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МИНИСТЕРСТВО ЗА ЛОКАЛНА САМОУПРАВЉУВАЊЕ  
MINISTRIA E VETËQEVERISJES LOJALE  
Скопје-Shkup

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**INTERREG IPA CBC PROGRAMME  
"GREECE – REPUBLIC OF NORTH MACEDONIA 2014-2020"**

**8<sup>th</sup> MONITORING COMMITTEE (MC) MEETING  
Thessaloniki, Greece**

**February 3, 2023**

**Brief Minutes & Decisions**

The Monitoring Committee (hereinafter referred to as MC) of the Interreg IPA Cross-Border Cooperation Programme "Greece – Republic of North Macedonia 2014-2020" convened for its 8<sup>th</sup> Monitoring Committee Meeting (retroactively for year 2022) on February 3, 2023, following an invitation by the Managing Authority INTERREG 2021-2027 (hereinafter MA).

The overall coordination of the Meeting was carried out by the Special Secretary for ERDF and CF Programmes – Hellenic Ministry of Development & Investments and Co-chair, **Mr. Georgios Zervos**. He announced that quorum is achieved, in line with the attached list of participants and informed the members to declare any conflict of interest and subsequently confidentiality and impartiality. No conflict of interest was declared. The Agenda was approved with the omission of the Antenna's office presentation, due to justified absence of the respective JS officer. Interpretation services in three languages were offered during the entire meeting.

Then, Minister of Local Self-Government, **Mr. Risto Penov**, as Co-chair, welcomed the participants and he highlighted the need for even better and in larger scale usage of available funds. Further to that, he expressed his wishes that the day would prove fruitful and productive.

The chair then passed the floor to Mrs. Gaby Hagmüller, representative from the European Commission, Regional and Urban Policy. She pointed out that year 2023 will be the final year of implementation of the 2014-20 Programme and there will be a need to consolidate all achievements so far and bring all projects and Programme components to a successful closure. For this work ahead, she assured the assembly of the continued support from the European Commission in the implementation and closure of the Programme. Finally, she thanked all involved members in the Managing Authority, the National Authority and the Joint Secretariat for their efforts and for organising this 8<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Monitoring Committee.

The co-Chairperson, **Mr. Georgios Zervos** explained that there are two major challenges for the current year, namely the successful budgetary closure of the 2014-2020 Programme and in parallel the rapid start and implementation of the 2021-2027 Programme. In this respect, he invited MC -with the contribution of the Ministry of Development & Investments and the National Authority, to intensify their efforts towards these goals.

The first presentation was delivered by the JS Coordinator. **Mr. Arseniou** mentioned that 65 projects are funded in the Programme (40 in 1<sup>st</sup> CfP, 22 in 2<sup>nd</sup> CfP, 1 in 3<sup>rd</sup> CfP and 2 projects in TA). The overbooking rate is already 130,76%.

In Axis 3, an amount of 1.461.180,38 € is not expected to be absorbed from the Greek TA. As far as the TA of the Republic of North Macedonia is concerned, it is estimated that an amount of 172.429,24€ will not be absorbed as well.

That said, a reallocation of TA amounts to Axes 1 and 2 was proposed to take place in order to further support the needs of projects. The level of the unabsorbed amount arose mainly due to the covid restrictions over the last two and a half years and the consequent elimination of any open events with physical presence. Other than that, this development has not affected the Programme performance in any way and is not expected to affect it until the end of its lifetime.

The **JS Coordinator** notified the MC members on the following three project-related issues;

- correction of the body code of the PB3 "COSV - Coordination of the Organizations for Voluntary Services" of the project with acronym: 'ENTEG' [Prilep] and full title: 'Entrepreneurship for tertiary education graduates', and MIS: 5060650, which was approved for financing under the 2nd Call for proposals.
- further optimization of the project with acronym: 'G.E.M.S.' and full title: Stimulating Green Employment: Across Border Educational and Technological Innovation Hot - Spots and MIS: 5067261, which was approved for financing under the 2nd Call for proposals
- upcoming actions to be undertaken by the JS in order the project with acronym: 'SUMBIO' and full title: Sustainable management and treatment of Bio Wastes by using Bio fuel production methods and MIS: 5032938, which was approved for financing under the 1st Call for proposals to be terminated.

**Mr. Spyros Arseniou** commented also on the overachievement of mainly 5 indicators which is based on the excessive online instead of live events and the greater geographical coverage due to greater number of projects approved than estimated. At that point, **Mrs. Gaby Hagsmüller** intervened and confirmed that substantial changes in indicators (ie. correction of indicators' target values in order to match the overachievement) should be avoided at this late stage of Programme implementation for transparency and audit reasons. The overachievement values of certain indicators are justified by solid reasons and the Final Report can be used to provide these explanations.

Then, **Mrs. Eleftheria Votsari**, JS Communication & Technical Assistance officer delivered the presentation on Programme's publicity main issues.

Concerning the next item on the Agenda which was Technical Assistance, **Mr. Georgios Zervos** informed the MC members that as far as the Ministry of Development & Investments is concerned, it intends to transfer the current JS staff to the new 2021-2027 Programme. Moreover, he suggested that the current Balkan-Med Programme 2014-2020 JS staff should occupy the job vacancies in the Programme.

Next, the state of play of the strategic project with the acronym BorPres was presented in detail by **Mr. Ioannis Ginis** and **Mr. Anastasios Sidiropoulos**, both representatives from ANKO Western Macedonia S.A.

When all presentations finished, the representative of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of North Macedonia, **Mr. Dimitar Mitrevski** cordially asked that all adopted documents/manuals should be proofread before final distribution, especially as regards to the official country names. In response to that, **Mr. Konstantinos Dikaros**, representative of the Hellenic Ministry of Foreign Affairs, reassured that the error in a draft supporting file is typographical and suggested that both countries should be mentioned by their official name for reasons of clarity and reciprocity.

Then, **Mr. Karl Gianciti**, representative of the Delegation of the European Union to the Republic of North Macedonia brought the discussion back to the strategic project *BorPres*. He mentioned the programme *EU for Prespa* [to be implemented in North Macedonia], which has important complementarities with *BorPres* and praised the collaboration and information sharing between the EU Delegation and the Managing Authority. In this spirit, he updated the MC members on the *EU for Prespa* programme. He described that the legal framework is complete now, the Financing Agreement between EU and North Macedonia for IPA 2021 has been adopted (*EU for Prespa* included) and the implementation phase will begin. The secondary commitments (ie. contract negotiations) are being prepared and negotiations with UNDP have launched. The UNDP will be the agency in charge for most of the infrastructure works or hard component of the programme which includes the support to the Customs building on the side of North Macedonia. In addition to that, in the course of the next months, 2 Calls for proposals will be launched, one in environment protection and one in support to local communities and civil society organizations. In parallel, in the course of the past year, DEU also worked with national and local authorities in North Macedonia to mature the infrastructure project and held meetings to discuss the pre-conditions for project

implementation (environmental studies, technical documentation, expropriation etc.). The Customs in North Macedonia informed DEU that the conceptual design for the Customs building, urban planning is completed, expropriations are ongoing and issuance of permit is expected by Q3 of 2023. The launch of the Call for tenders will be in Q1 of 2024 and the indicatively the works will start in Q3 of 2024. **Mrs. Aggeliki Bouziani** confirmed the fruitful collaboration and asked DEU to share the aforementioned information with the Managing Authority.

**Mrs. Sofce Krstikj Zafirovska** from the Secretariat for European Affairs, highlighted the importance of close collaboration because eventually both projects will end up in *one* border crossing point.

**Mrs. Gaby Hagmüller** highlighted that the border crossing point is a tremendously complex project involving a huge number of different stakeholders, decision makers and layers of decision making and disciplines. She asked when the permits (environmental, military, building construction etc.) will be obtained. Mrs. Sofce Krstikj Zafirovska replied that the Customs Administration finance the technical studies with their own budget and they expect that by end of March 2023 they will obtain building permit for the Customs building. For the Ministry of Interior, she added, that it will depend on how activities of BorPres project will progress.

**Mr. Ioannis Ginis, Director of Technical Services of ANKO.** said about the Police building that the architectural pre-study is suspended since October 2022 and he hopes it will be accepted this month (Feb2023) by the corresponding service of the Hellenic Ministry of Interior. After the acceptance, the entire study will finish in four months and the official approval of this study will follow the issuance of the environmental permit. In parallel, the legislation regulation is pending and he estimated that it will be signed in the Greek parliament during February 2023.

**Mrs. Asimina Misouli** from the Ministry of Development & Investments asked for further details on the contracted budget and overbooking rate.

Finally, **Mrs. Gaby Hagmüller** took the floor in order to remind that the EC practice about the country name is to use it once as "Republic of North Macedonia" in the beginning of a document and then continue with the short version of the name as "North Macedonia". **Mr. Georgios Zervos** clarified that in this document the correct country name will be used throughout the document, as it was spotted out by Mr. Mitrevski, will be definitely corrected.

**The members of the Monitoring Committee decided unanimously to approve the:**

1. Projects' implementation basic facts, specific notifications for three projects (ENTEG, GE.M.S, SUMBIO) and updated list of co-financed projects, as presented by the JS Coordinator.
2. Programme Modification - Reallocation of Programme budget between Priority Axes, as the next Table depicts;

Total Funds	Current Budget	Revised Budget following the 8 <sup>th</sup> MC decision
Axis 1	18.188.028,00 €	19.500.000,00 €
Axis 2	22.735.032,00 €	23.056.669,62 €
Axis 3	4.547.006,00 €	2.913.396,38 €
Sum	45.470.066,00 €	45.470.066,00 €

3. Updated Project Closure Manual and the Closure Manual for MIS procedures.
4. "Employment transfer" of the current JS staff of 2014-2020 Programme to the new 2021-2027 Programme, based on the provisions of the Greek legislation.

Following the above, the 8<sup>th</sup> Monitoring Committee meeting was adjourned, with the instructions of the Chairperson and of the Co-Chairperson of its decisions to come into force.

This document is signed by the two co-chairpersons.

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

Mr. Giorgos Zervos

Mr. Risto Penov

Ministry of Development and Investments

Ministry of Local Self Government

**Attachments:**

1. Agenda of the 8th Monitoring Committee meeting
2. Participants' list of the 8th Monitoring Committee meeting
3. Presentations delivered during the 8<sup>th</sup> Monitoring Committee meeting
4. Updated Project Closure Manual and the Closure Manual for MIS procedures