

# Cross-border cooperation programme under the IPA instrument

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# **SECTION 1 STRATEGY FOR THE COOPERATION PROGRAMME'S CONTRIBUTION TO ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND TERRITORIAL DEVELOPMENT, WITH THE VIEW OF SMART, SUSTAINABLE AND INCLUSIVE GROWTH AND FOR ITS CONTRIBUTION TO THE SELECTED THEMATIC PRIORITIES AND THE RELEVANT PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT AND COUNTRY STRATEGIC PAPER(S)**

[Reference: Article 2, Regulation No 231/2014 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 March 2014, establishing an Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance (IPA II) and Article 34 of Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) No 447./2014 of 2 May 2014 on the specific rules for implementing Regulation (EU) 231/2014 of 11 March 2014 of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing an Instrument for Pre-Accession assistance (IPA II)]

## **1.1 Strategy for the cooperation programme's contribution to the selected thematic priorities and, for the Member States, the relevant Partnership Agreement and, for IPA beneficiary(ies), Country Strategic Paper(s)**

*1.1.1. Description of the cooperation programme's strategy for contributing to the selected thematic priorities and the relevant Partnership Agreement and Country Strategic Paper(s)*

### **1. Introduction**

This document is the proposal for the Interreg IPA CBC Programme 'Greece – Republic of North Macedonia 2014-2020' between Greece and the Republic of North Macedonia. The Programme is a successor Programme to the IPA-CBC

Programme "Greece and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia 2007-2013", and will be implemented in the same eligible area located in the west-central of the Balkan Peninsula. The Programme covers five Nuts III Regions in Greece namely, Thessaloniki, Pella, Kilkis, Serres, Florina and four Nuts III Regions in the Republic of North Macedonia, namely Pelagonia, Vardar, Southeast and Southwest.

The total budget is 45,470,066 euro and the strategy statement is "to enhance territorial cohesion by improving living standards and employment opportunities holding respect to the environment and by using the natural resources for upgrading of the tourism product".

### **1.1 Basic Policies and Legislative Framework for the Interreg IPA CBC Programme 'Greece- Republic of North Macedonia 2014-2020'**

#### **1.1.1. EU Strategy 2020**

"Europe 2020" is the EU's ten –year growth and jobs strategy launched in 2010. It aims to create conditions within the EU to boost economic growth:

- Smart, through more effective investments in education, research and innovation;
- Sustainable, thanks to a decisive move towards a low-carbon economy;
- Inclusive, with a strong emphasis on job creation and poverty reduction.

#### **1.1.2. IPA II and CBC strategies**

The Interreg IPA CBC Programme 'Greece - Republic of North Macedonia 2014-2020' follows the provisions set in the Legislative framework of IPA II, namely Regulation 231/2014 and its implementing Regulation 447/2014.

Cross – border cooperation (CBC) on the external borders of the EU is a priority both in the European Enlargement Framework and in the EU's European Neighbourhood Policy.

As the European Council has granted the candidate country status to the Republic of North Macedonia, the country is a beneficiary of IPA II funding according to Annex I, of IPA II Regulation 231/2014.

As stated in Article 4-Framework for Assistance "In accordance with the specific objective set out in

point (d) of Article 2(1), assistance shall support cross-border cooperation, both between the beneficiaries listed in Annex I and between them and Member States...", with a view to promoting good neighbourly relations, fostering Union integration and promoting socio-economic development. The thematic priorities for assistance for territorial cooperation are set out in Annex III. In Annex III, eight thematic priorities are set aiming to assist territorial cooperation. According to Article 29.2 of IPA II Implementing Regulation a maximum of 4 thematic priorities shall be selected for each cross-border cooperation Programme.

Hereinafter the basic scope and development areas of countries Partnership Agreements' are summarized.

#### 1.1.3. Partnership Agreement for Greece for the period 2014-2020

According to the Position Paper of the European Commission Services on the development of Partnership Agreement and Programmes in Greece for the period 2014-2020, in November 2012 the European Commission proposed among others the following areas of development, regarding ETC Programmes;

1. Strengthening research, technological development and innovation, in particular on direct communication and links between the research and business communities, especially in the northern borders.

2. Protecting the environment and promoting resource efficiency.

3. Promoting sustainable transport and removing bottlenecks in key network infrastructure (e.g. the completion of the vertical axes of the Egnatia Highway, TEN-T networks, especially connectivity towards neighboring regions). Supporting modernisation of EU customs infrastructure, equipment, and systems, as well as administrative capacity building, as appropriate. Improving transnational and cross-border aspects of governance related to crossborder crime and security, including the financing of capacity-building in customs systems.

4. Dissemination of innovative technologies and know-how; strengthening strategic cooperation between public authorities and economic development bodies; protecting and enhancing natural resources and heritage; promoting renewable energy and energy efficiency;

5. Addressing weaknesses to its tourist product through the cooperation with other Mediterranean countries.

The key funding priorities for Greece according to the Greek Partnership Agreement amended in May 2014, related to E2020 are the following:

- Promoting competitive and export-oriented businesses, with a focus on quality, innovation and increased added-value, according to Regional Smart Specialization Strategies;
- Capacity development and promotion to employment of human resources;
- Protecting the environment and preventing climate change;
- Large scale infrastructure projects for Ten-T, and other transport infrastructure;
- Administrative reform for an efficient public and local administration.

For Interreg IPA CBC Programme "Greece - Republic of North Macedonia 2014 – 2020" the Partnership Agreement focuses on two specific priorities:

- Promotion of economic development;
- Environmental protection aiming to water resources and energy saving and promoting resource efficiency.

#### 1.1.4. "Country Strategy Paper 2014-2020 EU assistance to the former Yugoslav Republic of

Macedonia” (19 August 2014)

This Country Strategy Paper sets out the priorities for EU financial assistance for the period 2014-2020 to support the IPA beneficiary country on its path to accession.

It translates the political priorities as defined in the Enlargement Strategy, and the most recent Annual Progress Reports into key areas where financial assistance is most useful to meet the accession criteria.

The Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance (IPA II) is the main financial instrument to provide EU support to the beneficiary countries in implementing reforms with a view to Union Membership.

Financial assistance under IPA II pursues the following four specific objectives: (a) support for political reforms, (b) support for economic, social and territorial development, (c) strengthening the ability of the beneficiary country to fulfil the (future)

obligations stemming from membership in the EU by supporting progressive alignment with the Union acquis, (d) strengthening regional cooperation and territorial cooperation.

Regarding regional integration and territorial cooperation national borders pose administrative, legal and physical obstacles – whether differences in political institutions, administrative systems and procedures, legal structures or technical and environmental standards, which make cooperation across borders a difficult and rarely spontaneous process. However, good cooperation between border areas is vital for good neighbourly relations, economic development, as well as preservation of cultural and natural heritage. It is also vital in emergency situations, such as natural disasters, disease outbreaks and epidemics, which do not recognise administrative borders.

## 1.2 Methodology for the selection of Thematic Priorities

The methodology for strategy development of Interreg IPA CBC Programme ‘Greece – Republic of North Macedonia 2014 – 2020’ included past experience analysis and stakeholder consultations. An analysis of the aforementioned partnership Agreements was carried out. In addition, other relevant Programmes were reviewed. The goal is that the Programme strategy shall have the maximum impact in terms of added value. Therefore, the Strategy shall focus on specific interventions that respect this principle. On the contrary, interventions that achieve a better fit in other Programmes, shall not be envisaged.

### 1.2.1. Past experience analysis

The Global Objective of the IPA CBC Programme for the period 2007-2013 was to enhance convergence in the Programme area by promoting sustainable local development.

The Priority Axes of the Programme are defined below:

- Priority 1: "Enhancement of cross-border economic development", aiming at the promotion sustainable economic development through common interventions and facilitate cross-border relations: Priority 1 will be implemented by four Measures focusing on the promotion of entrepreneurship, the enhancement of Human Resources, the development of sustainable tourism and protection of public health through cross-border activities.

- Priority 2: "Enhancement of the environmental resources and cultural heritage of the Programme area" aiming to promote common actions for the protection of the natural and cultural environment and the mobilisation of the natural and cultural resources.

Priority 2 will be implemented by two Measures focusing on the promotion and protection the environmental resources and natural and cultural heritage of the area.

A review of lessons learned from IPA CBC Greece – the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia 2007 – 2013 Programme monitoring reports (2013) and EC mid-term evaluation provided the following information for the strategy development:

- 38 projects were implemented during programming period 2007 – 2013.
- 86 unique project partners.
- Most of the projects are implemented between two (02) partners, one from each country.
- Most beneficiaries are mainly Local Public Authorities and NGOs.

• Project partners did well regarding their compliance with EU and INTERREG specific procedures, according to Lead Partners testimonials.

Significant added value at CBC area:

- New infrastructure, tools and modules for development of CBC economic development;
- Improvement of qualifications of human resources through training;
- Sustainable CB tourism initiatives;
- Safeguard human life and upgrade the level of public health through upgrading hospital infrastructure and capacities;
- The quality of services for protection of natural and cultural resources in the area;
- The institutional capacity and infrastructure of public bodies responsible for protection of natural and cultural resources in the area;
- The cooperation among CB partners is strengthening, both in current projects, and by establishing new partnerships;
- Project partners increase their awareness about functioning of EU funding and EU rules;
- The stimulated communication and cooperation fosters common aspects and mitigates differences of the population in cross-border regions.

A mapping of projects awarded under the IPA II CBC Programme Greece - the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia 2007-13:

Three calls for proposals according to key themes allowed identifying the main areas of interest of project beneficiaries and partners within the Programme priorities and action already taken in particular fields.

According to the On-Going Evaluation, Project achievements are described hereinafter.

Under the 1st Call of Proposals that have been implemented the outcomes include:

-Infrastructure:

- a)creation of A Capacity Building and Research Center for Tourism,
- b)centers for enterprises and employment,

c)management of transnational riverbed

- Common events; commercial events and exhibitions, promotion of common products, common training, laboratories and work visits, common concerts and theatrical plays, sport events;
- Actions for public health, as blood testing and analysis;
- Creation of networks and clusters;
- Preparation of technical studies and project analysis;
- Certification of common professional qualifications;
- Guides and publishing material.

Outcomes of projects under the second call of proposals will include development of transborder infrastructure, improvement of cross-border roads. recycling of wastes, strengthening of cross-border exports, enhancing the institutional capacity for water monitoring.

The potential for cooperation was impeded from the Regulatory framework, which was applicable during the 2007-13 period. Due to the different management modes and the uneven budget allocations per partner country, a certain asymmetry in the scope of activities and their period of implementation could not be avoided.

Nonetheless, the seeds of cooperation between the partner countries have been sowed during the 2007-13 period. It shall be noted that the transition to shared management mode is expected to remedy the aforementioned shortcomings.

#### 1.2.2.Consultation process and consultation outcomes

The public consultation progress and outcomes are analytically and clearly described under paragraph

## 5.7 “involvement of partners”

### 1.2.3. Intervention logic of the Interreg IPA CPC Programme ‘Greece –Republic of North Macedonia 2014-2020’

The intervention logic outlined in the Programme for each priority axis is driven by the specific objectives established based on the analysis of development needs and by the expected results.

The intervention logic creates logical links between all of the following elements:

1) The analysis of development needs and the strategy set out in the Programme, including:

- development needs or challenges identified (including both sectoral and territorial development needs);
- the strategic approach to maximise impact and effectiveness - identification of the funding priorities;
- the selection of thematic priorities to be supported.

2) The outcomes of past experience analysis were combined with the results of the consultation, the On going-evaluation of the IPA CBC Programme for the Period 2007-2013

and compared with the list of CBC thematic priorities. Finally, the Interreg IPA CBC Programme ‘Greece - Republic of North Macedonia 2014-2020’ was built on

four IPA thematic priorities identified during the programming process as most relevant for the eligible cross-border area, the Thematic Priorities a, d, c, b.

By combining the thematic priorities the overall strategy statement of the Interreg IPA CBC Programme ‘Greece- Republic of North Macedonia 2014-2020’ is: " to enhance territorial cohesion by improving living standards and employment opportunities holding respect to the environment and by using the natural resources for tourism "

The selected thematic priorities have been structured into two priority axes, (excluding technical assistance) which reflect the needs and challenges as identified in the consultation phase of the Programme area:

#### PA 1: Development and Support of Local Economy

Specific Objectives related to Priority a: Promoting employment, labour mobility and social and cultural inclusion across borders through, inter alia: integrating cross-border labour markets, including cross-border mobility; joint local employment initiatives; information and advisory services and joint training; gender equality; equal opportunities; integration of immigrants' communities and vulnerable groups; investment in public employment services; and supporting investment in public health and social services;

- 1.1 Create employment opportunities for educated graduates by exploiting comparative advantages of the crossborder area, preferably with the use of innovative tools and practices

- 1.2 Improvement of preventive health care and social services of children and elderly population

Specific Objective related to Priority "d: Encouraging tourism and cultural and natural heritage"

- 1.3 Improve the attractiveness and promote tourism in the crossborder area to enhance employment in tourism

#### PA 2: Protection of Environment - Transportation

Specific Objective related to Priority "c: Promoting sustainable transport and improving public infrastructure by, inter alia, reducing isolation through improved access to transport, information and communication networks and services and investing in cross-border water, waste and energy systems and facilities"

- 2.1 Upgrade public infrastructure to improve road travel time, safe border crossing and promote energy efficiency towards green transport

- 2.2 Sustainable management and recycling of bio-wastes

Specific Objectives related to Priority "b: Protecting the environment and promoting climate change adaptation and mitigation, risk prevention and management through, inter alia: joint actions for environmental protection; promoting sustainable use of natural resources, resource efficiency, renewable energy sources and the shift towards a safe and sustainable low-carbon economy; promoting investment to address specific risks, ensuring disaster resilience and developing disaster management systems and emergency preparedness"

- 2.3 Sustainable management of protected areas, ecosystems and biodiversity

- 2.4 Prevention, mitigation and management of natural disasters, risks and hazards

#### 1.2.4. Programme Contribution to EU 2020 Strategy

The Programme contributes to EU2020 strategy as follows:

With respect to the "smart growth" objective :

- by promoting innovation at all levels,
- by promoting resource-efficiency,
- by using the comparative advantages offered by the rich and diverse cultural and natural resources for promoting economic development (tourism), and
- by supporting integration and efficient use of CB transport systems.

With respect to the "sustainable growth" objective:

- by increasing the ability of the CB area to adapt to climate change,
- by reducing CB natural and man-made risks and enhancing the response capabilities of local stakeholders,
- by preserving cultural and natural heritage,
- by protecting and restoring biodiversity and the sustainability of eco-systems,

With respect to the "inclusive growth" objective:

- by promoting employment
- by promoting "access for all" to health and social care,
- by promoting social inclusion

#### 2. Eligible Areas

The Interreg IPA CBC Programme 'Greece - Republic of North Macedonia 2014-2020' builds on the experience of the IPA CBC Programme "Greece - the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia 2007-2013" and promotes further integration for the cross border region, as it has been identified by all participating countries as a structured tool to strengthen cooperation through thematic focus, allowing capitalisation of experiences and results achieved so far. This approach has been jointly acknowledged by the European Commission and participating countries and forms the basis of the Interreg IPA CBC Programme for 2014-2020.

According to Article 30.a) of the IPA II Implementing Regulation (447/2014), for the purposes of cross-border co-operation between one Member State and one beneficiary country, the eligible areas for financing shall be NUTS III level regions along borders taking into account potential adjustments needed to ensure the coherence and continuity of the cooperation action, established for the 2007-2013 programming period; Hence 9 NUTS III regions along the border of the two countries (Florina, Pella, Kilkis and Serres, Thessaloniki on the Greek side and Pelagonia, Vardar and Southeast and Southwest on the side of the Republic of North Macedonia) are included in the eligible area, as the need to ensure coherence and continuity with the present programming period is valid in order to improve the effectiveness of the effort in the cross border area.

### 3. Analysis, needs and priorities for the Interreg IPA CBC Programme ‘Greece- Republic of North Macedonia 2014-2020’

The socioeconomic analysis and description of needs and priorities that follows, refers to development areas that are coherent to the choice of thematic priorities of the Interreg IPA CBC Programme ‘Greece- Republic of North Macedonia 2014-2020’.

#### 3.1 Demography and Spatial Patterns of the Programme Area

The total population of the Programme area is 2,366,750 people, of those 1,585,378 inhabitants (66.99%) live in Greece, and 781,372 (33.01%) live in the Republic of North Macedonia (Eurostat - Demographic Balance and Crude Rates by NUTS III

Regions, 2012). The total area covers 29,259 km<sup>2</sup>, 14,422 km<sup>2</sup> in Greece and 14,837 km<sup>2</sup> in the Republic of North Macedonia. The regional unit of Thessaloniki (1,126,438) gathers 47.59% of the total population in a single NUTS III area. The population in the Greek eligible area has decreased the past four years (2009 - 2013) by 2.48%. The population in the regional unit of Thessaloniki was reduced by 2.38%, along with the other Greek cross-border regions (Kilkis -3.53%, Serres -3.41%, Pella -0.86% and Florina -4.07%). In the Republic of North Macedonia the population decreased slightly during the past four years, only by 0.22% (2009 – 2012). The region of Pelagonia presented a reduction of 0.58%, followed by the Southwest with a small population decrease of approximately 0.38%, and Vardar with an insignificant decrease of 0.07%. On the contrary, the Southeast region presented a slight population growth of 0.35% (Eurostat - Demographic Balance and Crude Rates by NUTS III Regions, 2009 - 2012). Population density ranges from 27 persons/km<sup>2</sup> in Florina up to the tenfold figure of 306 persons/km<sup>2</sup> in Thessaloniki. The respective national averages are 82 for Greece and 80.1 for the Republic of North Macedonia.

As a general rule, in the eligible area of the Republic of North Macedonia, urban centers tend to be larger than in Greece. The population in the major urban centers of the cross border regions is 613,338 people in Thessaloniki, 93,380 in Bitola, 76,236 in Prilep, 60,254 in Serres, 56,280 in Strumica, 55,057 in Veles, 54,269 in Ohrid, 39,011 in Kavadarci, 33,795 in Giannitsa, 31,160 in Kilkis, 25,601 in Edessa and 22,934 in Gevgelja, according to the population census of 2011 in Greece and the publication «Estimations of the Population by Sex and Age, by Municipalities and by Statistical Regions, 2011» of the State Statistical Office of the Republic of North Macedonia.

High unemployment rates, both on total active population and on youth is the main common concern as it also leads young and skilled staff to migrate out of the eligible area. According to the “State Statistical Office of the National Statistical Authority” and the “Manpower Employment Organization of Greece”, in 2010 the unemployment rates in the eligible regions of the Republic of North Macedonia were 37% in Vardar, 34% in Southwest, 34% in Pelagonia and 12% in Southeast. In the Greek Regions of Central and Western Macedonia unemployment was 10% and 9% respectfully. Unemployment rates raised significantly during the Greek economic crisis, and according to Eurostat, the unemployment rates have dramatically increased in Western and Central Macedonia reaching 30% and 26% respectively, in 2012. In the Republic of North Macedonia, the unemployment tensions show a slight reduction in some regions like Vardar (36%) and Pelagonia (25%), and increase in others, like Southwest (42%) and Southeast (14%).

Also, a high percentage of the population with high education, especially from Thessaloniki, which has a considerable scientific community, immigrated to countries with stable economies seeking career opportunities, creating the “Brain Drain” phenomenon. The above explains the reduction of the population of those areas by 10.45% the last decade.

The region is characterised by high level of unemployment rates, and on the other hand by highly educated youth as many, large and high level academic institutions with several specialties are located in the eligible area. An abundant scientific community, with three public Universities, three Technological Educational Institutes and an Academy with thirtytwo

Departments (in total) in several scientific fields, are located in the Greek eligible area. According to the official data from the «Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs in Greece» regarding the students entering the educational institutions of those regions (2009 - 2012) and the paper of the «Monitoring Committee of the Academic Course of the Students» of the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki (2012), approximately 100.000 active students, study in the Universities of those regions. In more detail, the Technological Educational Institute of Central Macedonia, based in Serres, has two faculties (Management and Economics & Faculty of Applied Technology) with six departments in Serres and one in Kilkis, with more than 14.000 students. The division of the University of Western Macedonia, based in Florina has two Faculties (Fine Arts & Education) with three Departments and the division of the Technological Education Institute of Western Macedonia, one faculty (Agriculture Technology, Food Technology and Nutrition) with one department, based in Florina, with a capacity of 5.000 students.

Thessaloniki's higher education serves a student community of approximately 71.000 students. The Aristotle University of Thessaloniki has eleven faculties (with 44 departments) and the University of Macedonia has four faculties with eight departments. In addition, The Alexander Technological Educational Institute of Thessaloniki has five faculties.

In the cross border regions of the Republic of North Macedonia there are three Universities and one Higher Medical School, conducting several research and development

Programmes. According to a 2011 statistical publication there are 9.605 students, studying in public and private tertiary institutions. The University of St. Kliment Ohridski has nine faculties with 7.978 students, with five of them based in Bitola (Technical Engineering, Biotechnical Sciences, Administration and Management of Information Systems, Pedagogy, Veterinary Medicine), one in Prilep (Faculty of Economics), one in Ohrid (Tourism and Catering) and one in Veles (Technical-Technological Faculty). The recently founded University of IT based in Ohrid has four faculties (Information Systems – Visualization - Multimedia and Animation, Computer Science and Engineering, Computer Networks and Security, Machine Intelligence and Robotics). There is a Higher Medical School in Bitola with 1.268 students. There are also some private tertiary institutions like the International University in Struga with three faculties (Law, Economic Sciences, Political Sciences) and 289 students.

The eligible cross border regions of the two partner countries have a highly educated population in many scientific fields, which is an asset for the cross-border area.

By analysing demographic data, unemployment data and data concerning the tertiary education during the last years, one very important conclusion regarding the eligible area is: Although there is a large percentage of a highly educated young population, unemployment rates remain extremely high. The existence of several urban centres in the eligible area might create job opportunities for young educated people.

### 3.1.1. The priorities and needs in Employment Sector

Basic needs in the eligible area are:

- Decrease extremely high levels of unemployment in the eligible area, and reverse tendencies of further increasing of unemployment rates, due to a long lasting economic crisis and absence of job opportunities;
- Restrain demographic deficit, and fill the demographic gap with emphasis on young people and specially the ones with a higher education;
- Support the continuation and feasibility of current businesses, and implement changes to keep job positions.

Basic priorities in the eligible area are:

- The creation of new job positions;
- Make use of labour force in small urban centers, improve living conditions and use comparative advantages in key economic sectors, to create feasible enterprises;
- Take advantage of technology and innovation potentials, along with the knowledge of research institutions and young scientists to promote new technologies and implement them

in the eligible area;

- Enhance tensions of employment mobility to smaller urban centres, through the usage of highly educated youth and revitalization of local economies;
- Link academic capabilities with local opportunities and by supporting services and businesses, in order to transpose innovation into business practices and processes;
- Create mechanisms among academic and research institutions with professional institutions and chambers, associations of local entrepreneurs through clustering, networking and common actions.

### 3.2 Social Development

During the period 2009 – 2011 the per capita GDP in the Republic of North Macedonia regions (State Statistical Office of the Republic of North Macedonia), increased by 36% in Southeast to 4,200 €, by 18% in Vardar to 3,713 €, by 16% in Southwest to 2,638 € and by 7% in Pelagonia to 3,703 €. On the other hand, the intense financial crisis in Greece reduced the per capita GDP in the Regions of Western and Central Macedonia by 1% and 11%, to 20,000 € and 15,600 € respectively (Eurostat 2009 - 2011). The difference between the per capita GDP of the neighboring regions tend to become smaller. The per capita GDP of those regions is much lower than the average per capita GDP of the EU of 28 countries (23,300 €).

The poverty in Greece was increased during the last few years, due to a long and deep economic crisis. According to the changes of the Average Taxable Income (ATI) in the eligible regions of Greece the past four years (2009 - 2012), it is clear that a considerable part of the population lives near or below the poverty line (Integrated Approach to Spatial Development 2013, General Secretariat for Investments and Development - Greece). The Regional Unit of Serres is in the worst condition among the Greek eligible regions since it presents an ATI slightly above the poverty line (1.07), followed by Pella (1.08), Kilkis (1.12), Florina (1.25) and Thessaloniki presenting the highest ATI (1.38) among the Greek eligible regions.

As a result of the economic crisis in Greece and deterioration of government budgets, fiscal measures were put in place with a significant impact in domestic demand.

Moreover, public investment in the health and social welfare systems fell rapidly in Greece (since 2008, total spending on social protection and health fell by 18% according to OECD). Increasing disparities and the risk of poverty are tightened by the Greek economic crisis, lack of personnel in public health and social welfare, pension and wages reductions, while in the neighboring country health and social care are still way underdeveloped. Childhood care is limited, pensions cover only a small range of the population, and many vulnerable groups exist in the border regions.

The poverty rate in the Republic of North Macedonia is estimated at 31% of the population for the year 2011 (according to the “Commission staff working document for The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia 2013 Progress report”). An estimated 21 percent of the population live below the absolute poverty line (less than €245 per month), and 7 percent are so poor that they cannot get a minimum level of caloric intake. Economic and social differences between cities are also evident and the inequalities between urban and rural centers are further rising.

The most vulnerable groups are multi-member households and 54% of the poor people live in households with five and more members.

The poverty rate of the unemployed people is 40.5%.

The poor living conditions, low education level, and above all, the long-lasting poverty affect also the health situation of the majority of the poor.

Joint preventive health care Programmes, have been funded under the CBC Programme 2007-2013, and results showed, that a vast majority of children the age of 7 years old have never visited a doctor.

Basic needs in the eligible area are:

- cover basic needs of the poor including food, clothing, and access to health services. Provide a decent standard of living and the ability to achieve it;
- create mechanisms and Community Development to provide services to the poor;
- Fight against social exclusion of the "new" poor, people who lost their jobs and jobless families, people with debts, etc;
- Provision of care to vulnerable groups.

Basic priorities in the area are:

- To create new mechanisms focused on the conditions of poverty, that are severe and intense and occurred recently, and provide services of comfort and counselling to individuals and families;
- To create mechanisms for active inclusion and improve employability of people facing social exclusion and vulnerable groups;
- To create a Health Safety Net and provide access to health and social services for all inhabitants in the eligible area.

### 3.3 Environmental Characteristics of the Programme Area

The eligible Programme's area enjoys the benefits of having a vast, varied and mostly unspoiled natural environment. The region has a rich mixture of natural heritage in the form of flora and fauna, rivers, lakes, wetlands, grasslands, agro-ecosystems and forests.

#### 3.3.1. General description of the environmental heritage

The main characteristics of the Programme area along the borderline are the Prespa Lakes with the adjacent plains of Florina and Resen in the west, the mountain range of Voras reaching up to 2.560m, the Axios/Vardar Valley, the Doirani/Dojran Lake and Beles/Belasica mountain range, reaching up to 2.029m in the East. In the south the Gulf of Thermaikos and the Axios/Vardar plain and Delta dominate.

The main river of the area is the cross-border Axios/Vardar River. The river basin, which is shared between the two participating countries, covers almost the entire country of the Republic of North Macedonia and outflows into the Aegean Sea (Mediterranean Sea) at Thermaikos Gulf (Greece). According to the Second Assessment of Transboundary Rivers, Lakes and Groundwaters (UNECE, 2011), water is abstracted for irrigation (63%), fishponds (11%) and drinking water (12%), as well as for municipal and industrial uses (15%). There is an overuse of water in many parts of the river basin, mainly for agricultural purposes. The main pressure on water resources in terms of quality stems from agriculture. A few industrial installations also affect the aquatic ecosystem. In the Republic of North Macedonia, mining and quarrying activities in the eligible area, are in particular located in the catchment area of river Bregalnica and the heavy metal industry at Veles are additional pressure factors. The treatment and disposal of solid waste and wastewater, and their management at communal level, is also a problem for the eligible area. While there are controlled landfills for solid waste from big cities, there are also a number of uncontrolled dumpsites for solid waste from the villages. The quality of groundwater had been reported as, in general, very good, and often used for water supply without or with very little treatment in the Republic of North Macedonia. However, the occurrence of nitrogen, pesticides, heavy metals, pathogens, industrial organics and hydrocarbons in the Gevgelija/Axios Vardar aquifer had been reported as well. The transboundary Lake Dojran/Doirani is located in this basin and has been affected by quantity decrease and quality reduction since the early 1990s due to activities in both countries, such as water abstraction and municipal wastewater disposal. In the eligible area there is also a small part of the Struma/Strymonas River Basin, although the Struma/Strymonas River is typically considered to be shared by Bulgaria and Greece. Water is mainly used for irrigated agriculture and water demand is expected to increase significantly (more than 40%) by 2020.

Untreated wastewater is an important pressure factor for the eligible area. The construction of wastewater treatment plants has started for settlements with more than 2,000 inhabitants; however there are several settlements in the eligible area that lack wastewater treatment facilities.

The Prespa Lakes basin and the Ochrida Lake basin are also part of the eligible area. According to the Second Assessment of Transboundary Rivers, Lakes and Groundwaters (UNECE, 2011), abstraction of water throughout the two basin puts a pressure on natural ecosystems. Illegal sand and gravel extraction affect the hydrological regime of the wetlands. Other disturbing activities are non-sustainable (including illegal) hunting and fishing, and introduction of alien fish that affect native fish and invertebrate populations. The abandoning of cattle grazing on littoral meadows has led to the loss of these important habitats, and expansion of the reed beds in Minor Prespa. Lack of, or inadequate municipal wastewater management and sewerage leakages, have an equally important share with regard to nutrient loading in the lake, and exert minor pressure on the underlying Prespa and Ohrid Lakes karst aquifer. Uncontrolled waste disposal in the watershed might be a cause of groundwater, hence lake, pollution. The commercially important fish species in Lake Ohrid, including the famous Lake Ohrid trout, have been over-harvested in recent years, and the populations are in immediate danger. Tourism and recreation need to be developed in a sustainable way, minimizing direct disturbances of the natural ecosystems and pressures through water abstraction and wastewater discharges.

In the eligible area there are numerous protected areas under International Conventions, European Directives and National legislative frameworks. In 2000 was declared the creation of the transnational Prespa Park, under the auspices of the Ramsar Convention. In Greece, the Prespa National Park (32,700 ha) was designated in July 2009 including Ramsar Site Lake Minor Prespa (5,078 ha) and NATURA 2000 sites. In the Republic of North Macedonia, Lake Prespa is a natural monument and Ramsar Site (18,920 ha), which includes Strict Nature Reserve Ezerani (2,080 ha). Additionally, large parts of Galicica National Park and Pelister National Park are found within the Prespa Basin. The area is protected as a National Park and as a Special Protection Area under EU Directive 79/409, and also as a RAMSAR wildlife habitat. Other important natural lakes are the Ohrid Lake which has been a UNESCO World Natural Heritage site since 1980, Doirani/Dojran Lake and Kerkini Lake (both RAMSAR wildlife habitats) in the east. Vegoritits Lake considered as a biotope of significant ecological value complementing the water complex of the adjacent lakes of Zazari, Cheimaditis and Petron. The Axios/Vardar delta under along with the adjacent Gallikos, Loudias and Aliakmon rivers with a total area of 11.808 km<sup>2</sup> is a protected RAMSAR site. In the adjacent area of Thessaloniki there is the National Park of Koroneia and Volvi Lakes with several NATURA 2000 sites in which lake Koroneia suffers serious environmental problems related to pollution and water level decline and nowadays is under restoration. The mountains of the area are rich in flora and fauna and there is a large number of protected areas e.g. NATURA 2000 sites in Greece and Emerald sites within the Green Belt Initiative along the borders of the Republic of North Macedonia. The Emerald network includes sixteen sites of special conservation interest. The most important of them are SNR Ezerani on the Prespa Lake, Belchisko Blato, SNR Tikves, NP Galichitsa, NP Pelister and Natural Monuments (Markovi Kuli, Doyran Lake, Demir Kapija, Orlovo Brdo, Alshar, Monospitovo Swamp, Smolare and Kolesino Waterfalls).

The programme area is part of the wider Mediterranean Region that has been identified as the third most important biodiversity hotspot in the world with respect to the number of endemic plant species with 28 most important (key) ecosystem types/groups. In the Natura 2000 sites and protected areas of the eligible area, the main habitat types of community interest (included in Annex I of the Habitats Directive), belong to the following general categories:

#### 1. Coastal and Halophytic Habitats

2. Coastal Sand Dunes and Inland Dunes
  3. Freshwater Habitats
  4. Temperate Heath and Scrub
  5. Sclerophyllous Scrub (Matorral)
  6. Natural and Semi-Natural Grassland Formations
  7. Raised Bogs and Mires and Fens
- [21]
8. Rocky Habitats and Caves
  9. Forests.

According to the “5th National Report to the Convention on Biological Diversity of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (2014)”, and the National Biodiversity Strategy Plan of Greece (2014) the main threats and pressures that affect biodiversity in both countries including the eligible Programme area are:

- Forest fires. Thermophilic oak forests and shrubberies, characterized with high diversity and/or presence of species specific for Mediterranean biome of marine forests and maquis, as well as coniferous forests, are particularly affected.
- Urbanization, residential development and pollution. Several plant communities are affected (especially swampy) and representatives of flora (for example, *Carex elata*, *Nuphar lutea*), and entire endemic fauna in Ohrid Lake. To a lesser extent, the problem is also relevant for Prespa and Dojran Lakes, as well as Vardar River basin (which is also characterized by several endemic fish species).
- Unsustainable agriculture, such as intensified agricultural practices or abandonment of agricultural fields and crops.
- Unsustainable exploitation of water and mineral resources.
- Climate change.
- Other contributing drivers include unsustainable hunting and fishing practices, unsustainable/ uncontrolled collection of wild plants and fungi species, illegal logging, decline in prey availability, pollution of groundwater, etc.

The main priorities for biodiversity in the eligible area include the reduction of pressures on biodiversity due to unsustainable economic activities, the development of conservation and rehabilitation actions for habitats and species especially in protected areas and the public mobilization and active involvement towards the protection and conservation of biological diversity.

The waste management is considered to be among the major environmental issues in the eligible area. According to the European Environment Agency (2013) the amount of municipal solid waste generated in the Republic of North Macedonia during the period 2003-2011 has grown significantly. In the southwestern part of the country the municipal solid waste was increased from 197 kg per capita in 2003 to 357 kg per capita in 2011, while only a 0.26% was recycled or composted. In Greece there is also a gradual increase throughout the years from 416 kg per capita in 2001 to 457 kg per capita in 2010. The sustainable management of biodegradable waste is a crucial component of the EU's sustainable resource management agenda, as described in the Environment Action Programme. Although the recycling in Greece has increased by more than 10% over the last 10 years, the organic recycling is still very low at about 1% and Greece will need to make an exceptional effort in order to fulfill the 50% target of the Waste Framework Directive by 2020. According to the current trends, Greece is likely to miss the targets of both Landfill and the Waste Framework Directives if it does not intensify efforts towards recycling and diversion of waste from landfill considerably. The effective treatment and reuse of wastewater in the eligible area is one of the major issues of concern since the insufficient treatment of wastewater affects both the life quality of citizens and environmental quality. According to the Multi-annual Indicative Planning Document (MIPD 2011-2013), the

situation in the Programme area and in general in the Republic of North Macedonia, is similar to almost all other countries in the region, facing the environmental liabilities from the past. Taking into consideration all existing treatment plants, the total rate of population served by wastewater treatment is estimated at approximately only 12,5%. Industrial and urban wastewater is discharged as untreated or insufficiently treated to the Vardar/Axios river, whose pollution is adversely affecting both countries and also the Aegean Sea. Furthermore, the large cross-border lakes Ohrid, Prespa and Dojran, and on the Greek side the Vegoritida complex with Cheimaditida, Petron and Zazari Lakes are also threatened by wastewater discharges in the catchment areas. Following the 91/271/EEC Directive for urban waste water treatment, the construction of wastewater treatment plants has been started for settlements with more than 2,000 inhabitants. However, there are several settlements in the eligible area, especially in environmental sensitive areas, that lack wastewater treatment facilities.

Ecofriendly interventions for the sustainable management, recycling and reuse of solid and liquid biowaste are expected to contribute to the protection of natural environment and the improvement of life quality of the citizens in the Programme area.

Air pollution is considered to be a problem in specific locations of the Programme area. Highly urbanized and industrialized centers such as Bitola (energy) and Kavadarci (metallurgy) are significant contributors to the background air quality conditions in these areas. During the winter months in Florina, elevated levels of micro particles in the air were frequently reported, as a result of the burning of unsuitable wood stoves and fireplaces. The city of Thessaloniki suffered severe air pollution problems during the last decades, mostly related to PM10 levels. Activities and interventions within the framework of the Programme will be in line with objectives of the EU Clean Air Package (2013) regarding the harmful emissions from industry, traffic, energy plants and agriculture, with a view to reducing their impact on human health and the environment.

In the area of climate change, according to “National State-of-the-Art Analysis – for Greece and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (LOCSEE, 2013)”, both countries undertake activities at several levels: international, regional, bilateral and national for climate change adaptation and mitigation. Climate change is responsible for the increased severity and frequency of natural disasters, which have a significant impact on the environment, the economy and the development of the area. According to the South East European Forum on Climate Change Adaptation-SEEFCCA (2012), the consequences from climate change are expected to vary significantly all over the Republic of North Macedonia, with explicit implications in the southern part of the country. According to UNDP and WMO (2011) the eligible area is highly exposed to flooding, forest fires, drought, and extreme temperatures. River floods occur in the basins of the Vardar/Axios, Crna Reka, Strumica/Stymonas, Pcinja, and Bregalnica rivers. Meteorological, hydrological drought and extreme temperatures are also common in the area leading, in combination with human activities, to soil and water salinization (eg Axios/Vardar Delta), erosion, acidification (e.g soils in Bitola and Florina) and desertification problems (e.g. Kilkis and Vegoritida areas) while affecting fisheries and agricultural production. The most highly exposed agricultural zones are the Povardarie region (especially in the area of the confluence of the Crna and Bregalnica rivers with the River Vardar), the south eastern portion of the Republic of North Macedonia, the southern Vardar Valley in the Republic of North Macedonia and Greece, the Kilkis and Pella area, the Skopje-Kumanovo Valley and Ovce Pole. Effective measures of climate change adaptation and mitigation in agriculture, forestry and natural ecosystems will prevent the degradation of natural resources and ensure the sustainability of local economic activities in the eligible area.

For the effective prevention and management of natural disasters risks and threats it is necessary to improve the operational efficiency and capacity of competent authorities in the eligible area, to develop joint networks of cooperation, exchange of know how and to

reinforce volunteerism for providing immediate aid in urgent and extreme situations.

### 3.3.2. The environmental priorities and needs

Basic needs in the eligible area are:

- To mitigate the danger from natural disasters and especially wildfires and floods that affect natural environment, economy and human welfare in the cross border area;
- To halt the overexploitation and degradation of natural resources;
- To halt the environmental pollution and reduce the impacts of human activities on environment;
- To safeguard local biodiversity and wildlife habitats;
- To mitigate impacts and threats of climate change that affect natural ecosystems (eg. desertification in Vegoritida and Kilkis), biodiversity (eg. impacts on species and wildlife habitats), and local economy (eg. water stress in agricultural plants, elimination of fisheries).

Basic priorities in the eligible area are:

- The protection and conservation of threatened species, habitats and ecosystems;
- The active involvement of citizens in the protection of environment and biodiversity;
- The restoration of polluted and degraded areas and natural resources such as soil, air and water;
- The effective management of solid and liquid biowastes using ecofriendly techniques and processes;
- The recycling and reuse of wastes;
- The protection of natural resources, environment and biodiversity from unsustainable development and unsustainable economic activities such as forestry, mining, agriculture, livestock raising, tourism, fishing, urban expansion, industrial activities;
- The development of conservation and rehabilitation actions for habitats and species, especially in protected areas;
- The improved protection, resilience and effective management of natural disasters;
- The mitigation of risks and hazards related to climate change.

### 3.4 Tourism and Cultural Heritage

The cross-border region combines favorable natural resources (mountains, forests, lakes, biodiversity, unique natural forms, geothermal and mineral waters, waterfalls), favorable climate conditions, as well as cultural assets (existing cultural manifestations, festivals, carnivals; churches and monasteries; crafts, authentic local characteristic.

These provide opportunities for sustainable development of tourism, with respect to the environment. All actions shall be environmentally neutral or with a positive environmental effect. Greece and the Republic of North Macedonia are two countries, which share common natural heritage such as lakes, reserves and natural parks. The Republic of North Macedonia is a country of nature characterized by a wealth of lakes and mountains. Three natural lakes, Ohrid-Natural and Cultural World Heritage Site, Prespa and

Dojran lake, wine regions (Tikves), lot of churches and monasteries, cultural events as: Ohrid Summer, Struga Poetry Evenings, May Opera Evenings, Wedding ceremony in Galicnik, Strumica and Vevchani's Carnival, Tikvesh vintage are part of the natural and cultural heritage. The eligible area in Greece has rich natural heritage, with numerous rivers, lakes and mountain areas of natural beauty. Notable natural touristic attractions are the lake of Kerkini near Serres, the estuary of River Strimonas, the lakes Pikrolimni and Doiran the lakes Volvi, Koronia and the significant lagoons of Epanomi and Aggelohori near Thessaloniki, the lakes Petron and Vegoritida near Florina and the lake Agra with a dam in Pella. In the area also has interesting caves like "Aistrati" and "Mara" (Serres), the two store

cave of Agios Georgios (Kilkis) and the lakeside caves of Florina. The hot springs of Polikastro, Lagada and Loutraki Aridaias are interesting and have many visitors each year. Thessaloniki is considered an important port and cruise destination and one of the most important places of creation, promotion and development of culture in Europe, with thematic museums of modern art, like the Macedonian Museum of Contemporary Art and the Olympic Museum, the Teloglion Foundation of Art, the museums of Cinema and Photography, the Museum of Ancient Greek, Byzantine and Post-Byzantine Instruments, the Science Center and Technology Museum and the Museum of Water Supply. The city also has a rich events Programme, with the International Film Festival and Demetria being the most distinguished. In other towns like Kilkis, there is a Folklore and a War Museum, in Axioupoli a Museum of Natural History, in Goumenissa a Folklore museum of Aevras, in Serres a Folklore Museum Sarakatsani and in Florina a Museum of Contemporary Art. Cultural events take place in all urban centers of those regions, such as the custom of Anastenarides in Lagadas, the “Prespeia” organized in late summer in the regions of Prespa and Florina with cultural events, etc. In relation to the monuments of the Christian culture, the eligible cross-border area is characterized by relatively high density of churches and monasteries.

Touristic services in the cross-border area are not organised, regarding mainly the potential to promote the touristic products to groups with special interests and joint efforts to create attractive itineraries and common branding are missing.

Touristic facilities and their management need to be improved substantially. Access to tourist sites need to be extended together with development of the new forms of tourism / new tourism products.

The results of the territorial (situation) analysis indicate that tourism is a growing sector in the border region but the tourism growth is not associated anyhow with the CB region as a popular tourism destination.

On the other hand, there is an untapped potential and underestimation of niche tourism prospects, such as agro, eco, wine-tasting and mountain tourism, sport tourism, tourism for people with disabilities etc. Such a potential is significantly correlated with the urgent needs to use chances that the border region has.

There are seven major ski resorts in the border area: five in Greece, Pisoderi west of Florina, Voras between Florina and Edessa, Seli south of Edessa, Lailia north of Serres and two in the the Republic of North Macedonia: Kozuf west of Gevgelija and Krusevo north of Prilep. The mountainous area of the border regions is ideal for sport tourism activities such as mountain biking, mountaineering, bouldering and paragliding, with many organised climbing areas and hiking trails. Sport tourism, which is a fast-growing sector of the global travel industry, along with the natural and cultural heritage of the cross border regions, makes the eligible area, an all four season destination.

#### 3.4.1. The Tourism and Natural and Cultural Heritage priorities and needs

Basic needs are:

- Protection and usage of cultural and natural heritage;
- Upgrade of touristic products and services;
- Horizontal and vertical networking among sectors that upgrade the touristic product (local products, gastronomy, cultural events);
- Involve stakeholders and population to the development of the touristic sector to create employment opportunities;
- Create a joint touristic brand for the CBC area.

Main priorities in the touristic sector are:

- Take action to attract tourists from the eligible area and of neighbouring regions with specific interests, mainly in rural and winter tourism;
- Small interventions to use and create touristic attractions and events;
- Use new technologies to promote tourism in the eligible area;
- Exchange of experience and best practices in the sphere of tourism and for promoting joint tourist products.

### 3.5 Transport and Mobility characteristics in the Cross border area

The Republic of North Macedonia shares 262 km of its southern border with Greece (taking into consideration land, fluvial and lakes). This is the longest stretch of the external frontier of the country, accounting for some 31% of the total. It should be noted that the border corridor between neighboring countries is a key link in the north-south corridor connecting Greece to the other Member States of the European Union. The border region is the North-South corridor region of the country: Gevgelija being the main corridor (E-75) and Bitola the secondary (M5). The E-75 North-South road in the Republic of North Macedonia forms part of the Trans-European Road Network (TEN-T) i.e. Corridor X connecting the Serbia to the north and Greece to the south. Neighboring prefectural units on the Greek side of the border are Florina (in the Region of Western Macedonia) and Kilkis, Serres and Pella (in the Region of Central Macedonia). The Regional Unit of Thessaloniki as well as Pelagonia is also included in the eligible area. This cross-border area is also connecting both South-North (Athens-Thessaloniki-Skopje-Vienna-Prague-Berlin) and East West (Istanbul-Thessaloniki-Igoumenitsa-Brintisi). Thessaloniki has also an important Port for both neighboring countries.

In the cross border zone, the drastic improvement of road transport infrastructure, with the completion of the EU co-funded Egnatia motorway along with its vertical axes, has not only raised the traditional remoteness and bad accessibility of this zone; it has also affected drastically trans-border connectivity, as it shortened considerably the time distances between border regions. The improved road infrastructure is expected to have significant effects on spatial interactions between trans-border regions in South-East Europe.

The Egnatia Motorway is, actually, one of the largest transport projects constructed lately in Europe, and it was included among the top priority projects of the Trans European Transport Networks (TENs-T). Through 9 vertical axes, the Egnatia Motorway operates as a collector axis of the Trans-European Network (No7) and the Pan European Transport Corridors that cross SE Europe from North to South. These vertical axes connect the Egnatia Motorway, among others, with the Republic of North Macedonia (towards Skopje).

There is an emerging, but explicit, spatial interaction between several cities and regions because they are affected by very frequent mobility (often daily) for work purposes. Such spatial interaction, and, therefore, common spatial planning perspectives, is mostly evident in the trans-border area of Kilkis – Serres – Strumica. The pairs which as expected got high scores in terms of flows are Thessaloniki – Skopje and Thessaloniki – Strumica. In accordance with the EU Transport Policy there is a need combat transport's negative impact on energy use and environmental quality by introducing intelligent or 'smart' systems to make transport greener and more efficient.

The geographical location of the cross border area has contributed to the development of international traffic in its territory, namely on Trans National Axes and especially North - South (Corridor X). Other cross border points such as Bitola/Niki and Doiran are also important for the development of the area and cross border mobility.

Flows of people and goods in the three checkpoints of the border area can be quite high

affecting the natural environment mainly through the increase of air pollution, energy consumption and GHGs emissions. The infrastructure and relevant services shall be very efficient, so that the cross-border times and the associated environmental impacts are decreased.

### 3.5.1. Needs and priorities in the transport sector

Basic needs are :

- Improve road services;
- Protect natural environment from the negative impacts of transportation;
- Improve the services provided at the border zones and the border checkpoints;
- Reduce road accidents;

Basic priorities are:

- Use new technologies to improve road services;
- Improve border checkpoints;
- Reduce the energy consumption and carbon footprint of transport;
- Facilitate joint actions to improve spatial planning and flows in the cross border area with respect to environment.

## 4. STRATEGY

The following sections describe the strategic choices for the Interreg IPA CBC Programme 'Greece - Republic of North Macedonia 2014-2020', which take into account the prerequisite to have a continuity to the IPA-CBC Programme 'Greece - the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia 2007-2013' and lessons learned, the new EU 2020 strategy and regulations and rules of the new programming period for territorial - cooperation, the input from all consultation phases, the current situation analysis and needs and priorities addressed.

To form the strategy, emphasis is given to strategic choices that could have value added for the cross border area, joint actions among potential beneficiaries and the fact that this Programme is a supplementary tool to EU2020 and national strategies, and not appropriate for intense - in terms of funding and size - interventions.

### Strategic Choice 1: Promote Employment

The population of the eligible area shows the following controversy: Very high levels of unemployment of the active population, and especially of the young people. At the same time, a high percentage of the population has received higher education. Trends show a demographic strengthening in smaller urban centers, thus job-seekers seem willing to move from the metropolitan areas to rural areas probably to use opportunities in rural sectors of economy. Potential capacity for economic development is pursued through mobility, jobs creation and innovative actions

The main strategic choices of the Programme, regarding promotion of employment, are:

- (1) To take advantage of opportunities to support youth and unemployed to create business with a comparative advantage in local and international level;
- (2) To foster networking initiatives, supporting employment mechanisms and joint efforts in the cross border area towards the goal of creating new jobs;
- (3) To create new opportunities through investment and co-operation in tourism and environment, the adaption of ICT innovation, eco-innovation and attract additional investment and private funding within the border area;
- (4) To establish connections among research and academic institutions and the productive basis of the

eligible area, by promoting opportunities to scientists to live and work in the eligible area;  
(5) To promote mobility and co-operation of scientists towards new businesses in sectors of local economy, which are feasible and profitable.

### Strategic Choice 2: Improve access to social and health care and promote social inclusion and Community Development

Achieving social inclusion for all has been a top priority of EU 2020 strategy. Delivering it means we must guarantee opportunity for all in our society, not just for a privileged few. So it is our responsibility to ensure that opportunity is dispersed as widely as possible, and that people are not denied the chances to which they are entitled in life.

The main strategic choices of the Programme, regarding this area, are:

- (1) Eliminating Poverty - Despite improvements in general prosperity and social conditions in recent years, the focus of future policy and effort must be on people (including children and pensioners) who remain in poverty.
- (2) Eliminating Social Exclusion - The priority is also to provide opportunities for everyone to participate fully in the social and economic life of the community. For those individuals and families who suffer from multiple social problems, this presents the greatest challenge.
- (3) Improve quality of life in Rural Areas - Pressures on the agricultural sector, demographic change and the physical isolation leave many in rural communities in or at serious risk of poverty and social exclusion. Here the challenge and priority is to build a strong rural community infrastructure which will help to provide a better quality of life and infrastructure and service that will attract people from large urban centers to rural towns.
- (4) Shared Future – Shared Challenges - The promotion of respect and Joint action between the two neighboring countries is a significant challenge but an essential condition nonetheless for achieving the pace of further economic and social change needed to eliminate poverty and social exclusion in the eligible area.
- (5) Tackling Inequality in the Labour Market - Just as it is important to continue to create employment, it is important to promote equality of opportunity for all in accessing employment, by reducing inequalities in the labour market including those based on gender and disability.
- (6) Tackling Health Inequalities - It is important to reduce inequalities in health and improve access to health services for people living in rural areas.
- (7) Increasing the ‘Ownership’ of the CB area - development of the feeling and awareness of the community and its social offering, motivation to support the community, creation of social networks and mobilization of possible donors.

### Strategic Choice 3: Touristic Development and better use of cultural and natural heritage

The cross-border area is characterized by a broad heritage of dense and diverse cultures and natural resources. It can reinforce socio-economic development by strengthening the regional cooperation and cultural events while ensuring sustainability and joint action could decrease unemployment in various fields of provision of goods and services and could be a ground for the development of joint tourism routes, joint studies and joint actions for protection and intercultural exchange.

The use of ICT could provide potential for creation of innovative products and services.

There are several cultural organizations (museums, cultural centers, etc.) that are well recognized by local population and operate for a long time.

The main strategic choices of the Programme, regarding this area, are:

- (1) Protection and Promotion of Natural Heritage in conjunction with joint local development initiatives to create job positions and businesses;
- (2) Common branding of the Cross-border area to create a touristic destination attractive to groups with special interests or with special needs;

(3) Joint development of the tourism sector in Digital Technology and ICT, as well as web based and digital marketing promotion actions;

(4) Joint actions to address to client groups with thematic interests, such as eco-tourism, wine-tasting tourism, religious tourism etc.

#### Strategic Choice 4: Improve transport conditions and checkpoints and promote green transport

Cross-border road transport is essential for the development of trade, regional economic integration, tourism, wealth creation and distribution. It also impacts on the natural environment and the welfare of cross border communities and international drivers.

Governments, employers and workers and their representatives have a mutual interest in mitigating any possible undesired direct or indirect effects of cross-border traffic and accessibility problems. Delays due to deficiencies in infrastructure, facilities and control procedures at problematic border crossings can have a negative impact on the environmental quality and the living and working conditions of drivers, passengers, employees as well as on socio-economic progress, cross border and international trade, tourism, safety and transport. Also safety should be increased especially on highways. Traffic controls and the diminishing of road accidents is a key issue especially in Corridor X.

The cross border area is characterised with dense flows in both directions in the road network and in cross-border check points.

The main strategic choices of the Programme, regarding this area, are:

(1) Improve road connections and services at the border zone with respect to environment. All actions shall be environmentally neutral or with a positive environmental effect.

(2) Improve energy efficiency and reduce the carbon footprint of road facilities and transport.

(3) Take initiatives to improve cross passing times by removing bottlenecks in key network infrastructure.

(4) Improve controls and border safety.

(5) Improve of infrastructure and equipment at the three cross-border control checkpoint stations.

#### Strategic Choice 5: Environmental protection and sustainable management of natural resources

Protected areas and ecosystems in the eligible area include lakes, wetlands, forests, grasslands, agro-ecosystems, transitional and coastal ecosystems. They provide essential services that can be summarized into four categories: (a) Supporting primary and secondary production and biodiversity; (b) Provisioning services, such as food, material, fuel and medicine; (c) Regulating climate and environment, such as carbon sequestration, protection from floods, avalanches or rockfall, water and air quality improvement and disease and pest regulation; (d) Cultural services, i.e., the protection of spiritually/religious or historically important sites.

The sustainable management of protected areas, ecosystems and biodiversity is necessary for the protection, rehabilitation and conservation of the cross border natural heritage and the services that they provide to mankind.

The main strategic choices of the Programme, regarding the environmental protection and sustainable management of natural resources, are:

(1) To protect and restore threatened ecosystems, biodiversity and natural resources through the development of sustainable management/rehabilitation plans and measures;

(2) To reduce the pressures and impacts on environment through effective management, recycling and reuse of solid and liquid biodegradable wastes;

(3) To promote sustainable and innovative forms of nature based economy (ie tourism, agriculture,

forestry, fishing) with minimum environmental impacts and within the carrying capacity of the ecosystems;  
 (4) To prevent and mitigate natural disasters, risks and hazards with focus on wildfires, floods, and climate change impacts and risks.

*1.1.2. Justification for the choice of thematic priorities, based on an analysis of the needs within the programme area as a whole and the strategy chosen in response to such needs, addressing, where appropriate, missing links in cross-border infrastructure, taking into account the results of the ex-ante evaluation*

**Table 1: Justification for the selection of thematic priorities**

Selected thematic priority	Justification for selection
<p>a - Promoting employment, labour mobility and social and cultural inclusion across borders through, inter alia: integrating cross-border labour markets, including cross-border mobility; joint local employment initiatives; information and advisory services and joint training; gender equality; equal opportunities; integration of immigrants' communities and vulnerable groups; investment in public employment services; and supporting investment in public health and social services.</p>	<p>The choice of the thematic priority uses the following strengths and opportunities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(+) Trends show that differences in GDP among the neighboring countries become smaller, thus co-operation in certain sectors of economy might be feasible</li> <li>(+) A raising co-operation among neighboring countries in several sectors</li> <li>(+) Greece is both a major investor in the neighboring country and an important trading partner</li> <li>(+) Raising population in Greek smaller urban centers in the cross-border zone as a result of the economic crisis</li> <li>(+) Raising awareness in EU strategies and National Strategies to combat poverty and social exclusion</li> </ul> <p>The choice of the thematic contributes against the following weaknesses and threats:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(-) Extremely high rates of unemployment and especially of youth unemployment and long-term unemployment</li> <li>(-) A large portion of population in the area are not beneficiaries in pension and healthcare systems</li> <li>(-) Ageing population creating more demands on the healthcare system</li> </ul>

Selected thematic priority	Justification for selection
<p>b - Protecting the environment and promoting climate change adaptation and mitigation, risk prevention and management through, inter alia: joint actions for environmental protection; promoting sustainable use of natural resources, resource efficiency, renewable energy sources and the shift towards a safe and sustainable low-carbon economy; promoting investment to address specific risks, ensuring disaster resilience and developing disaster management systems and emergency preparedness.</p>	<p><b>Strengths and opportunities considered for the selection:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(+) The area has a rich natural heritage with numerous protected areas</li> <li>(+) The ecosystems provide essential services including support of primary and secondary production and biodiversity</li> <li>(+) Close cooperation in the field of adaptation to climate change, reduction of carbon/water footprint and GHG emissions and support of low carbon economy,</li> <li>(+) Networks and Projects under way in the current programming period of the CBC Programme 2007-2013</li> <li>(+) Increasing interest for sustainable management of natural resources and protection against natural disasters</li> </ul> <p><b>Weaknesses and threats considered for the selection::</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(-) The severity of extreme events like drought, heat waves, forest fires and flooding has intensified over the last few decades</li> <li>(-) The pressures of human activities on natural environment and the impacts on natural resources</li> <li>(-) Protected areas, ecosystems and biodiversity in the eligible area are threatened</li> </ul>
<p>c - Promoting sustainable transport and improving public infrastructures by, inter alia, reducing isolation through improved access to transport, information and communication networks and services and investing in cross-border water, waste and energy systems and facilities.</p>	<p><b>Strengths and opportunities considered for the selection:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(+) High quality central crossroads of Corridor X (E75) and Egnatia Highway (E90) with frequent flows between the neighboring countries</li> <li>(+) Extended primary transport infrastructure that facilitate accessibility</li> <li>(+) Significant and valuable ecosystems and natural resources</li> </ul> <p>(+) Technology development in ICT might improve communication and</p>

Selected thematic priority	Justification for selection
	<p>information system on the road network and facilitate border controls</p> <p>Weaknesses and threats considered for the selection:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(-) Delays due to deficiencies in infrastructure, facilities and control procedures affecting the environmental health</li> <li>(-) Pressures of transport on the environment and natural resources</li> <li>(-) Difficulties in the accessibility of information and communication related to mobility and transport</li> <li>(-) Insufficient solid and liquid waste management recycling and reuse.</li> <li>(-) Increasing volume of wastes, of which only a small percentage is recycled or composted.</li> </ul>
<p>d - Encouraging tourism and cultural and natural heritage.</p>	<p>The choice of the thematic priority is based on the status and needs analysis in order to use the following strengths and opportunities within the Programme area:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(+) The area is well connected to North-East and Central Europe</li> <li>(+) Interesting natural environment, and cultural sites</li> <li>(+) Touristic flows among neighboring countries</li> <li>(+) Cultural bonds and links in certain thematic fields such as religion, rural life and eco-tourism</li> <li>(+) Links of thematic tourism to unique local products</li> <li>(+) ICT and digital marketing provide chances for contacting directly special interest focus groups</li> </ul> <p>The choice of the thematic priority based on needs analysis, was made in order to contribute against the following weaknesses and threats:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(-) Touristic flows overpass the cross border area and do not bring added</li> </ul>

Selected thematic priority	Justification for selection
	value (-) There is no branding for the touristic product of the area and interventions as well as organization is lacking behind

## 1.2 Justification for the financial allocation

Justification for the financial allocation (i.e. Union support) to each thematic priority in accordance with the thematic concentration requirements (taking into account the ex-ante evaluation).

The selected thematic priorities have been structured in **two priority axes**, which reflect the needs and challenges as identified in the Programme consultation:

### **PA 1: Development and Support of Local Economy**

Specific Objectives related to IPA Thematic Priority a:

- **1.1 Create employment opportunities for educated graduates by exploiting comparative advantages of the cross-border area, preferably with the use of innovative tools and practices**
- **1.2 Improvement of preventive health care and social services of children and elderly population**

Specific Objective related to IPA Thematic Priority d:

- **1.3 Improve the attractiveness and promote tourism in the cross-border area to enhance employment in tourism**

### **PA 2: Protection of Environment - Transportation**

Specific Objective related to IPA Thematic Priority c:

- **2.1 Upgrade public infrastructure to improve road travel time, safe border crossing and promote energy efficiency towards green transport**
- **2.2 Sustainable management and recycling of bio-wastes**

Specific Objectives related to IPA Thematic Priority b:

- **2.3 Sustainable management of protected areas, ecosystems and biodiversity**

- **2.4 Prevention, mitigation and management of natural disasters, risks and hazards**

Both PAs contribute in particular to "sustainable growth": promoting a more resource efficient, greener and more competitive economy of the **EU 2020** Strategy. Eligible activities will be related to environment protection, risk prevention and management.

The financial allocation between the selected thematic priorities (TPs) was done by taking into account the following regulations:

- No 1299/2013\_17.12.2013
- The Com. Implementing Regulation No 447/2014\_ 2.5.2014

The financial allocation to the chosen TPs reflects:

- a) The results on the relative importance of the selected TPs through the stakeholder consultation process and the results from the diagnostic report for the cross border-area;
- b) The experiences of the previous programming period and especially the preparatory steps for key projects and the continuity of efforts in 'promising' policy areas
- c) the capacity of core actors in certain thematic fields;
- d) The outputs of the ongoing evaluation of the 2007-2013 Programme, and especially the data pertaining to the unit costs of the various interventions.

The estimated budget allocation corresponds to the importance of each TP for the cross border area, as it was adjusted in order to account for the varying cost of typical interventions under each specific objective. More specifically:

## Priority axis 1 (TP a and d): The planned EU support of EURO

18,188,028 corresponding to 40% of the total Programme budget, broken down as follows:

- 25% allocated to TP a – ‘Promoting employment...’
- 15% allocated to TP d – ‘Encouraging tourism...’

For TP a, the financial allocation reflects the character of the envisaged soft measures and the need to improve the conditions for business development and to create a better awareness on the business opportunities offered by the region, to reduce unemployment as well as increase the level of employability of special and specific groups and create a better quality of life and enhance social inclusion.

For TP d, the financial allocation reflects the expected size of actions facing the needs to improve the valorization of natural and cultural heritage and the tourism attractiveness in the region and to enhance cooperation and networking for sustainable tourism.

The financial allocation to this priority is aligned with the high interest shown by the regional stakeholders in the consultation process. All partner regions expressed their interest in this Priority; the potential interest expressed in consultation meetings during programming has been significant. Stakeholders already have a certain tradition and a growing need of cooperation in the field of natural and cultural heritage development and sustainable tourism development. The broad variety of beneficiaries and approaches in the period 2007-2013 clearly documents the interest for cooperation.

## Priority axis 2 (Thematic Priority c and b)

The planned EU support to priority axis of EURO 22,735,032 € corresponding to 50% of the Programme budget, broken down as follows:

- 30% allocated to TP c
- 20% allocated to TP b.

For TP c, the financial allocation reflects the character of the envisaged infrastructure and soft measures and the need to improve the conditions for transport development, to improve accessibility

of the region with respect to the environment, and to improve biowaste management, recycling and reuse.

For TP b, the financial allocation reflects the expected size of pilot actions addressing the needs to better protect the environment and biodiversity in the cross-border region, to support joint initiatives related to nature protection and sustainable use of common natural resources and to take action against natural disasters, climate change and risks envisaged.

Priority axis 3 (Technical Assistance).

The financial allocation (EUR 4,547,006) corresponds to 10% of the Programme budget. These funds will ensure that:

a) the Joint Secretariat has the required capacity to adequately support the Programme

Structures at all times (e.g. peak periods, during project generation, assessment of proposals, etc.).

b) the promotion and awareness of the Programme reaches a satisfactory level. The

Communication strategy shall be fully supported. A more engaging role of the Antenna of the Joint Secretariat shall be envisaged, as compared with the 2007-13 period.

**Table 2: Overview of the investment strategy of the cooperation programme**

Priority axis	Union support (€)	Proportion (%) of the total Union support for the cooperation programme	Thematic priorities	Result indicators corresponding to the thematic priority
1	15,459,821.00	40.00%	<p>a - Promoting employment, labour mobility and social and cultural inclusion across borders through, inter alia: integrating cross-border labour markets, including cross-border mobility; joint local employment initiatives; information and advisory services and joint training; gender equality; equal opportunities; integration of immigrants' communities and vulnerable groups; investment in public employment services; and supporting investment in public health and social services.</p> <p>d - Encouraging tourism and cultural and natural heritage.</p>	R0101, R0102, R0103, R0104
2	19,324,776.00	50.00%	<p>b - Protecting the environment and promoting climate change adaptation and mitigation, risk prevention and management through, inter alia: joint actions for environmental protection; promoting sustainable use of natural resources, resource efficiency, renewable energy sources and the shift towards a safe and sustainable low-carbon economy; promoting investment to address specific risks, ensuring disaster resilience and developing disaster management systems and emergency preparedness.</p> <p>c - Promoting sustainable transport and improving public infrastructures by, inter alia, reducing isolation through improved access to transport, information and communication networks and services and investing in cross-border water, waste and energy systems and facilities.</p>	R0205, R0206, R0201, R0202, R0203, R0204
3	3,864,955.00	10.00%		

## SECTION 2. PRIORITY AXES

(Reference: points (b) and (c) of Article 8(2) of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013)

### 2.1 Description of the priority axes other than technical assistance

(Reference: point (b) of Article 8(2) of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013)

#### 2.1.1 Priority axis - 1

<b>ID of the priority axis</b>	1
<b>Title of the priority axis</b>	Development and Support of Local Economy

- The entire priority axis will be implemented solely through financial instruments
- The entire priority axis will be implemented solely through financial instruments set up at Union level
- The entire priority axis will be implemented solely through community-led local development

#### 2.1.2 Fund, calculation basis for Union support and justification of the calculation basis choice

<b>Calculation basis (total eligible expenditure or public eligible expenditure)</b>	Total
<b>Justification of the calculation basis choice</b>	In order to promote and equally finance the non-public eligible sector

#### 2.1.3 Thematic priority

(Reference: points (b)(i) and (ii) of Article 8(2) of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013)

<b>ID of the thematic priority</b>	a
<b>Title of the thematic priority</b>	Promoting employment, labour mobility and social and cultural inclusion across borders through, inter alia: integrating cross-border labour markets, including cross-border mobility; joint local employment initiatives; information and advisory services and joint training; gender equality; equal opportunities; integration of immigrants' communities and vulnerable groups; investment in public employment services; and supporting investment in public health and social services.

#### 2.1.4 The specific objectives of the thematic priority and expected results

(Reference: Article 34(2) of IPA II Implementing Regulation)

ID	Title	The results that the partner States seeks to achieve with union support
1.1	Create employment opportunities for educated graduates by exploiting comparative advantages of the crossborder area, preferably with the use of innovative tools and practices	<p>The main expected result is; Job creation, mobility of workers in the CB area from urban to rural areas, networking of SMEs, entrepreneurship</p> <p>Expected results aim:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To use local opportunities to create jobs and enterprises, using the comparative advantages of the eligible area. The results will build on existing potential of the region and human resources, with emphasis on educated youth.</li> <li>• Innovation and new types of business models that enable the differentiation of business activities according to the potentials and needs of the specific territory. It is crucial to mobilise internal assets, natural and human resources, in fields where the CB area is specialised.</li> <li>• Increase mobility of human resources from urban to rural areas, benefiting from the CB area potentials, in specific sectors of the economy.</li> <li>• Focus towards creating missing links among sectors of the economy; enhance innovation and ICT, knowledge transfer, business relations and exports' orientation.</li> <li>• Increase the number of self-employed and SMEs, that produce new products and services, with added value for the CB area, or the international markets.</li> <li>• enhance clustering and networking among local business, which will create new job positions</li> <li>• promote entrepreneurship, by facilitating the economic usage of new ideas and fostering the creation of new firms</li> </ul>
1.2	Improvement of preventive health care and social services of children and elderly population	<p>The main expected result is: Improvement of preventive health care and social services for children and elderly population mainly in the rural cross-border areas.</p> <p>More specifically, the expected results aim:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To create opportunities for everyone to participate fully in the social and economic life of the community, especially for young people who want to live and work in the countryside and for those (individuals and families) that are socially excluded.</li> <li>• To promote equality in accessing employment, for specific groups such as individuals with disabilities (vulnerable)</li> <li>• Help women who offer care services to children and the elderly, etc.</li> <li>• To improve accessibility to health care services to citizens, without exceptions</li> </ul> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Offer quality health care to isolated population</li> </ul>

<b>ID</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>The results that the partner States seeks to achieve with union support</b>

## 2.1.5. Actions to be supported under the thematic priority

### 2.1.5.1. A description of the type and examples of actions to be supported and their expected contribution to the specific objectives, including, where appropriate, identification of the main target groups, specific territories targeted and types of beneficiaries

(Reference: point (b)(iii) of Article 8(2) of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013)

According to Article 39 of IPA II Implementing Regulation, selected operations shall involve beneficiaries from both participating countries, provided that cross-border impacts and benefits are identified. Beneficiaries shall cooperate in the development and implementation of operations. In addition, they shall cooperate in either the staffing or the financing of operations. Projects are expected to establish long-lasting links within the eligible area while resulting in a clearly improved situation for the issue they address.

Each project shall provide for and include a mix of:

- Enhanced contacts within the area including networking, forums and the establishment of partnerships
- Enhanced knowledge and skills including the exchange of experience and good practice, innovation, capacity-building and joint research
- Concrete and visible outputs including small-medium scale investments, pilot projects, ICT shared tools, online open-access resources

When designing and implementing their action, project partners shall also pay particular attention to ensure:

- The sustainability of their action
- Communication on and dissemination of results
- Synergies and complementarities with other actions in the same field

The following examples of action are a non-exhaustive list that is illustrating the range of possible actions under specific objective 1.1 are:

- Initiatives to encourage support of unemployed and self employed or managers to innovation, creativity and entrepreneurship;
- Awards on innovative ideas
- University Students' mini-companies (competitions)
- Support to joint market initiatives and networking, incl. promotion and marketing campaigns for entrepreneurs
- Networking of public services, authorities and nongovernmental initiatives for the exchange of know-how and the support of employment and entrepreneurship

Target groups:

- University Students
- Young people (up to age of 29)
- Unemployed
- Vulnerable groups
- Inactive women

Potential Beneficiaries

- All levels of national or regional/local authorities and their enterprises
- Universities, knowledge / research institutes
- Civil society structure (association/foundation)/ NGOs
- International Organisations
- Business support structures and chambers, associations

The indicative actions to be supported under specific objective 1.2 are:

- Mobile and other health services and social care for children and elderly habitants of remote areas
- Elaboration of ICT, telemedicine and smart applications related to health and social care
- Communities development initiatives to support social and family care;
- Cross-border initiatives for promotion of health and well-being of children;
- Promotion of people's participation in social care
- Preventive health Programmes
- Supply of equipment for health care and social care

Target groups:

- Vulnerable groups
- Unemployed
- Elderly
- Women inactive
- People facing poverty and social exclusion

Potential Beneficiaries

- All levels of national or regional/local authorities and their enterprises
- Hospitals/social care services/Regional health administration/health and social institutions
- Civil society structure (association/foundation)/ NGOs
- Organizations of volunteers, associations/
- International Organisations
- Universities, knowledge / research institutes

### 2.1.5.2. Guiding principles for the selection of operations

(Reference: point (b)(iii) of Article 8(2) of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013)

According to article 39 (1), Selection of operations, of Commission Implementing regulation (EU) No 447/214 of 2 May 2014 on the specific rules for implementing Regulation (EU) No 231 of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing an Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance (IPA II), the operations under cross-border cooperation Programmes shall be selected by the JMC.

- The selection of projects will be carried out following a standardized assessment procedure using the following criteria:

Strategic Relevance and Coherence: this criterion examines at least the coherence and contribution of each project application to the relevant Programme's objectives and results

Eligible Entities: this criterion examines:

- the eligibility of Partners including international organisations
- jurisdiction and competence of partners in terms of project activities.

All actions shall be environmentally neutral or with a positive environmental effect.

The detailed assessment criteria will be laid down and made available to potential applicants in the Calls for Proposals documentation that will be prepared and disseminated by the Programme's Managing Authority.

**2.1.5.3. Planned use of financial instruments (where appropriate)**

(Reference: point (b)(iii) of Article 8(2) of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013)

No

**2.1.5.4 Planned use of major projects (where appropriate)**

(Reference: point (b)(iii) of Article 8(2) of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013)

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## 2.1.6 Common and programme specific indicators

(Reference: point (b)(ii) and (b)(iv) of Article 8(2) of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013 and Article 2(2) of IPA II Implementing Regulation)

### 2.1.6.1 Priority axis result indicators (programme specific)

**Table 3: Programme specific result indicators**

Specific objective		1.1 - Create employment opportunities for educated graduates by exploiting comparative advantages of the crossborder area, preferably with the use of innovative tools and practices					
ID	Indicator	Measurement unit	Baseline value	Baseline year	Target value (2023)	Source of data	Frequency of reporting
R010 1	Highly educated in employment, including self employment 6 months upon leaving the project/intervention	Persons	47.00	2015	52.00	SMEs, Potential Individual Entrepreneurs, Graduates	2015, 2018, 2020, 2023

Specific objective		1.2 - Improvement of preventive health care and social services of children and elderly population					
ID	Indicator	Measurement unit	Baseline value	Baseline year	Target value (2023)	Source of data	Frequency of reporting
R010 2	Population having access to health services	Persons living close to health centers	1,808,707.00	2015	1,826,794.00	Regional Health Services (DYPE), Statistical Authorities of the countries	2015, 2018, 2020, 2023
R010 3	Population having access to social services	Persons living close to social services providers	1,260,163.00	2015	1,272,765.00	Regional Statistics from Ministries, Regions and Municipalities, Statistical Authorities of the countries	2015, 2018, 2020, 2023

### 2.1.6.2. Priority axis output indicators (common or programme specific)

**Table 4: Common and programme specific output indicators**

<b>ID of the thematic priority</b>		<b>a - Promoting employment, labour mobility and social and cultural inclusion across borders through, inter alia: integrating cross-border labour markets, including cross-border mobility; joint local employment initiatives; information and advisory services and joint training; gender equality; equal opportunities; integration of immigrants' communities and vulnerable groups; investment in public employment services; and supporting investment in public health and social services.</b>			
<b>ID</b>	<b>Indicator</b>	<b>Measurement unit for indicator</b>	<b>Target value (2023)</b>	<b>Source of data</b>	<b>Frequency of reporting</b>
O0101	Number of participants in joint local cross-border employment activities	Persons	350.00	Programme Monitoring Information System	annually
O0103	Population covered by improved social services	Persons	500.00	Programme Monitoring Information System (Project Progress Reports)	annually
CO36	Health: Population covered by improved health services	Persons	1,500.00	Programme Monitoring Information System (Project Progress Reports)	annually

<b>ID of the thematic priority</b>	d
<b>Title of the thematic priority</b>	Encouraging tourism and cultural and natural heritage.

### 2.1.4 The specific objectives of the thematic priority and expected results

(Reference: Article 34(2) of IPA II Implementing Regulation)

<b>ID</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>The results that the partner States seeks to achieve with union support</b>
1.3	Improve the attractiveness and promote tourism in the cross-border area to enhance employment in tourism	<p>The main expected result is: Increase the scope of the touristic product, by creating employment and self-employment</p> <p>Expected results are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• to improve attractiveness of the touristic product of the eligible area, the creation of thematic touristic itineraries, the promotion and enhancement of natural and cultural heritage, as well as the networking and cooperation of stakeholders participating in touristic development</li> <li>• to create a diversified touristic all- season product in the cross-border area focusing on the comparative advantages of rural areas attracting tourists with specific interests, such as eco-tourism, religious-historical tourism, gastronomic- wine tasting tourism, etc.</li> <li>• To foster other sectors of the economy along with the touristic product including the environmental preservation, employment and entrepreneurship.</li> <li>• to use ICT technologies in promoting touristic products directly to target groups with specific interests</li> </ul>

ID	Title	The results that the partner States seeks to achieve with union support

## 2.1.5. Actions to be supported under the thematic priority

### 2.1.5.1. A description of the type and examples of actions to be supported and their expected contribution to the specific objectives, including, where appropriate, identification of the main target groups, specific territories targeted and types of beneficiaries

(Reference: point (b)(iii) of Article 8(2) of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013)

According to Article 39 of IPA II Implementing Regulation, selected operations shall involve beneficiaries from both participating countries, provided that cross-border impacts and benefits are identified. Beneficiaries shall cooperate in the development and implementation of operations. In addition, they shall cooperate in either the staffing or the financing of operations. Projects are expected to establish long-lasting links within the eligible area while resulting in a clearly improved situation for the issue they address.

Each project shall provide for and include a mix of:

- Enhanced contacts within the area including networking, forums and the establishment of partnerships
- Enhanced knowledge and skills including the exchange of experience and good practice, innovation, capacity-building and joint research
- Concrete and visible outputs including small-medium scale investments, pilot projects, ICT shared tools, online open-access resources

When designing and implementing their action, project partners shall also pay particular attention, ensuring:

- The sustainability of their action
- Communication on and dissemination of results
- Synergies and complementarities with other actions in the same field.

The indicative actions to be supported under specific objective 1.3 are:

- Joint actions on potential niche tourism activities and/or on the demand for new tourist destinations and experience;
- ICT applications promoting sustainable tourism and international branding;
- Joint activities to identify tourist products with potential for cross-border branding;
- Development of local brands based on natural and cultural heritage of the region;
- Visualization of local brands, incl. 3D visualization, mobile applications, social networks, tailor-made internet platforms, and other innovative tools;
- Development of sustainable and responsible tourism potential of the crossborder region, through innovative and quality tourism products;
- Expansion of touristic season as well as increase of senior tourism
- Planning of integrated actions to support the creation of jobs and enterprises to promote tourism and protect environment in the cross-border area;

Target groups:

- Regions residents

- Europe's inhabitants
- Youth organisations
- Eco-friendly organisations
- Associations for the elderly
- Touristic organisations/ social and school tourism organisations
- NGO's
- Sports associations, clubs, school sports teams

#### Potential Beneficiaries

- All levels of national or regional/local authorities and their enterprises
- NGOs
- Business support structures and chambers, associations of tourism
- Universities, knowledge / research institutes
- Organizations of volunteers,
- Cultural institutes (museum, library, art gallery, community centers, etc.)
- Exhibition and fair associations

### *2.1.5.2. Guiding principles for the selection of operations*

(Reference: point (b)(iii) of Article 8(2) of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013)

According to article 39 (1), Selection of operations, of Commission Implementing regulation (EU) No 447/214 of 2 May 2014 on the specific rules for implementing Regulation (EU) No 231 of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing an Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance (IPA II), the operations under cross-border cooperation Programmes shall be selected by the JMC.

- The selection of projects will be carried out following a standardized assessment procedure using the following criteria:  
Strategic Relevance and Coherence: this criterion examines at least the coherence and contribution of each project application to the relevant Programme's objectives and results

Eligible Entities: this criterion examines:

- the eligibility of Partners including international organizations
- Jurisdiction and competence of partners in terms of project activities.

All actions shall be environmentally neutral or with a positive environmental effect.

The detailed assessment criteria will be laid down and made available to potential applicants in the Calls for Proposals documentation that will be prepared and disseminated by the Programme's Managing Authority.

**2.1.5.3. Planned use of financial instruments (where appropriate)**

(Reference: point (b)(iii) of Article 8(2) of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013)

No

**2.1.5.4 Planned use of major projects (where appropriate)**

(Reference: point (b)(iii) of Article 8(2) of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013)

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## 2.1.6 Common and programme specific indicators

(Reference: point (b)(ii) and (b)(iv) of Article 8(2) of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013 and Article 2(2) of IPA II Implementing Regulation)

### 2.1.6.1 Priority axis result indicators (programme specific)

**Table 3: Programme specific result indicators**

Specific objective		1.3 - Improve the attractiveness and promote tourism in the cross-border area to enhance employment in tourism					
ID	Indicator	Measurement unit	Baseline value	Baseline year	Target value (2023)	Source of data	Frequency of reporting
R0104	Jobs created in the tourism sector	Persons	3,250.00	2015	3,285.00	ELSTAT (Greece), SSO (Republic of North Macedonia) /	Annually

2.1.6.2. Priority axis output indicators (common or programme specific)

**Table 4: Common and programme specific output indicators**

ID of the thematic priority		d - Encouraging tourism and cultural and natural heritage.			
ID	Indicator	Measurement unit for indicator	Target value (2023)	Source of data	Frequency of reporting
O0104	Number of enterprises participating in cross-border joint projects	Number of Enterprises	30.00	Programme Monitoring Information System	annually

## 2.1.7 Performance framework

(Reference: point (b)(v) of Article 8(2) of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013 and Annex II of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013)

**Table 5: Performance framework of the priority axis**

ID of the priority axis		1 - Development and Support of Local Economy					
ID	Type	Key implementation step or indicator	Measurement unit	Milestone for 2018	Final target (2023)	Source of data	Explanation of the relevance of the indicator
CO36	O	Health: Population covered by improved health services	Persons	0	1,500.00	Programme Management Information System (MIS)	Access to health and social services is identified as a major Programme challenge, especially for inhabitants of remote locations in the areas of Serres, Pella, Florina, Vardarski and Pelagoniski. The final target value was based on figures from similar interventions during the 2007-13 Period: 6 concluded projects with an average of 350 people served / project (for health and social services combined).
F011	F	Eligible verified (certified) Expenditure of the Axis	Euro	1400000	18,188,028.00	Programme Management Information System (MIS)	Final target: The Priority's total budget. N+3 cumulative target: € 3.295.000 (2014+2015 IPA financial appropriation: € 2.800.000). N+3 broken down / Priority 1 (40%): € 1.318.000 Milestone: € 1.400.000
K0101	I	Contracted Projects	Number of Projects	13		Programme Management Information System (MIS)	The indicator adequately captures the progress of the Priority (stage of the project pipeline the programme is able to reach by 2018).

## Additional qualitative information on the establishment of the performance framework (optional)

The indicator CO36 is covered by S.O. 1.2.

Following the decision of the Joint Monitoring Committee regarding the 1st Call for Proposals: a) The funds allocated to approved projects were in excess of the Call's initial budget. b) Nine projects were approved under S.O. 1.2, with a total budget of EUR 10.9 mil. The already allocated funds amount to 60% of the respective Priority's budget. Based on experience from the previous Period, concluded projects will only use 85-90% of their initial budget. As such, the selected indicator represents 51%-54% of Priority 1.

Justification for the Key Implementation Step

Number of approved projects under the 1. CfP: 18

Milestone: Based from experience from the previous Programming Period, 10% of all approved projects will be suspended/withdrawn. In addition to project failures, delays and coordination problems are expected, especially in large partnerships and can affect one in four projects, based on previous experience. Therefore, 5 out of 18 approved projects shall not be contracted until the end of 2018.

As the Priority is oversubscribed under the 1st CfP, future Call(s) will only cover failed / delayed projects. Yet, zero projects from a future CfP are expected to be contracted until the end of 2018. In case of project failures, projects from the reserve list may also be introduced. Nonetheless, it is unlikely that any such projects are contracted until the end of 2018. Due to the support provided to approved projects and commitment expected from them, the Programme Bodies are not expected to resort to the ranking list before 2019.

## 2.1.8 Categories of intervention

(Reference: point (b)(vii) of Article 8(2) of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013)

Categories of intervention corresponding to the content of the priority axis, based on a nomenclature adopted by the Commission, and indicative breakdown of Union support

**Table 6: Dimension 1 Intervention field**

<b>Priority axis</b>	<b>1 - Development and Support of Local Economy</b>
<b>Dimension</b>	<b>€ Amount</b>
075 - Development and promotion of tourism services in or for SMEs	1,221,899.00
092 - Protection, development and promotion of public tourism assets	2,337,498.00
094 - Protection, development and promotion of public cultural and heritage assets	2,210,424.00
102 - Access to employment for job-seekers and inactive people, including the long-term unemployed and people far from the labour market, also through local employment initiatives and support for labour mobility	4,845,000.00
112 - Enhancing access to affordable, sustainable and high-quality services, including health care and social services of general interest	4,845,000.00

**Table 7: Dimension 2 Form of finance**

<b>Priority axis</b>	<b>1 - Development and Support of Local Economy</b>
<b>Dimension</b>	<b>€ Amount</b>
01 - Non-repayable grant	15,459,821.00

**Table 8: Dimension 3 Territory type**

<b>Priority axis</b>	<b>1 - Development and Support of Local Economy</b>
<b>Dimension</b>	<b>€ Amount</b>
05 - Cooperation across national or regional programme areas in national context	15,459,821.00

**Table 9: Dimension 6 Territorial delivery mechanisms**

<b>Priority axis</b>	<b>1 - Development and Support of Local Economy</b>
<b>Dimension</b>	<b>€ Amount</b>
05 - Other integrated approaches to sustainable urban/rural development	15,459,821.00

**2.1.9 A summary of the planned use of technical assistance including, where necessary, actions to reinforce the administrative capacity of authorities involved in the management and control of the programmes and beneficiaries and, where necessary, actions for to enhance the administrative capacity of relevant partners to participate in the implementation of programmes (where appropriate)**

(Reference: point (b)(vi) of Article 8(2) of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013)

<b>Priority axis</b>	<b>1 - Development and Support of Local Economy</b>
<p>Capacity building initiatives: - For project generation, assisting potential beneficiaries for the identification of needs among target groups, coordination of administrative procedures.</p> <p>Promotion initiatives: - To activate participation among potential beneficiaries groups; - To inform target groups on outputs of the Programme.</p> <p>Surveys and evaluation activities: - Surveys among target groups to evaluate the achievement of PA's results indicators.</p>	

### 2.1.1 Priority axis - 2

<b>ID of the priority axis</b>	2
<b>Title of the priority axis</b>	Protection of Environment - Transportation

- The entire priority axis will be implemented solely through financial instruments
- The entire priority axis will be implemented solely through financial instruments set up at Union level
- The entire priority axis will be implemented solely through community-led local development

### 2.1.2 Fund, calculation basis for Union support and justification of the calculation basis choice

<b>Calculation basis (total eligible expenditure or public eligible expenditure)</b>	Total
<b>Justification of the calculation basis choice</b>	In order to promote and equally finance the non-public eligible sector

### 2.1.3 Thematic priority

(Reference: points (b)(i) and (ii) of Article 8(2) of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013)

<b>ID of the thematic priority</b>	b
<b>Title of the thematic priority</b>	Protecting the environment and promoting climate change adaptation and mitigation, risk prevention and management through, inter alia: joint actions for environmental protection; promoting sustainable use of natural resources, resource efficiency, renewable energy sources and the shift towards a safe and sustainable low-carbon economy; promoting investment to address specific risks, ensuring disaster resilience and developing disaster management systems and emergency preparedness.

### 2.1.4 The specific objectives of the thematic priority and expected results

(Reference: Article 34(2) of IPA II Implementing Regulation)

<b>ID</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>The results that the partner States seeks to achieve with union support</b>
2.3	Sustainable management of protected areas, ecosystems and biodiversity	The expected results are focused on the Protection and conservation of natural resources and biodiversity in the Programme Area. More specifically they include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improved protection and sustainable management of protected areas, ecosystems and biodiversity in the cross-border area.</li> <li>• improvement of awareness and environmental education for the conservation of nature</li> </ul>

ID	Title	The results that the partner States seeks to achieve with union support
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• restoration and rehabilitation of degraded soil and water resources</li> <li>• improvement of the conservation status of threatened habitats and species in the cross border area</li> <li>• fulfillment of the commitments of the two countries under international conventions and agreements on protected areas and biodiversity (RAMSAR Convention, UNESCO Convention etc)</li> </ul>
2.4	Prevention, mitigation and management of natural disasters, risks and hazards	<p>The expected results focus on the improvement of the capacity and readiness to tackle natural disasters, risks and hazards.</p> <p>More specifically they include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improvement on prevention, response and resilience to natural disasters and risks, especially forest fires, floods and climate impacts, in order to minimize their impact on the natural and human environment</li> <li>• rehabilitation of degraded ecosystems and natural resources affected by natural disasters risks and hazards</li> <li>• promotion of public safety and protection of public and private investments from natural disasters and hazards</li> <li>• mobilization and capacity building of citizens and volunteers involved in natural disasters mitigation and management</li> <li>• enhancement of operational readiness and effectiveness of public services and competent authorities and early crossborder identification and assessment of emergency situation, and effective disaster management</li> </ul>

## 2.1.5. Actions to be supported under the thematic priority

### 2.1.5.1. A description of the type and examples of actions to be supported and their expected contribution to the specific objectives, including, where appropriate, identification of the main target groups, specific territories targeted and types of beneficiaries

(Reference: point (b)(iii) of Article 8(2) of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013)

According to Article 39 of IPA II Implementing Regulation, selected operations shall involve beneficiaries from both participating countries, provided that cross-border impacts and benefits are identified. Beneficiaries shall cooperate in the development and implementation of operations. In addition, they shall cooperate in either the staffing or the financing of operations.

Projects are expected to establish long-lasting links within the eligible area while resulting in a clearly improved situation for the issue they address.

Each project shall provide for and include a mix of:

- Enhanced contacts within the area including networking, forums and the establishment of partnerships
- Enhanced knowledge and skills including the exchange of experience and good practice, innovation, capacity-building and joint research
- Concrete and visible outputs including small-medium scale investments, pilot projects, ICT shared tools, online open-access resources

When designing and implementing their action, project partners shall also pay particular attention to ensure:

- The sustainability of their action
- Communication on and dissemination of results
- Synergies and complementarities with other actions in the same field

The indicative actions to be supported under specific objective 2.3 are:

- Management, conservation and restoration actions of protected areas, vulnerable and threatened ecosystems
- Water resources vulnerability assessment and mitigation measures
- Rehabilitation of degraded soil ecosystems and conservation of soil biodiversity
- Interventions for the conservation of threatened or indigenous species of flora and fauna
- Reducing the environmental footprint of human activities through sustainable use of natural resources and ecosystem services
- ICT applications in environmental protection, monitoring and management
- Networks of cooperation for environmental education, awareness and volunteering

Target groups:

- Regions residents
- Regional and Local Authorities

- Management Bodies of Protected Areas
- Stakeholders

#### Potential Beneficiaries

- All levels of Regional and Local Authorities and their enterprises
- Universities, Educational / Research Institutions
- Research Centres
- Organizations of volunteers
- NGOs
- Non-profit bodies
- International Organizations
- Management Bodies of Protected Areas

The indicative actions to be supported under specific objective 2.4 are:

- Improving the operational efficiency of public administration and public services in natural disasters management
- Mobilization of citizens and support of volunteering to increase disaster resilience and emergency preparedness
- Cross-border networks of co-operations for the effective prevention and management of natural disasters, and climate related risks and hazards
- ICT systems for early warning and risk management

Target groups:

- Affected population of the CB region
- All levels of regional/local authorities

#### Potential Beneficiaries

- National, local and regional structures for dealing with emergency situations
- Civil Protection Authorities
- Universities, Educational / Research Institutions
- Research Centres
- Organizations of volunteers
- NGOs
- Non-profit Organizations

### 2.1.5.2. Guiding principles for the selection of operations

(Reference: point (b)(iii) of Article 8(2) of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013)

According to article 39 (1), Selection of operations, of Commission Implementing regulation (EU) No 447/214 of 2 May 2014 on the specific rules for implementing Regulation (EU) No 231 of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing an Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance (IPA II), the operations under cross-border cooperation Programmes shall be selected by the JMC.

- The selection of projects will be carried out following a standardized assessment procedure using the following criteria:  
Strategic Relevance and Coherence: this criterion examines at least the coherence and contribution of each project application to the relevant Programme's objectives and results.

Eligible Entities: this criterion examines

- the eligibility of Partners including international organisations
- jurisdiction and competence of partners in terms of project activities.

The detailed assessment criteria will be laid down and made available to potential applicants in the Calls for Proposals documentation that will be prepared and disseminated by the Programme's Managing Authority.

All actions shall have a positive environmental effect.

**2.1.5.3. Planned use of financial instruments (where appropriate)**

(Reference: point (b)(iii) of Article 8(2) of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013)

No

**2.1.5.4 Planned use of major projects (where appropriate)**

(Reference: point (b)(iii) of Article 8(2) of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013)

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## 2.1.6 Common and programme specific indicators

(Reference: point (b)(ii) and (b)(iv) of Article 8(2) of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013 and Article 2(2) of IPA II Implementing Regulation)

### 2.1.6.1 Priority axis result indicators (programme specific)

**Table 3: Programme specific result indicators**

Specific objective		2.3 - Sustainable management of protected areas, ecosystems and biodiversity					
ID	Indicator	Measurement unit	Baseline value	Baseline year	Target value (2023)	Source of data	Frequency of reporting
R020 5	Surface area of ecosystems or habitats with improved protection and conservation status	Hectars	1,369,578.00	2015	1,557,578.00	Greece: Ministry of Environment. Republic of North Macedonia: Survey	2015, 2018, 2020, 2023

Specific objective		2.4 - Prevention, mitigation and management of natural disasters, risks and hazards					
ID	Indicator	Measurement unit	Baseline value	Baseline year	Target value (2023)	Source of data	Frequency of reporting
R020 6	Population benefiting from risk / hazards prevention and natural disaster management measures	Persons	1,150,000.00	2015	1,620,200.00	Civil Protection Authorities – Fire Brigades – Decentralized Authorities	2015, 2018, 2020, 2023

### 2.1.6.2. Priority axis output indicators (common or programme specific)

**Table 4: Common and programme specific output indicators**

<b>ID of the thematic priority</b>		<b>b - Protecting the environment and promoting climate change adaptation and mitigation, risk prevention and management through, inter alia: joint actions for environmental protection; promoting sustainable use of natural resources, resource efficiency, renewable energy sources and the shift towards a safe and sustainable low-carbon economy; promoting investment to address specific risks, ensuring disaster resilience and developing disaster management systems and emergency preparedness.</b>			
<b>ID</b>	<b>Indicator</b>	<b>Measurement unit for indicator</b>	<b>Target value (2023)</b>	<b>Source of data</b>	<b>Frequency of reporting</b>
CO23	surface area of habitats supported in order to attain a better conservation status	Hectars	50,000.00	Ministry of Environment and Management Bodies of protected areas	annually
O0207	Surface area of rehabilitated or with improved management ecosystems	Hectars	188,000.00	Survey	annually
CO20	Population benefiting from flood protection measures	Persons	200,000.00	Programme Monitoring Information System	annually
CO21	Population benefiting from forest fire protection measures	Persons	270,000.00	Programme Monitoring Information System	annually
O0210	Number of participants in prevention actions	Persons	200.00	Programme Monitoring Information System	annually

<b>ID of the thematic priority</b>	c
<b>Title of the thematic priority</b>	Promoting sustainable transport and improving public infrastructures by, inter alia, reducing isolation through improved access to transport, information and communication networks and services and investing in cross-border water, waste and energy systems and facilities.

### 2.1.4 The specific objectives of the thematic priority and expected results

(Reference: Article 34(2) of IPA II Implementing Regulation)

<b>ID</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>The results that the partner States seeks to achieve with union support</b>
2.1	Upgrade public infrastructure to improve road travel time, safe border crossing and promote energy efficiency towards green transport	<p>Expected results: Improved mobility and integration of the Cross-border area with respect to the environment.</p> <p>More specifically they include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• upgraded or improved cross - border infrastructure (such as customs or other related to border safety and transport) ,</li> <li>• Reduced energy consumption and carbon footprint of road facilities and transport</li> <li>• information and communication systems related to transport aiming to support accessibility and mobility improve cross border accessibility and services</li> <li>• facilitation of mobility for people and goods</li> </ul>

ID	Title	The results that the partner States seeks to achieve with union support
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• facilitation of trade, tourism, wealth creation and distribution of goods and services</li> <li>• contribution to regional economic integration</li> </ul>
2.2	Sustainable management and recycling of biowastes	<p>The expected results are focused on: Reduction of waste's threats and pressures on the environment</p> <p>More specifically they include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• improved management of biowastes in the Programme area</li> <li>• effective recycling and reuse of biowastes</li> <li>• demonstration of ecofriendly process and solutions for the effective management of solid and liquid waste</li> <li>• joint operations for reduction of the volume of wastes</li> <li>• effective treatment and reuse of liquid and solid waste contribution to the fulfillment of EU landfill, waste and wastewater aquis</li> </ul>

## 2.1.5. Actions to be supported under the thematic priority

### 2.1.5.1. A description of the type and examples of actions to be supported and their expected contribution to the specific objectives, including, where appropriate, identification of the main target groups, specific territories targeted and types of beneficiaries

(Reference: point (b)(iii) of Article 8(2) of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013)

According to Article 39 of IPA II Implementing Regulation, selected operations shall involve beneficiaries from both participating countries, provided that cross-border impacts and benefits are identified. Beneficiaries shall cooperate in the development and implementation of operations. In addition, they shall cooperate in either the staffing or the financing of operations. Projects are expected to establish long-lasting links within the eligible area while resulting in a clearly improved situation for the issue they address.

Each project shall provide for and include a mix of:

- Enhanced contacts within the area including networking, forums and the establishment of partnerships
- Enhanced knowledge and skills including the exchange of experience and good practice, innovation, capacity-building and joint research
- Concrete and visible outputs including small-medium scale investments, pilot projects, ICT shared tools, online open-access resources

When designing and implementing their action, project partners shall also pay particular attention to ensure:

- The sustainability of their action
- Communication on and dissemination of results
- Synergies and complementarities with other actions in the same field

The indicative actions to be supported under specific objective 2.1 are:

- ICT systems and equipment to improve check point services and facilities
- Improving cross-border road access and mobility with targeted interventions of small scale infrastructure
- Improving cross border custom and safety infrastructure and equipment
- Improving energy efficiency of public buildings and infrastructure
- Small scale investments in energy efficiency, in check point facilities and public buildings of cross- border area, including joint awareness initiatives for energy efficiency.
- Integrated solutions for reducing the carbon footprint of road facilities and transport in the cross-border area

Target groups:

- Regions residents
- Regional / Local Authorities

Potential Beneficiaries

- All levels of National, Regional and Local Authorities
- Public enterprises or bodies governed by public law dealing with subjects related to transportation planning, construction, monitoring and management
- Universities, Educational / Research Institutions
- Research Centres
- NGOs
- Non-profit Organizations
- International Organisations

The indicative actions to be supported under specific objective 2.2 are:

- Monitoring, early warning and decision support systems for the sustainable management of waste
  - Green waste management and recycling
  - Recycling and improving resource efficiency through the pilot use of wastes in composting and biogas production
  - Sustainable management and recycling of solid and liquid bio-degradable wastes using eco-friendly techniques and processes
  - Development of processes and demonstration units for managing food and kitchen waste from households, restaurants caterers and retail premises
- Interventions within specific objective 2.2 are related to demonstrative actions while the improvement of existing infrastructure is not foreseen within the framework of the Programme.

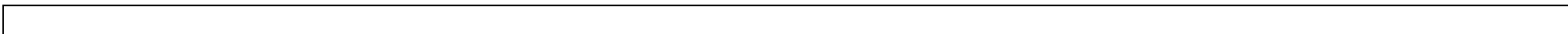
Target groups:

- Regions residents
- National, Regional / Local Authorities
- Bodies of solid waste management and recycling
- Enterprises
- Organisations of Volunteers
- Eco-friendly organisations

Potential Beneficiaries:

National Public Authorities

- All levels of Regional / Local Authorities
- Universities, Educational / Research Institutions
- Research Centres
- NGOs
- Organizations / Associations of Volunteers
- Non-profit bodies
- International Organizations
- Bodies of solid waste management and recycling



### 2.1.5.2. Guiding principles for the selection of operations

(Reference: point (b)(iii) of Article 8(2) of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013)

According to article 39 (1), Selection of operations, of Commission Implementing regulation (EU) No 447/214 of 2 May 2014 on the specific rules for implementing Regulation (EU) No 231 of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing an Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance (IPA II), the operations under cross-border cooperation Programmes shall be selected by the JMC.

- The selection of projects will be carried out following a standardized assessment procedure using the following criteria:  
Strategic Relevance and Coherence: this criterion examines at least the coherence and contribution of each project application to the relevant Programme's objectives and results

Eligible Entities: this criterion examines:

- the eligibility of Partners including international organisations
- Jurisdiction and competence of partners in terms of project activities.

All actions shall be environmentally neutral or with a positive environmental effect.

The detailed assessment criteria will be laid down and made available to potential applicants in the Calls for Proposals documentation that will be prepared and disseminated by the Programme's Managing Authority.

**2.1.5.3. Planned use of financial instruments (where appropriate)**

(Reference: point (b)(iii) of Article 8(2) of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013)

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**2.1.5.4 Planned use of major projects (where appropriate)**

(Reference: point (b)(iii) of Article 8(2) of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013)

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## 2.1.6 Common and programme specific indicators

(Reference: point (b)(ii) and (b)(iv) of Article 8(2) of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013 and Article 2(2) of IPA II Implementing Regulation)

### 2.1.6.1 Priority axis result indicators (programme specific)

**Table 3: Programme specific result indicators**

Specific objective		2.1 - Upgrade public infrastructure to improve road travel time, safe border crossing and promote energy efficiency towards green transport					
ID	Indicator	Measurement unit	Baseline value	Baseline year	Target value (2023)	Source of data	Frequency of reporting
R0201	Reduced travel time	Minutes	10,81 min/10 km	2015	10% improvement over 2015 value	Road infrastructure agencies	2015, 2018, 2023
R0202	Average border crossing travelling time	Minutes	101		20% improvement over 2015 value	Cross border Customs Service	2015, 2018, 2023
R0203	Energy efficiency awareness barometer	Value in a scale of 100	61.77	2015	20% improvement over 2015 value	Survey	2015, 2018, 2020, 2023

Specific objective		2.2 - Sustainable management and recycling of biowastes					
ID	Indicator	Measurement unit	Baseline value	Baseline year	Target value (2023)	Source of data	Frequency of reporting
R0204	Population served by improved waste management or recycling	Persons	17,885.00	2015	25,097.00	Ministries of Environment and Regional-Local Authorities	2015, 2018, 2020, 2023

2.1.6.2. Priority axis output indicators (common or programme specific)

**Table 4: Common and programme specific output indicators**

ID of the thematic priority		c - Promoting sustainable transport and improving public infrastructures by, inter alia, reducing isolation through improved access to transport, information and communication networks and services and investing in cross-border water, waste and energy systems and facilities.			
ID	Indicator	Measurement unit for indicator	Target value (2023)	Source of data	Frequency of reporting
O0201	Surface of improved cross-border road and infrastructure	Square meters	1,200.00	Statistical data from National Regional authorities and road infrastructure agencies	annually
CO34	Estimated annual decrease of GHG	Kilograms of CO2 equivalent/year	106.00	Survey	Annually
CO32	Decrease of annual primary energy consumption of public buildings	Kwh/year	150,000.00	Relevant Invoices	annually
O0204	Volume of solid wastes under improved management or recycling	Tonnes / year	1,725.00	Programme Monitoring Information System	annually
O0205	Volume of liquid wastes under improved management or recycling	Cubic meters / year	158,775.00	Programme Monitoring Information System	annually

## 2.1.7 Performance framework

(Reference: point (b)(v) of Article 8(2) of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013 and Annex II of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013)

**Table 5: Performance framework of the priority axis**

ID of the priority axis		2 - Protection of Environment - Transportation					
ID	Type	Key implementation step or indicator	Measurement unit	Milestone for 2018	Final target (2023)	Source of data	Explanation of the relevance of the indicator
O0207	O	Surface area of rehabilitated or with improved management ecosystems	Hectars	0	188,000.00	Survey	The selected indicator captures the importance of the Programme's rich ecosystem and biodiversity. At the same time, it reflects the fragility of the respective areas.
O0210	O	Number of participants in prevention actions	Persons	0	200.00	Programme Management Information System (MIS)	The selected indicator's focus on the beneficiaries' capacity and readiness is in line with the relevant goal of the IPA to strengthen the capacity and ownership of Programme stakeholders.
F0102	F	Eligible verified (certified) Expenditure of the Axis	Euro	2000000	22,735,032.00	Programme Management Information System (MIS)	Final target: The Priority's total budget. N+3 cumulative target: € 3.295.000 (2014+2015 IPA financial appropriation: € 2.800.000). N+3 broken down / Priority 2 (50%): € 1.647.500 Milestone: € 2.000.000 The elevated milestone is in line with the respective appropriation of the funds to the approved projects under the 1st CFP (P1: 40,4%, P2: 59,6%)
K0102	I	Contracted Projects	Number of Projects	16		Programme Management Information System (MIS)	The indicator adequately captures the progress of the Priority (stage of the project pipeline the programme is able to reach by 2018).

## Additional qualitative information on the establishment of the performance framework (optional)

Justification for indicators:

O0207

The final target was estimated based on a number of variables and relevant experience, namely: the average size of ‘protected areas’ within the Programme area, the average cost of similar interventions (and hence the average cost per hectare intervention) and the indicative financial allocation of the respective Specific Objective to the Programme.

Average unit cost per ecosystems intervention project: EUR 500.000

Average size of protected areas: 20.000 hectares

Average cost per hectare intervention: EUR 25

Final target: Indicative budget allocation (EUR 4.7 mil.) / average cost per hectare intervention (EUR 25) = 188.000 hectares

The indicator is partially covered by S.O. 2.3. Following the relevant Joint Monitoring Committee decision, the allocated funds to the approved projects of the 1. CFP under S.O. 2.3, amount to 41% of the respective Priority’s budget.

O0210

The final target value was based on the expectation of 4 relevant projects, with an average number of 50 active participants / project:

In the scope of the Performance Framework, the indicator is a suitable complement to the previous one (O027). The indicator is covered by S.O. 2.4.

As only two projects were approved under the 1st CfP, S.O. 2.4 is a prime contender for the next CfP, which will intend to balance the under-represented areas of intervention

In the current state of play, the approved projects under S.O 2.3 and S.O. 2.4 have a combined budget of EUR 11.5 mil., i.e. more than 50% of the total Priority's budget. Further, € 2 – 4 million is expected to be added to the already approved funds under S.O.2.4 (under-subscribed specific objective, see above).

Therefore, the combined value of S.O. 2.3 and S.O. 2.4 will range between EUR 13.5-15.5 mil., i.e. 59%-68% of the Priority's weight. Providing for a 10-15% budget reduction of projects (based on previous experience), the selected indicators (O0207, O0210) of Priority 2 capture at least 51% of the Priority's weight.

K0102

Milestone:

Number of approved projects under the 1. CfP: 22

Based from experience from the previous Programming Period, 10% of the approved projects will be suspended/withdrawn.

In addition to project failures, delays and coordination problems are expected, especially in large partnerships and can affect one in four projects, based on previous experience. Therefore, 6 out of 22 approved projects shall not be contracted until the end of 2018.

As for future Call(s), 1-2 new projects are expected under S.O. 2.4. Suspended projects will also be replaced from the reserve list. Yet, as explained under Priority 1, no new projects from these pools are expected to be contracted before 2019.



## 2.1.8 Categories of intervention

(Reference: point (b)(vii) of Article 8(2) of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013)

Categories of intervention corresponding to the content of the priority axis, based on a nomenclature adopted by the Commission, and indicative breakdown of Union support

**Table 6: Dimension 1 Intervention field**

<b>Priority axis</b>	<b>2 - Protection of Environment - Transportation</b>
<b>Dimension</b>	<b>€ Amount</b>
013 - Energy efficiency renovation of public infrastructure, demonstration projects and supporting measures	935,000.00
017 - Household waste management (including minimisation, sorting, recycling measures)	5,865,000.00
034 - Other reconstructed or improved road (motorway, national, regional or local)	1,394,000.00
044 - Intelligent transport systems (including the introduction of demand management, tolling systems, IT monitoring control and information systems)	3,400,000.00
085 - Protection and enhancement of biodiversity, nature protection and green infrastructure	3,986,500.00
087 - Adaptation to climate change measures and prevention and management of climate related risks e.g. erosion, fires, flooding, storms and drought, including awareness raising, civil protection and disaster management systems and infrastructures	3,744,276.00

**Table 7: Dimension 2 Form of finance**

<b>Priority axis</b>	<b>2 - Protection of Environment - Transportation</b>
<b>Dimension</b>	<b>€ Amount</b>
01 - Non-repayable grant	19,324,776.00

**Table 8: Dimension 3 Territory type**

<b>Priority axis</b>	<b>2 - Protection of Environment - Transportation</b>
<b>Dimension</b>	<b>€ Amount</b>
05 - Cooperation across national or regional programme areas in national context	19,324,776.00

**Table 9: Dimension 6 Territorial delivery mechanisms**

<b>Priority axis</b>	<b>2 - Protection of Environment - Transportation</b>
<b>Dimension</b>	<b>€ Amount</b>
05 - Other integrated approaches to sustainable urban/rural development	19,324,776.00

**2.1.9 A summary of the planned use of technical assistance including, where necessary, actions to reinforce the administrative capacity of authorities involved in the management and control of the programmes and beneficiaries and, where necessary, actions for to enhance the administrative capacity of relevant partners to participate in the implementation of programmes (where appropriate)**

(Reference: point (b)(vi) of Article 8(2) of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013)

Priority axis	2 - Protection of Environment - Transportation
<p>Capacity building initiatives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- For project generation, assisting potential beneficiaries for the identification of needs among target groups, coordination of administrative procedures.</li></ul> <p>Promotion initiatives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- To activate participation among potential beneficiaries groups;</li><li>- To inform target groups on outputs of the Programme.</li></ul> <p>Surveys and evaluation activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Surveys among target groups to evaluate the achievement of PA's results indicators.</li></ul>	

## 2.2 Description of the priority axes for technical assistance

(Reference: point (c) of Article 8(2) of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013)

### 2.2.1 Priority axis

ID of the priority axis	3
Title of the priority axis	Technical Assistance

### 2.2.2 Calculation basis for Union support and justification of the calculation basis

Calculation basis (total eligible expenditure or public eligible expenditure)	Total
Justification of the calculation basis choice	In order to promote and equally finance the non-public eligible sector

### 2.2.3 The specific objective of the priority axis and the expected results

(Reference: points (c)(i) and (ii) of Article 8(2) of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013)

ID	Title	Results that the partner States seek to achieve with Union support
3	Programme Management	To maximise the effectiveness and efficiency of the management and implementation of the Interreg IPA CBC Programme 'Greece - Republic of North Macedonia 2014- 2020'

## 2.2.5 Programme specific indicators

### 2.2.5.1 Programme specific result indicators

(Reference: point (c)(ii) of Article 8(2) of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013)

**Table 10: Programme specific result indicators**

Priority axis		3 - Technical Assistance					
ID	Indicator	Measurement unit	Baseline value	Baseline year	Total target value (2023)	Source of data	Frequency of reporting

## 2.2.5.2 Programme specific output indicators expected to contribute to results

Reference: point (c)(iv) of Article 8(2) of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013)

**Table 11: Common and programme specific output indicators**

Priority axis		3 - Technical Assistance		
ID	Indicator	Measurement unit	Total target value (2023)	Source of data

## 2.2.4 Actions to be supported and their expected contribution to the programme implementation

Priority axis	3 - Technical Assistance
<p>Technical Assistance will finance the Programme's Joint Secretariat as well as certain activities undertaken by the Managing Authority/ and Certifying Authority.</p> <p>The Joint Secretariat needs a team of professionals bundling the skills and competencies needed for the management, content delivery, financial and communication tasks related to implementing this IPA CBC Programme. Staffing and equipping the Joint Secretariat is a core part of the Technical Assistance budget expenditure.</p> <p>In addition, the Technical Assistance priority will support a range of activities and tools that are instrumental to achieving the specific objective of this priority. These include the following types of activities:</p> <p>Project generation and selection:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Developing application forms, calls for proposals/terms of reference and guidance documents for potential project applicants.</li><li>- Providing assistance and advice to potential applicants in the process of developing their project application, e.g. through seminars, bilateral consultations and contacts.</li><li>- Performing quality assessments of applications for projects.</li></ul> <p>Support to actors involved in implementing Interreg IPA CBC projects</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Providing tools and guidance documentation (manuals, supporting project beneficiaries implement their project).</li><li>- Providing assistance and advice to lead partners and partners on the implementation of their project e.g. through seminars, first level control seminars and bilateral contacts.</li><li>- Participating in project related meetings and events and performing "on-the-spot visits" to projects to address project progress, outputs and results as well as obstacles in the implementation.</li></ul> <p>Monitoring, control and reporting:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Operating a computerized system for Programme management, monitoring, audit and control.</li><li>- Providing guidance and support to ensure adequate control of the Programme actions at all levels (partners, controllers, Partner State bodies responsible for first level controller approbation) e.g. through seminars, guidance documents and advice.</li><li>- Coordinating and organising of Programme level audit activities, including the (external) audits on projects and supporting the Group of Auditors.</li><li>- Regular reporting to the European Commission on the progress of the Programme.</li></ul> <p>Communication, dissemination and capitalization</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Continuous development of the Programme website.</li><li>- Creation and printing of Programme information and publications.</li></ul>	

- Organization of events to generate interest for participation in the Programme, showcase and disseminate results of the Programme supported actions to professional audiences and the wider public and facilitate inter-project interaction and cooperation.

Programme management and steering

- Organization, preparation and facilitation of meetings of the Programme bodies, in particular the Monitoring Committee and Group of Auditors meetings.

- Evaluations, analysis and studies related to the delivery of the Programme in support of the continuous improvement of its management and implementation.

In addition to the activities and Programme bodies described above, the Programme may decide to use Technical Assistance funding to contribute to activities carried out by Partner States.

## 2.2.6 Categories of intervention

(Reference: point (c)(v) of Article 8(2) of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013)

Corresponding categories of intervention based on a nomenclature adopted by the Commission, and an indicative breakdown of Union support.

**Table 12: Dimension 1 Intervention field**

<b>Priority axis</b>	<b>3 - Technical Assistance</b>
<b>Dimension</b>	<b>€ Amount</b>
121 - Preparation, implementation, monitoring and inspection	2,123,592.00
122 - Evaluation and studies	870,682.00
123 - Information and communication	870,681.00

**Table 13: Dimension 2 Form of finance**

<b>Priority axis</b>	<b>3 - Technical Assistance</b>
<b>Dimension</b>	<b>€ Amount</b>
01 - Non-repayable grant	3,864,955.00

**Table 14: Dimension 3 Territory type**

<b>Priority axis</b>	<b>3 - Technical Assistance</b>
<b>Dimension</b>	<b>€ Amount</b>
05 - Cooperation across national or regional programme areas in national context	3,864,955.00

## 2.3 Overview table of indicators per priority axis and thematic priority

**Table 15: Table of common and programme specific output and result indicators**

Priority axis	Thematic priority	Specific objective	Result indicators	Output indicators
1	a- Promoting employment, labour mobility and social and cultural inclusion across borders through, inter alia: integrating cross-border labour markets, including cross-border mobility; joint local employment initiatives; information and advisory services and joint training; gender equality; equal opportunities; integration of immigrants' communities and vulnerable groups; investment in public employment services; and supporting investment in public health and social services.	Specific objective 1.1	R0101	O0101, O0103, CO36
1	a- Promoting employment, labour mobility and social and cultural inclusion across borders through, inter alia: integrating cross-border labour markets, including cross-border mobility; joint local employment initiatives; information and advisory services and joint training; gender equality; equal opportunities; integration of immigrants' communities and vulnerable groups; investment in public employment services; and supporting investment in public health and social services.	Specific objective 1.2	R0102, R0103	O0101, O0103, CO36
1	d- Encouraging tourism and cultural and natural heritage.	Specific objective 1.3	R0104	O0104
2	b- Protecting the environment and promoting climate change adaptation and mitigation, risk prevention and management through, inter alia: joint actions for environmental protection; promoting sustainable use of natural resources, resource efficiency, renewable energy sources and the shift towards a safe and sustainable low-carbon economy; promoting investment to address specific risks, ensuring disaster resilience and developing disaster management systems and emergency preparedness.	Specific objective 2.3	R0205	CO23, O0207, CO20, CO21, O0210
2	b- Protecting the environment and promoting climate change adaptation and mitigation, risk prevention and management through, inter alia: joint actions for environmental protection; promoting sustainable use of natural resources, resource efficiency, renewable energy sources and the shift towards a safe and sustainable low-carbon economy; promoting investment to address specific risks, ensuring disaster resilience and developing disaster management systems and emergency preparedness.	Specific objective 2.4	R0206	CO23, O0207, CO20, CO21, O0210
2	c- Promoting sustainable transport and improving public infrastructures by, inter alia, reducing isolation through improved access to transport, information and communication networks and services and investing in cross-border water, waste and energy systems and facilities.	Specific objective 2.1	R0201, R0202, R0203	O0201, CO34, CO32, O0204, O0205
2	c- Promoting sustainable transport and improving public infrastructures by, inter alia, reducing isolation through improved access to transport, information and communication networks and services and investing in cross-border water, waste and energy systems and facilities.	Specific objective 2.2	R0204	O0201, CO34, CO32, O0204, O0205
3		Specific objective 3		

## SECTION 3. FINANCING PLAN

(Reference: point (d) of Article 8(2) of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013)

### 3.1 Financial appropriation from the IPA (in €)

(Reference: point (d)(i) of Article 8(2) of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013)

**Table 16**

2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	Total
0.00	2,799,148.00	3,997,362.00	9,180,232.00	7,408,446.00	7,556,616.00	7,707,748.00	38,649,552.00

### 3.2.1 Total financial appropriation from the IPA and national co-financing (in €)

(Reference: point (d)(ii) of Article 8(2) of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013)

1. The financial table sets out the financial plan of the cooperation programme by priority axis.
2. The EIB contribution is presented at the level of the priority axis.

**Table 17: Financing plan**

Priority axis	Basis for calculation of Union support (Total eligible cost or public eligible cost)	Union Support (a)	National counterpart (b) = (c) + (d)	Indicative breakdown of the national counterpart		Total funding (e) = (a) + (b) or (a) + (c)	Co-financing rate (f) = (a) / (e)	For information	
				National public funding (c)	National private funding (d)			Contributions from third countries	EIB contributions
1	Total	15,459,821.00	2,728,207.00	2,728,207.00	0.00	18,188,028.00	84.9999846053%		
2	Total	19,324,776.00	3,410,256.00	3,410,256.00	0.00	22,735,032.00	84.9999947218%		
3	Total	3,864,955.00	682,051.00	682,051.00	0.00	4,547,006.00	84.9999978008%		
<b>Total</b>		<b>38,649,552.00</b>	<b>6,820,514.00</b>	<b>6,820,514.00</b>	<b>0.00</b>	<b>45,470,066.00</b>	<b>84.9999909831%</b>		

### 3.2.2 Breakdown by priority axis and thematic priority

(Reference: point (d)(ii) of Article 8(2) of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013)

**Table 18**

Priority axis	Thematic priority	Union support	National counterpart	Total funding
1	a - Promoting employment, labour mobility and social and cultural inclusion across borders through, inter alia: integrating cross-border labour markets, including cross-border mobility; joint local employment initiatives; information and advisory services and joint training; gender equality; equal opportunities; integration of immigrants' communities and vulnerable groups; investment in public employment services; and supporting investment in public health and social services.	9,662,387.00	1,705,128.00	11,367,515.00
1	d - Encouraging tourism and cultural and natural heritage.	5,797,434.00	1,023,079.00	6,820,513.00
2	b - Protecting the environment and promoting climate change adaptation and mitigation, risk prevention and management through, inter alia: joint actions for environmental protection; promoting sustainable use of natural resources, resource efficiency, renewable energy sources and the shift towards a safe and sustainable low-carbon economy; promoting investment to address specific risks, ensuring disaster resilience and developing disaster management systems and emergency preparedness.	7,729,910.00	1,364,102.00	9,094,012.00
2	c - Promoting sustainable transport and improving public infrastructures by, inter alia, reducing isolation through improved access to transport, information and communication networks and services and investing in cross-border water, waste and energy systems and facilities.	11,594,866.00	2,046,154.00	13,641,020.00
<b>Total</b>		<b>34,784,597.00</b>	<b>6,138,463.00</b>	<b>40,923,060.00</b>

**SECTION 4. INTEGRATED APPROACH TO TERRITORIAL DEVELOPMENT (WHERE APPROPRIATE)**

(Reference: Article 34 (1) of IPA II Implementing Regulation and Article 8(3) of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013)

Description of the integrated approach to territorial development, taking into account the content and objectives of the cooperation programme and the Partnership Agreements of the participating Member States showing how it contributes to the accomplishment of the programme objectives and expected results

Not applicable

#### **4.1 Community-led local development (where appropriate)**

Approach to the use of community-led local development instruments and principles for identifying the areas where they will be implemented

(Reference: Article 34 (3) of IPA II Implementing Regulation and point (a) of Article 8(3) of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013)

Not applicable

#### **4.2 Integrated actions for sustainable urban development (where appropriate)**

Principles for identifying the urban areas where integrated actions for sustainable urban development are to be implemented and the indicative allocation of the IPA support for these actions

(Reference: Article 34 (3) of IPA II Implementing Regulation and point (b) of Article 8(3) of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013)

Not applicable

**Table 19: Integrated actions for sustainable urban development – indicative amounts of Union support**

Indicative amount of Union Support (€)

### **4.3 Integrated Territorial Investment (ITI) (where appropriate)**

Approach to the use of Integrated Territorial Investments (ITI) (as defined in Article 36 of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013) other than in cases covered by 4.2, and their indicative financial allocation from each priority axis

(Reference: Article 34 (3) of IPA II Implementing Regulation and point (c) of Article 8(3) of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013)

Not applicable
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**Table 20: Indicative financial allocation to ITI (aggregate amount)**

<b>Priority axis</b>	<b>Indicative financial allocation (Union support) (EUR)</b>
1	
2	
3	
<b>Total</b>	0.00

**4.4 Contribution of planned interventions towards macro-regional and sea basin strategies, subject to the needs of the programme area as identified by the relevant partner States and taking into account, where applicable, strategically important projects identified in those strategies (where appropriate)**

**(Where partner States and regions participate in macro-regional and/or sea basin strategies)**

(Reference: point (d) of Article 8(3) of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013)

Not applicable

## SECTION 5. IMPLEMENTING PROVISIONS FOR THE COOPERATION PROGRAMME

### 5.1 Relevant authorities and bodies

(Reference: Article 8(4) of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013)

**Table 21: Programme authorities**

(Reference: point (a)(i) of Article 8(4) of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013)

Authority/body	Name of authority/body and department or unit	Name of the person responsible for the authority/body (position or post)	Address	Email
Managing authority	Managing Authority European Territorial Cooperation Programmes, Ministry of Economy and Development of Greece	Head of the Managing Authority	65, Georgikis Scholis Ave, 57001 Thessaloniki, Greece	interreg@mou.gr
Certifying authority	Units A,B and C; Special Service "Certifying & Verifications Authority of Co-funded Programmes" of the Ministry of Economy and Development	Head of the Special Service "Certifying & Verifications Authority of Co-funded Programmes"	11, Navarchou Nikodimou & Voulis, 105 57, Athens, Greece	spa@m nec.gr
Audit authority	General Accounting Office/ Financial Audit Committee of the Hellenic Ministry of Finance	General Director of Management and Control of EU Co-financed programmes	57, Panepistimiou str., GR-10564, Athens, Greece	gdde@mof-gl k.gr

**The body to which payments will be made by the Commission is:**

(Reference: point (b) of Article 8(4) of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013)

- the managing authority  
 the certifying authority

**Table 22: Body or bodies carrying out control and audit tasks**

(Reference: points (a)(ii) and (iii) of Article 8(4) of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013)

Authority/body	Name of authority/body and department or unit	Name of the person responsible for the authority/body (position or post)	Address	Email
Body or bodies designated to be responsible for carrying out audit tasks	General Accounting Office/ Financial Audit Committee of the Hellenic Ministry of Finance	General Director of Management and Control of EU Co-financed programmes	57, Panepistimiou str., GR-10564, Athens, Greece	gdde@mof-gl.k.gr
Body or bodies designated to carry out control tasks	Decentralised FLC system established and coordinated by the National Authority	Responsible of National Authority, or authorised officer by the National Authority	Ciryl and Methodius no. 54, 1000, Skopje, Republic of North Macedonia	ajet.ajeti@gmail.com
Body or bodies designated to carry out control tasks	Special Service Managing the "European Territorial Cooperation" Objective Operational Programmes – Unit C of the Hellenic Ministry of Economy and Development	Head of the Managing Authority		interreg@mou.gr

## 5.2 Joint Monitoring Committee

**Table 23: Indicative list of Joint Monitoring Committee members**

<b>Name of authority/body and department or unit</b>	<b>Role in the programme</b>	<b>Name of the person responsible for the authority/body (position or post)</b>	<b>Address</b>	<b>Email</b>
European Commission	Advisory	DG Regional Policy Competence Center Macro-regions and European territorial cooperation		Csaba.Hende@ec.europa.eu
Ministry of Economy and Development	Voting Member	Special Secretary for ERDF & CF Funded Sectoral OPs		efotoniata@mne.gov.gr
Operating structure (Republic of North Macedonia)	Voting Member	State Counselor for European Integration at Ministry of Local Self-government		nkriiliu@gmail.com
Region of Central Macedonia	Voting Member	Head of the Region of Central Macedonia		grper@pkm.gov.gr
Region of Southeast (Republic of North Macedonia)	Voting member	Head of the Region of Pelagonia		zulieta.gjurkova@rdc.mk
Region of Southwest (Republic of North Macedonia)	Voting member	Head of the Region of Southwest		sofce.zafirovska@sep.gov.mk
Region of Western Macedonia (Greece)	Voting Member	Head of the Region of Western Macedonia		info@pdm.gov.gr

### 5.3 Procedure for setting up the joint secretariat

(Reference: point (a)(iv) of Article 8(4) of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013)

The joint secretariat is set up after consultation with the Partner countries under the responsibility of the managing authority. The partner countries delegate the task to the Managing Authority (i.e. MA of European Territorial Cooperation Programmes of the Greek Ministry of Economy and Development to carry out all necessary actions for the swift and smooth transition from the 2007-2013 implementing structures to the 2014-2020 implementing structures.

As such, the Managing Authority takes advantage of the arrangements, already in place, from the 2007-2013 programming period. The current structure of the 'Joint Technical Secretariat' will be retained with possible adjustments and enhancements to achieve efficiency and effectiveness.

The location of the joint secretariat is in Thessaloniki, Greece.

The joint secretariat assists the monitoring committee, managing authority, and where appropriate, the audit authority in carrying out their duties. The exact framework of the JS shall be laid out in its rules of procedures, in agreement with the MA and the partner countries.

The joint secretariat is funded from the technical assistance budget.

## 5.4 Summary description of the management and control arrangements

(Reference: point (a)(v) of Article 8(4) of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013)

### 5.4.1 Introduction

Management mode:

Management mode is the term to describe the contractual arrangement through which funds are channelled to their final recipients, i.e. contractors and beneficiaries. The question is which body undertakes the role of the contracting authority and the relevant budget implementation tasks.

The Interreg IPA CBC Programme ‘Greece –Republic of North Macedonia 2014-2020’ shall be implemented under shared management, in accordance with article 59 of Fin.Regulation No 966/2012 and article 36 of Regulation No 447/2014. Under shared management, budget implementation tasks are delegated to Member States, acting through the managing authorities. In accordance with Article 26 of the ETC Regulation, specific financial and implementation provisions concerning the participation of the Republic of North Macedonia will be regulated in the respective Financing Agreement.

The Programme language is English.

### 5.4.2 Control and Audit Tasks

Each partner country establishes the First Level Control system, ensuring the legality and regularity of the expenditures declared by the beneficiaries participating in the operation on its territory.

The designated body or bodies to carry out audit tasks shall be functionally independent of the designated controllers to carry out verification and control tasks under Article 23 of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013 and shall be set up within three months of the decision approving the cooperation Programme [Article 24(3) of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013].

Verification of Expenditure: The Managing Authority shall satisfy itself that the declared eligible expenditure of each beneficiary participating in an operation has been verified by an appointed first level controller (Art. 23 of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013 and art. 125 of Regulation 1303/2013

The verifications referred to above shall include the following procedures:

- (a) administrative verifications in respect of each application for reimbursement by beneficiaries;
- (b) on-the-spot verifications of operations.

The frequency and coverage of the on-the-spot verifications shall be proportionate to the amount of public support to an operation and to the level of risk identified by such verifications and audits by the audit authority for the management and control system as a whole.

On-the-spot verifications of individual operations may be carried out on a sample basis.

In the case that delivery of co-financed products or services may be verified only in relation to the entire operation, verification shall be carried out by the Managing Authority.

Where the Managing Authority is also a beneficiary in the context of operations under the Technical Assistance Priority Axis, arrangements for the verifications shall ensure adequate separation of functions in accordance with point (b) of article 72 of Regulation (EC) No 1303/2013.

Verifications shall also include procedures to avoid double financing of expenditure under other Community or national Programmes and under other programming periods.

The verification of expenditure for the Greek partners will be conducted under the responsibility of the competent Special Service of the Ministry of Economy and Development.

### 5.4.3 Designation of Programme Bodies:

The two authorities, responsible for the formulation of the current Programme Document have commonly agreed and designated the Programme Structures according to Regulation (EU)

231/214 (IPA II), Regulation (EU) 447/2014 (IPA II IR), Regulation (EU) 1299/2013 (ETC), Regulation (EU) 1303/2013 (CPR), as follows:

#### Joint Monitoring Committee

The Joint Monitoring Committee (JMC) is the main decision body of the Programme. The JMC is responsible for monitoring the Programme's implementation and reviewing the Programme's overall effectiveness towards meeting its objectives. The functions and responsibilities of the JMC are described in article 38 of the Commission Regulation 447/2014 and articles 49 and 110 of Regulation 1303/2013.

The JMC will be set up within 3 months from the date of the European Commission's notification of the Programme approval to Greece. The composition of the JMC will be decided by the partner countries. The representatives of the JMC shall come from national, regional and local authorities. Both partner countries shall be equally represented.

The JMC will be governed by the 'partnership principle' in managing, monitoring and evaluating the operations and overall Programme in all stages of its implementation. The exact functions and responsibilities of the JMC and its members (including their impartiality) will be described in the 'Rules of the Procedure' (RoP) of the JMC. The RoP will be adopted in the first meeting of the JMC.

#### Joint Steering Committee

According to article 39 of the Commission Regulation 447/2014, the JMC will optionally set up a Joint Steering Committee acting under its responsibility for the selection of operations.

According to Article 12(1) of Regulation 1299/2013, the Joint Steering Committee shall report to the Joint Monitoring Committee.

#### Managing Authority

The Managing Authority is the existing structure, namely: The Managing Authority of ETC Programmes of the Ministry of Economy and Development, Greece.

Address: 65 Georgikis Scholis Ave, PC 57001 – Thessaloniki, Greece

Tel.: +30 2310 469600

Fax : +30 2310 469602

E-mail: [interreg@mou.gr](mailto:interreg@mou.gr)

The Managing Authority (MA), assisted by the joint secretariat, shall be responsible for managing and implementing the Programme in accordance with the principle of sound financial management and carry out the functions set out in Articles 37 of the Commission Implementing Regulation 447/2014, articles 72 and 125 of Regulation 1303/2013 and article 23 of Regulation 1299/2013. The MA ensures that the different Programme bodies interact in a smooth way.

This includes the following tasks and responsibilities:

- supervision of the Programme and projects monitoring, including accuracy and legality of payments
- information and publicity measures related to the cooperation Programme

Reporting on the Programme implementation

- liaison between the authorities implementing the Programme and other interested parties where necessary
- liaison with the European Commission and the implementation of all accepted recommendations for amending management and monitoring procedures
- supervision of the joint secretariat and of the technical assistance budget, as approved by the

#### Joint Monitoring Committee

- preparation of the Programme committees and support the work of the Joint Monitoring Committee, including advising the JMC regarding the Programme's strategies and policies.

With reference to the Programme's financial Management and Control, the Managing Authority will also:

- put in place effective and proportionate anti-fraud measures taking into account the risks identified;
- set up procedures to ensure that all documents regarding expenditure and audits required to ensure an adequate audit trail are held in accordance with the requirements of point (g) of Article 72 of Regulation 1303/2013;
- draw up the management declaration and annual summary referred to in points (a) and (b) of Article 59(5) of the Financial Regulation.

The Head of the Managing Authority is authorised to sign all subsidy contracts of the approved projects.

#### Joint Secretariat

The Joint Secretariat will succeed the existing structure (i.e. the JTS) of the Programming Period 2007-2013, as indicated in section 5.3. The body is :

Joint Secretariat of the Interreg IPA CBC Programme “Greece- Republic of North Macedonia 2014-2020”

Zeda Building, Entrance 4., 2nd floor

65 Georgikis Scholis Ave, PC 57001 – Thessaloniki, Greece

Tel.: +30 2310 469648

The Joint Secretariat is set up under the legal responsibility of the managing authority. The two bodies work closely together. Under the MA’s supervision, the joint secretariat assists the monitoring committee, the managing authority and, where appropriate, the audit authority in carrying out their respective functions and especially:

- to prepare, implement and follow-up decisions of the monitoring committee,
- to organise the monitoring committee/steering committee and task force meetings;
- to distribute information and publicise the Programme, its various components and its projects, including running a Programme website and events and establishing a project database;
- to develop for submission to the MA and approval by the monitoring committee a project selection procedure, including Calls for Proposals, selection criteria, terms of reference, application pack, etc.
- to assist and organise activities to support project generation and development and to organise partner search tools or events;
- to manage the project application process for all projects, including providing information and advice to applicants, checking and evaluating applications and informing partners on monitoring / steering committee decisions;
- to provide advice and assistance to projects regarding implementation of activities and financial administration;
- to monitor progress made by projects through collecting and checking project monitoring reports, outputs, results and financial implementation data within the agreed timeframe
- to elaborate the Technical Assistance annual planning and support the managing authority in managing the technical assistance budget
- to fulfil the usual work of a Programme secretariat, i.e. organisation of meetings, preparation of documents, drafting of minutes, etc
- to cooperate with the certifying authority and audit authority and ensure a good communication flow between these authorities and the audited projects

#### Antenna of the Joint Secretariat

An antenna of the Secretariat may be established in the Republic of North Macedonia.

The role of the Antenna will be focused at the national level. In particular, it shall support the Programme’s communication strategy and the Programme’s potential beneficiaries and project partners in their activities.

The participating countries shall designate for the purpose of Article 123(2) of Regulation No 1303/2013 (CPR) Regulation, a single certifying authority; and for the purpose of Article 123(4) of that Regulation, a single audit authority. The managing authority and the audit authority shall be situated in the same Member State.

### Certifying Authority

According to article 123, par.2 of Reg. 1303/2013, the Member State designates the Certifying Authority.

The designated Certifying Authority of the Programme is the “Special Service Paying Authority” for the CSF, the community initiatives and the Cohesion Fund, at the Ministry of Economy, Infrastructure, Shipping and Tourism, Greece.

The Certifying Authority shall be responsible for certifying statements of expenditure and applications for payment before being sent to the Commission. In this context, the certifying authority shall carry out the functions envisaged in article 37 of the Commission Implementing Regulation 447/2014, article 24 of Regulation 1299/2013 and 126 of Regulation 1303/2013, and in particular for:

- drawing up and submitting payment applications to the Commission, and certifying that they result from reliable accounting systems, are based on verifiable supporting documents and have been subject to verifications by the managing authority
- drawing up the accounts referred to in point (a) of Article 59(5) of the Financial Regulation;
- certifying the completeness, accuracy and veracity of the accounts and that the expenditure entered in the accounts complies with applicable law and has been incurred in respect of operations selected for funding in accordance with the criteria applicable to the Programme and complying with applicable law;
- ensuring that there is a system which records and stores, in computerised form, accounting records for each operation, and which supports all the data required for drawing up payment applications and accounts, including records of amounts recoverable, amounts recovered and amounts withdrawn following cancellation of all or part of the contribution for an operation or Programme;
- ensuring, for the purposes of drawing up and submitting payment applications, that it has received adequate information from the Managing Authority on the procedures and verifications carried out in relation to expenditure included in statements of expenditure;
- taking account when drawing up and submitting payment applications of the results of all audits carried out by, or under the responsibility of, the audit authority;
- maintaining in computerised form accounting records of expenditure declared to the Commission and of the corresponding public contribution paid to beneficiaries;
- keeping an account of amounts recoverable and of amounts withdrawn following cancellation of all or part of the contribution for an operation. Amounts recovered shall be repaid to the budget of the European Union, prior to the closure of the Programme, by deducting them from the subsequent statement of expenditure;

### Audit Authority

The Audit Authority of this Programme is the Financial Control Committee (EDEL), set up following the decision of the Minister for Finance, at the Ministry of Finance – General Accounting Office of the State), Greece.

The Audit Authority shall be responsible for verifying the effective functioning of the management and control system of the Programme and on an appropriate sample of projects and relevant sampling methodology, in accordance with article 37 of Regulation No 447/2014 (IPA II IR), article 25 of Regulation No 1299/2013 (ETC), article 127 of Regulation No 1303/2013 (CPR) and article 59, par.5 of the Financial Regulation.

The Audit Authority shall draw up:

#### Audit Strategy

In accordance with article 127 par.4 of Regulation 1303/2013, the Audit Authority shall prepare within eight months of the adoption of the Programme, an audit strategy for performance of audits. The contents of the strategy are: the audit methodology, the sampling method for audits on operations and the indicative planning of audits.

control report setting out the main findings of the audits (systems and operations) carried out in

accordance with the audit strategy including findings with regard to deficiencies found in the management and control systems, and the proposed and implemented corrective actions. an audit opinion, in accordance with the second subparagraph of article 59 par. 5 of the Financial Regulation.

#### Audits carried out by the Audit Authority

In carrying out its functions, the audit authority shall ensure that audits on systems, Authorities and intermediate bodies are carried out and assess their reliability.

Audits on operations shall be carried out on-the-spot, on the basis of documentation and records held by the beneficiary. Audits shall verify that the following conditions are fulfilled:

a. the operation meets the selection criteria for the Programme, has been implemented in accordance with the approval decision and fulfils any applicable conditions concerning its functionality and use or the objectives to be attained;

b. the expenditure declared corresponds to the accounting records and supporting documents held by the beneficiary;

c. the expenditure declared by the beneficiary is in compliance with Community and national rules;

d. the public contribution has been paid to the beneficiary in accordance with article 127 of the Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013

In the framework of the audit strategy, audits shall be carried out on the basis of an annual plan approved by the audit authority. Additional audits, not included in the plan, shall also be carried out, whenever required. In particular, when problems appear to be systemic in nature and therefore entail a risk for other operations under the Programme, the Audit Authority shall ensure that further examination is carried out, including additional audits where necessary, to establish the scale of such problems. The Audit Authority shall ensure that the audit work takes account of internationally accepted audit standards.

#### Group of Auditors

In accordance with Article 25 of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013 [ETC] the partner countries do not authorize the Audit Authority to carry out directly the audit functions, in the whole territory of the Programme. As a consequence, the audit authority will be assisted by a group of auditors comprising a representative of each partner country participating in the cooperation Programme carrying out the duties provided for in Article 127 of Regulation No 1303/2013 [CPR].

The group of auditors shall be set up within three months of the decision approving the Programme. The group shall draw up its own rules of procedure. The group of auditors shall be chaired by the Audit Authority of the Programme (25(2) of Regulation 1299/2013). Each participating country shall be responsible for audits carried out on its territory.

Each representative from each participating country in the cooperation Programme shall be responsible for providing the factual elements relating to expenditure on its territory that are required by the audit authority in order to perform its assessment.

#### Structures in Republic of North Macedonia

##### National IPA Coordinator (NIPAC)

The NIPAC shall be the main counterpart of the Commission for the overall process of: strategic planning, coordination of programming, monitoring of implementation, evaluation and reporting of IPA II assistance. The responsibilities of the NIPAC duties are outlined in article 4 of Regulation No 447/2014 (IPA II IR).

In particular, the NIPAC shall coordinate with the administration in the Republic of North Macedonia and ensure that the administration takes all necessary steps to facilitate the implementation of the Programme.

The designated NIPAC in the Republic of North Macedonia is the Ministry of European Integration.

## Operating Structure

The Operating Structure shall coordinate the participation of project partners from the Republic of North Macedonia and other IPA II beneficiaries in the Programme, in accordance with article 4 of Regulation No 447/2014 (IPA II IR).

The designated Operating Structure is the Ministry of Local Self Government.

### 5.4.4 The Lead Partner Principle

For each project proposal and approved operation, a lead beneficiary shall be appointed by the beneficiaries among themselves. The Lead Beneficiary shall assume the overall responsibility of the project, as stipulated in the 'Subsidy Contract', signed between the Lead beneficiary and the Managing Authority.

The Lead beneficiary will also lay down the arrangements with the other project beneficiaries in the respective 'Partnership agreement' comprising provisions that, inter alia, guarantee the sound financial management of the funds allocated to the operation, including the arrangements for recovering amounts unduly paid;

The exact responsibilities of the Lead Beneficiary are stipulated in article 13 of Regulation 1299/2013).

Information on the contractual arrangements between the Lead Partner and the Managing Authority and between the Lead Partner and the other project partners will be provided in the Project Manual.

### Main stages of flow of EU funds to the beneficiaries

Projects have to be 'pre-financed' by the project partners, This means that project expenditure has to be initially incurred by the project partners. Conditions and arrangements on advance payments to project beneficiaries may be provided.

The Lead Partner (LP) collects the certified declarations of expenditure of all project partners.

The LP performs a preliminary check (completeness of data and eligibility of declared expenditure) and submits to the Joint Secretariat/Managing Authority: a claim for reimbursement of the EU funds, accompanied with a progress report and the certified declarations of expenditure of all project partners. The Joint Secretariat checks that all the necessary information is available. The Managing Authority transmits the data to the Certifying Authority. The latter certifies the verified expenditure and submits to the European Commission certified statements of expenditure and applications for payment.

Once the Commission processes the application for payment, the EU funds are transferred to the Lead Partner (Reimbursement on the basis of eligible costs actually incurred) .

Finally, the Lead Partner distributes the respective amounts to the project partners.

The Lead Partner shall maintain either a separate accounting system or an adequate accounting code for all transactions relating to an operation. The detailed procedures and timeframes of the financial flows will be elaborated in the Project Manual.

### 5.4.5 Selection of Operations

Potential beneficiaries will be invited to submit their project proposals under specific Calls for Project Proposals. The Calls will be launched by the Managing Authority/Joint Secretariat under the mandate of the Monitoring Committee. The proposals will be assessed based on pre-defined criteria. The criteria will be elaborated by the Managing Authority/Joint Secretariat, and will be approved by the Joint Monitoring Committee. In accordance with the Union and national rules., the criteria shall

- ensure the contribution of operations to the achievement of the specific objectives and results of the relevant priority;
- be non-discriminatory and transparent;
- take into account the general principles of promotion of equality between men and women and

non- discrimination and sustainable development

- ensure that a selected operation falls within the scope of the IPA II and can be attributed to a category of intervention of the Programme;
- ensure that beneficiaries shall cooperate in the operations in accordance with article 39 of the Commission Regulation 447/2014

#### Assessment of Operations

The proposals will normally be assessed by the Joint Secretariat, based on the predefined criteria and scoring methodology, which will be established in the Project Manual and may be further specified in each Call for Proposals. Proposals with the highest assessment score will be recommended for approval.

#### Approval of Operations

As already mentioned, the Joint Monitoring Committee may delegate the task of project approval to a dedicated Joint Steering Committee. Following the assessment of the project proposals, the Joint Steering Committee will convene to decide on the approval of the recommended projects.

#### Provisions for Complaints

Procedures for the examination of complaints shall be in place. To this end, the two partner countries shall set up a joint Complaint Committee, with separate and independent members from the JMC, for the review of any complaint addressed to the Managing Authority regarding the selection of operations under a given call for proposals. The Joint Complaint Committee will be composed by two members: One member from the Managing Authority and one member from the Operating Structure. Project lead applicants of rejected project proposals are informed in writing about the reasons why an application was not eligible or not approved. Eventual formal complaints against the decisions taken by the Programme authorities on the projects' selection can be initiated only by a Lead Applicant. Detailed description of the complaint description and the relevant procedure will be provided in the Project Manual

The Joint Complaint Committee will evaluate the relevant complaints and give an opinion to the Joint Monitoring Committee that will take the final decision.

The Managing Authority will send this decision to the interested parties and inform the applicants about their judicial rights under Greek law.

All relevant procedures will be covered by Greek law since Greece hosts the Managing Authority of the Programme and any case will fall under the jurisdiction of the Greek Courts.

Greece as the country hosting the Managing Authority of the Programme shall, upon request by the Commission, examine any complaints submitted to the Commission falling within the scope of its arrangements. The Managing Authority shall inform the Commission, upon request, of the results of those examinations.

#### 5.4.6. Communication Strategy and related activities

The managing authority, assisted by the Joint Secretariat, will draw up a communication strategy which will be approved by the monitoring committee no later than 6 months after the adoption of the cooperation Programme, in accordance with Article 14, paragraph 4(b) of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013.

The communication strategy aims to inform potential beneficiaries about funding opportunities under the Cooperation Programme, along with relevant information for the successful implementation of the projects. Furthermore, the Communication Strategy shall publicise to citizens the role and achievements of cohesion policy and of the

Programme in particular.

The communication strategy will be funded from the Programme's budget for technical assistance. The managing authority will inform the monitoring committee at least once a year on the progress in the implementation of the communication strategy, the planning of related activities to be carried out in the following year and their budget.

The communication strategy will be implemented by the communication officer(s) in the Joint Secretariat, under the supervision of the Managing Authority and with the cooperation of the Operating Structure and the Antenna of the Joint Secretariat.

To ensure transparency in the support of the funds, a list of approved projects will be published on the Programme website, updated at least every six months, and exportable in a format which allows the data to be sorted, searched, extracted, compared and easily published on the internet.

#### 5.4.7. Computerised Exchange of data

In accordance with Article 122(3) of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013 a computerised system for the Programme management and monitoring will be set up. This system will allow electronic exchange of information and data between beneficiaries and the Managing Authority, the Certifying Authority, the Audit Authority and any intermediate body set by the Programme in relation to management and monitoring issues.

The Programme's computerised system will be developed taking into consideration the data base, on-line functions and information technology system, which is currently available and operational. This system covers all twelve ETC Programmes, in which Greek beneficiaries are participating.

## 5.5 Apportionment of liabilities among partner States in case of financial corrections imposed by the managing authority or the Commission

(Reference: point (a)(vi) of Article 8(4) of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013)

### Legal Background:

Article 46 (6) “Financial management, decommitment, examination and acceptance of accounts, closure and financial corrections” of the IPA II Implementing Regulation (447/2014) specifies that the following shall apply:

- Articles 85, 122(2) and 143 to 147 of the Common Provisions Regulation (1303/2013), concerning financial corrections and recoveries
- Article 27(2) and (3) of the ETC Regulation (1299/2013), concerning the apportionment of liabilities.

As a general rule, Partner Countries will bear ultimate responsibility for recovering amounts unduly paid to beneficiaries and jointly assume liability for irregularities deriving from their common decisions made in the MC. The procedure is described as follows:

The managing authority shall ensure that any amount paid as a result of an irregularity is recovered from the lead beneficiary. Beneficiaries shall repay to the lead beneficiary any amounts unduly paid.

If the lead beneficiary does not succeed in securing repayment from other beneficiaries or if the managing authority does not succeed in securing repayment from the lead beneficiary, the Member State or third country on whose territory the beneficiary concerned is located shall reimburse the managing authority any amounts unduly paid to that beneficiary. The managing authority shall be responsible for reimbursing the amounts concerned to the general budget of the Union.

Each participating country shall establish its own national rules regarding the procedures for the recovery of unduly paid funds to beneficiaries, directly linked to detected financial corrections regarding the operations funded under the Programme.

The participating countries shall in the first instance be responsible for investigating irregularities and for making the financial corrections required and pursuing recoveries.

In the case of a systemic irregularity, the participating country concerned shall extend its investigation to cover all operations potentially affected.

### Financial Corrections

Participating countries shall make the financial corrections required in connection with individual or systemic irregularities detected in operations or the CBC Programme.

Financial corrections shall consist of cancelling all or part of the public contribution to an operation or to the CBC Programme. Participating countries shall take into account the nature and gravity of the irregularities and the financial loss to the IPA and shall apply a proportionate correction. Financial corrections shall be recorded in the accounts by the Managing Authority for the accounting year in which the cancellation is decided.

The contribution from the IPA cancelled in accordance with the above-mentioned provisions may be reused by the Participating countries within the same Programme concerned, subject to the condition that the contribution cancelled may not be reused for any operation that was the subject of the correction or, where a financial correction is made for a systemic irregularity, for any operation affected by the systemic irregularity.

In any case a financial correction by the Commission shall not prejudice the Member State's obligation to pursue recoveries under article 143(2) of Regulation 1303/2013 and to recover State aid within the meaning of Article 107(1) TFEU and under Article 14 of Council Regulation (EC) No 659/1999.

In the event of financial corrections imposed by the Managing Authority or the Commission and in case liabilities cannot be assigned to a specific partner country (e.g. systemic error), an apportionment of liabilities among the partner countries will be made. The apportionment will be based on the projection of the specific error rate to the population of project beneficiaries per partner country potentially affected.

## 5.6 Use of the Euro (where applicable)

(Reference: Article 28 of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013)

Method chosen for the conversion of expenditure incurred in another currency than the Euro

Expenditure incurred by beneficiaries in a currency other than the Euro shall be converted into euro. The conversion is to be made by the beneficiaries using the accounting exchange rate of the Commission applied in the month during which the expenditure was incurred, in accordance with option (a) of Article 28 of the ETC Regulation.

## 5.7 Involvement of partners

(Reference: point (c) of Article 8(4) of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013)

### **Actions taken to involve the partners referred to in Article 5 of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013 in the preparation of the cooperation programme, and the role of those partners in the preparation and implementation of the cooperation programme, including their involvement in the Joint Monitoring Committee**

Participation of partners in the preparation of the Programme.

The entire Programme cycle, embracing the Programme preparation, implementation, monitoring and evaluation alike, has been designed to ensure the active involvement of the relevant partners. As presented above, partners have been involved in the programming process, primarily through:

- Meetings of the Task Force and Joint Working Group;
- Consultations with the stakeholders – local and regional authorities, central and regional offices of national institutions, Chambers of commerce and industry, NGOs, Academic institutions etc;
- Internet based consultations. More specifically, the entire methodology and timeline of consultations, is described analytically, hereinafter;

a) Questionnaire Design. Duration : From May 27<sup>th</sup> to June 01<sup>st</sup> 2014

Major objective was to develop a Questionnaire structure that meets the criteria of a) Minimize time needed to fill in the questionnaire, in order to maximize response rate b) A prescribed response format, to enable rapid completion of the questionnaire c) an Explanatory text following the priorities for better understanding, d) Web format to ensure internet functionality.

b) Data Collection. Duration: June From 02<sup>nd</sup> to 20<sup>th</sup> 2014

For both country sides, the questionnaires addressed to as many as possible stakeholders. The sample included National and Regional public authorities, local public authorities, development agencies, other public bodies, universities/research institutions, chambers or other professional bodies, enterprises, non-governmental organizations, COOPs and stakeholders that already implementing similar projects.

A wide database consisting of potentially beneficiaries and stakeholders addresses gathered from:

1. Managing Authority.
2. JTS.
3. EU Delegation – Skopje.
4. Expert's data.

Thus, more than 600 email addresses were built – up and refined. The deadline for completing the questionnaire was Friday, 20<sup>th</sup> June 2014.

Using a special email address created for this occasion from Managing Authority, namely <http://cbc-ipa2.eu/>, 623 questionnaires were sent on unique recipients. Approximately 100 mails failed due to invalid email addresses or user's mailboxes exceeded capacity. Thus, the effected email sent meets the number of 524 unique recipients.

Pursuing emails, major stakeholders were contacted, via phone; more than 90 contacts had been held; 74 of them successfully. By the end of the above mentioned procedure, the answers gathered figured up to 100.

Data qualitative and quantitative analysis was held, using adequate software (SPSS) in order to improve outcome for decision making, using statistical and analytical tools such as standard deviation, mean, normalization cumulative percentages, percentile

equivalents, Z-scores, T-scores, standard nines and percentages in standard nines.

c) Workshops Dates: June 24 – 30

Managing Authority, EU Delegation and Task Force responsible for the drafting of the new Cooperation Programme organized two (02)

workshops, one (01) in Greece (Kilkis) and one (01) in the Republic of North Macedonia (Bitola).

The main role of these workshops were:

- 1) A Presentation of questionnaires' methodology, data collection from questionnaires, objectives and priorities for Interreg IPA CBC Programme 'Greece – Republic of North Macedonia 2014-2020'.
- 2) Feedback from the participants of workshops.-
- 3) A stakeholders involving interactive game.

d) Public consultation phase A & B; Data analysis and evaluation Date delay: 07 July 2014

Upon completion of public consultation Phase A procedure, the gathered information was processed and analyzed. Multiple criteria analysis were used for the prioritization of thematic objective and investment priorities.

e) O.P. Format and Structure Date delay: 21 July 2014.

Taking into account the consultation process, and MA guidelines, the structure and the format of the IPA II template, a draft for Interreg IPA CBC Programme 'Greece – Republic of North Macedonia 2014-2020' was conducted including priorities, objectives, expenditure categories and fund allocation, result and output indicators, which was fully completed, was submitted to Managing Authority and to the Task Force Members and ex-ante evaluators

#### Public Consultation Phase C

Date: from 23rd July to 10th August 2014.

On 23 of July 2014 the First draft OP Interreg IPA CBC 2014-2020 was submitted to Managing authority for working consultation. Over the period 21th – 28th of July 2014 the First draft OP Interreg IPA CBC 2014-2020 was also consulted with the Task force and Joint working group members.

Public consultation – phase C refers to the Draft Cooperation Interreg IPA CBC Programme 'Greece – Republic of North Macedonia 2014-2020' in order to collect stakeholders' opinions, were the draft Op and a questionnaire were published on the internet. Responses were gathered from 5 stakeholders

#### Public Consultation Phase D

Date: 3rd and 4th of September 2014

The OP was approved in the Task Force Meeting of the 3rd September and it was presented in the Monitoring Committee Meeting in the 4th September held in Kilkis.

Public consultation for the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)

A detailed note on the public consultation for the SEA has been annexed to the Cooperation Programme, as submitted to the European Commission. A summary is provided below:

The Strategic Environmental Assessment of the Interreg IPA CBC Programme 'Greece – Republic of North Macedonia 2014-2020' was sent by the competent Authority, i.e. Ministry of Reconstruction, of Production, Environment and Energy to the relevant environmental authorities (Regional Councils, General Secretariats, etc). Also the SEA was set under consultation with the relevant public, as it was posted on the websites) of:

- The Cooperation Programme
- The Managing Authority
- The Ministry of Environment and Physical Planning in the Republic of North Macedonia

- The Operating Structure in the Republic of North Macedonia

Greece will submit statements summarising how environmental considerations have been integrated into the Programme and how the environmental report, the opinions and the result of consultations have been taken into account. The final statement will be available to the public (posted on the website: <http://www.ipa-cbc-Programme.eu/index.php/news>)  
A clear commitment from both countries will be submitted with regard to the monitoring measures identified in the SEA process for prevention, reduction and, where possible, offsetting any possible significant effects on the environment resulting from the implementation of the Programme.

## SECTION 6. HORIZONTAL PRINCIPLES

(Reference : Article 8(7) of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013)

### 6.1 Sustainable development

Description of specific actions to take into account environmental protection requirements, resource efficiency, climate change mitigation and adaptation, disaster resilience and risk prevention and management, in the selection of operations.

Sustainable development is one of the main pillars of Interreg IPA CBC

Programme ‘Greece - Republic of North Macedonia 2014-2020’.

The Programme supports several Priority Axes and specific objectives that focus fully on sustainable development

Since the integration of sustainability principles is a requirement for the preparation of the Programs, Directive 2001/42 on the Environmental Impact Assessment of certain plans and programs, constitutes an important instrument for the integration of the environmental dimension in the formulation and implementation of the Programs for the programming period 2014-2020 and the search for sustainable solutions.

In summary, the goals of implementing the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) in the preparation of Programs, are: a) to make an ex ante evaluation of the environmental effects due to the Programme implementation and b) the integration of the environmental dimension in the planning process.

In the context of the preparation of the Programs 2014 - 2020, the Strategic Environmental Assessment is a process of "parallel and complementary" with the elaboration of the Programs and the ex ante evaluation.

Therefore, the incorporation of the principle of sustainable development has been taken into account in the design of the Programme. and namely:

1. During the preparation of the Programme, the SEA is implemented in parallel aiming at the continuous enrichment of the Program and the proposal of corrective actions until its final submission and approval.
2. During SEA consultation with the environmental authorities for compliance.
3. During the specification of the criteria for selecting the actions in relation to the SEA compliance of the OP by priority axis, which will be included in the Management and Control System and will be approved by the Monitoring Committee of each OP.

The overall approach in relation to the principle of sustainable development is set out in detail in section 1.5.3 of Partnership Agreement EU-Greece 2014-2020 and is applied where appropriate and depending on the nature of the actions as described in the OP .

‘Projects prepared under the area based development (ABD) approach to facilitate sustainable growth in defined geographical areas in cross-border regions in the Western Balkans, in particular rural areas characterised by specific complex development problems, will be considered for funding under this cross-border cooperation Programme. Account will be taken of the preparatory work for the ABD approach already carried out in a cross-border region covering the Republic of North Macedonia.’ Under the Priorities and their respective specific objectives the Programme will support cross-border cooperation projects, with the primary aim to improve the implementation of cross-border cooperation initiatives related to sustainable development issues. Project applications will have to clearly demonstrate, that

their proposed activities will make the implementation of those initiatives better, in order to eventually contribute to the sustainable development of the cross border area. Projects that fail to demonstrate this clear contribution to improving cross-border sustainable development policies will not be selected.

PA2 is targeted entirely on sustainable development issues. Project applicants under this PA will be invited to explain in their application how their project will comply with and possibly even strengthen sustainable development. At the end of the project the partners will be asked to report how their project activities and outputs actually contributed to this horizontal principle.

Based on the aggregated contributions to be reported by projects, the Interreg IPA CBC Programme will be able to monitor and demonstrate how the Programme concretely contributed to sustainable development. The activities may address relevant cross-border cooperation experiences and practices related to the principle of sustainable development.

## 6.2 Equal opportunities and non-discrimination

Description of the specific actions to promote equal opportunities and prevent any discrimination based on sex, racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation during the preparation, design and implementation of the cooperation programme and, in particular, in relation to access to funding, taking account of the needs of the various target groups at risk of such discrimination, and in particular, the requirements of ensuring accessibility for persons with disabilities.

The Programme intends to focus on specific actions uniquely aimed at the promotion of equal opportunities and the prevention of discrimination.

The Programme adopts social inclusion, which also implies equal opportunities and non-discrimination, as a crosscutting theme, to be applied in relevant cases within the scope of the Programme's actions. This cross-cutting theme is most likely to emerge in projects under the PA1 (SO 1.1 and SO 1.2), which is dedicated to supporting young people, potential for development and entrepreneurship and health and social care services. The primary focus of this specific objective is on addressing the equal opportunities and non discrimination principle. It is anticipated that certain projects focus on the aforementioned issues.

Under PA1 specifically, projects could for instance address the issue of promoting entrepreneurship among specific target groups at risk of discrimination (e.g. youth with disabilities, marginalised and/or groups of people in risk of poverty). The development of such projects, among the possible applications that may come forward in the corresponding Priority Axis, would be welcomed by the Programme bodies, as also indicated in the presentation of specific objectives in section 2 of the Programme document.

Project applicants will be invited to explain in their application how their project will comply with and possibly even strengthen equal opportunities and non-discrimination.

At the end of the project the partners will be asked to report how their project activities and outputs actually contributed to this horizontal principle.

Based on the aggregated contributions reported by projects, the Programme will be able to monitor and demonstrate how the Programme concretely contributed to equal opportunities and non-discrimination.

### 6.3 Equality between men and women

Description of the contribution of the cooperation programme to the promotion of equality between men and women and, where appropriate, the arrangements to ensure the integration of the gender perspective at cooperation programme and operation level.

The horizontal principle of gender equality is considered to be a primary focus of the Programme, in line with the main policy areas of the IPA II regulation. The principle is closely related to the nature of the thematic Programme's strategy. The specific objectives of the Programme cover thematic areas that have direct link to the horizontal principle of gender equality.

There is evidence indicating a positive correlation between gender equality and factors promoting social inclusion. Support schemes for inactive population might also have an impact on gender equality. Similarly, under the same PA1, projects could for instance address the issue of promoting female entrepreneurship. The development of such projects as part of the wider thematic scope of PA2 specific objectives would be welcomed by the Programme bodies, as also indicated in the presentation of the respective specific objectives in section 2 of the Programme document.

Project applicants will be invited to explain in their application how their project will comply with and possibly even strengthen gender equality. At the end of the project the partners will be asked to report how their project activities and outputs actually contributed to this horizontal principle. Based on the aggregated contributions reported by projects the Programme will be able to monitor and demonstrate how the Programme concretely contributed to equality between men and women. Specific selection criteria are foreseen to favour the development of projects dealing with this issue.

## SECTION 7 SEPARATE ELEMENTS

### 7.1 Major projects to be implemented during the programming period

**Table 24 - List of major projects**

Title	Planned notification/submission date (year, quarter)	Planned start of implementation (year, quarter)	Planned completion date (year, quarter)	Priority Axes / Thematic Priorities
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## 7.2 Performance framework of the cooperation programme

**Table 25 – Performance framework (summary table)**

Priority axis	Indicator or Key implementation step	Measurement unit, where appropriate	Milestone for 2018	Final target (2023)
1	CO36 - Health: Population covered by improved health services	Persons	0	1,500.00
1	F011 - Eligible verified (certified) Expenditure of the Axis	Euro	1400000	18,188,028.00
1	K0101 - Contracted Projects	Number of Projects	13	
2	F0102 - Eligible verified (certified) Expenditure of the Axis	Euro	2000000	22,735,032.00
2	K0102 - Contracted Projects	Number of Projects	16	
2	O0207 - Surface area of rehabilitated or with improved management ecosystems	Hectars	0	188,000.00
2	O0210 - Number of participants in prevention actions	Persons	0	200.00

**7.3 Relevant partners involved in the preparation of the cooperation programme**

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