

**INTERREG IPA CROSS-BORDER COOPERATION  
PROGRAMME "GREECE – REPUBLIC OF NORTH MACEDONIA 2021-2027"**

**1st PROGRAMMING COMMITTEE MEETING**

**JULY 13, 2020**

**Brief Minutes & Decisions**

The Programming Committee (hereinafter referred to as PC) of the interreg IPA Cross-Border Cooperation Programme "Greece-Republic of North Macedonia 2021-2027" convened for its 1st Meeting on July 13th, 2020, via teleconference, following an invitation by the Hellenic Managing Authority of European Territorial Cooperation Programmes (hereinafter MA of ETCP).

Ms Niki Dandolou, Special Secretary for the European Regional Development Fund, Cohesion Fund and European Social Fund Programmes, who is Chair of the Committee, welcomed the participants, thanked the EC representatives, as well as the representatives of both countries and wished a fruitful 1st Programming Committee Meeting.

The floor was then passed to the Co-Chair Ms. Nade Petrushevshka from the Ministry of Local Self-Government, who welcomed everyone and wished a fruitful meeting.

The floor was then passed to Ms Angeliki Bouziani, Head of the MA of ETCP, who welcomed the members and noted that the PC expenses for the preparation of the new Programme will be covered by the Technical Assistance (TA) 2014-2020 and JMC members will be informed accordingly. Mr. Samaras, Head of Unit B1 of the Managing Authority, clarified that there is such provision in the TA 2014-2020 Manual. Then, he presented the Rules of Procedure. The Rules of Procedure document was approved without any comment.

The floor was then passed to Mr Gertsos, member of Unit B1 of the MA, who presented the Concept Paper.

Mr. Mpefas, representative of the Region of Central Macedonia stated his initial agreement with the Concept Paper and proposed that:

- a. the Regional Unit of Imathia to be also included in the Programme eligible area, apart from Kozani
- b. the Programme should strategically focus in all four crossing points, namely Prespas, Niki, Doirani and Evzonoi, according to the local needs
- c. in regards to Smarter Europe Policy objective and projects of tourism and entrepreneurship, state aid conditions should be avoided and real cooperation in the cross-border area should be envisaged.

Ms Feurle, Programme Manager at DG for Regional Policy and Urban Policy of the European Commission, intervened and mentioned that the Multi-Annual Framework will be discussed in Brussels very soon.

As far as the Concept Note is concerned, and in relation to the phrase "...The conservation of habitats and biodiversity and protection of natural environment and cross border assets is essentially linked to Prespes area, it could be interesting to develop an integrated territorial strategy located around Prespa and finance proposed measures through "Better Interreg governance" (Interreg specific objective 1)", she clarified that the preparation of the strategy can be funded through PO5 or ISO1. The integrated territorial strategy is implemented under PO5. Similarly, in relation

to the phrase "The development of integrated territorial strategy located around common habitats and financing proposed measures through "Better Interreg governance" (Interreg specific objective 1) is also an option", she noted that the preparation of the strategy can be funded through PO5 or ISO1. The integrated territorial strategy is implemented under PO5.

Ms Bouziani further explained that a large consultation about the new Programme will take place in September 2020 and the final Draft will be submitted for comments to the European Commission in Sept. – Oct. 2021. Ms Feurle answered that still this would be late submission, in comparison with other Interreg Programmes.

Mr. Anastasiadis, representative of the Central Union of Municipalities of Greece took the floor and fully endorsed the inclusion of Kozani in the Programme eligible area, in view of the post-lignite era. He made the following two remarks;

- a. To explore the possibility of implementing strategic projects in civil protection among Greece, North Macedonia, Albania and Bulgaria
- b. To fund private investments (enterprises, start-ups)

Mr. Samaras duly noted that the Small Project Fund (SPF) can be used towards this direction.

Ms Feurle offered to send more information on civil protection and the related policy objective. She also reminded that Interreg funds will be decreased in the next Programming period, so any geographical area addition should be extensively justified and in consistency with the geography of other Programmes in the area.

Mr. Ambas, representative of Western Macedonia, stated his view that Regional Units of Kozani and Imathia are not comparable and that any alteration of the eligible area should be duly justified.

Ms Bouziani said that all suggestions will be taken into consideration and they will be discussed internally.

Ms. Dandolou added that – at least for Kozani- it is not only a matter of allocation of funds, but most importantly about Interreg synergies with the post-lignite mechanism in Western Macedonia. Secondly, she described that strong organisation bodies for entrepreneurship and innovation exist in Kozani, which can be Programme beneficiaries and with their capacity and knowledge can contribute substantially to the implementation of successful projects within the new Programme.

Ms Bouziani concluded that all these aspects will be examined by the consultant experts through a socio-economic analysis.

Then, Ms. Stefkova from Municipality of Veles questioned whether an absorption capacity analysis has been done. She referred to Veles, geographically situated in the center of the country, in contrast to other regions (like Pelagonija) which have more opportunities and can absorb funds from Programmes with other neighbouring countries, as well. She

stressed that they also need to strengthen their capacity – on an equal level- by participating in more projects and consequently by receiving more funds. She put an emphasis on connectivity with Greece and Corridor 10. She also asked for a broader Programme view in all lakes and rivers through the Corridor 10 and not only Prespas & Doirani lakes. She highlighted that waste management is a major issue for both countries and proposed to connect the integration of Roma population in Vardar region with the circular economy.

Mr. Samaras admitted that all aforementioned issues are very interesting and invited everyone to actively participate in the public consultation\* however, he repeated that the budget is limited and focus should be pursued.

The floor was then passed to Ms Vafeidou, member of Unit D of the MA, who presented the details of the Call for the external consultant, who will prepare the New Programme Document.

It was discussed that the next PC meeting will probably take place in Sept. – Oct. 2020.

**Following the discussions, the Programming Committee (PC) decides unanimously to:**

- Approve its Rules of Procedure and authorises the Managing Authority to proceed with minor alterations of the text if needed.
- Agrees with the future actions within the framework of the programming procedure as presented by the M.A.

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

**Chair**

Ms Niki Dandotou

**Co-Chair**

Ms Nade Petrushevska

Special Secretary for the European  
Regional Development Fund,  
Cohesion Fund and European Social  
Fund Programmes  
Ministry of Development &  
Investments

Head of Unit for IPA Implementation in  
EU sector

Ministry of Local Self Government

Attachments:

1. Agenda of the 1st Programming Committee Meeting
2. List of participants
3. Presentations
4. Rules of Procedures