Marinov

21.04.2026

What is SUMMIT?

- SUMMIT is a complex program comprising a large number of relatively independent but strategically linked projects and complementary activities
- This is the STRATEGIC RESEARCH AND INNOVATION PROGRAMME FOR DEVELOPMENT of SOFIA UNIVERSITY
- Financed by the European Union - NextGenerationEU, through the National Recovery and Resilience Plan, Pillar 2 Establishing a network of research higher education institutions in Bulgaria
- Total budget: 44 000 000 BGN (nearly 22,5 million EUR)
- Duration: 42 months (01.01.2023-30.06.2026)
- Nearly 1000 researchers and other staff members were involved in SUMMIT implementation by contract or Rector's order

Goal

To implement a new model for the development of the university as a research organization, increasing its capacity:

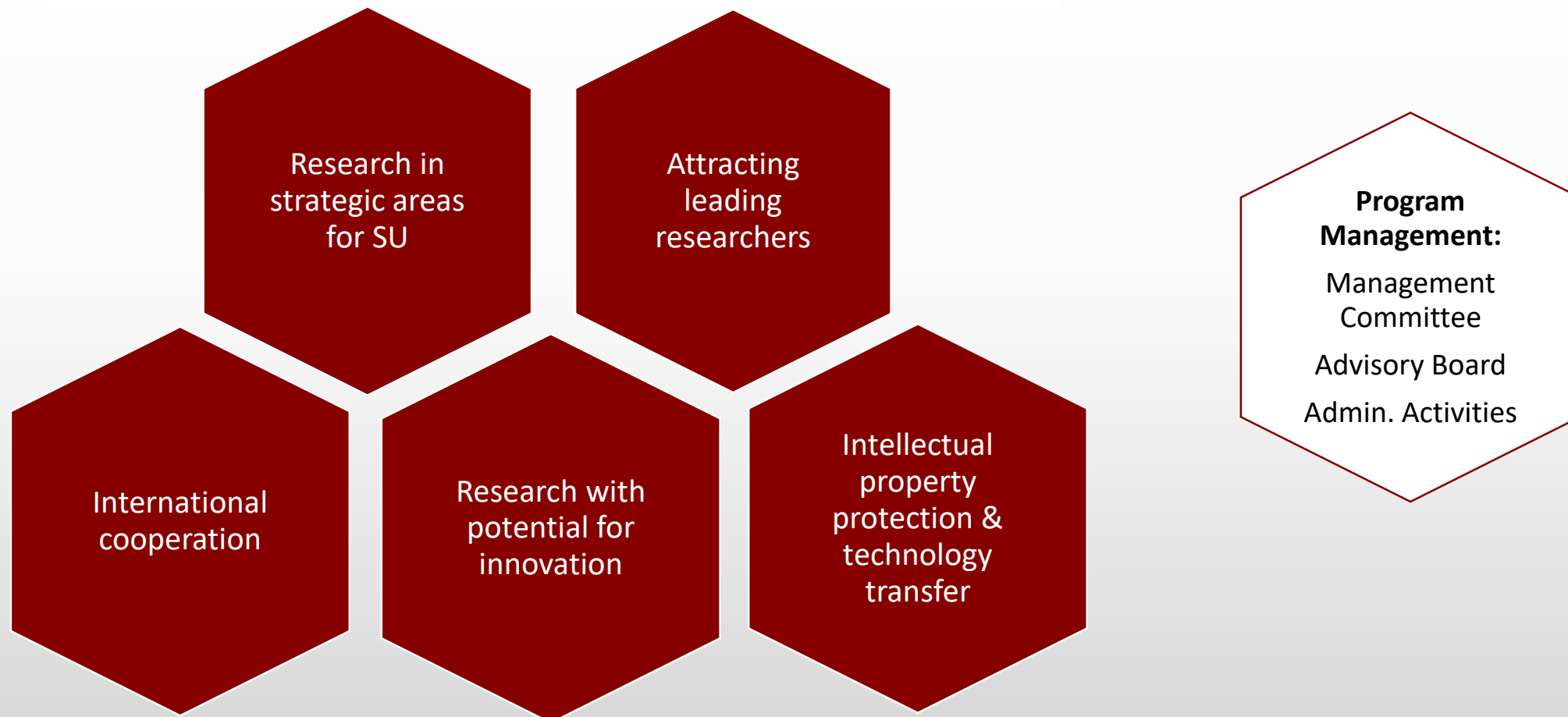
- to attract funding and form its budget through the implementation of research and innovation projects
- To participate as a full partner in European networks and consortia that compete successfully in leading European programs

Achieving this goal implies the creation of an environment conducive to attracting, engaging and developing talented researchers who will contribute to establishing the University as an educational, scientific and cultural center of pan-European importance, as well as to achieving top scientific results.

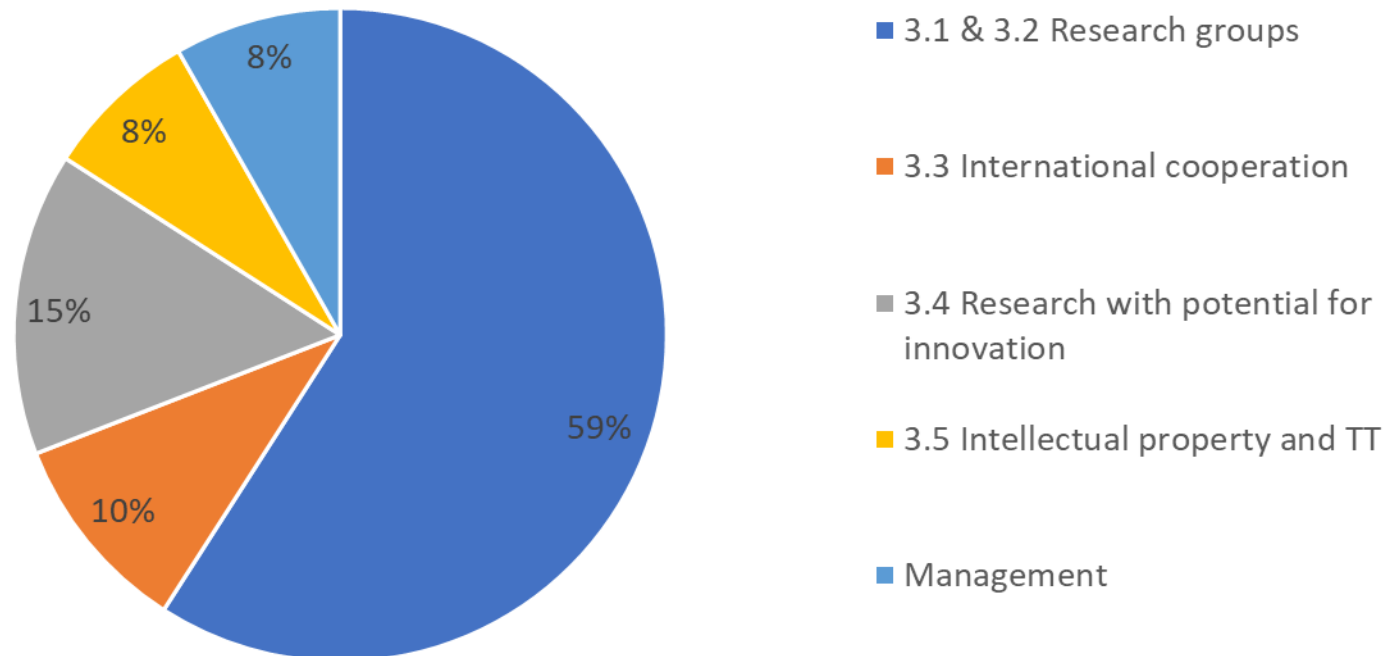
Expected benefits:

- Increased quantity and quality of scientific research through
 - Attracting and retaining leading researchers
 - Attracting young researchers
 - Improving the research infrastructure and physical environment
- Improved visibility through publications in globally recognized databases
- Increased patent activity and promotion of applied research
- Extended international cooperation, incl. participation in scientific networks
- Attracted external funding and industry support
- Improved position of Sofia University in international university rankings

Main components of the program (activities)



Structure of the budget by activity



- **Activity 3.1: Research directed towards scientific areas strategic for Sofia University**
- 17 scientific groups formed led by lead researches from Sofia University in areas of physics, chemistry, medicine, biology, environment and earth sciences, mathematics, informatics, humanities, education, social sciences, economics
- Ensure the preservation and development of research capacity both by retaining and developing promising scientists and by attracting young researchers
- The work is carried out based on approved scientific programs that are part of the funding application
- Budget for 3.1 – BGN 20.5 million (€ 13.3 million) - 47% of the total
 - Per group – 1.1 – 1.8 million BGN
 - Distribution by the lead researcher depending on the specific needs

No	Group Name	Lead Researcher	Subject
3.1.1.	Mathematical Physics and Astrophysics	Prof. Stoycho Yazadzhiev	Physical Sciences and Mathematics
3.1.2.	Active formulations and materials	Prof. Slavka Tcholakova	Soft matter
3.1.3.	GROWTH	Dr. Tsvetelina Velikova	Medicine, immunology, public health
3.1.4.	AQOT	Prof. Nikolay Vitanov/Prof. Assen Pashov	Quantum technologies
3.1.5.	Computational heterogeneous catalysis	Prof. Hristiyan Aleksandrov	Application of quantum chemical methods for the study of catalytic systems and reactions on them
3.1.6.	BAV (Biologically Active Substances)	Prof. Ivo Grabchev	New photosensitive compounds with sensing and bioactivity
3.1.7.	Functional materials	Prof. Tony Spassov	New functional materials for clean energy and environment
3.1.8.	Plant parasites	Assoc. Prof. Lyuben Zagorchev	Biology of parasitic plants
3.1.9.	GAMMA	Assoc. Prof. Mladen Savov	Random processes

No	Group Name	Lead Researcher	Subject
3.1.10.	DigitalEdu-SU	Prof. Roumiana Peytcheva-Forsyth	Digital education
3.1.11.	Algology	Assoc. Prof. Blagoy Uzunov	Algae, algae cultures
3.1.12.	Intelligent systems	Prof. Ivan Koychev	Artificial Intelligence
3.1.13.	Climate, Weather and Natural Risks (CW&NR)	Assoc. Prof. Guergana Guerova	Earth and related environmental sciences
3.1.14.	Nuclear	Assoc. Prof. Krasimir Mitev	Experimental nuclear and sub-nuclear physics and technology
3.1.15.	European Values and Social Challenges (EuVaSC)	Prof. Maria Stoicheva	Social Sciences
3.1.16.	Digital Humanities. ICT applications for History and Language	Prof. Anna-Maria Totomanova Assoc. Prof. Maria Baramova	Digital Humanities
3.1.17.	Digitization of SMEs	Prof. Desislava Yordanova	Digitization, small and medium enterprises

Activity 3.2: Attracting external leading researchers in the scientific areas strategic for Sofia University

- 5 research groups in strategic areas such as mathematics, chemistry, biology, physics and psychology, led by Bulgarian scientists from universities in the USA, France and the United Kingdom, as well as from the industry - from Germany and Bulgaria.
- The goal is to attract world-class scientists who can complement the existing research capacity, to set high standards for scientific results and to raise to a new level the overall scientific activity of Sofia University
- The work is carried out based on approved scientific programs that are part of the funding application (as in Activity 3.1)
- Budget for 3.2 – BGN 5.5 million (13%)
 - Per group – 1.1 million
 - Distribution by the lead scientist depending on the specific needs (as in Activity 3.1)

No	Group Name	Lead Researcher	Subject
3.2.1.	NATATA	Prof. Boyan Popov	Numerical Analysis and Theory of Approximations
3.2.2.	ZeoNeo	Prof. Valentin Valtchev	Zeolite materials for new applications
3.2.3.	New materials and photonics	Dr. Sotir Chervenkov	Development, characterization and applications of new materials for photonics
3.2.4.	Microbiological risks in the environment	Dr. Sergei Ivanov	Wastewater-based epidemiology (EWS)
3.2.5.	NUDGE: Behavior models, attitudes and Policy implementation for sustainable development	Prof. Ivo Vlaev	Behavioural Science

Results reported for activities 3.1 and 3.2 as of 31.03.2026

- Organizational and administrative arrangements have been put in place to ensure the efficient and effective implementation of research programs, incl.
 - All research groups were formed already in the initial phase of implementation
 - Contracts for financing of the research groups establishing the implementation rules
- A total of 382 researchers working on the scientific programs in activities 3.1 and 3.2, incl.:
 - 23 lead researchers – 18 from SU and 5 external
 - 88 young scientists
 - Other 271 team members
- Involvement of students and PhD students:
 - 264 participating students (including those without remuneration), 44 completed Master's or Bachelor's theses
 - 25 participating PhD students (including those without remuneration), 12 completed PhD theses

Results reported for activities 3.1 and 3.2 as of 31.03.2026

- 606 publications indexed in WoS (70% of the total for SUMMIT), 520 from 3.1 and 86 from 3.2
- 503 publications indexed in Scopus and 216 other publications
- 688 participants in 408 scientific forums
- 32 organized scientific forums
- 136 international mobilities, incl. 80 outgoing and 56 incoming
- 16 agreements for participation in international scientific networks and bilateral cooperation signed
- 23 agreements with the industry signed
- Acquired tangible and intangible assets worth BGN 2.8 million

Activity 3.3 International cooperation in the scientific areas strategic for the University

- Creates opportunities for international cooperation and increasing the scientific expertise of scientists who are not part of the research groups (activities 3.1 and 3.2)
- Funding is provided based on motivated application for:
 - Short-term specializations of researchers abroad
 - Participation of University scientists in conferences, seminars, etc.
 - Short-term research visits to laboratories, libraries, etc.
 - Attracting foreign guests from universities or business abroad
 - Organisation of scientific conferences, seminars, schools with external participation
- Budget - BGN 4.4 million or € 2,250 million (10%), allocated between faculties and departments based on objectively verifiable indicators

Results reported for activity 3.3 as of 31.03.2026

- Organizational and administrative arrangements have been put in place to ensure the smooth running of the selection process for mobilities, their implementation, and reporting incl.:
 - Procedure for selection and implementation of activities for international cooperation
 - Package of documents for outgoing and incoming mobility
 - Methodology for the distribution of funds by faculties and departments
 - Established Faculty selection commissions
- 1054 mobilities carried out, including 718 outgoing and 336 incoming
- 18 scientific forums with international participation have been funded

Activity 3.4: Research with potential for innovation or knowledge transfer/intellectual property

- Provides support to projects that do not fall into the scientific programs of established research groups,
- Smaller projects, with budget up to BGN 200 000
- Expected to produce significant and visible results necessary for knowledge transfer through intellectual property protection or have the potential for innovation.
- Selected on a competitive basis according to the requirements of the call for proposals, organized by faculties
- Budget for activity 3.4 - BGN 6.6 million or € 3,375 million (15%), allocated between faculties and departments based on objectively verifiable indicators

Results reported for activity 3.4 as of 31.03.2026

- Organizational and administrative framework established for the selection, funding, implementation, reporting and monitoring of projects, including:
 - Adopted methodology for allocation of funds, application, ranking and reporting of projects
 - Developed set of documents for application, evaluation and ranking of project proposals
 - Scientific committees set up at faculty and department level to evaluate and select projects
- Two project selection sessions successfully held
- 93 projects approved and financed, including 9 for patent applications
- 62 projects successfully completed by 31 March 2026
 - the remaining projects are scheduled for completion by May 2026
- A total of 488 persons involved under employment contracts or rector's orders
 - 404 research staff
 - 84 technical assistants

Results reported for activity 3.4 as of 31.03.2026

- 83 young scientists attracted to the programme
- 103 PhD students involved, 19 completed PhD theses
- 168 students involved, 119 completed bachelor's and master's theses
- 235 publications indexed in Web of Science
- 36 publications indexed in Scopus and 21 other publications
- 6 international patent applications have been submitted
 - 3 more are under preparation and are expected to be filed by the end of June 2026
- 147 participations in scientific forums
- 11 scientific forums were organized
- 104 international mobilities, incl. 83 outgoing and 21 incoming
- Acquired tangible and intangible assets worth BGN 825 000 (EUR 422 000)

Activity 3.5: Intellectual property protection and technology transfer

- Works to establish an integrated system for technology transfer and university entrepreneurship at Sofia University
 - through optimizing the functions and competences of already established structures at the University level and using the expertise available
- Provides support to scientists under activities 3.1, 3.2 and 3.4, as well as all other scientists at the University to be able to protect their intellectual property and to apply for patents
 - through trainings, consultations, support for the entire patent application process
- Budget - BGN 3 367 600 (EUR 1 721 827 EUR) - 7,7% of the total

Results reported for activity 3.5 as of 31.03.2026

- Organisational, administrative and material conditions have been created to enable the effective functioning of the intellectual-property and technology-transfer system at Sofia University
 - Analysis of the ecosystem for intellectual property and technology transfer at Sofia University
 - Updated Rules for the Management of Intellectual Property Rights at Sofia University (adopted by the AC on 30.10.2024)
 - Regulation on Industrial Property of Sofia University (adopted by the AC on 28.05.2025)
 - Templates of agreements for granting licenses and a package of standard documents for the establishment of spin-off companies
 - Commercialization roadmap for the industrial property of Sofia University

Results reported for activity 3.5 as of 31.03.2026

- Intellectual property protection
 - Registered project logo as a European trademark (EUIPO)
 - 9 international patent applications filed
 - 8 national patent applications filed
 - 3 patent applications are under preparation
 - 1 utility model registered
 - 3 trademarks registered
- 13 specialized trainings for researchers, lecturers, PhD students and administrative staff and 2 seminars in partnership with the Patent Office of the Republic of Bulgaria and the European Patent Office in the field of intellectual property protection and technology transfer
- Participation in 7 specialized trainings by Activity 3.5 team members
- 6 visits and meetings for exchanging experiences

Activity 4. Management – key actors

- Management Committee – ensuring overall coordination, coordinators for the key activities
 - Regular meetings (16 in person and 72 online) – internal monitoring, addressing current challenges, identifying and mitigating risks
 - 2 joint meetings with the Rector’s Council and Deans’ Council
- Administrative staff
 - Accounting, public procurement, HR, PR, office administration
 - Significant workload - the total number of official files in the document-management system up to 31.03. 2026 exceeds 6,400, with an average monthly count of about 200 since 2024
- Advisory Board
 - Renowned scientists from international universities
 - Objective external perspective, and valuable advice, especially for the research groups (3.1 and 3.2)

Activity 4. Management – main results

- Standard rules, procedures and tools for the main processes
- Unified cloud space for storing and easy access to all key documents
- Ongoing support for providing the necessary working environment for researchers
- Timely implementation of the activities
- Proper reporting to the Managing authority
 - Although some improvement in internal reporting discipline is needed
- Promptly identifying and reacting to risks
- Quality assurance and control (incl. external through the Advisory board)
- “Seal of Quality” award of Sofia University in the category “successful change” (November 2025)

Performance against indicators

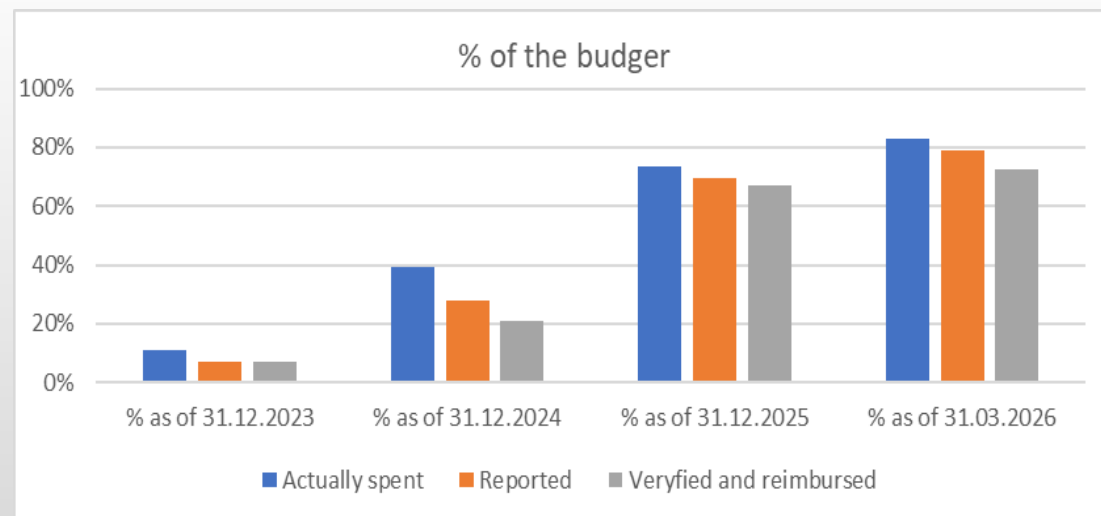
	Criteria	Indicators	Target	Achieved by 31.03.2026	
1	Quality of research in the proposed sectoral specialization	A 20% increase in the number of publications (WoS) at the end of the period on an annual basis compared to 2020	1066	1425	134%
2	Patent activity and applied developments	New international patent applications	8	9	112%
3	High qualification of personnel in the areas of sectoral specialization	Number of leading researchers to create or develop Research Groups	23	23	100%
4	Attracting young scientists and improving their qualifications for conducting applied scientific research	Number of young scientists who took part in research funded under the programme	23	88	382%
5	Attracted external funding and industrial support	Signed agreements with industry	5	23	460%
6	International activity and participation in networks	Signed international agreements	5	17	340%

WoS PUBLICATIONS

- The performance data (1425) refers to all publications with authors from Sofia University that are refereed and indexed in WoS in 2025.
- The total number of publications generated within the framework of the strategic program, with reference to the support from the Recovery and Resilience Plan, is 874
- 70% of the publications are generated by research groups under activities 3.1 and 3.2. However, the productivity of the small projects under Activity 3.4 is higher relative to the allocated budget:
 - 3.1+3.2 – 606 publications, allocated BGN 26 million
 - 3.4 – 235 publications, allocated BGN 6,6 million

Financial absorption as of 31.03.2026

	BGN	EUR	%
Actually spent	36 473 635	18 648 673	83%
Reported	34 666 735	17 724 621	79%
Verified and reimbursed	31 935 811	16 328 521	73%



- The absorption based on actual expenses is 83%
- Significant acceleration in 2024 and 2025
- Slight delay in verification and reimbursement in the beginning of 2026 due to the transition to the Euro
- But so far, there have been no unverified expenses
- Expected absorption by the end of the project – 95%

Was this a good and successful project?

- Addresses relevant and priority needs
- Received the required funding
- Involved significant part of the academic community of Sofia University
- Activities were completed as planned
- Outputs were delivered, results (benefits) are visible, the target values of key performance indicators have been achieved
- Funds have been spent lawfully, efficiently, and effectively, with no unverified expenses
- No serious issues during the monitoring of the implementation by the MA
- **Was this project problem-free?**
 - Of course not, but all issues were resolved through joint efforts.

Why – success factors?

- Realistic and inclusive planning, involving key actors in future implementation
- Effective organization and management that successfully balance
 - decentralization of the management of specific research activities with
 - centralized coordination, the establishment and adherence to unified rules and procedures, and the provision of administrative support for the core research activities
- Active commitment and contribution of key stakeholders:
 - Researchers
 - Technical and administrative staff
 - Rector and vice-rectors of Sofia University, Faculty Deans
 - Members of the Advisory Board
 - Managing Authority – Implementing agency “Programme Education”
- **THANK YOU TO ALL OF THEM!**



IS THIS THE END OF THE STORY?

- We hope no
- A substantial capacity and experience to organize, manage and accomplish research is available in terms of:
 - Structures, incl. rules and procedures
 - Resources, especially human resources
 - Systems and tools
 - Organizational culture
- **We are looking forward to the continuation!**



SOFIA UNIVERSITY -
MARKING MOMENTUM
FOR INNOVATION AND TECHNOLOGICAL TRANSFER

National Recovery and Resilience Plan



OF THE REPUBLIC OF BULGARIA

**Thank you
for your attention**

