



**INTERREG IPA CBC PROGRAMME
"GREECE – THE FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA
2014-2020"**

4th JOINT MONITORING COMMITTEE MEETING

November 8th, 2018

Prespes, Greece

Brief Minutes & Decisions

The Joint Monitoring Committee (hereinafter referred to as JMC) of the Interreg IPA Cross-Border Cooperation Programme “Greece-The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia 2014-2020” convened for its 4th Joint Monitoring Committee Meeting on November 8th, 2018 in Prespas, Greece, following an invitation by the Managing Authority of European Territorial Cooperation Programmes (hereinafter MA of ETCP), in agreement with the co-chairs.

The meeting started as Mrs. Dominic Zaralidou, co-chair of the Committee welcomed the participants, and wished an effective and fruitful discussion 4th Joint Monitoring Committee Meeting. Also, she stipulated that the Programme has already committed 90% of the budget.

The chair then passed to Mrs. Mjellma Mehmeti - Petersen, co-chair of the Committee who also welcomed the members and participants and focused on the importance of the decisions. She pointed out that by the potential new project in Prespas, it is needed “to think out” of the previous frame of cooperation.

The chair then passed the floor to Mr. Csaba Hende, EU Commission representative who said that the potential project is well appreciated and adds value to the Programme.

The floor was then passed to the representative of the EU delegation in Skopje, Mr. F. Janmaat, who thanked the committee members for the invitation and expressed the DEU support on the potential new project. He mentioned that Commissioner Hahn is supporting this initiative for the new project as a part of IPA CBC input in the three countries (Greece, The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Albania).

Following, Mayor of Municipality of Prespas, Mr. Paschalides welcomed the committee members and thanked the organisers. He was delighted that this event is hosted in Prespes, he expressed his community’s great interest in the proposed project and elaborated on his belief that such a project would prove of significant importance for the development of the whole cross-border area.

Mr. Samaras proposed a change in the agenda and the external evaluation part to be presented after Crossing point discussion. The committee members agreed.

The Chair announced that the quorum is achieved as the meeting was attended by thirteen (13) members with voting right (from both countries), in line with the

attached list of participants and informed the members to declare any conflict of interest if there is such. No conflict of interest was declared.

The presentations were delivered by the Managing Authority and the Joint Secretariat, as foreseen in the Agenda.

The MA/JS then proceeded with the following presentations and according to the approved agenda:

1. Programme's state of play, presented by Mr. Nikolaos Chatzisavvas, MA Programme Officer.
2. Contracting & Financial Flows, presented Mr. George Papapostolou, JS Financial Officer
3. Future Steps, presented by Mr. Dimitrios Gertsos, MA Programme Officer
4. Potential strategic project for the opening of the Prespes border crossing point, presented by Mr Sidiropoulos (member of ANKO) on behalf of the Region of Western Macedonia
5. Information & Publicity, presented by Mrs. Eleftheria Votsari, JS Communication & Technical Assistance Officer and Mr. Adnan Emini, JS Antenna Officer.
6. Technical Assistance & IPA Procurement Manual, presented by Mr. Zhupan Martinovski, JS Project Officer
7. Project Manual Modification, presented by Ms. Konstantina Kouliali, JS Project Officer

On the above, the MA informed the JMC on its intention to proceed with drafting a Strategic Call for the implementation of a potential project concerning the opening of the Prespes border crossing point. The Project is considered valuable to the region and the importance of its implementation was exhibited thoroughly by the presenters. The MA requested the approval of the JMC to receive authorization to begin deliberations with the Region of Western Macedonia, the Ministry of Local Self Government and the Ministry of Interior in order to enact the procedure and begin drafting the Call of Proposals.

Mrs Mehmeti Petersen commented on the pre-financing issue of the IPA partners and advised the acceleration of the processes that would follow.

Mr Hende commented on the performance framework. He indicated that expenditures must reach the 65% of the target, in order to avoid further corrective actions. He elaborated that, in that respect, there is no need for declaring certified expenditures until the end of the year. He also commented about the need of a programme revision and advised that, should a revision take place, it should take into consideration all relevant information.

The chair confirmed that the numbers given are realistic and expressed her consent to Mr. Hendes' concern.

Next order of business was the presentation of the concept note by the Region of Western Macedonia concerning the proposed strategic project. Following the presented material, the following discussion took place:

Mr. T. Efremov informed the members that there is no border crossing between Evzoni and Niki and that the Regions of Pella in Greece and Kavadarci in the partner country also lack border points connecting them.

The representative of the Hellenic Ministry of Foreign Affairs Mr. V. Katakalides was acknowledged and stated that the authority which he represents fully supports the implementation of the proposed project.

Mrs Mehmeti Petersen said that this issue has been elaborated by the Government officials in Skopje and indicated the willingness of the Government to implement the project. She also commended that, beside the concept note and the affirmed willingness of all concerned parties, there are elements that are not within the core of IPA CBC. Lastly, she proposed to examine the implementation of common facilities.

Mrs P. Mavria representative of National Coordination Authority, focused on the environmental issues, operationality and functionality of the project that must be achieved in the time allocated. She also contributed that a road map should be decided upon and that the relevant administrative decisions should be signed before the procurement of any tenders. Mr Giantsis, representative of Region of Central Macedonia, expressed the support of the Region and expanded on the region's experience on similar projects.

Mr Emmanuel, representative of Ministry of Interior / sector Macedonia Thrace expressed the support of his Ministry and presented their capacity and readiness to take all necessary actions needed.

Mr. Voulgarakis, representative of Economic and Social Council took the floor and expressed his support to the potential new project. He also noted that a written confirmation should be presented in a later stage by the competent authorities in order to avoid any discrepancies and misunderstandings that may occur. He encouraged the National Authorities to accelerate all administrative steps. He elaborated on the importance of the strategic project. Lastly, he expressed his agreement focusing on the importance and impact on the area.

Mr Mitrevski, representing the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, also expressed the support of his authority concerning the project, emphasizing the belief that the project's implementation will strengthen the local economic ties between the local populations.

Mr Samaras stated that the concept note presented is the first attempt by the MA/JS to present a first documentation upon the expressed will of all parties involved. He noticed that the MA has experience in similar projects. Lastly, he stated that all efforts will be directed towards implementing a functional project by the end of the programming period.

Mr Hende expressed his content that all involved parties exhibited their volition to realize the project and mentioned that such a convoluted task requires commitment and hard work.

Mr Janmaat informed that DEU has assigned to 2 experts to prepare a study on the potential social economic benefit of this project.

He confirmed that there is a possibility of a written confirmation on a higher lever of authority, if required or requested.

Mrs Mehmeti Petersen stated that the project implementation depends on the trilateral agreement, on opening the new border crossing point, among governments that should be signed before the next JMC.

Mrs Bouziani stated her agreement with Mrs Mehmeti Petersen and stated that the MA/JS should continue their work as more actions are needed.

Mrs. Zaralidou indicated the complexity that the proposed project represents, as it is a new cross border point and not a renovation of an existing one. On that note, she asked from the MA to focus on completing all preparatory works and actions. Finally, she requested from the participating members to mandate the MA/JS to initiate all relevant actions discussed.

Also, the MA/JS presented a revision of the Project Manual, requesting the permission of the JMC to affect changes regarding:

- i. Project Modification Procedures
- ii. Pre-financing procedures of Beneficiaries
- iii. References to MIS user guides
- iv. Eligibility of expenditure (flat rate use)

The MA/JS elaborated on the proposed changes, indicating that the intent is to ameliorate project implementation, to expedite administrative procedures and to incorporate the MIS seamlessly in established implementation fiat.

In addition, the Managing Authority informed the JMC of the intent to open a targeted call regarding the following Priority Axis/ Specific Objectives in order to achieve the specific indicators:

- 1.1: “Development and Support of Local Economy/ Create employment opportunities for educated graduates by exploiting comparative advantages of the crossborder area, preferably with the use of innovative tools and practices”
- 1.3: “Development and Support of Local Economy / Improve the attractiveness and promote tourism in the cross-border area to enhance employment in tourism”
- 2.4: “Protection of Environment – Transportation / Prevention, mitigation and management of natural disasters, risks and hazards”

The MA requested the permission of the JMC to begin the preparation of the necessary documentation and to take all the necessary, relevant actions for the achievement of the aforementioned indicators.

Mrs. P. Mavria agreed that the targeted Call should focus on the three (3) Specific Objectives, in order to achieve the relevant indicators. On that issue she commented that additional funds must be allocated as overbooking up to 20%. She proposed that on/off criteria must be put in place to ensure administrative maturity for the projects.

On that note, and in order to proceed with both the Strategic and the Targeted calls, the MA submitted its request to the JMC in order to be authorized to proceed with an overbooking of Programme Funds of approx. 15%. The MA extrapolated on the request, stating that the proposed overbooking of funds would be required in order to facilitate the procedures and to finance both Calls accordingly.

Lastly, the MA requested the permission of the JMC to proceed with the formulation of an established methodology concerning the monitoring of Project Indicators. The MA proposed that a methodology will be developed that would harmonize Indicator Monitoring Programme-wide, a condition that would improve substantially the MA/JS's ability to monitor project implementation. To that end, an appropriate external expert would be contracted in order to develop the methodology in cooperation with the MA/JS.

Following the discussions, the Joint Monitoring Committee (JMC) decides unanimously to:

- Approve the modified Agenda
- Authorize the MA/JS to take the necessary actions in order to prepare a Call for the Strategic Project for the Opening of the Prespes Border Crossing Point and present it for approval to the next JMC meeting.
- Authorize the MA/JS to take the necessary actions to prepare a targeted Call under the Specific Objectives 1.1, 1.3 & 2.4 and present it for approval to the next JMC meeting.
- Authorize the MA to proceed with a preparation of the Calls taking into consideration of overbooking of Programme Funds by approx. 15%.
- Approve the proposed modifications in the Project Implementation Manual and the IPA Procurement Rules Manual
- Approve the multiannual plan of the Technical Assistance budget

The Joint Monitoring Committee authorizes the MA\JS to proceed with all of above, to take the necessary actions to prepare the two (2) Calls, to consider overbooking and to affect the changes of the Project Implementation Manual, the IPA Procurement Manual and multi annual plan of the TA budget.

Finally, the document was signed in three (3) copies by the two co-chairpersons.

**The Co-Chairpersons
of the Joint Monitoring Committee**

Co-Chair
Ms. Dominic Zaralidou

Co-chair
Ms. Mjellma Mehmeti Petersen

Ministry of Economy and Development

Ministry of Local Self Government

Attachments:

1. Agenda of the 4th Joint Monitoring Committee Meeting
2. Participants' list of the 4th Joint Monitoring Committee Meeting