



## **CITIZENS' SUMMARY**

### **Preface**

The Interreg IPA Cross-border Programme ‘Greece- The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia 2014-2020’ is predominantly financed by the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance II (IPA II) and co-financed by the two partner countries.

It aims to improve the employment prospects and overall living standards in neighbouring geographical regions of the two countries. In doing so, it supports bilateral ‘cooperation’ projects, i.e. joint activities of actors from both sides of the border.

This report will be produced annually, to give the wider public an insight into how the IPA II European funds are being spent, if the Programme is on track to reach its objectives, and how the actions funded are benefitting the population at large.

### **Programme Implementation**

2016 has been a focal year, as it marked the activation of the Programme with the launching of the first Call for Projects. It attracted proposals for joint activities in the fields of Local Economy – Tourism and the Protection of the Environment. The Call was a massive hit, both from a communication and an implementation standpoint.

On the one hand, it was backed by several information events and interactive Questions and Answers sessions. On the other hand, it attracted 179 unique applications, with the participation of over 450 partners. No wonder that the advertised budget of € 20.5 mil. was ‘oversubscribed’ more than 7 times!

### **Management and Control**

Making funds available is one thing. Managing funds and abiding by the strict Regulation and rules is another!

The Programme Bodies have been busy to fulfil the relevant requirements that will grant the 'green light' for the actual projects and the payment of EU and national subsidies.

While the direct recipients of funds are selected from a specific pool of public and not-for-profit private entities, the overall impact of the Programme is a main concern. Therefore, several information and promotion activities have been realised in 2016. During one such activity - the Annual International Fair of Thessaloniki - children were introduced to the Programme's geographical focus with the play of relevant jigsaw puzzles. Future play at home was ensured, as the children received the puzzles as gifts!