

Cooperation programmes under the European territorial cooperation goal

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1. STRATEGY FOR THE COOPERATION PROGRAMME'S CONTRIBUTION TO THE UNION STRATEGY FOR SMART, SUSTAINABLE AND INCLUSIVE GROWTH AND THE ACHIEVEMENT OF ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND TERRITORIAL COHESION

1.1 Strategy for the cooperation programme's contribution to the Union strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth and to the achievement of economic, social and territorial cohesion

1.1.1 Description of the cooperation programme's strategy for contributing to the delivery of the Union strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth and for achieving economic, social and territorial cohesion.

INTRODUCTION

The Programme Area

The Greece-Bulgaria cross-border cooperation area for the programming period 2014-2020 is identical to the current ETC programme. It extends to 40.202 km² and has a total population of 2.7 million inhabitants. It covers four territorial units at NUTS II level (Regions), and 11 territorial units at NUTS III level (Districts). The eligible area extends across the entire Greek-Bulgarian border and is neighbouring with Turkey (east) and FYROM (west), both countries aspiring to access to the EU. It is part of the most south-eastern non-insular area of EU, and it is situated between three seas: the Black Sea, the Mediterranean Sea and the Ionian-Adriatic Sea. Finally, it sits at the crossroad of strategic fossil fuel pipelines supplying the EU market and TEN transport axes.

The settlement structure of the area is characterized by the presence of 10 medium-large cities (>50.000 inhabitants) which accumulate 38,2% of total population, and 25 small cities (10.000-50.000 inhabitants).

Despite the historically relatively small amounts of funds allocated, there is a long history of cooperation in the eligible area, which started with Community initiative INTERREG I (1989-1993).

DIAGNOSTIC ANALYSIS AND PROGRAMME AREA SWOT

General Level of Development

The Greece-Bulgaria cross-border cooperation area is **one of the poorest in the European Union**, as the GDP per capita is below 50% of the E28 average. This has not changed considerably in the last 10 years, even though short-lived improvements were noted during 2002-2004 and then again in 2006-2009. The CB area is also characterized by large internal disparities, especially as it concerns the dichotomy between Bulgarian and Greek territories. Bulgarian districts exhibit a much lower level of economic development (below $\frac{1}{4}$) than their Greek counterparts, mainly attributable to the fact that Bulgaria has long been a transition economy.

The 2006-2009 period was marked by economic growth on both sides of the border, as was the general trend all over Europe. After 2009, the global recession effects resulted in slowing down the growth rates in the Bulgarian part (0,25% annually) and in negative growth rates in the Greek part (-9% annually).

Economy

Even though the CB area has been gradually converting from an agricultural/industrial economy to an industrial/service economy, this conversion has been rather slow. Compared to EU28, **the economy remains considerably more agricultural, less industrial, and more service-dependant**. However, this is far from being homogeneous. The Greek CB-area is considerably less agricultural and industrial than the BG CB-area part, and more service-oriented. This heterogeneity is even more pronounced at district level. We can discern 2 types of districts in the BG part, and 3 types of districts in the GR part:

- Blagoevgrad/Haskovo: industry and trade dominated
- Smolyan/Kardzhali: industry and agriculture dominated
- Exros/Drama/Thessaloniki: public administration and industry dominated
- Xanthi/Rodopi: public administration and agriculture dominated, and
- Kavala/Serres: industry and public administration dominated.

More than half of GVA produced in the CB area (59%) is produced in the district of Thessaloniki. All other areas exhibit low percentages. Particularly low percentages are observed in the Bulgarian districts Haskovo, Smolyan and Kardzhali (1-2%).

Some of the noteworthy intra-territorial structural developments that have taken place recently include:

- A gradual conversion between the two parts in terms of the portion of GVA attributable to the primary sector. Still, there remains a large differential between the two sides, with the Bulgarian territories being more heavily agricultural than the Greek territories, and even more heavily agricultural than the national (BG) average.
- A significant diversion between the two parts in the secondary sector, mainly attributable to the considerable losses of industrial activity experienced in the Greek part after 2006 (mainly due to relocations of labour-intensive industries in cheaper neighbouring countries).

Total labour productivity in the CB area is significantly lower than the EU28 avg. (approx. 1/5) and exhibits high differentials between the Greek (32800€/employee) and Bulgarian (5800€/employee) parts. CB area productivity is also below the respective national averages for both parts:

- for the Bulgarian part: ranging from 60% to 78% of the BG national average, and
- for the Greek part: ranging from 60% to 84% of the GR national average.

Tourism – and especially eco-tourism - has long been heralded as the “growth-industry” of the CB area, as it includes a significant number of pristine areas of high ecological value. Yet, it has a rather modest number of accommodation establishments compared to its population (43 establishments/100.000 inhabitants, when the EU28 average is 111),

and unevenly distributed. The largest concentrations of accommodation establishments and beds are in the districts of Kavala, Thessaloniki and Smolyan.

Innovation

Both Greece and Bulgaria have outlined national or regional strategies for innovation in the context of “smart specialization”. Yet, **Bulgaria** is lagging far behind the other EU countries and is listed as a “**modest innovator**” in the 2014 “Innovation Union Scoreboard”, while **Greece**, although in a somewhat better position, falls below the EU average and is listed as a “**moderate innovator**”.

Yet, **the CB area possesses significant research facilities** currently which are however not collaborating with each other or with the business community. It also possesses similar productive systems, therefore exhibiting important opportunities for coupling entrepreneurship initiatives with innovation. The critical mass of research centres and other academic structures is located in Thessaloniki with the following fields of excellence: biotechnology, advanced production systems for chemical processes, energy and environmental technologies, information processing, virtual reality, security services, etc. R&D activities in East Macedonia and Thrace are concentrated in the public sector and particularly in the Demokritos University of Thrace (with a unique Genetics Department) and to a lesser degree in the Technical Education Institute (TEI) of Kavala. On the Bulgarian part, most important research infrastructure is located outside the CB area (mainly in Sofia and Plovdiv) and only Blagoevgrad seems to have any significant research structures. The South-West University “Neofit Rilski”- with nine faculties[1] – offers PhD programmes in many liberal arts fields (Education and Pedagogy, Literary Studies and Linguistics, History and Archaeology, Social Sciences, Law, etc. and Arts - with a specializations in choreography and cinema). Of particular importance for the CB area are the programmes in Economics (with a specialization in Tourism), Geography and Environmental Sciences, and IT technologies. Also, in Smolyan there are branches of the In Smolyan there are branches of the "Paisii Hilendarski" University of Plovdiv with its Technical College and the Varna Free University "Tchernotisets Hrabar".

Climate change

According to the ESPON-CLIMATE project, **the programme area is substantially more vulnerable to climate change both compared to EU 28 and the Greek and Bulgarian national levels** as well. The districts with the highest vulnerability are Thessaloniki, Serres, Kardzhali and Haskovo.

Climate change will have major negative impacts to the CB area. It is estimated that it will affect the majority of the urban centers, by rising the number of heat-wave days to more than 50 by 2071-2100. Natural hazards in the area include flood risk zones (mainly in the vicinity of Nestos/Mesta and Evros/Maritza rivers), wildfire risk areas (mainly in the mountain ranges) and erosion risk areas (especially on the coast). Floods and wildfires can quickly spread across borders and their effective management is of cross-border importance. Finally the areas with the highest risk of landslides are located in the basin of Maritsa East and in the coal development area in the South-west region. The largest studied landslide is located in the district of Smolyan at the location "Smolyan's Lakes".

In addition, the combined adaptive capacity of the CB area to climate change is similar to the national levels and the lowest in Europe. On the Greek side the district of

Thessaloniki and on Bulgarian side the district of Blagoevgrad show a rather high adaptive capacity relative to the national values but still lower than the EU28 average.

Environment

The CB area is **characterized by many and important natural resources**, including a large number of protected natural sites (86 Natura 2000 areas, 5 Ramsar wetlands, etc), many of which are of pristine character. The CB landscape consists of densely forested mountains, straits of rivers, valleys, plains, lakes, coastal wetlands, seashores and river deltas. The area comprises the mountain ranges of Rila, Pirin and Rhodopi, featuring outstanding forests, the cross-border rivers Strymon (Struma), Nestos (Mesta), Ardas (Arda) and Evros (Maritsa) and more than 400 kilometers of coastline. These important natural resources **have not been sufficiently exploited for development purposes in the past**.

In terms of the state of the environment, industry is among the major polluters on both parts of the border, and pollution hot-spots are concentrated in southwestern Bulgaria and near the Kavala urban area. **Both cross-border rivers - Nestos and Evros - are polluted** with urban as well as industrial effluents (e.g. BOD). The major problems in the management of urban wastewater result from the **lack of sewage treatment infrastructure** in settlements between 2,000-10,000 inhabitants. The problem is more acute on the Bulgarian portion of the CB area. In Bulgaria only 46% of the population is covered by wastewater treatment systems and most of the treatment capacity (71%) is located in the Danube and Black sea river basins (which are outside the CB area). On the Greek portion 88% of the population is covered by wastewater treatment systems.

Accessibility

The area possesses significant transport infrastructures. It is served by three ports of national/international importance (the Thessaloniki port, the double port of Kavala and the port of Alexandroupolis) and three main airports (the International Airport “Makedonia”, at Thessaloniki, the Airport “Great Alexander” at Kavala and the Airport “Democritus” at Alexandroupolis), all of them on the Greek side.

The **most important transport infrastructure is the road network** and overall connectivity has improved significantly in the past:

- with the construction of the Egnatia motorway and several vertical axes connecting Greece to Bulgaria and
- the construction of large portions of motorways A3 and A4 in Bulgaria.

Nevertheless, lower-level roads are at various stages of disrepair (especially on the Bulgarian part) making **interconnections difficult and reducing mobility especially in the mountain ranges**. At the same time, several Egnatia vertical axes as agreed in the

Transnational Agreement between Greece and Bulgaria in 1998 still missing or under construction (such as the connection of II-86 to the Greek transport system) and the motorways on the Bulgarian part are incomplete.

The area is deficient in terms of railway and multi-modal infrastructure (despite the existence of important ports and airports). Both Greece and Bulgaria have been recently investing in the CB area railway network but it requires considerable investment which is outside the financial capabilities of the present programme. This heavy dependence on road transport also increases considerably the environmental footprint of transport activities in the area, especially at the border crossings (e.g. long lines of trucks) and especially during the tourist season. Last but not least, the area lacks accessible public transport for people with disabilities and cross-border public transport services.

Labour Market, Poverty and Social Inclusion

While in 2007 unemployment rates for the CB districts were on the average near or below the national rates and below the EU27 average rate, unemployment started to rapidly increase – especially in Greece - soon after the wake of the economic crisis in 2008 reaching record high levels in 2013. The Bulgarian districts succeeded to keep unemployment rates near or lower than the EU27 average. Currently, the high disparities among the CB districts have not dissipated. The latest data exhibit the following **high unemployment rates (2013): Xanthi 37,5%, Drama 36,8%, Thessaloniki 32,1%, Serres 22,9%, Kavala 22,8%, Evros 22%, Smolyan 20,3% and Rodopi 16,8%.**

In addition, long term unemployment rates have increased sharply - especially for the Greek regions - after 2009, indicating a **risk of large structural unemployment** which in turn implies the existence of inefficient labour markets and a mismatch between labour market demand and the available skills and locations of the workers seeking employment. According to the ESPON DEMIFER project the CB area shows significantly higher values of long-term unemployed persons compared to the EU28. Youth unemployment rates display similar trends and are attributed to the lack of economic growth, the rigid labour market, and the mismatch between potential employee skills and employers' needs in Greece and Bulgaria.

In addition, the CB area exhibits **considerably higher than EU28 percentages of population at risk of poverty or social exclusion** (3-4 times higher). The main reason for the large divergence is the comparatively higher long term unemployment rates, and the higher share of people living in areas with low work intensity and low income levels. With respect to the latter, the share of people living in areas with low work intensity has been rising since 2010 in Bulgarian and Greek territories alike.

The large number of people experiencing poverty and social exclusion in the CB area is also attributable to the **presence of various vulnerable groups** such as minorities, internal migrants, asylum seekers and foreign persons under subsidiary protection. The higher risk of poverty and social exclusion among these groups is primarily connected to long-term unemployment and economic inactivity.

The rising incidence of poverty has many social consequences, one of which is the **deteriorating public health conditions**. Even though the CB area enjoys the availability of basic health care resources (e.g. hospitals and doctors) at levels near, or even better in several cases, than the EU28 average, the average life expectancy is lower than EU28 levels and many epidemiological indicators record higher values. Overall, Greek districts have exhibited higher life expectancy than Bulgarian districts in the past, but since poverty forces more people to resort to hospital care (more than a 20% increase has been documented in Greece after 2010), it appears that Greek districts may be more at risk of

deteriorating health care conditions in the near future, thereby lowering overall public health levels in the CB area.

PRIORITY NEEDS/CHALLENGES (SWOT)

The CB area exhibits many strengths and considerable development potential which includes:

- A rich natural environment with many protected natural areas which conveys a high quality of life and tourist development potential;
- Rich water, forest, mineral and energy resources which can be used for strengthening the local economy;
- Proximity to sea (Aegean, Black sea) which presents many opportunities for combined transport and a relatively mature TEN-T network, combined with the large urban and transport center of Thessaloniki which acts as a European “gateway”;
- A critical mass of research capacity mainly concentrated in Thessaloniki but with lesser concentrations in Thrace and in the Bulgarian part;
- Considerable agricultural potential in the entire CB area; and
- Considerable industrial potential and a specialization in IT in the Bulgarian part.

It is however plagued by many and serious weaknesses which need to be overcome:

- The area is predominantly rural, mountainous and remote (compared both to the territory of the 2 countries and as well as to the rest of EU), and exhibits a low urbanization level (i.e. medium-small cities);
- It suffers from depopulation and an ageing population;
- It exhibits severe infrastructure challenges in environment (urban effluents in BG) which leads to pollution problems and in transport (low cross-country accessibility and low multi-modal accessibility) which leads to low goods transport potential and low commuting potential;
- It has low broadband connectivity and low digital content;
- The production system is characterized by stagnant growth trends, low innovation content, and a low tourist capacity;
- The characteristics of the production system combined with the low education levels and a mismatch between labour demand and supply have led to high unemployment (mainly in the Greek part), poverty and social exclusion;
- The CB area is very susceptible to climate change due to low institutional capacities; and
- The area population is faced with considerable health challenges, especially in remote areas and areas of concentration of special population groups.

Opportunities from the wider environment which can help the CB area face its challenges include:

- Existence of “smart specialization” strategies in both participating countries and regions, which exhibit many complementarities between the production systems

and regarding the priorities established in each country for this programming period; and

- A good interaction track-record between actors from Greece and Bulgaria due to long-standing cooperation.

On the road to development, the CB area will have to overcome:

- Severe international competition due to intense globalization of the economy;
- Slowing-down global growth rates which characterize the 21st century; and
- Worsening climate change risks which lead to a rise in potential area damages.

STRATEGIC PROCESS FOLLOWED TO IDENTIFY COOPERATION POLICY PRIORITIES

Thematic Cooperation Priorities for the programme area were identified through a multi-criteria analysis and the consideration of Strategic Guidelines coming from other programming levels (Commission Recommendations, Partnership Agreements, etc.).

The multi-criteria analysis used 6 criteria against which all ERDF Thematic Objectives were evaluated:

1. Cross-border character: it evaluates the degree to which cooperation is necessary to resolve important policy issues of cross-border nature (i.e. not able to be resolved unilaterally) and relevant for the CB area or the degree to which cooperation adds significant value.
2. Continuity: it evaluates whether the thematic objective and its identified intervention areas capitalize on results achieved by previous programming periods.
3. Complementarity: it evaluates the existence of synergies and complementarities with mainstream programmes to be implemented during 2014-2020 in the CB area.
4. Relevance: it reflects the prioritization of needs and challenges in the cross-border area as portrayed in the analysis of the existing situation.
5. Demand: it reflects demand for specific interventions, as evidenced by the consultation process followed for the drafting of the programme.
6. Institutional capacity: it evaluates the existence of established institutional capacity in the border region to implement actions within the thematic objective, as evidenced by the consultation process followed for the drafting of the programme, data from the implementation of the current programme, specific evaluations, etc.

The results of the multi-criteria analysis were then combined with:

- The recommendations from the on-going evaluation of the current programme,
- The recommendations from the Commission Position Papers for Greece and Bulgaria specifically in the field of cross-border cooperation, as they have been incorporated in the respective Partnership Agreements, and
- The results from 3 distinct consultation procedures:
 - phases A and B of the consultation process followed for the drafting of the present OP,

- the consultation conducted in 2013 for the Strategic Projects, and
- a preparatory study conducted by the responsible Greek Ministry in order to identify Strategic Guidelines for ETC programmes.

This process resulted in combined priority rankings for all Thematic Objectives (on a 0-6 scale) as follows:

- Thematic Objective 6: 6
- Thematic Objective 9: 5
- Thematic Objectives 3 & 7: 4
- Thematic Objective 5: 3
- Thematic Objective 8: 2
- Thematic Objectives 1, 4, 10: 1
- Thematic Objectives 2 & 11: 0

The five thematic objectives with the highest rankings (6, 9, 1, 7 and 5) were selected for the programme.

KEY CHALLENGES ADDRESSED BY THE PRESENT OPERATIONAL PROGRAMME

The present OP addresses challenges in five thematic objectives of Europe 2020:

- Enhancing the competitiveness of SMEs,
- Promoting climate change adaptation, risk prevention and management,
- Preserving and protecting the environment and promoting resource efficiency,
- Promoting sustainable transport and removing bottlenecks in key network infrastructures, and
- Promoting social inclusion and combating poverty and discrimination,

formulated into **four priority axes**. Thematic Objectives 5 and 6 are combined to produce an integrated approach to environmental protection and adaptation to climate change.

Furthermore, “Innovation” and “Institutional Strengthening” permeate all interventions of the programme (where applicable) as cross-cutting themes. More specifically, the following categories of actions are foreseen by the programme under the cross-cutting theme of “innovation”:

- networks, training and soft actions facilitating the transfer of innovation (technological, organizational, and marketing) to businesses;
- development of ICT and other innovative tools for flood prevention/management;
- development and pilot testing of innovative techniques in the area of cultural heritage preservation;
- new techniques in biodiversity management such as: CB frameworks and platforms for the interoperability of existing databases and the integration of management approaches; pilot application of joint negotiation, mediation, participation and conflict resolution models; mainstreaming of pro-active preservation methods (such as alien species control);

- actions in water management such as: eco-innovation partnerships and participation in European Innovation Partnerships; pilot applications or mainstreaming of existing innovative methods/technologies in the areas of water management (pollution control and efficient use) and joint development of new methods; and
- telemedicine and telecare infrastructure and other technology-oriented health care provision methods.

Under the the cross-cutting theme of “institutional strengthening”, the following categories of actions are foreseen by the programme:

- investment in entrepreneurship support infrastructure and service provision systems such as: business support facilities, “one-stop-shop” approaches in the provision of business services by the greater public sector, ICT systems and e-platforms, collaborative schemes (clusters, value-chains);
- jointly coordinated (drafted or updated) National flood risk management plans; awareness-raising campaigns in the areas of flood, biodiversity and water management;
- actions building up a common knowledge base in the areas of flood, biodiversity and water management; CB frameworks and platforms for the interoperability of databases and the integration of management approaches in the areas of biodiversity and water management;
- knowledge transfer and exchange of good practices in the area of preservation of natural and cultural heritage; actions that support the better interpretation of natural and cultural heritage (including ICT applications);
- common risk assessment models in biodiversity protection;
- development of support centres of reference (for health threats, rare diseases, organ donation) and joint cross-border plans and principles for the sharing of human and information resources in health-care; telemedicine and telecare;
- methodologies and joint research on monitoring and on the assessment of the contribution of the social economy sector to the achievement of social and territorial cohesion in the CB area.

NEEDS, PROGRAMME GOALS AND CONTRIBUTION TO E2020 STRATEGY

The programme is designed to address the main challenges identified by the diagnostic report in the cross-border area where collaboration is either necessary or is expected to produce significant added value by either capitalizing on past results, or by being complementary to mainstream programmes and the “smart specialization” strategies, or by exploiting existing institutional capacities and/or expressed demand. It contributes to E2020 strategy as follows.

With respect to the “smart growth” objective by:

- strengthening the business fabric of the CB area and especially by promoting productivity improvements, export-orientation and the introduction of new products with a special focus on sectors identified by the “smart specialization” strategies,

- by promoting innovation at all levels,
- by promoting resource-efficiency,
- by exploiting 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 health of eco-systems, and
- by reducing the environmental footprint of transport activities in the CB area.

With respect to the “inclusive growth” objective:

- by enhancing CB connectivity and hence CB mobility,
- by promoting “access for all” to health care,
- by supporting employability especially for the most vulnerable groups, and
- by developing social entrepreneurship.

The precise needs/challenges that the present strategy is designed to address are highlighted below by Thematic Objective.

THEMATIC OBJECTIVE 3

The CB area - despite its scientific and socio-economic potential - has had very poor results in innovative entrepreneurship. Links between the research community and businesses are very weak.

Recently the RIS3 studies have more systematically and in detail examined the situation in both sides (in Bulgaria at national level, in Greece at regional level) with respect to innovation. There is a significant degree of divergence in the needs of businesses for innovation. The *common emerging needs* can be summarized as follows:

- connect academic research to enterprises and raise awareness with respect to concrete innovation results (e.g. patents);
- bring businesses together to overcome disadvantages stemming from their small size and low degree of networking;
- strong mobilization and enablement of young people for entrepreneurial activity in technology intensive fields;
- improvements and enhancement of broadband connections – popularization of use of the internet;
- offer more government services online;
- reverse “brain drain” trends and bring back much needed educated human resources.

RIS3 Specialization areas. The specialization areas proposed by both sides include:

- agro-biotechnology and food industry
- energy efficiency products and services & construction materials
- other environmental management technologies (e.g. waste management technology)
- textile industry
- transport and logistics technologies.

RIS3 Strategies. The strategies to be adopted include:

- clustering and business incubation
- direct financial support for innovation

RIS3 Coordination and monitoring mechanisms. The two countries will establish mechanisms to coordinate and monitor the progress of their respective RIS initiatives. Bulgaria has adopted a national level mechanism whereas a regional system has been proposed in Greece. In particular, for Bulgaria:

- the top responsibility lies with the Council of Ministers and the Council for Smart Growth, supported by a Secretariat
- policy-making is enacted by the coordinated responsible Ministries advised by the National Council for Innovation (Ministry of Economy and Energy), National Council for Science and Innovation (Ministry of Education and Science), supported by Directorate “Science, Education and Innovation” (Ministry of Agriculture and Food). Funding is secured by the respective Managing Authorities .
- involved stakeholders encompass businesses, technology support structures and research community.

For Greece, the mechanisms have a national and a regional dimension:

- at national level, the coordination is done by National Council for Research and Technology, supported by the General Secretariat for Research and Technology
- at regional level, each region has its own Regional Research and Innovation Council supported by the services of the Regional Authorities.

Funding is secured by the respective Managing Authorities of mainstream programmes.

Inferring the character of businesses from the Diagnostic Analysis, we can draw the following conclusions combining GVA and employment data:

- there is a contrast between businesses in the Bulgarian and Greek portions: business activity on the Bulgarian side is more centered around agriculture and manufacturing, whereas on the Greek side around trade and public services
- compared to national averages both CB parts have stronger agriculture orientation
- excluding agriculture, which is usually family-based, the Greek side business activity is more on trade-oriented and the Bulgarian side is manufacturing-oriented
- for both sides, agriculture has a lower productivity than all other sectors.

Although regional and local data about the number, size and qualitative characteristics of businesses are not available, we can safely infer from the general country characteristics and the consultation during programme preparation that SMEs are the main employers in the CBC area. Very few large enterprises are present, mainly in the Thessaloniki area.

Some of the predominant business characteristics include:

- the small business size and family-ownership precludes them from facing international challenges effectively; this weakness is exacerbated by the lack of clusters;
- businesses in the cross-border area have been rather slow in expanding their activity to the other side of the border; the borderline remains a barrier and business activity remains vastly local;
- most businesses have a low cost-orientation, and compete on the basis of cost; as a result, they are vulnerable to other lower cost competitors (e.g. from developing countries)
- products have a relatively low technological content; very few businesses invest in product innovation and most follow the “creative reproduction” approach; significant opportunities for innovation remain unexploited (e.g. Academic research) because of the limited geographic scope of the economic activity that deprives businesses of the necessary market size to support substantial innovation investments;
- there is a lack of business financial instruments for “high risk” business investments; existing entrepreneurship support centers and facilities are mainly concentrated in the Thessaloniki metro area; in other areas they are non-existent or very weak to have an impact; low demand from CB area entrepreneurs for support services for the establishment of new enterprises and for the development of new products/services (with the exception of metropolitan areas) is perhaps related to the lack of such support systems;
- CB economy (except Thessaloniki) is dominated by agricultural production and recently a rising tourism sector; the agricultural sector specializes in non-dynamic produce and the level of processing of agricultural produce is low; agro-food industry has been declining; in tourism, there is a lack of integrated tourist destinations with quality characteristics that satisfy the respective customer groups; the quality characteristics of the tourism sector are generally low (e.g. star-rating system for hotels);
- there is weak business access (except for Thessaloniki) to a wider market area and in particular to international markets; there are very few and weak collective bodies for export promotion.

The main identified needs under this thematic area include:

- **Alleviating the lack of information i.e. access to business-relevant know-how, information and contacts, that could be counterbalanced by business support advices-services.**
- **Facilitating business establishment and encouragement of entrepreneurship and entrepreneurial culture**

- **Promote and support networking between academic research and SMEs and raise awareness with respect to concrete innovation results (e.g. patents);**
- **Improved business support system in order to promote and facilitate entrepreneurship.**
- **Promote and support SMEs business networking (eg. clusters) in order to establish economies of scale and better access to markets, technology etc.**
- **Improved access to a wider market area including to international markets, increase of sales beyond the local area.**

THEMATIC OBJECTIVE 5

The CB area includes three (3) international river basins of the cross-border rivers: 1) Strymon-Struma, 2) Nestos-Mesta, 3) Ardas-Arda and Evros-Maritsa. Natural hazards in flood risk zones (mainly in the vicinity of Nestos/Mesta and Evros/Maritsa rivers) are often and of high cost damages. Floods can quickly spread across borders, their effective management is of cross border importance and affects a high number of CB area population and a considerable surface of the area. In the Bulgarian CB portion approximately 72% of the total population is affected by high/medium flood risk, while in the Greek CB portion this percentage is about 50%.

Legal Obligations:

- Directive 2007/60/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council on the assessment and management of flood risks (Article 8, par.2) at the level of international river basins: jointly designed and/or agreed and/or coordinated “flood risks management plans” by 22/12/2015, First Review / 22/12/2021, End of 1st flood risk management cycle
- Directive 2000/60/EC the European Parliament and of the Council establishing a framework for Community action in the field of water policy (Water Framework Directive - WFD) : second cycle of “river basin management plans” - also due in 2015 - at which time the two sets of plans (river basin and flood risks) will be coordinated.
- Directive 2007/60/EC (Article 4) “preliminary flood risk assessment” including Flood hazard and risk maps with high risk flood areas (floods with a high probability) by 12/2011 (status: Completed in both CB area Countries)

Status (up to date) of National “flood risks management plans”:

- Greek CB portion: 1) Strymon-Struma and 2) Nestos-Mesta are under elaboration, 3) Ardas-Arda and Evros-Maritsa 1st draft Completed
- Bulgarian CB portion: all under elaboration
- No actions towards jointly designed and/or agreed and/or coordinated plans have been undertaken.

The CB area is susceptible to severe flooding and extensive forest wildfire risks. Forest wildfires have been extensively addressed during past programming periods (2000-2013) and are considered a lower priority target for this programming period. Additional risks-

not of a CB character - affecting the area include: erosion (especially for the coastal area) and localized landslides in some areas.

Additional, issues related to “Directive 2000/60/EC in the field of water policy” for environmental objectives such as pollution control and efficient use are addressed under SO6 (IP 6f).

The main identified needs under this thematic area include:

- **Fulfillment of the obligation of the Directive 2007/60/EC (Article 8, par.2) for jointly coordinated flood risk management plans for international rivers.**
- **Coordination with and contribution to “River Basin Management Plan” (Directive 2000/60/EC - Water policy) concerning jointly coordination in flood issues of international rivers. Environmental objectives-needs derived from the Water Framework Directive 2000/60/EC are reflected in SO6 under the Thematic Objective 6)**
- **Need to enhance the flood protection infrastructure on specific points of the rivers basins with pilot projects.**
- **Awareness raising and capacity-building of the responsible civil protection Authorities and local population for better preparedness in risk response actions**

THEMATIC OBJECTIVE 6

Environment is one of the most valuable CB area resources and environmental protection is of the highest priorities at all levels, including environmental protection from transport (reducing the environmental footprint of transport activities is addressed under Thematic Objective 7).

The CB area exhibits an impressive biodiversity richness (vascular plants, amphibians, birds, etc) and one of the highest densities of protected sites. Currently there are:

- 5 Wetlands of International Importance (Ramsar Convention); and
- 86 Natura 2000 protected sites (51 sites on the Greek territory and 35 sites on the Bulgarian territory) covering 41,5% of the Programme Area surface.

However, only **a small portion of these habitats (appr. ¼) is assessed in 2010 as having favourable conservation status** (the data is from the 2007 reports). Currently there is updated information only for the Bulgarian side, since Bulgaria submitted the “article 17” report in 2013 and Greece has not submitted it yet. Common threats between GR-BG sites include:

- human activity (agriculture, water pollution, intensive afforestation, illegal hunting, poisonous baits, wind farms, hydromorphological modifications of surface waters, etc); and
- climate change (mainly through increased frequency of forest wild-fires).

Most area habitats have high CB connectivity (e.g. protected areas and/or species extending on both sides of the border, animal and bird migration patterns, disease spread patterns, etc) and require CB approaches. While both countries have been planning and implementing management actions in their respective protected areas, the potential for common CB approaches to biodiversity protection has little been exploited in prior programming periods where most interventions implemented through the Greece-Bulgaria cooperation programme 2007-2013 were “parallel” in character and not genuinely “joint”.

The main identified needs under this thematic area include:

- **cross-border coordination in mapping, assessing, valuating and monitoring ecosystems;**
- **support for species of regional, national and international importance and of their habitats (mostly concentrated on prevention but also re-introduction of species);**
- **limiting the spread and impact of invasive alien species; and**
- **limiting the impacts of climatic change.**

The CB area is also rich in water resources – mainly surface water resources, which include the cross-border rivers Strymon (Struma), Nestos (Mesta), Ardas (Arda) and Evros (Maritsa) with a total renewable water resources of approximately 23500 hm³. These water resources exhibit:

- **an increased percentage of non-classified water bodies** on the Greek portion of the programme area (hence with unknown ecological, chemical and hydromorphological parameters);
- **relatively low hydromorphological modification** levels among classified water bodies; but
- **an increased proportion of classified water bodies not meeting Good Ecological Status (GES)** according to the EEA 2012 state of water assessment report. These percentages vary greatly between countries and regions:
 - approximately 70% in Central Macedonia, and 30% in East Macedonia-Thrace do not meet GES (most surface waters that meet GES on the Greek portion are coastal waters); and
 - approximately 50% in Bulgaria do not meet GES.
- **relatively good chemical status** on the Bulgarian side and largely unknown chemical status on the Greek side.

The ecological status of surface waters is directly linked to the conservation status of many important aquatic Natura 2000 sites (such as the Evros Delta GR1110007, the lakes Vistonida and Ismarida and the Porto Lagos lagoon GR1130010, and the Nestos Delta GR1150010) which are important for the development of the CB area.

Factors contributing to the low levels of GES include:

- **inadequate waste-water treatment capacity** on the Bulgarian side;
- **industrial pollution** (e.g. fertilizer industries, agro-food industries like oil-presses and canning industries);

- inadequate solid waste management; and
- pollution from agricultural activities (e.g. fertilizer run-off from fields, improperly disposed off waste from animal farms and by-products from fisheries).

With respect to groundwater resources, the Bulgarian side of the CB area exhibits a very low incidence of poor quantitative status per RBD (less than 10%), while on the Greek side aquifer salinization has been observed in some locations due to increased drilling and water abstraction mainly for use in agriculture. Groundwater problems are not of a CB nature.

Water resource quantity and quality are directly linked to overall environmental health and are necessary for economic development as well (hence linked to Thematic Objective 3). **Effective resolution of most surface water-related issues (mostly vis-à-vis CB rivers) requires joint management.** Water resource efficiency and the use of innovative technologies for reducing pollutant levels has been a long-standing strategic priority for the CB area and has been addressed in prior programming periods (through both cooperation and mainstream programmes) but with moderate results so far, as exhibited by the high % of water bodies not meeting GES. This is due to the very high cost of dealing with urban effluents which has been the main intervention area in the past. As it stands today, the main sources of water pollution remain: a) urban effluents on the Bulgarian side, b) industrial effluents on both sides, and c) agricultural pollution on both sides. Hence, it continues to be considered a high-priority target. **The main identified needs under this thematic area include:**

- **transborder coordination according to the requirements of Water Framework Directive (WFD) / coordination of monitoring programmes /coordination of Programmes of measures (PoM) according to the River Basin Management Plans (RBMP);**
- **wastewater treatment for agglomerations between 2 000 and 10 000 in Bulgaria (to be addressed by mainstream programmes) and reduction in other main sources of pollution in river basins with low rates of GES; and**
- **promotion of innovative technologies and initiatives in the water management sector and especially in the industrial and agricultural pollution areas.**

The most serious **soil management needs** identified across the CB area include:

- soil erosion, which is most prominent along the coastline (Greek side) and is observed at localized pockets;
- landslides, which are most prominent in the district of Smolyan and are also observed at localized pockets (Bulgarian side); and
- desertification threats, which have been documented across all agricultural lands.

Soil management issues are not of a CB nature and are not dealt with by the cooperation programme.

Finally, preservation and promotion of cultural and natural heritage is necessary for the development of tourism and hence highly complementary with Thematic Objective 3.

The CB area is characterized by largely unexploited, rich cultural and natural heritage resources which include:

- cultural assets covering over 3000 years of history, among which 16 important Monuments and Monumental Groupings designated as a UNESCO World Heritage site (Paleochristian and Byzantine Monuments of Thessaloniki);
- 40.000 hectares of protected natural areas designated as a UNESCO World Heritage site (Pirin National Park)

The use of cultural and natural heritage for tourist promotion purposes has been a long-standing strategic priority for the CB area but has been addressed in prior programming periods only partially and in a fragmented manner (i.e. in relation to the promotion of very localized eco-tourist activity) with very low effectiveness. In recent years, overall tourist activity has increased in the CB area – mainly due to exogenous factors - creating an impetus and an important development opportunity. This impetus needs to be capitalized on.

The main identified needs in CB area tourism include:

- **the lack of international tourist destinations in the CB area;**
- **the lack of sustainable tourist development plans and strategies capitalizing on area-specific resources (especially CB plans);**
- **the lack of integrated tourist destinations both thematically (i.e. for specific tourist groups) and territorially;**
- **the improvement of the preservation status and the increase in carrying capacity (i.e. numbers of potential visitors) of cultural and natural sites used for tourist purposes; and**
- **the increase in international visibility of area cultural and natural resources.**

The development of tourist development strategies, integrated tourist destinations and actions for the increase in international visibility of CB area tourism will be addressed under TO3. The improvement in the preservations status and increase in carrying capacity of cultural and natural sites will be addressed through TO6. Hence, a coordination mechanism is required. This could include combined calls aimed exclusively at tourism, preparatory consultation/publicity events to raise awareness about opportunities offered through the programme, etc

THEMATIC OBJECTIVE 7

The CB area – despite the significant improvements achieved during recent years through the construction of motorways – still lacks sufficient north-to-south interconnections. This is the case of Plodviv (BG) - Xanthi (GR) axis, where communities along it are not served by an appropriate cross border crossing, being forced to make deviations through the Makaza-Komotini crossing (east of this area) and through Sandanski-Petritsi crossing (west of this area). This is particularly burdensome, as the area is very mountainous, and the characteristics of the local road network make travel lengthy and in some cases unsafe.

Secondary network connections to motorways (TEN-T system) in the area are particularly insufficient and some parts are in a bad state of repair, needing upgrade for security reasons and for optimization of their technical characteristics. In addition, multimodality is almost non-existent as well as public transport means accessible to persons with disabilities.

THEMATIC OBJECTIVE 9

CB area health status indicators have not been satisfactory for a long time despite the satisfactory levels (in terms of quantity) of healthcare infrastructure in the area, indicating a lack of effectiveness and proper spatial distribution of such resources. The rise of poverty in the CB area now exerts increased pressure on health care systems. Improving their effectiveness is of paramount importance. At the same time, economic recession and disinvestment prevent many CB area inhabitants from gaining access to healthcare services (uninsured civilians). The rise of poverty in the CB area places vulnerable groups – which have a significant presence in the CB area - at increased risk of peril. Health inequalities in the CB area are shaped by the inequalities in availability, access and quality of services, by the financial burden these impose on people, and even by the linguistic, cultural and gender-based barriers that are often embedded in the way in which clinical practice is conducted. Supply gaps are still a reality in the border-zone or buffer area, making the extension of health service networks across the border a priority concern. Further, service delivery reforms are needed to transform conventional health-care delivery into primary care, optimizing the contribution of health services – local health systems, health-care networks, health districts – to health and equity while responding to the growing expectations for better health performance. Especially in the low income parts of the CB area, the opportunity exists to reorient existing health services towards primary care, to improve the health of affected communities.

The CB area includes some of the most deprived and isolated communities of both countries, as manifested by rising poverty rates and high unemployment rates, particularly amongst 2 types of social groups: vulnerable groups (such as disabled people and elderly) and professionally and financially challenged groups (women, youth, long-term unemployed, below poverty line households and other special social groups), which find it difficult to be integrated in the labour market. Amongst those groups, the Roma in particular, whose population is estimated at about 45,000 people (32,000 living in Bulgarian and 13,000 living in Greek regions respectively), encounter high risk of discrimination and social exclusion.

As a consequence of this labour market breakdown, the CB area exhibits depopulation trends. The prevailing economic recession and fiscal crisis across both sides of the border have further intensified public and private sector disinvestment in social services, further weakening the delivery and sustainability of social welfare policy in the CB area aimed at resolving poverty and social exclusion problems.

The deteriorating socioeconomic context, in conjunction with public policy support and mainly EU financing instruments, have generated interest in the formation and operation of social enterprises that offer a supplementary opportunity:

1. To the professionally and financially challenged and to vulnerable groups to enter the labour market,

2. To NGOs to generate business incomes by (a) seeking new and sustainable resources to fulfil social aims for the public benefit, guided by a balance between social and economic objectives, transparency and quality of products and services, and (b) exploiting market opportunities to generate resources to meet the social mission, while people and their needs remain in the focus of the social enterprise.

National data indicate there are 501 social enterprises in the 4 eligible Bulgarian regions (employing an unknown number of people) and 37 enterprises in the Greek eligible regions employing more than 350 people. Social entrepreneurship has been proven at European level to alleviate both labour market entry obstacles and social service delivery obstacles to special population groups, problems both present in the eligible programme area. Unfortunately, such information (e.g. types of services delivered, target groups, effectiveness in alleviating obstacles, etc) is extremely limited regarding the eligible area social enterprises and needs to be addressed.

The capacity for employment and social inclusion of both the professionally and financially challenged and the vulnerable groups, through social entrepreneurship and other forms of social economy, could be strengthened by financial instruments and/or support schemes funded through the Cooperation Programme and through the dissemination of good practices at local level. Actions funded would include provision of opportunity for social entrepreneurs to enter the market and search for market niches and trade possibilities. Also, will encourage knowledge transfer for the social enterprises, in order to familiarize themselves with good management and marketing, examples and exchange of information, and if necessary, support the performance of their activities through the first years of operation (to ensure survival), having knowledge of the specifics of other social enterprises. Finally, the programme could support the creation of a knowledgebase, regarding social entrepreneurship in the area.

LESSONS LEARNT AND CAPITALIZATION OF PRIOR PROGRAMME EXPERIENCE

According to the findings of the on-going evaluation of programme Greece-Bulgaria 2007-2013, the elements of the current programme with the highest added-value include:

- a better geographic concentration of resources (more resources directed to the CB area in total and to the smaller population centers) than through the mainstream programmes;
- approximately 1/3 of implemented projects being of genuine cross-border character (i.e. projects that would not be able to produce results through unilateral action), a rate which nevertheless needs to increase in the new programming period; and
- important intangible benefits received by the beneficiaries from the cooperative nature of the projects (such as “exchange of good practice”, “capacity building”, “joint strategies”, etc) as well as the gain of respect and trust between the cooperating partners and access to wider networks of cooperation.

However, the rate of capitalization of prior experiences in the current programme has been very low (reported by only 1.5% of beneficiaries) due to the lack of joint projects in previous programming periods (i.e. 2000-2006). Hence, capitalization on project results

from the 2007-2013 period becomes of foremost importance. This conclusion was reinforced by a programme beneficiary survey, which demonstrated that the “knowledge gained” from the projects implemented and the “contacts established” are valuable results beneficiaries intend to use in the future.

The programme on-going evaluation also showed that – due to the orientation and due to the limited financial resources – the programme cannot solve the CB area major problems and can only be seen as complementary to mainstream programmes. Hence it needs to concentrate on major challenges of a CB nature such as:

- more movement of people and goods (i.e. open borders and increased accessibility);
- integration of the cross-border area in terms of social services, educational levels, living conditions, streamlining administrative procedures and systems, etc.;
- joint defence mechanisms against exogenous threats to the area; and
- the environmental and climate-change issues.

A decisive variable in this respect is the capacity of local stakeholders to implement the types of cooperative projects necessary. Public sector stakeholders exhibit a high exposure and experience due to their increased participation in current programme interventions as well as their involvement in other programmes. Greek beneficiaries seem to be more experienced than their Bulgarian counterparts, even though this result has not been corroborated. However, socio-economic stakeholders and the private sector seem to have an advantage of being in a position to attract staff with higher education and skills levels. Overall, approximately half of CB area stakeholders are assessed as satisfactorily/highly competent to implement CB interventions which implies that CB area stakeholders are in a position to implement large, complex projects. This conclusion is reinforced by the good absorption rates of the current programme.

According to the on-going evaluation recommendations, the new programme needs to focus on fast “return-on-investment” policies. Therefore it should contain:

- more projects building on already existing systems, knowledge and infrastructure than projects building new ones;
- more projects producing tangible results; and
- more genuinely joint projects as they tend to create a higher CB added-value.

In order to accomplish this, the project selection process and the programme monitoring system need to be designed accordingly, i.e. content-related project selection criteria should receive a higher weight[2] than implementation-related criteria. Proper implementing procedures are already in place, project officers are highly experienced and the JTS has already implemented a risk appraisal and management system which needs to continue. The programme should actively attract other types of final beneficiaries apart from public entities. Finally, strategic projects need to be opened earlier in the new programming period (we recommend 2018) so that the results are available by the start of the following programming period.

With respect to specific thematic areas, the most important conclusions from the current programme are as follows.

Entrepreneurship, competition and innovation

The current programme has not concentrated enough on boosting the competitiveness of the local economic systems through the use of innovation. Even though 15 projects contained actions networking businesses to research centers only 4 projects directly targeted research and technology transfer actions. As the CB area belongs (according to the RIS3 guide) to the “*peripheral regions with structural inertia, de-industrialization trends, and lacking strong research strengths and international connections*”^[3], the main policy strategy must “stimulate knowledge absorption (by the business community) and help regional research actors take first steps in international cooperation”. In other words, the focus of 2014-2020 policy should be in the incorporation of already existing technologies and innovation into the production structure – in order to increase productivity, improve product quality and reduce production costs - and the international networking and cooperation of the local research institutes in order to improve their capacity for the production of innovation in all fields of excellence. The outcomes from the strategic project on “smart specialization” strategies need to be taken into account in this respect.

The development of entrepreneurship was mostly done through targeted business improvement services - including sectoral studies and product certification (60%), and electronic platforms and web applications (40%).

Social conditions and unemployment.

The current programme has spent a fair amount of resources to stimulate employment and labour mobility in the CB area. The vast majority of the projects concerned support structures – mostly training, and some employment matching services. Employment was addressed indirectly – through the development of entrepreneurship – (see above). The overall impact of these interventions on employment has never been measured, as there were no impact assessment studies conducted.

During the programme implementation period, unemployment rose to unprecedented levels due to the economic crisis. Under these conditions, the expansion of economic activity is the only policy option certain to produce long-term sustainable results. One part of this policy can be implemented through the incorporation of innovation in the dominant economic sectors of the CB area (see above). The second part of this policy will need to aim at the creation of new business activity in the area, concentrating on labour intensive economic activities.

The final constituent of this policy area deals with the spread of poverty and social inclusion. The current programme has addressed health-related issues to a large extent and to a much lesser extent issues related to vulnerable groups (e.g. disabled people, etc). 30% of projects targeted epidemiological issues (e.g. studies, labs, prevention programmes), another 30% dealt with health policy and the prevention of health risk factors (safe driving, children obesity, environmental health risks, safe food supply) and 30% with common health systems (including e-health) and sharing infrastructures. Only a small portion of programme resources was directed to vulnerable groups (such as Roma, people with disabilities, etc)

As poverty has increased in the CB area during the last years, the new programme needs to concentrate more resources, especially as vulnerable groups are concerned.

Environment

The current programme devoted a large part of its resources to environmental protection but mostly to promotion. Twenty-five projects contained such actions 40% of which had as ultimate objective either the promotion of natural heritage for tourist development purposes or raising the quality of life (such as development of recreational sites) or public awareness raising on environmental issues. This outcome is directly linked to the fact that most programme beneficiaries come from the public sector. Other thematic areas – which attracted less attention - included:

- civil protection (28%);
- integrated water management (12%);
- energy (8%);
- biodiversity protection (4%); and
- integrated waste management (4%).

Future programmes will need to devote larger portions of resources for the environment as overall resources for environmental protection will become scarcer due to fiscal adaptation policies on the Greek side. Risk management and energy efficiency are important issues for the development of all economic activities in the area and need to be continued. Past experience shows that resources for biodiversity protection need to be earmarked in order to increase the share of programme actions targeted in the area. Last, but not least, the new programme needs to:

- promote more comprehensive/holistic interventions - instead of incremental actions - in biodiversity, management of ecosystems and natural resources, and risk management/prevention; and
- link energy efficiency to competitiveness and innovation interventions.

[1] Faculties of Law and History, Mathematics and Natural Sciences, Economics, Pedagogy, Philology, Philosophy, Arts, Public Health and Sports and a Technical College

[2] Due to the results-based orientation of cohesion policy in 2014-2020, the criteria that relate to project results – e.g. SMART indicators – need to receive higher weights. The same applies for the “project design” criteria, in which we need to add the project “intervention logic”.

[3] With Thessaloniki as the only exception.

1.1.2 Justification for the choice of thematic objectives and corresponding investment priorities, having regard to the Common Strategic Framework, 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 objectives and investment priorities

| Selected thematic objective | Selected investment priority | Justification for selection |
|---|--|---|
| 03 - Enhancing the competitiveness of small and medium-sized enterprises, the agricultural sector (for the EAFRD) and the fisheries and aquaculture sector (for the EMFF) | 3a - Promoting entrepreneurship, in particular by facilitating the economic exploitation of new ideas and fostering the creation of new firms, including through business incubators | The cross-border area despite its scientific and socio-economic potential has had very poor results in innovative entrepreneurship. The links between the research community and businesses have overall been very weak. Existing entrepreneurship support centres are mainly concentrated in the metropolitan area of Thessaloniki while in other areas are virtually non-existent or very weak to have a broader impact. |
| 03 - Enhancing the competitiveness of small and medium-sized enterprises, the agricultural sector (for the EAFRD) and the fisheries and aquaculture sector (for the EMFF) | 3d - Supporting the capacity of SMEs to grow in regional, national and international markets, and to engage in innovation processes | Businesses in the cross-border area have been rather slow in expanding their activity to the other side of the border. The borderline remains a barrier and business activity remains vastly local. Significant opportunities for innovation remain unexploited because of the limited geographical scope of the economic activity that deprives businesses of the necessary market size to support substantial innovation. |
| 05 - Promoting climate change adaptation, risk prevention and management | 5b - Promoting investment to address specific risks, ensuring disaster resilience and developing disaster management systems | The CB area is susceptible to severe flooding and extensive forest wildfire risks. Additional risks affecting the area include: erosion (especially for the coastal area) and landslides in some areas. |
| 06 - Preserving and protecting the environment and promoting resource efficiency | 6c - Conserving, protecting, promoting and developing natural and cultural heritage | The CB area is characterized by a richness of cultural and natural heritages, which can be used in order to address common challenges caused by external driving forces such as demographic change, economic pressures due to globalization, etc. In the past, these competitive advantages have only been partially addressed, i.e. in relation to the promotion of localized eco-tourist activity. Integrated tourism approaches (promoted through TO3) are essential for |

| Selected thematic objective | Selected investment priority | Justification for selection |
|--|--|---|
| | | the development of a competitive tourist industry but need to be complemented by an improvement in the preservation status of the cultural and natural sites and by an increase in their carrying capacity (i.e. potential numbers of visitors). |
| 06 - Preserving and protecting the environment and promoting resource efficiency | 6d - Protecting and restoring biodiversity and soil and promoting ecosystem services, including through Natura 2000, and green infrastructure | Some of CB area ecological resources (such as bird sanctuaries) imply a particular responsibility for their preservation within Europe. In addition, CB area ecological connectivity (e.g. common habitats, migration patterns, etc) requires common cross-border approaches. Biodiversity preservation status in CB area habitats is particularly low, while common approaches to biodiversity protection remain largely unexploited as most management systems/approaches have been planned and implemented by the participating countries separately. |
| 06 - Preserving and protecting the environment and promoting resource efficiency | 6f - Promoting innovative technologies to improve environmental protection and resource efficiency in the waste sector, water sector and with regard to soil, or to reduce air pollution | This investment priority presents significant opportunities for the programme to capitalize on previous investments. Resource efficiency (with regards to water resources) and the use of innovative technologies aiming at protecting the environment have been identified as long-standing strategic priorities for the CB area. However, a large number of surface water bodies remain at less than Good Ecological Status. Since water pollution/degradation problems are of cross-border character, they require common approaches. Improving surface water quality is of utmost importance for the CB area environment as many of the Natura sites are aquatic and are influenced by the quality of the waters. |
| 07 - Promoting sustainable transport and removing bottlenecks in key network | 7b - Enhancing regional mobility by connecting secondary and tertiary nodes to TEN-T infrastructure, including | The CB area – despite the significant improvements achieved in the recent years through the construction of motorways – still lacks sufficient north-to-south interconnections. The secondary network |

| Selected thematic objective | Selected investment priority | Justification for selection |
|---|---|--|
| infrastructures | multimodal nodes | connections to the area motorways is particularly insufficient. |
| 09 - Promoting social inclusion, combating poverty and any discrimination | 9a - Investing in health and social infrastructure which contributes to national, regional and local development, reducing inequalities in terms of health status, promoting social inclusion through improved access to social, cultural and recreational services and the transition from institutional to community-based services | CB area health status indicators have not been satisfactory for a long time despite the satisfactory levels (in terms of quantity) of healthcare infrastructure in the area, indicating a lack of effectiveness in the application and/or distribution of such resources. The rise of poverty in the CB area now places more pressure on health care systems. Improving their effectiveness is hence of paramount importance. |
| 09 - Promoting social inclusion, combating poverty and any discrimination | 9c - Providing support for social enterprises | The rise of poverty in the CB area places vulnerable groups at increased risk of peril. Social entrepreneurship has been successfully used to alleviate such problems in other EU regions/Member States but has not been sufficiently developed in the CB area. Social entrepreneurship can address issues of reduced service delivery to special populations subject to or threatened by social exclusion and– at the same time - provide a vehicle for these populations to gain access to employment. |

1.2 Justification for the financial allocation

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

The financial allocation to each thematic objective (TO) corresponds to the priority ranking of each TO for the cross-border area, as it was adjusted to account for the varying cost of typical interventions under each TO.

Transport is the only intervention area which typically exhibits very high unit costs compared to all other intervention areas of the programme. In order to account for this particularity, transport is allocated an amount disproportionate of its relative priority ranking (29,48% of total budget). This budget allocation corresponds to specific infrastructure projects and is necessary in order to ensure that the infrastructure planned under IP 7b will result in an operational and functional transport link between the two countries. In addition, increased accessibility is expected to contribute to other programme objectives as well (such as T.O.3 - entrepreneurship and economic development – and to IP6c - through the growth of tourism). As such part of the added value achieved through T.O. 7 investments will be diffused to other programme priorities.

The remaining budget has been distributed among all other Thematic Objectives in a way roughly proportional to their priority rankings.

Environment represents the highest priority for the CB area (it received the highest score 6) as documented both by the analysis of the existing situation and the partnership process during programme development. In addition, it is a critical factor for the growth of a key economic sector: tourism. Environment is currently under pressure both from man-made activities (pollution, accidents, etc) as well as from climate change. The high degree of correlation and complementarity between T.O.6 and T.O.5 interventions and the desire to achieve thematically and territorially integrated interventions in order to increase concentration and impact of the available resources, has led to the combination of the two T.O.s into one priority axis (P.A. 2). The objective of P.A.2 is to preserve the area environmental resources in as much as possible pristine state, while at the same time exploiting them for the development of sustainable tourism.

As such the programme allocates to P.A.2 33,2% of programme resources:

- 22,18% of programme budget to TO 6 activities and
- 10,89% to TO 5 activities.

The relatively larger share of budget allocated to T.O.5 activities – as compared to its relative priority ranking 3, which is the lowest among all selected T.Os – is justified by the excessive gap in joint disaster prevention and management planning that currently exists in the two participating countries: there are absolutely no joint or jointly coordinated plans. In addition, the needs in this thematic area are extremely urgent as is it manifested by the recent severe flooding incidents.

Social inclusion (TO 9) represents the second highest priority for the CB area (it received the second highest score 5) and is allocated 16,64% of programme resources. Social inclusion and especially the combat against poverty is also expected to indirectly benefit from T.O.3 interventions as well (see complementarities between 3a and 9c actions). As such, one could argue that the total resources allocated to social inclusion exceed 17% of programme resources.

Finally entrepreneurship (TO 3) represents the third highest priority for the CB area (it received the third highest score 4) and receives 15,60% of programme resources. Social inclusion and especially the combat against poverty is also expected to benefit from entrepreneurship interventions as well, hence rising the total impact of programme resources.

Thematic Objectives 3, 6, 7, and 9 together represent 83,9% of total programme resources, thus contributing to effective concentration of resources.

The concentration of programme resources to a few thematic priorities (5 in total), and scaled according to the relative weight of each TO (in terms of CB area need and in terms of unit cost of typical intervention) increases the impact and effectiveness of EU policy.

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

| Priority axis | ERDF support (€) | Proportion (%) of the total Union support for the cooperation programme (by Fund) | | | Thematic objective / Investment priority / Specific objective | Result indicators corresponding to the specific indicator |
|---------------|------------------|---|------------------------|------------------------|---|---|
| | | ERDF | ENI (where applicable) | IPA (where applicable) | | |
| 1 | 17,200,000.00 | 15.60% | 0.00% | 0.00% | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▼ 03 - Enhancing the competitiveness of small and medium-sized enterprises, the agricultural sector (for the EAFRD) and the fisheries and aquaculture sector (for the EMFF) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▼ 3a - Promoting entrepreneurship, in particular by facilitating the economic exploitation of new ideas and fostering the creation of new firms, including through business incubators <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▼ 1 - To Improve entrepreneurship SME support systems ▼ 3d - Supporting the capacity of SMEs to grow in regional, national and international markets, and to engage in innovation processes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▼ 2 - To improve SME capacity to expand beyond local markets | [R0201, R0202] |
| 2 | 36,450,000.00 | 33.06% | 0.00% | 0.00% | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▼ 05 - Promoting climate change adaptation, risk prevention and management <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▼ 5b - Promoting investment to address specific risks, ensuring disaster resilience and developing disaster management systems <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▼ 3 - To improve CB cooperation on flood risk management plans at river basin level. ▼ 06 - Preserving and protecting the environment and promoting resource efficiency <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▼ 6c - Conserving, protecting, promoting and developing natural and cultural heritage <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▼ 4 - To valorise CB area cultural and natural heritage for tourist purposes ▼ 6d - Protecting and restoring biodiversity and soil and promoting ecosystem services, including through Natura 2000, and green infrastructure <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▼ 5 - To enhance the effectiveness of biodiversity protection activities ▼ 6f - Promoting innovative technologies to improve environmental protection and resource efficiency in the waste sector, water sector and with regard to soil, or to reduce air pollution <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▼ 6 - To enhance water management | [R0203, R0204, R0205, R0206] |
| 3 | 32,500,000.00 | 29.48% | 0.00% | 0.00% | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▼ 07 - Promoting sustainable transport and removing bottlenecks in key network infrastructures <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▼ 7b - Enhancing regional mobility by connecting secondary and tertiary nodes to TEN-T infrastructure, including multimodal nodes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▼ 7 - Improve cross-border accessibility | [R0207] |

| Priority axis | ERDF support (€) | Proportion (%) of the total Union support for the cooperation programme (by Fund) | | | Thematic objective / Investment priority / Specific objective | Result indicators corresponding to the specific indicator |
|---------------|------------------|---|------------------------|------------------------|---|---|
| | | ERDF | ENI (where applicable) | IPA (where applicable) | | |
| 4 | 18,341,234.00 | 16.64% | 0.00% | 0.00% | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▼ 09 - Promoting social inclusion, combating poverty and any discrimination <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▼ 9a - Investing in health and social infrastructure which contributes to national, regional and local development, reducing inequalities in terms of health status, promoting social inclusion through improved access to social, cultural and recreational services and the transition from institutional to community-based services <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▼ 8 - To improve access to primary and emergency health care (at isolated and deprived communities) in the CB area ▼ 9c - Providing support for social enterprises <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▼ 9 - To expand social entrepreneurship in the CB area | [R0208, R0209, R0210] |
| 5 | 5,750,000.00 | 5.22% | 0.00% | 0.00% | 10 - To manage and implement the Cooperation Programme effectively and efficiently | [] |

2. PRIORITY AXES

2.A DESCRIPTION OF THE PRIORITY AXES OTHER THAN TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

2.A.1 Priority axis

| | |
|-----------------------------------|--|
| ID of the priority axis | 1 |
| Title of the priority axis | A Competitive and Innovative Cross-Border Area |

- 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 through community-led local development

2.A.2 Justification for the establishment of a priority axis covering more than one thematic objective (where applicable)

Not Applicable

2.A.3 Fund and calculation basis for Union support

| Fund | Calculation basis (total eligible expenditure or eligible public expenditure) |
|-------------|--|
| ERDF | Public |

2.A.4 Investment priority

| | |
|---|---|
| ID of the investment priority | 3a |
| Title of the investment priority | Promoting entrepreneurship, in particular by facilitating the economic exploitation of new ideas and fostering the creation of new firms, including through business incubators |

2.A.5 Specific objectives corresponding to the investment priority and expected results

| | |
|--|---|
| ID of the specific objective | 1 |
| Title of the specific objective | To Improve entrepreneurship SME support systems |
| Results that the Member States seek to achieve with Union support | <p>Improved entrepreneurial climate which will facilitate the development of businesses and support them during the first period of their operation.</p> <p>A tangible result in the medium term will be the development of new business support systems. In the longer term, CP will contribute to development and higher survival of start-ups.</p> <p>Increased entrepreneurial activity especially among underrepresented groups.</p> |

Table 3: Programme-specific result indicators (by specific objective)

| Specific objective | | 1 - To Improve entrepreneurship SME support systems | | | | | |
|--------------------|--|--|----------------|---------------|---------------------|----------------|------------------------|
| ID | Indicator | Measurement unit | Baseline value | Baseline year | Target value (2023) | Source of data | Frequency of reporting |
| R0201 | Entrepreneurial business support environment | entrepreneurship barometer – composite index in 1-10 scale | 5.34 | 2015 | 5.90 | Survey | 2018, 2020, 2023 |

2.A.6 Actions to be supported under the investment priority (by investment priority)

2.A.6.1 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

| | |
|---|--|
| Investment priority | 3a - Promoting entrepreneurship, in particular by facilitating the economic exploitation of new ideas and fostering the creation of new firms, including through business incubators |
| <p>Specific Objective: Improve entrepreneurship SME support systems.</p> <p>In the current economic climate, SMEs face particular operational challenges, such as obtaining finance, access to business-relevant know-how, information and contacts, services for developing competitive products-services, introduction of cost saving technologies, human development and skills related to the new market conditions etc. In mountainous and peripheral areas, these challenges are amplified either by limited access to support systems due to long distances and/or the limited capacity of systems.</p> <p>The SO1 will mainly finance projects to provide business support services to new or newly established SMEs (target group-end users). Project beneficiaries will be business support organizations (of public interest or no-profit, or professional associations etc). Other activities will include infrastructure projects to provide to SMEs a network of support facilities and networks helping the transfer of innovation, new technologies, business advices, access to information, etc, with a cross-border dimension.</p> <p>Interventions concentrate on the most dynamic business sectors as documented by RIS3 strategies. As such it concentrates on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Business support systems focused on removing barriers and bottlenecks for SMEs, for example by facilitating campus support facilities and other types of business support over distance, creating support networks of peers, developing inclusive business models, targeted use of public procurement, and horizontal ICT and connectivity services (e.g. web-platforms for SMEs), etc | |

| | |
|--|--|
| Investment priority | 3a - Promoting entrepreneurship, in particular by facilitating the economic exploitation of new ideas and fostering the creation of new firms, including through business incubators |
| <p><u>Types of Actions:</u></p> <p>Projects to provide business support services to entrepreneurs, new or newly established (up to 3 years operation) SMEs aimed at: removing barriers to business establishment and encouragement of entrepreneurship:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promoting and facilitating entrepreneurship by including inter-alia actions for raising awareness, training, presenting new business and funding possibilities-opportunities • Network for providing to entrepreneurs support and consulting services based on a “one-stop-shop” approach. • Facilitating operation and modernization of existing, or establishment of new campus business support facilities and networks helping the transfer of innovation, new technologies organizational and marketing tools etc.: Business-hosting facilities, such as technology parks, incubators, etc and business support facilities such as market places, exhibition halls, outlets, depots and logistics centres, laboratories or other technological installations, etc.(Infrastructure will not be financed alone, without the provision of services by the supported infrastructure; no infrastructure financed by IP 3a will be financed by IP 3d) • Development of business support services including inter-alia ICT systems, business consulting,e- platforms. • Development of services fostering productivity such as business-specific training programmes and actions facilitating the introduction of new techniques and technologies into the production process, including inter-alia new technologies / new organizational methods. <p>Productive priority areas include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Agro-food industry o Waste management for recycling or energy production | |

| | |
|--|--|
| Investment priority | 3a - Promoting entrepreneurship, in particular by facilitating the economic exploitation of new ideas and fostering the creation of new firms, including through business incubators |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Renewable energy and energy saving and efficiency o Sustainable tourism o The most dynamic business sectors as documented by RIS3 strategies. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Health • Materials - Technology • Textile industry <p><u>Main target groups:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Newly established SMEs (up to 3 years operation) including those organized as cooperatives, self-employed individuals, social enterprises • potential entrepreneurs <p><u>Types of beneficiaries:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National, regional and local authorities and bodies-organizations dealing with the private sector and business support; • Business Chambers, Professional & Collective Associations, NGOs and Non-Profit-Organizations, (or Not for Profit), Regional Development Agencies, Business Networks (various public and private sector participants) and other bodies representing and/or dealing with the private sector with interests (aims) relevant to entrepreneurship • Universities and other education and training providers. Research Institutes-Centers (public or private) in the CB area. • Chambers, collective organizations and associations representing businesses and other professionals participating in the tourist value-chain as well | |

| | |
|---|--|
| Investment priority | 3a - Promoting entrepreneurship, in particular by facilitating the economic exploitation of new ideas and fostering the creation of new firms, including through business incubators |
| as National, regional and local authorities and their departments responsible for CB cultural assets and protected natural areas. | |

2.A.6.2 Guiding principles for the selection of operations

| | |
|--|--|
| Investment priority | 3a - Promoting entrepreneurship, in particular by facilitating the economic exploitation of new ideas and fostering the creation of new firms, including through business incubators |
| <p>Priority will be given to projects that further youth and female entrepreneurship and projects supporting entrepreneurship in geographic areas that exhibit a relative lack of support systems.</p> <p>Projects which can document the improvement of entrepreneurship conditions within the programming period and sustainability thereafter will be given preference over other projects.</p> <p>Projects in the following sectors will receive priority:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agro-food industry • Waste management for recycling or energy production • Renewable energy and energy saving and efficiency • Sustainable tourism • Health • Materials – Technology • Textile industry | |

| | |
|--|--|
| Investment priority | 3a - Promoting entrepreneurship, in particular by facilitating the economic exploitation of new ideas and fostering the creation of new firms, including through business incubators |
| <p>The following conditions will also be observed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The support on target group (participants SMEs and/or entrepreneurs) must be provided regularly (not ad-hoc support) and during a period adequate (eg. at least 2 years) in order to SMEs will be highly potential viable and commercially active after finalizing of support. • Projects must demonstrate a cross-border added value and clearly illustrate the contribution expected from each partner. Active engagement of project partners in joint activities will be required (simple parallel actions will not be allowed). • Projects that rely solely on analysing the current situation and/or making plans for future action will not be approved. • Projects should have a lasting impact. • Infrastructure will not be financed alone, without the provision of services by the supported infrastructure. • All infrastructure constructed should be informed by the risk assessments in compliance with EU Civil protection legislation (Decision 1313/2013/EC on the Union civil protection mechanism) to assess the projects' vulnerability to disaster risks, including longer-term expected effects from climate change. • Projects shall meet the requirements of the General Regulation (Regulation (EU) 1303/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council laying down common provisions on the ERDF, the ESF, the Cohesion Fund, the EAFRD and the EMFF – known as the “common provisions regulation” or CPR), article 7 concerning the implementation of the principles of non discrimination and accessibility to persons with disabilities | |

2.A.6.3 Planned use of financial instruments (where appropriate)

| | |
|---------------------------------------|--|
| Investment priority | 3a - Promoting entrepreneurship, in particular by facilitating the economic exploitation of new ideas and fostering the creation of new firms, including through business incubators |
| No financial instruments will be used | |

2.A.6.4 Planned use of major projects (where appropriate)

| | |
|---------------------------------------|--|
| Investment priority | 3a - Promoting entrepreneurship, in particular by facilitating the economic exploitation of new ideas and fostering the creation of new firms, including through business incubators |
| No major projects will be implemented | |

2.A.6.5 Output indicators (by investment priority)

Table 4: Common and programme-specific output indicators

| | | | | | |
|----------------------------|--|-------------------------|----------------------------|-----------------------|-------------------------------|
| Investment priority | 3a - Promoting entrepreneurship, in particular by facilitating the economic exploitation of new ideas and fostering the creation of new firms, including through business incubators | | | | |
| ID | Indicator | Measurement unit | Target value (2023) | Source of data | Frequency of reporting |
| CO01 | Productive investment: Number of enterprises receiving support | Enterprises | 275.00 | Programme MIS | Annually |
| CO05 | Productive investment: Number of new enterprises supported | Enterprises | 275.00 | Programme MIS | Annually |

2.A.4 Investment priority

| | |
|---|--|
| ID of the investment priority | 3d |
| Title of the investment priority | Supporting the capacity of SMEs to grow in regional, national and international markets, and to engage in innovation processes |

2.A.5 Specific objectives corresponding to the investment priority and expected results

| | |
|--|---|
| ID of the specific objective | 2 |
| Title of the specific objective | To improve SME capacity to expand beyond local markets |
| Results that the Member States seek to achieve with Union support | <p>Well-recognized and addressed challenges entrepreneurs face in remote areas.</p> <p>Changed attitudes and behaviour of CB SMEs towards international markets.</p> <p>Increased awareness and capacity to act on business opportunities beyond local markets.</p> <p>Enhanced cooperation between area SMEs and SMEs located beyond local markets. Enhanced SMEs networking attitude and creating business networks</p> <p>Better access to key markets and a wider customer base by facilitating the transfer and development of marketing concepts and models.</p> <p>Enhanced integration of CB area into global economy and increased CB area exports</p> |

Table 3: Programme-specific result indicators (by specific objective)

| Specific objective | | 2 - To improve SME capacity to expand beyond local markets | | | | | |
|--------------------|---------------------------------------|--|----------------|---------------|---------------------|----------------|------------------------|
| ID | Indicator | Measurement unit | Baseline value | Baseline year | Target value (2023) | Source of data | Frequency of reporting |
| R0202 | Total Value of Annual CB Area Exports | meuros | 4,407.47 | 2013 | 4,540.00 | SEBE/NSI | 2018, 2020, 2023 |

2.A.6 Actions to be supported under the investment priority (by investment priority)

2.A.6.1 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

| | |
|--|---|
| Investment priority | 3d - Supporting the capacity of SMEs to grow in regional, national and international markets, and to engage in innovation processes |
| <p>Specific Objective: Improve SME capacity to expand beyond local markets</p> <p>CB area SMEs face challenges such as a small local customer base, long distances to market, and a poor business environment generally, which limit their growth potential for existing SMEs (target group-end users).</p> <p>CB cooperation can contribute to increase access to key markets and a wider customer base by facilitating the transfer and development of marketing concepts and models:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Marketing models will be used to CB cluster or networks of SMEs with complementary product or service portfolio, networks to take advantage of trends such as increasing eco-tourism in the Programme area or use market research to discover new consumer markets.• Marketing models will focus on the use of ICT solutions, e-commerce and social media, and cooperation on logistics to overcome barriers such as distance to markets, and measures supporting trade facilitation, for example helping to meet product standards, and labelling requirements.• Marketing models will be used to realise the potential of ‘place-based’ development opportunities. For example, the Programme area’s unique cultural and natural heritage is a basis for tourism and experience industries, based on the area’s unique natural environment, indigenous lifestyles, and creative industries. <p>The SO2 will finance projects to provide information and special advisory services to SMEs including services based on a “one-stop-shop” approach as well as business support facilities-infrastructures such as exhibition halls, logistics centres, laboratories (tests and quality of products) etc.</p> <p>Project beneficiaries will be business support organizations (of public interest or no-profit, or professional associations etc).</p> | |

| | |
|---|---|
| Investment priority | 3d - Supporting the capacity of SMEs to grow in regional, national and international markets, and to engage in innovation processes |
| <p>The CP seeks to contribute to an increased awareness of and increased capacity to act on business opportunities beyond local markets to overcome challenges faced by SMEs especially in mountainous and peripheral areas, such as a limited customer base and long distance to market.</p> | |
| <p><u>Types of Actions:</u></p> | |
| <p>Projects to provide business support services to existing SMEs aimed at encouragement and facilitating of acting beyond local markets:</p> | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transfer and development of marketing models and solutions suitable for SMEs in c-b areas, to increase their market reach and to facilitate the use of distance-spanning technology to overcome distance to the market barriers. • Transfer and development of concepts for clustering and creating networks of SMEs to meet a larger scale, more diverse and/or more complex demand (eg. marketing, export promotion) • Creation of clusters or other types of “networks” (e.g. “value-chains”) for the achievement of cost-savings, common research and product development, etc. • Collaboration schemes between businesses and non-businesses (e.g. private museums) for the tourism/culture area, • Development and test control systems for branding of “green”, and “traditional” products respecting and promoting the CB area cultural and natural heritage. • Joint or common (horizontal) export support services for CB businesses (e.g. participation to exhibitions and business-promotion events). • Joint or common business support facilities-infrastructure (included: modernization, creation, operation, services to SMEs) including inter-alia market places, exhibition halls, outlets, depots and logistics centres, laboratories. (No infrastructure financed by IP 3d will be financed by IP 3a) • Cross-border business-plans with pilot applications for individual businesses and/or sectors/sub-sectors in the areas of: Cross-border trade. / Establishment of new cross-border “business organization models” (e.g. contract farming, “modular production networks”) | |

| | |
|--|---|
| Investment priority | 3d - Supporting the capacity of SMEs to grow in regional, national and international markets, and to engage in innovation processes |
| <p>Productive priority areas include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Agro-food industry• Waste management for recycling or energy production• Renewable energy and energy saving and efficiency• Sustainable tourism• Health• Materials – Technology• Textile industry• The most dynamic business sectors as documented by RIS3 strategies. <p><u>Main target groups:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Existing SMEs, including those organized as cooperatives, self-employed individuals, social enterprises <p><u>Specific territories targeted:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• N/A | |

| | |
|--|---|
| Investment priority | 3d - Supporting the capacity of SMEs to grow in regional, national and international markets, and to engage in innovation processes |
| <u>Types of beneficiaries:</u> | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National, regional and local authorities and bodies-organizations dealing with the private sector and business support; • Business Chambers, Professional & Collective Associations, NGOs and Non-Profit-Organizations, (or Not for Profit), Regional Development Agencies, Business Networks (various public and private sector participants) and other bodies representing and/or dealing with the private sector with interests (aims) relevant to entrepreneurship • Universities and other education and training providers. Research Institutes-Centers (public or private) in the CB area. • Chambers, collective organizations and associations representing businesses and other professionals participating in the tourist value-chain as well as National, regional and local authorities and their departments responsible for CB cultural assets and protected natural areas. • Actors in the export chain that can facilitate trade, such as export agencies, international Chambers of Commerce, trade organisations, sector-specific organisations, representatives of logistics and distribution companies, port authorities, business services including marketing, as well as business services provided by the creative industries and civil society organisations. In addition, projects could cooperate with technical partners. | |

2.A.6.2 Guiding principles for the selection of operations

| | |
|--|---|
| Investment priority | 3d - Supporting the capacity of SMEs to grow in regional, national and international markets, and to engage in innovation processes |
| Priority will be given to projects that: | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • promote the integration of specialist marketing-sales models, R&D, innovation, to SMEs, in order to lead high export potential. • promote the networking between various participants of the value chain • further the promotion and sales of the CB area products/services beyond the CB area (preferably international) eg. common marketing actions, exhibitions, business mission. • involve both partners from the business and the non-business sectors. • support business extroversion and growth in geographic areas that exhibit a relative lack of such support systems and | |

| | |
|---|---|
| Investment priority | 3d - Supporting the capacity of SMEs to grow in regional, national and international markets, and to engage in innovation processes |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • support business extroversion and growth of businesses owned by underrepresented groups. <p>Projects which can document the improvement of entrepreneurship conditions within the programming period and sustainability thereafter will be given preference over other projects.</p> <p>Projects in the following sectors will receive priority:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agro-food industry • Waste management for recycling or energy production • Renewable energy and energy saving and efficiency • Sustainable tourism • Health • Materials – Technology • Textile industry <p>The following conditions will also be observed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Projects must demonstrate a cross-border added value and clearly illustrate the contribution expected from each partner. Active engagement of project partners in joint activities will be required (simple parallel actions will not be allowed). • Projects that rely solely on analysing the current situation and/or making plans for future action will not be approved. • The support on target group (participants SMEs and/or entrepreneurs) must be provided regularly (not ad-hoc support) and during a period adequate (at least 2 years) in order to SMEs absorb – incorporate in a productive way the provided business support and will be able to act alone for further development, after the end of the project. | |

| | |
|--|---|
| Investment priority | 3d - Supporting the capacity of SMEs to grow in regional, national and international markets, and to engage in innovation processes |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> .All infrastructure constructed should be informed by the risk assessments in compliance with EU Civil protection legislation (Decision 1313/2013/EC on the Union civil protection mechanism) to assess the projects' vulnerability to disaster risks, including longer-term expected effects from climate change. | |

2.A.6.3 Planned use of financial instruments (where appropriate)

| | |
|---------------------------------------|---|
| Investment priority | 3d - Supporting the capacity of SMEs to grow in regional, national and international markets, and to engage in innovation processes |
| No financial Instruments will be used | |

2.A.6.4 Planned use of major projects (where appropriate)

| | |
|---------------------------------------|---|
| Investment priority | 3d - Supporting the capacity of SMEs to grow in regional, national and international markets, and to engage in innovation processes |
| No major projects will be implemented | |

2.A.6.5 Output indicators (by investment priority)

Table 4: Common and programme-specific output indicators

| | | | | | |
|----------------------------|---|-------------------------|----------------------------|-----------------------|-------------------------------|
| Investment priority | 3d - Supporting the capacity of SMEs to grow in regional, national and international markets, and to engage in innovation processes | | | | |
| ID | Indicator | Measurement unit | Target value (2023) | Source of data | Frequency of reporting |

| Investment priority | | 3d - Supporting the capacity of SMEs to grow in regional, national and international markets, and to engage in innovation processes | | | |
|---------------------|---|---|---------------------|----------------|------------------------|
| ID | Indicator | Measurement unit | Target value (2023) | Source of data | Frequency of reporting |
| CO01 | Productive investment: Number of enterprises receiving support | Enterprises | 330.00 | Programme MIS | Annually |
| CO04 | Productive investment: Number of enterprises receiving non-financial support | Enterprises | 330.00 | Programme MIS | Annually |
| O0201 | Number of clusters and other collaborative schemes composed of stakeholders/enterprises from both sides of border | collaborative schemes | 4.00 | Programme MIS | Annually |

2.A.7 Performance framework

Table 5: Performance framework of the priority axis

| Priority axis | | 1 - A Competitive and Innovative Cross-Border Area | | | | | |
|---------------|----------------|--|-------------------------------------|--------------------|---------------------|----------------|--|
| ID | Indicator type | Indicator or key implementation step | Measurement unit, where appropriate | Milestone for 2018 | Final target (2023) | Source of data | Explanation of relevance of indicator, where appropriate |
| CO05 | O | Productive investment: Number of new enterprises supported | Enterprises | 0 | 275.00 | Programme MIS | |
| F0201 | F | Eligible verified (certified) Expenditure of the Axis | Euro | 1,011,765 | 20,235,295.00 | Programme MIS | (n+3 = 2015) |
| K0201 | I | Selection of enterprises | Number | 6 | 9.00 | Programme MIS | Approved & Contracted Projects that contribute to the CO05 (1 typical project = 30 enterprises of CO05) Total projects 2023 = 275 SMEs / 30 SMEs = 9 |

Additional qualitative information on the establishment of the performance framework

2.A.8 Categories of intervention

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

Tables 6-9: Categories of intervention

Table 6: Dimension 1 Intervention field

| Priority axis | 1 - A Competitive and Innovative Cross-Border Area | |
|----------------------|--|-------------------|
| | Code | Amount (€) |
| | 063. Cluster support and business networks primarily benefiting SMEs | 2,500,000.00 |
| | 064. Research and innovation processes in SMEs (including voucher schemes, process, design, service and social innovation) | 2,800,000.00 |
| | 066. Advanced support services for SMEs and groups of SMEs (including management, marketing and design services) | 7,000,000.00 |
| | 067. SME business development, support to entrepreneurship and incubation (including support to spin offs and spin outs) | 2,000,000.00 |
| | 072. Business infrastructure for SMEs (including industrial parks and sites) | 2,900,000.00 |

Table 7: Dimension 2 Form of finance

| | | |
|-------------------------|---|-------------------|
| Priority axis | 1 - A Competitive and Innovative Cross-Border Area | |
| | Code | Amount (€) |
| 01. Non-repayable grant | | 17,200,000.00 |

Table 8: Dimension 3 Territory type

| | | |
|--|---|-------------------|
| Priority axis | 1 - A Competitive and Innovative Cross-Border Area | |
| | Code | Amount (€) |
| 01. Large Urban areas (densely populated >50 000 population) | | 8,600,000.00 |
| 02. Small Urban areas (intermediate density >5 000 population) | | 8,600,000.00 |

Table 9: Dimension 6 Territorial delivery mechanisms

| | | |
|----------------------|---|-------------------|
| Priority axis | 1 - A Competitive and Innovative Cross-Border Area | |
| | Code | Amount (€) |
| 07. Not applicable | | 17,200,000.00 |

2.A.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 to enhance the administrative capacity of relevant partners to participate in the implementation of programmes (where appropriate)

| | |
|-----------------------|---|
| Priority axis: | 1 - A Competitive and Innovative Cross-Border Area |
| Not applicable | |

2.A.1 Priority axis

| | |
|-----------------------------------|---|
| ID of the priority axis | 2 |
| Title of the priority axis | A Sustainable and Climate adaptable Cross-Border area |

- 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 through community-led local development

2.A.2 Justification for the establishment of a priority axis covering more than one thematic objective (where applicable)

Investment priorities from both TO 6 and TO 5 are combined in this priority axis in order to encourage integrated (thematically and territorially) solutions to environmental issues. This is particularly necessary when addressing surface-water related issues where interventions need to be integrated both territorially (i.e. at international river-basin level) and thematically (i.e. addressing simultaneously issues of ecological and chemical protection alongside with issues of flood protection). Thematic integration of flood protection –with surface water protection (as per WFD) is necessary in order to produce flood protection solutions which will result in the minimum possible derogations from the requirement to achieve good status and the least costly mitigation measures.

Thematic integration of tools available under TO 6 investment priorities with TO 5 objectives - such as approaches to address simultaneously biodiversity preservation and flood protection objectives – result in better overall management of the environmental system.

Traditionally, flood risk has been managed through “gray” infrastructure—including dams, levees and floodwalls, which, however, eliminates one of the most important ecological processes on Earth: the connection between rivers and floodplains. River basins with extensive flood-management infrastructure customarily lose this essential connection, resulting in dramatic declines in river biodiversity. In fact, freshwater species are endangered at higher rates than either terrestrial or marine species, in large part due to the fragmentation and changes in river flow resulting from “gray” infrastructure. In order to prevent such impacts, integration of biodiversity protection tools and flood management is necessary in an approach which incorporates natural features and processes into flood-management projects. These techniques and approaches, unlike “gray” infrastructure, can also include restoration or conservation of forests, wetlands, rivers and floodplains. When implemented as part of an overall strategy for sustainable river

and watershed management, these approaches provide not just the primary benefit of flood-risk reduction, but also support a diverse array of other benefits such as:

- reduced necessity for continuous vigilance (e.g. against levee failures) and constant maintenance of flood protection infrastructure (e.g., to repair erosion sites);
- retaining run-off water – before it reaches the river banks - and using it for other purposes;
- increasing ground permeability and enrichment of groundwater aquifers (e.g. through reforestation of watersheds) which simultaneously increase nesting sites for endangered species as well;
- controlling farm run-off of fertilizers into rivers (e.g. through storm-water retention ponds) thus controlling eutrophication; etc.

Finally, as the natural environment of the CB area is an important asset that can be used for economic development purposes through the promotion of eco-tourism, natural site promotion interventions (such as infrastructure which facilitates visitation) need to be combined with flood protection measures in order to increase the safety of the visitors. In addition, upgrades in urban and cultural assets in order to attract tourists, when combined with “green” approaches (e.g. porous pavement, rain gardens and rain barrels, grassy swales, etc) as part of the intervention, can contribute to a decrease in storm-water run-off and vulnerability to floods.

2.A.3 Fund and calculation basis for Union support

| Fund | Calculation basis (total eligible expenditure or eligible public expenditure) |
|------|---|
| ERDF | Public |

2.A.4 Investment priority

| | |
|----------------------------------|---|
| ID of the investment priority | 5b |
| Title of the investment priority | Promoting investment to address specific risks, ensuring disaster resilience and developing disaster management systems |

2.A.5 Specific objectives corresponding to the investment priority and expected results

| | |
|--|---|
| ID of the specific objective | 3 |
| Title of the specific objective | To improve CB cooperation on flood risk management plans at river basin level. |
| Results that the Member States seek to achieve with Union support | <p><i>Strengthened capacity of local actors to prevent / limit damage caused by CB natural disasters (floods)</i></p> <p><i>Increased resilience to CB natural disasters (floods).</i></p> <p><i>Fulfillment of Directive 2007/60/EC requirements on flood risk management plans jointly coordinated at the level of the international river basin district</i></p> |

Table 3: Programme-specific result indicators (by specific objective)

| Specific objective | | 3 - To improve CB cooperation on flood risk management plans at river basin level. | | | | | |
|--------------------|---|--|----------------|---------------|---------------------|----------------------------------|------------------------|
| ID | Indicator | Measurement unit | Baseline value | Baseline year | Target value (2023) | Source of data | Frequency of reporting |
| R0203 | Number of international river basin districts with jointly coordinated flood risks management plans in compliance with Directive 2007/60/EC | number | 0.00 | 2014 | 3.00 | Authorities for civil protection | 2018, 2020, 2023 |

2.A.6 Actions to be supported under the investment priority (by investment priority)

2.A.6.1 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

| | |
|--|--|
| Investment priority | 5b - Promoting investment to address specific risks, ensuring disaster resilience and developing disaster management systems |
| <p>Specific Objective: Reduce impacts from disasters.</p> <p>The CB area includes three (3) international river basin districts of the cross-border rivers: 1) Strymon-Struma, 2) Nestos-Mesta, 3) Ardas-Arda and Evros-Maritsa. Natural hazards in flood risk zones (mainly in the vicinity of Nestos/Mesta and Evros/Maritsa rivers) are often and of high costs damages. Floods can quickly spread across borders and their effective management is of cross border importance.</p> <p>There are also other natural risks in wildfires as well as landslides and erosion. The CP aims on dealing with one main risk, the flood, in order to maximize the expected results given the available financial resources. Forest wildfires have been extensively addressed during past programming periods (2000-2013) and are considered a lower priority target for this programming period. Additional, water management (pollution control and efficient use) and soil management (erosion, contaminated lands) are addressed under SO6 (IP 6f).</p> <p>Both Countries are under elaboration of National flood risks management plans for the above 3 international rivers. Up to date no actions for jointly coordinated plans have been planned and implemented. In the framework of SO3 emphasis will be given in fulfillment of the obligation that derives from Directive 2007/60/EC, Article 8, for jointly coordinated flood risks management plans (by 22/12/2015, First Review & 22/12/2021, End of 1st flood risk management cycle).</p> <p>Additional, SO3 will contribute in the second cycle of “river basin management plans” (by end 2015) of the Directive 2000/60/EC in the field of water policy, at which time the two sets of plans (river basin and flood risks) will be coordinated.</p> <p>CB Programme can contribute in better management of flood risks as well as in capacity-building of stakeholder in immediately risk response actions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jointly coordinated drafted or reformed National flood risk management plans in line with Directive 2007/60/EC (Article 8, par.2) • Contribution to “River Basin Management Plan” (Directive 2000/60/EC - Water policy) concerning jointly coordination in flood issues of international rivers • Adaptation/mitigation pilot actions (for specific risks) with positive mitigation effects: e.g. conservation/rehabilitation of peatland, “buffer zones”, | |

| | |
|--|--|
| Investment priority | 5b - Promoting investment to address specific risks, ensuring disaster resilience and developing disaster management systems |
| <p>innovative methods/technologies, etc.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Raising awareness and Capacity-building of responsible Authorities and local population for better preparedness in risk response actions by awareness campaign, education, drills, training etc. <p>As a result of the CB cooperation the CP seeks to contribute to an integrated jointly management of flood incidents. A tangible result in the medium term will be Countries' compliance with Directive 2007/60/EC and higher level of preparedness in dealing with floods risks. In the longer term, CB cooperation will contribute to lower cost (damages) of floods.</p> <p><u>Type of actions:</u></p> <p>Development of common standards to be applied on National flood risks management plans in order to plans be jointly coordinated in compliance with Directive 2007/60/EC.</p> <p>Adaptation (revision) of National flood risks management plans on commonly agreed standards in order to plans be jointly coordinated.</p> <p>Development of Strategies and action plans for flood risks management</p> <p>Contribution to “River Basin Management Plan” (Directive 2000/60/EC - Water policy) concerning jointly coordination in flood issues of international rivers</p> <p>Capacity-building actions for flood risks such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Actions for building up a common knowledge base; • ICT and other innovative tools; • Harmonized action plans and standards in the CB area; • Training/educational support to enhance stakeholder capacity in emergency response. <p>Specific actions in the field of education, information sharing, drills and training for local population for risk communication and raising the awareness of</p> | |

| | |
|---|--|
| Investment priority | 5b - Promoting investment to address specific risks, ensuring disaster resilience and developing disaster management systems |
| <p>the population. General campaigns at national and local level to raise the level of preparedness.</p> <p>Risks and disaster management pilot actions for specific flood cross-border risks such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Investment in risk and disaster prevention and management (including equipment and tools for monitoring, early warning systems, exchange of information, flow prediction and alert systems, small-scale infrastructure pilot projects at river basins and their wider area for flood defence such as retention ponds, retaining walls, small dams, drainage canals, etc); • Land improvements for areas with high and medium hazard risk level aiming at increasing resilience of the ecosystem, the built environment and the rural environment such as "green" infrastructure, "ecosystem-based adaptation" approaches which strengthen the capacity of ecosystems to absorb extreme weather, small-scale landscaping to regulate the flow of surface water from heavy rainfall, small-scale drainage improvements, etc. • <p><u>Main target groups:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CB area and surrounding area (affected directly & indirectly by climate changes and risks in the area) population <p>Specific territories targeted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the most vulnerable territories to the above-mentioned risks. <p><u>Types of beneficiaries:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National, regional and local authorities and their agencies responsible for spatial planning, natural disaster management, civil protection and other fields relevant to the specific risks addressed each time; • Environmental NGOs, Non-Profit-Organisations, social enterprises, CB networks and other civil society Associations dealing with environment, natural disasters and civil protection, and other fields relevant to the addressed risks; • Education providers (public, private), Universities and research institutes dealing with natural disasters and civil protection, and other fields | |

| | |
|---|--|
| Investment priority | 5b - Promoting investment to address specific risks, ensuring disaster resilience and developing disaster management systems |
| relevant to the specific risks addressed each time. | |

2.A.6.2 Guiding principles for the selection of operations

| | |
|--|--|
| Investment priority | 5b - Promoting investment to address specific risks, ensuring disaster resilience and developing disaster management systems |
| <p>Funds will be channeled on a priority basis to projects listed in or implied by the National and Regional Flood Risk Management Plans. Also, projects addressing risks and disaster management at an adequate bio-geographical scale (e.g. at river basin level, or a mountainous zone etc) will receive priority over other actions.</p> <p>The following conditions will also be observed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Projects must demonstrate a need for cross-border cooperation and clearly illustrate the contribution expected from each partner. • All projects must observe the sustainable development principle. • Active engagement of project partners in joint activities will be required (no parallel actions will be allowed). • Projects that rely solely on analysing the current situation and/or making plans for future action will not be approved. It is instead expected that projects validate conclusions with testing and pilots which provide a sound basis for other regions and/or organisations to build on these results. • Projects should have a lasting impact. • Projects should be in line with mandatory 'risk assessments' (Council requirement: Decision No 2013/1313/EC) as well as flood risk plans (Flood Directive: Directive 2007/60/EC on the assessment and management of flood risks) or national 'civil protection / risk management' strategies or plans of Member State. • Projects shall meet the requirements of the CPR, article 7 concerning the implementation of the principles of non discrimination and accessibility to persons with disabilities. | |

2.A.6.3 Planned use of financial instruments (where appropriate)

| | |
|---------------------------------------|--|
| Investment priority | 5b - Promoting investment to address specific risks, ensuring disaster resilience and developing disaster management systems |
| No financial Instruments will be used | |

2.A.6.4 Planned use of major projects (where appropriate)

| | |
|---------------------------------------|--|
| Investment priority | 5b - Promoting investment to address specific risks, ensuring disaster resilience and developing disaster management systems |
| No major projects will be implemented | |

2.A.6.5 Output indicators (by investment priority)

Table 4: Common and programme-specific output indicators

| | | | | | |
|----------------------------|--|-------------------------|----------------------------|-----------------------|-------------------------------|
| Investment priority | 5b - Promoting investment to address specific risks, ensuring disaster resilience and developing disaster management systems | | | | |
| ID | Indicator | Measurement unit | Target value (2023) | Source of data | Frequency of reporting |
| CO20 | Risk prevention and management: Population benefiting from flood protection measures | Persons | 747,000.00 | Programme MIS | Annually |

2.A.4 Investment priority

| | |
|--------------------------------------|----|
| ID of the investment priority | 6c |
|--------------------------------------|----|

| | |
|---|--|
| ID of the investment priority | 6c |
| Title of the investment priority | Conserving, protecting, promoting and developing natural and cultural heritage |

2.A.5 Specific objectives corresponding to the investment priority and expected results

| | |
|--|--|
| ID of the specific objective | 4 |
| Title of the specific objective | To valorise CB area cultural and natural heritage for tourist purposes |
| Results that the Member States seek to achieve with Union support | <p><i>Improved capacities of regional actors to sustainably use natural and cultural resources in the CB area</i></p> <p><i>Better preservation status of CB area natural and cultural assets.</i></p> <p><i>Increased attractiveness of cultural and natural assets for local and international visitors.</i></p> <p><i>Increased tourist traffic in CB area.</i></p> |

Table 3: Programme-specific result indicators (by specific objective)

| Specific objective | | 4 - To valorise CB area cultural and natural heritage for tourist purposes | | | | | |
|--------------------|--|--|----------------|---------------|---------------------|----------------|------------------------|
| ID | Indicator | Measurement unit | Baseline value | Baseline year | Target value (2023) | Source of data | Frequency of reporting |
| R0204 | Annual tourist overnight stays at accommodation establishments | Millions | 5.80 | 2013 | 7.40 | ELSTAT / NSI | 2018, 2020, 2023 |

2.A.6 Actions to be supported under the investment priority (by investment priority)

2.A.6.1 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

| | |
|--|---|
| Investment priority | 6c - Conserving, protecting, promoting and developing natural and cultural heritage |
| Specific Objective: Valorise CB area cultural and natural heritage for tourist purposes | |
| <p>CB area tourist industry faces challenges such as the lack of international tourist destinations (emblematic destinations) and the lack of integrated tourist destinations suitable for different tourist groups (e.g. athletes, elderly, etc). The CP aims to increase the allure and carrying capacity of CB area cultural and natural heritage as tourist attractions, in order to - in the long-term and in combination with the actions foreseen under Thematic Objective 3 - boost tourist flows and revenues in the area, and put the tourist sector on a sustainable development path. As such, it concentrates on actions that exhibit considerable CB added value such as know-how transfer in the areas or restoration, promotion and management of these resources within an approach of integrated (thematically and territorially) interventions. All other indicative actions are supplementary.</p> <p>Investments under IP 6c need to be coordinated with investments foreseen under IP 3d in order to increase concentration of resources, added value and long-term sustainability. This can be done either through the opening of specific calls (combined calls) aimed at projects introducing integrated tourist destinations through a combination of actions from IPs 3d and 6c, or through the application of a two-step approach: a) through a strategic project which will design territorially and thematically integrated tourist destinations (in the form of a territorially-coordinated approach), and b) through the opening of calls in IPs 3d and 6c to implement the actions foreseen for each of these integrated tourist destinations.</p> <p>Short-term expected results include increased capacities in the management of tourist resources, and a better preservation status of cultural and natural heritage. Long-term results include increased area attractiveness, increased international visibility of area cultural and natural resources and increased tourist flows.</p> <p><u>Types of Actions:</u></p> | |

| | |
|---|---|
| Investment priority | 6c - Conserving, protecting, promoting and developing natural and cultural heritage |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Capacity-building actions such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ knowledge transfer and exchange of good practices in the area of preservation of natural and cultural heritage; ○ joint development and pilot testing of innovative techniques in the area of cultural heritage preservation, including training; • Rehabilitation/protection of cultural assets of cross-border significance including inter-alia assets shared between the two countries (i.e. on the border line), assets characteristic of an important historic period common to both countries, and assets on a common itinerary (all structures rehabilitated under this action will be required to be accessible to people with disabilities); rehabilitation/protection of natural assets of cross-border significance; small infrastructure interventions necessary, such as entrances to the sites and parking lots, easements (very small access roads, i.e. just a few meters), sidewalks, signage, street lighting, etc.for ensuring accessibility of sites (only as part of a project). • Actions that support the better interpretation of natural and cultural heritage (including ICT applications). • CB area-wide cultural initiatives such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ joint events/actions promoting cultural identity (including traditional agricultural products specific to the CB area) and enhancing the awareness of CB area cultural heritage; ○ youth cross-border exchanges; ○ cross-border exchanges of cultural events (including art and archaeological exhibitions). ○ actions to re-invent/preserve traditional jobs. <p>Main target groups:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • visitors, tourists, area businesses <p>Types of beneficiaries:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National, regional and local authorities and their institutions dealing with natural and cultural heritage; • National, regional and local authorities and their institutions dealing with regional development planning; • Protected area management bodies; • NGOs, Non-Profit-Organizations, social enterprises, and other civil society associations dealing with natural resources, and cultural issues; | |

| | |
|--|---|
| Investment priority | 6c - Conserving, protecting, promoting and developing natural and cultural heritage |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Institutions specialized in education, training and capacity building. | |

2.A.6.2 Guiding principles for the selection of operations

| | |
|---|---|
| Investment priority | 6c - Conserving, protecting, promoting and developing natural and cultural heritage |
| <p>All actions under 6c are to be financed as integrated, place-based approaches which exploit the common features on both sides of the border. Also, projects with broad area impacts/significance will receive priority over projects with localized effects. For the latter, it will be required to demonstrate and justify the relevance of their activities for the rest of the eligible area (transferability).</p> <p>Projects which can document the improvement of entrepreneurship conditions within the programming period and sustainability thereafter will be given preference over other projects.</p> <p>The following conditions will also be observed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All investments should demonstrate financial self-sustainability • Small infrastructure interventions will be eligible only as part of a larger project, • Projects have to demonstrate an added value resulting from cross-border cooperation and clearly illustrate the contribution expected from each partner. Projects must define the precise need(s) addressed by the project, how this affects each partner, and the specific benefits expected from the cooperation. • Projects will be required to observe the principles of sustainable and inclusive growth especially as far as people with disabilities are concerned. Especially all cultural facilities and interpretation media will be required to be disabled-accessible, as well as every cultural initiative (events, exhibitions, services provided etc). • All infrastructure constructed should be informed by the risk assessments in compliance with EU Civil protection legislation (Decision 1313/2013/EC on the Union civil protection mechanism) to assess the projects' vulnerability to disaster risks, including longer-term expected | |

| | |
|------------------------------|---|
| Investment priority | 6c - Conserving, protecting, promoting and developing natural and cultural heritage |
| effects from climate change. | |

2.A.6.3 Planned use of financial instruments (where appropriate)

| | |
|---------------------------------------|---|
| Investment priority | 6c - Conserving, protecting, promoting and developing natural and cultural heritage |
| No financial Instruments will be used | |

2.A.6.4 Planned use of major projects (where appropriate)

| | |
|---------------------------------------|---|
| Investment priority | 6c - Conserving, protecting, promoting and developing natural and cultural heritage |
| No major projects will be implemented | |

2.A.6.5 Output indicators (by investment priority)

Table 4: Common and programme-specific output indicators

| Investment priority | 6c - Conserving, protecting, promoting and developing natural and cultural heritage | | | | |
|----------------------------|--|------------------|---------------------|----------------|------------------------|
| ID | Indicator | Measurement unit | Target value (2023) | Source of data | Frequency of reporting |
| CO09 | Sustainable Tourism: Increase in expected number of visits to supported sites of cultural and natural heritage | Visits/year | 140,000.00 | Programme MIS | Annually |

| | | | | | |
|----------------------------|---|-------------------------|----------------------------|-----------------------|-------------------------------|
| Investment priority | 6c - Conserving, protecting, promoting and developing natural and cultural heritage | | | | |
| ID | Indicator | Measurement unit | Target value (2023) | Source of data | Frequency of reporting |
| | and attractions | | | | |
| 00202 | Number of cultural and/or natural assets rehabilitated/protected | number | 10.00 | Programme MIS | Annually |

2.A.4 Investment priority

| | |
|---|--|
| ID of the investment priority | 6d |
| Title of the investment priority | Protecting and restoring biodiversity and soil and promoting ecosystem services, including through Natura 2000, and green infrastructure |

2.A.5 Specific objectives corresponding to the investment priority and expected results

| | |
|--|---|
| ID of the specific objective | 5 |
| Title of the specific objective | To enhance the effectiveness of biodiversity protection activities |
| Results that the Member States seek to achieve with Union support | <p><i>Increased incidence of common approaches in biodiversity protection on both sides of the border</i></p> <p><i>Increased effectiveness of coordinated biodiversity protection actions (especially in the area of aquatic eco-systems)</i></p> <p><i>Increased incidence of pro-active species protection actions</i></p> <p><i>Improved degree of conservation of CB protected habitats.</i></p> |

Table 3: Programme-specific result indicators (by specific objective)

| | |
|---------------------------|---|
| Specific objective | 5 - To enhance the effectiveness of biodiversity protection activities |
|---------------------------|---|

| ID | Indicator | Measurement unit | Baseline value | Baseline year | Target value (2023) | Source of data | Frequency of reporting |
|-------|--|------------------|----------------|---------------|---------------------|----------------|------------------------|
| R0205 | % of Natura areas reporting excellent or good degree of conservation | % | 54.00 | 2015 | 60.00 | Survey | 2018, 2020, 2023 |

2.A.6 Actions to be supported under the investment priority (by investment priority)

2.A.6.1 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

| | |
|---|---|
| Investment priority | 6d - Protecting and restoring biodiversity and soil and promoting ecosystem services, including through Natura 2000, and green infrastructure |
| <p>Specific Objective: Enhance the effectiveness of biodiversity protection activities</p> <p>CB area habitats face similar challenges in GR and BG such as intensive deforestation, forest fires, use of poisonous baits for raptors, reduction of nesting sites, illegal hunting, pressures from agriculture and mainly grazing, industrial and urban water pollution and human interventions on surface waters (hydropower plants, water dams, etc), wind farms, etc.</p> <p>The CP aims at improving the conservation status of CB area habitats. As such, it concentrates on actions that exhibit considerable CB added value such as joint monitoring databases and risk assessments and coordinated interventions for the protection and/or re-introduction of species. Actions for the reduction of water-born pollution are included under IP 6f.</p> <p>Short-term expected results include the consistent application of successful biodiversity protection approaches by both sides. Long-term results include the improvement of conservation status in CB area habitats.</p> | |

| | |
|---|---|
| Investment priority | 6d - Protecting and restoring biodiversity and soil and promoting ecosystem services, including through Natura 2000, and green infrastructure |
| <p><u>Types of Actions:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of CB frameworks and platforms for the interoperability of existing databases and the integration of management approaches (hazard and risk assessment, planning methodologies, management plans, sustainability assessments, etc.); • Development of joint strategies & procedures (and pilot applications of such) for sustainable management of resources, for the development of green infrastructure, for biodiversity protection, for landscape management and for the establishment of green corridors; • Development (and pilot application) of joint negotiation, mediation, participation and conflict resolution models in the context of land use management with a view to protecting biodiversity; • Design risk assessment & management models and strategies for CB protected areas; <p>Main target groups:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • protected natural areas <p>Types of beneficiaries:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National, regional and local authorities and their departments responsible for environmental protection, biodiversity protection, agriculture, forestry, and spatial planning; • Protected area management bodies; • Environmental NGOs, Non-Profit-Organizations, social enterprises, CB networks and other civil society associations dealing with biodiversity, nature protection, agriculture, forestry, and spatial planning; • Universities and research institutes dealing with biodiversity, nature protection, agriculture, forestry, and spatial planning. | |

2.A.6.2 Guiding principles for the selection of operations

| | |
|----------------------------|---|
| Investment priority | 6d - Protecting and restoring biodiversity and soil and promoting ecosystem services, including through Natura 2000, and green infrastructure |
|----------------------------|---|

| | |
|--|---|
| Investment priority | 6d - Protecting and restoring biodiversity and soil and promoting ecosystem services, including through Natura 2000, and green infrastructure |
| <p>Funds will be channeled on a priority basis to projects in compliance with the National Prioritized Action Frameworks for biodiversity, and on projects which focus on prevention methods (pro-active) such as (but not limited to) alien species control (targeting importers of goods and live organisms, guidelines to travelers, work with eco-tourism operators to prevent introduction of alien species to vulnerable environments, etc),</p> <p>Biodiversity loss (harmonized observation systems, addressing livelihood needs to prevent deforestation, restricting access to and regulating use of ecosystems, incentive-based interventions, etc).</p> <p>Projects which can document the improvement of entrepreneurship conditions within the programming period and sustainability thereafter will be given preference over other projects.</p> <p>The following conditions will also be observed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All projects need to address specific protected areas including Natura 2000 sites, or species within these areas. Projects addressing the preservation of endangered species or protected natural areas of international importance will receive priority over other actions. • All projects must observe the sustainable development principle. • Projects must demonstrate a need or an increased added value resulting from cross-border cooperation and clearly illustrate the contribution expected from each partner. • Active engagement of project partners in joint activities will be required (no parallel actions will be allowed). • Projects that rely solely on analysing the current situation and/or making plans for future action will not be approved. It is instead expected that projects validate conclusions with testing and pilot applications which provide a sound basis for other regions and/or organisations to build on these results. Projects should have a lasting impact. | |

2.A.6.3 Planned use of financial instruments (where appropriate)

| | |
|---------------------------------------|---|
| Investment priority | 6d - Protecting and restoring biodiversity and soil and promoting ecosystem services, including through Natura 2000, and green infrastructure |
| No financial Instruments will be used | |

2.A.6.4 Planned use of major projects (where appropriate)

| | |
|---------------------------------------|---|
| Investment priority | 6d - Protecting and restoring biodiversity and soil and promoting ecosystem services, including through Natura 2000, and green infrastructure |
| No major projects will be implemented | |

2.A.6.5 Output indicators (by investment priority)

Table 4: Common and programme-specific output indicators

| | | | | | |
|----------------------------|---|-------------------------|----------------------------|-----------------------|-------------------------------|
| Investment priority | 6d - Protecting and restoring biodiversity and soil and promoting ecosystem services, including through Natura 2000, and green infrastructure | | | | |
| ID | Indicator | Measurement unit | Target value (2023) | Source of data | Frequency of reporting |
| CO23 | Nature and biodiversity: Surface area of habitats supported to attain a better conservation status | Hectares | 356,000.00 | Programme MIS | Annually |

2.A.4 Investment priority

| | |
|---|---|
| ID of the investment priority | 6f |
| Title of the investment priority | Promoting innovative technologies to improve environmental protection and resource efficiency in the waste sector, water sector and with regard to soil, or to reduce air pollution |

2.A.5 Specific objectives corresponding to the investment priority and expected results

| | |
|--|---|
| ID of the specific objective | 6 |
| Title of the specific objective | To enhance water management |
| Results that the Member States seek to achieve with Union support | <i>Increased incidence of joint surface and groundwater management systems.</i> <i>Increased number of water bodies under GES.</i> |

Table 3: Programme-specific result indicators (by specific objective)

| Specific objective | | 6 - To enhance water management | | | | | |
|--------------------|--|---------------------------------|----------------|---------------|---------------------|--|------------------------|
| ID | Indicator | Measurement unit | Baseline value | Baseline year | Target value (2023) | Source of data | Frequency of reporting |
| R0206 | % of characterized surface water bodies in GES | % | 43.88 | 2014 | 55.00 | Greece: Special Secretariat for Water Resources/ Bulgaria: Ministry of Environment | 2018, 2020, 2023 |

2.A.6 Actions to be supported under the investment priority (by investment priority)

2.A.6.1 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

| | |
|----------------------------|--|
| Investment priority | 6f - Promoting innovative technologies to improve environmental protection and resource efficiency in the waste sector, water sector and with regard to soil, or to reduce air pollution |
|----------------------------|--|

| | |
|----------------------------|--|
| Investment priority | 6f - Promoting innovative technologies to improve environmental protection and resource efficiency in the waste sector, water sector and with regard to soil, or to reduce air pollution |
|----------------------------|--|

Specific Objective: Enhance water management

CB area surface water GES is affected by pollution sources in both GR and BG. In GR the main the pollution source is agriculture, while in BG the main pollution sources are industry and urban effluents.

The CP strives to improve the GES of surface water bodies as it is directly related to the conservation status of area habitats, many of which are aquatic. As such, it concentrates on actions that exhibit considerable CB added value such as joint monitoring, promotion of innovative methods in water management and management. Wastewater treatment actions are assumed to be implemented by sectoral and regional OPs.

Short-term expected results include the consistent application of successful approaches (best practices) in water management by both sides. Long-term results include the improvement in the ecological status and chemical status of the surface water bodies

Types of Actions:

- CB frameworks and platforms for the interoperability of databases and the integration of management approaches in the areas of water management (pollution control and efficient use);
- CB eco-innovation partnerships and participation in European Innovation Partnerships in the areas of water management (pollution control and efficient use);
- Pilot applications or promotion/maintreaming of existing innovative methods/technologies in the areas of water management (pollution control and efficient use) and joint development of new methods (i.e. adaptation of water management innovative methods to the CB area conditions, use of existing methods in other scientific fields for water management purposes, improvement of existing water management methods, etc), including e.g. the use of forests and other areas with woody vegetation for ensuring water quality and quantity;
- Promoting “green behavior” campaigns in the areas of water management.

Main target groups:

| | |
|---|--|
| Investment priority | 6f - Promoting innovative technologies to improve environmental protection and resource efficiency in the waste sector, water sector and with regard to soil, or to reduce air pollution |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • water management bodies and utilities (as end users), farmers, industrial zone management bodies, residents and businesses in intervention areas <p>Types of beneficiaries:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National, regional and local authorities and their departments in charge of subjects related to water and soil management; • Universities and research institutes dealing with subjects related to water and soil management. • Chambers, collective organizations and associations representing businesses and other professionals, and social enterprises in areas relevant to water and soil management. | |

2.A.6.2 Guiding principles for the selection of operations

| | |
|--|--|
| Investment priority | 6f - Promoting innovative technologies to improve environmental protection and resource efficiency in the waste sector, water sector and with regard to soil, or to reduce air pollution |
| <p>Funds will be channeled on a priority basis to technology development projects with high transferability potential especially in the areas of prevention and/or reduction of pollution from industrial or agricultural sources. Technologies developed under the approved projects should have the potential to be adopted into standard working practices in the respective field. Also, the transfer of existing state-of-the-art technologies and their adoption into standard practice by CB stakeholders will be targeted.</p> <p>Projects which can document the improvement of entrepreneurship conditions within the programming period and sustainability thereafter will be given preference over other projects.</p> <p>The following conditions will also be observed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Projects have to demonstrate a need for cross-border cooperation and clearly illustrate the contribution expected from each partner. | |

| | |
|---|--|
| Investment priority | 6f - Promoting innovative technologies to improve environmental protection and resource efficiency in the waste sector, water sector and with regard to soil, or to reduce air pollution |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All projects must observe the sustainable development principle. • Projects with broad area potential impacts/significance will receive priority over projects with localized effects. For the latter, it will be required to demonstrate and justify the relevance of their activities for the rest of the eligible area. | |

2.A.6.3 Planned use of financial instruments (where appropriate)

| | |
|---------------------------------------|--|
| Investment priority | 6f - Promoting innovative technologies to improve environmental protection and resource efficiency in the waste sector, water sector and with regard to soil, or to reduce air pollution |
| No financial Instruments will be used | |

2.A.6.4 Planned use of major projects (where appropriate)

| | |
|---------------------------------------|--|
| Investment priority | 6f - Promoting innovative technologies to improve environmental protection and resource efficiency in the waste sector, water sector and with regard to soil, or to reduce air pollution |
| No major projects will be implemented | |

2.A.6.5 Output indicators (by investment priority)

Table 4: Common and programme-specific output indicators

| | | | | | |
|----------------------------|--|--|----------------------------|-----------------------|-------------------------------|
| Investment priority | | 6f - Promoting innovative technologies to improve environmental protection and resource efficiency in the waste sector, water sector and with regard to soil, or to reduce air pollution | | | |
| ID | Indicator | Measurement unit | Target value (2023) | Source of data | Frequency of reporting |
| O0203 | Surface water resources under joint monitoring | hm3 | 7,500.00 | Programme MIS | Annually |

2.A.7 Performance framework

Table 5: Performance framework of the priority axis

| | | | | | | | |
|----------------------|-----------------------|--|--|---------------------------|----------------------------|-----------------------|--|
| Priority axis | | 2 - A Sustainable and Climate adaptable Cross-Border area | | | | | |
| ID | Indicator type | Indicator or key implementation step | Measurement unit, where appropriate | Milestone for 2018 | Final target (2023) | Source of data | Explanation of relevance of indicator, where appropriate |
| CO20 | O | Risk prevention and management: Population benefiting from flood protection measures | Persons | 0 | 747,000.00 | Programme MIS | |
| O0202 | O | Number of cultural and/or natural assets rehabilitated/protected | number | 3 | 10.00 | Programme MIS | |
| F0202 | F | Eligible verified (certified) Expenditure of the Axis | Euro | 4,328,824 | 42,882,353.00 | Programme MIS | (n+3 = 2015) |
| K0202 | I | Selected projects CO20 (Decision of approval) | Projects | 2 | 3.00 | Programme MIS | Approved & Contracted projects that contribute to the above output indicator CO20 Total projects 2023=3 |

| | | | | | | | |
|----------------------|-----------------------|---|--|---------------------------|----------------------------|-----------------------|---|
| Priority axis | | | 2 - A Sustainable and Climate adaptable Cross-Border area | | | | |
| ID | Indicator type | Indicator or key implementation step | Measurement unit, where appropriate | Milestone for 2018 | Final target (2023) | Source of data | Explanation of relevance of indicator, where appropriate |
| | | | | | | | |

Additional qualitative information on the establishment of the performance framework

2.A.8 Categories of intervention

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

Tables 6-9: Categories of intervention

Table 6: Dimension 1 Intervention field

| | | |
|----------------------|--|-------------------|
| Priority axis | 2 - A Sustainable and Climate adaptable Cross-Border area | |
| | Code | Amount (€) |
| | 021. Water management and drinking water conservation (including river basin management, water supply, specific climate change adaptation measures, district and consumer metering, charging systems and leak reduction) | 5,850,000.00 |
| | 079. Access to public sector information (including open data, e-Culture, digital libraries, e-Content and e-Tourism) | 1,000,000.00 |
| | 085. Protection and enhancement of biodiversity, nature protection and green infrastructure | 5,100,000.00 |

| | | |
|--|--|---------------|
| Priority axis | 2 - A Sustainable and Climate adaptable Cross-Border area | |
| 086. Protection, restoration and sustainable use of Natura 2000 sites | | 2,000,000.00 |
| 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 | | 12,000,000.00 |
| 090. Cycle tracks and footpaths | | 500,000.00 |
| 091. Development and promotion of the tourism potential of natural areas | | 2,000,000.00 |
| 094. Protection, development and promotion of public cultural and heritage assets | | 7,000,000.00 |
| 095. Development and promotion of public cultural and heritage services | | 1,000,000.00 |

Table 7: Dimension 2 Form of finance

| | | |
|-------------------------|--|-------------------|
| Priority axis | 2 - A Sustainable and Climate adaptable Cross-Border area | |
| | Code | Amount (€) |
| 01. Non-repayable grant | | 36,450,000.00 |

Table 8: Dimension 3 Territory type

| | | |
|----------------------|--|-------------------|
| Priority axis | 2 - A Sustainable and Climate adaptable Cross-Border area | |
| | Code | Amount (€) |

| | | |
|----------------------|--|-------------------|
| Priority axis | 2 - A Sustainable and Climate adaptable Cross-Border area | |
| | Code | Amount (€) |
| | 01. Large Urban areas (densely populated >50 000 population) | 4,000,000.00 |
| | 02. Small Urban areas (intermediate density >5 000 population) | 3,000,000.00 |
| | 03. Rural areas (thinly populated) | 29,450,000.00 |

Table 9: Dimension 6 Territorial delivery mechanisms

| | | |
|----------------------|--|-------------------|
| Priority axis | 2 - A Sustainable and Climate adaptable Cross-Border area | |
| | Code | Amount (€) |
| | 07. Not applicable | 36,450,000.00 |

2.A.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 to enhance the administrative capacity of relevant partners to participate in the implementation of programmes (where appropriate)

| | | |
|-----------------------|--|--|
| Priority axis: | 2 - A Sustainable and Climate adaptable Cross-Border area | |
| Not Applicable | | |

2.A.1 Priority axis

| | |
|-----------------------------------|---|
| ID of the priority axis | 3 |
| Title of the priority axis | A Better interconnected Cross-Border Area |

- 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 through community-led local development

2.A.2 Justification for the establishment of a priority axis covering more than one thematic objective (where applicable)

Not applicable

2.A.3 Fund and calculation basis for Union support

| Fund | Calculation basis (total eligible expenditure or eligible public expenditure) |
|-------------|--|
| ERDF | Public |

2.A.4 Investment priority

| | |
|---|--|
| ID of the investment priority | 7b |
| Title of the investment priority | Enhancing regional mobility by connecting secondary and tertiary nodes to TEN-T infrastructure, including multimodal nodes |

2.A.5 Specific objectives corresponding to the investment priority and expected results

| | |
|--|---|
| ID of the specific objective | 7 |
| Title of the specific objective | Improve cross-border accessibility |
| Results that the Member States seek to achieve with Union support | <p><i>Better cross-border connectivity and connectivity of TEN-T with “less accessible” areas</i></p> <p><i>Reduced travel times for people and goods</i></p> <p><i>Improved traffic safety</i></p> |

Table 3: Programme-specific result indicators (by specific objective)

| Specific objective | | 7 - Improve cross-border accessibility | | | | | |
|--------------------|--------------------------------------|--|----------------|---------------|---------------------|--|------------------------|
| ID | Indicator | Measurement unit | Baseline value | Baseline year | Target value (2023) | Source of data | Frequency of reporting |
| R0207 | Number of operating border crossings | number | 6.00 | 2014 | 7.00 | Egnatia Odos S.A. / Ministry of Exterior | 2018, 2020, 2023 |

2.A.6 Actions to be supported under the investment priority (by investment priority)

2.A.6.1 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

| | |
|----------------------------|---|
| Investment priority | 7b - Enhancing regional mobility by connecting secondary and tertiary nodes to TEN-T infrastructure, including multimodal nodes |
|----------------------------|---|

| | |
|--|---|
| Investment priority | 7b - Enhancing regional mobility by connecting secondary and tertiary nodes to TEN-T infrastructure, including multimodal nodes |
| <p data-bbox="136 256 913 300">Specific Objective: Improve accessibility of the CB area</p> <p data-bbox="136 400 2096 435">The CB area exhibits many and varied accessibility problems: limited cross-border mobility and reduced accessibility of remote and mountainous areas.</p> <p data-bbox="136 469 2132 687">The main purpose of the CP is to improve cross-border mobility. As such, it concentrates mainly: a) on the construction of new roads (such as the section Dimario- Greek/Bulgarian border)- necessary to open a new border crossing and make operational the transport connection between Plodviv and Xanthi which is part of EU comprehensive road network - and b) on the improvement of existing roads (such as Road II-86 Srednogortsi – Rudozem and the bypass of Rudozem and Road II-59 Momchilgrad – Ivaylovgrad) which directly contribute to connectivity with the TEN-T network. Improvements needed in local roads in remote and mountainous areas are the responsibility of national works programmes as they are not eligible under 2014-2020 regulations. All other actions foreseen in the cooperation programme (e.g. logistics centers, etc) are considered supplementary.</p> <p data-bbox="136 721 1704 756">Short-term expected results include the decrease in travel times. Long-term results include the increase in traffic volumes.</p> <p data-bbox="136 858 383 893"><u>Types of Actions:</u></p> <ul data-bbox="203 932 2123 1043" style="list-style-type: none"> • Construction of new or upgrading of existing infrastructure and construction works of CB importance especially through the completion of gaps in the TEN-T network (EU Comprehensive road network,) and the existing secondary and tertiary network connected to it; • Construction of new or upgrading of existing complementary infrastructures and connections (e.g. border-crossings); <p data-bbox="136 1077 405 1112">Main target groups:</p> <ul data-bbox="203 1150 1292 1185" style="list-style-type: none"> • visitors, residents and businesses in intervention areas, transport service providers <p data-bbox="136 1219 443 1254">Types of beneficiaries:</p> <ul data-bbox="203 1292 1984 1327" style="list-style-type: none"> • National, regional and local authorities and their departments in charge of transportation planning, construction and management issues; | |

| | |
|--|---|
| Investment priority | 7b - Enhancing regional mobility by connecting secondary and tertiary nodes to TEN-T infrastructure, including multimodal nodes |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Specific bodies dealing with subjects related to transportation planning, management and construction issues; • Collective organizations and associations representing businesses and other professionals in areas relevant to transportation planning, management and construction issues; | |

2.A.6.2 Guiding principles for the selection of operations

| | |
|---|---|
| Investment priority | 7b - Enhancing regional mobility by connecting secondary and tertiary nodes to TEN-T infrastructure, including multimodal nodes |
| <p>Funds will be channeled on a priority basis to projects completing the secondary TEN-T road network in the CB area and preference will be given to the construction of missing links to investment in existing infrastructure. Non-linked interventions on either side of the border or pure maintenance and renovation projects of existing infrastructure will not be funded.</p> <p>Projects which can document the improvement of entrepreneurship conditions within the programming period and sustainability thereafter will be given preference over other projects.</p> <p>The following conditions will also be observed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Projects should ensure identical level of service/comfort for the cross-border investments on both sides of the border in order to eliminate situations where the road quality degrades on one side of the border. • All reconstruction projects of existing infrastructure must be in full compliance with safety requirements. • All projects must observe the sustainable development principle. • All infrastructure constructed should be informed by the risk assessments in compliance with EU Civil protection legislation (Decision 2013/1313/EC) to assess the projects' vulnerability to disaster risks, including longer-term expected effects from climate change. • Projects have to demonstrate a need for cross-border cooperation and clearly illustrate the contribution expected from each partner. Projects must define the precise need(s) addressed by the project, how this affects each partner, and the specific benefits expected for the entire CB area. | |

| | |
|--|---|
| Investment priority | 7b - Enhancing regional mobility by connecting secondary and tertiary nodes to TEN-T infrastructure, including multimodal nodes |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Projects with broad area impacts/significance will receive priority over projects with localized effects. • All project proposals should comply with regulation 2013/1315/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council, on Union guidelines for the development of the trans-European transport network and repealing Decision No 661/2010/EU. • Projects shall meet the requirements of the CPR, article 7 concerning the implementation of the principles of non discrimination and accessibility to persons with disabilities | |

2.A.6.3 Planned use of financial instruments (where appropriate)

| | |
|---------------------------------------|---|
| Investment priority | 7b - Enhancing regional mobility by connecting secondary and tertiary nodes to TEN-T infrastructure, including multimodal nodes |
| No financial Instruments will be used | |

2.A.6.4 Planned use of major projects (where appropriate)

| | |
|---------------------------------------|---|
| Investment priority | 7b - Enhancing regional mobility by connecting secondary and tertiary nodes to TEN-T infrastructure, including multimodal nodes |
| No major projects will be implemented | |

2.A.6.5 Output indicators (by investment priority)

Table 4: Common and programme-specific output indicators

| Investment priority | | 7b - Enhancing regional mobility by connecting secondary and tertiary nodes to TEN-T infrastructure, including multimodal nodes | | | |
|---------------------|---|---|---------------------|----------------|------------------------|
| ID | Indicator | Measurement unit | Target value (2023) | Source of data | Frequency of reporting |
| CO13a | Roads: Total length of newly built roads, of which: TEN-T | km | 8.00 | Programme MIS | Annually |

2.A.7 Performance framework

Table 5: Performance framework of the priority axis

| Priority axis | | 3 - A Better interconnected Cross-Border Area | | | | | |
|---------------|----------------|---|-------------------------------------|--------------------|---------------------|----------------|--|
| ID | Indicator type | Indicator or key implementation step | Measurement unit, where appropriate | Milestone for 2018 | Final target (2023) | Source of data | Explanation of relevance of indicator, where appropriate |
| CO13a | O | Roads: Total length of newly built roads, of which: TEN-T | km | 0 | 8.00 | Programme MIS | |
| F0203 | F | Eligible verified (certified) Expenditure of the Axis | Euro | 8,602,941.00 | 38,235,295.00 | Programme MIS | (n+3 = 2015) |
| K0203 | I | Projects with at least one signed Contract of technical - construction works sub-projects | number | 2 | 4.00 | Programme MIS | Projects that contribute to the above CO13a |

Additional qualitative information on the establishment of the performance framework

2.A.8 Categories of intervention

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

Tables 6-9: Categories of intervention

Table 6: Dimension 1 Intervention field

| Priority axis | 3 - A Better interconnected Cross-Border Area | |
|---------------|---|---------------|
| | Code | Amount (€) |
| | 029. TEN-T motorways and roads - comprehensive network (new build) | 30,000,000.00 |
| | 034. Other reconstructed or improved road (motorway, national, regional or local) | 2,500,000.00 |

Table 7: Dimension 2 Form of finance

| Priority axis | 3 - A Better interconnected Cross-Border Area | |
|---------------|---|---------------|
| | Code | Amount (€) |
| | 01. Non-repayable grant | 32,500,000.00 |

Table 8: Dimension 3 Territory type

| | | |
|----------------------|--|-------------------|
| Priority axis | 3 - A Better interconnected Cross-Border Area | |
| | Code | Amount (€) |
| | 03. Rural areas (thinly populated) | 32,500,000.00 |

Table 9: Dimension 6 Territorial delivery mechanisms

| | | |
|----------------------|--|-------------------|
| Priority axis | 3 - A Better interconnected Cross-Border Area | |
| | Code | Amount (€) |
| | 07. Not applicable | 32,500,000.00 |

2.A.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 to enhance the administrative capacity of relevant partners to participate in the implementation of programmes (where appropriate)

| | | |
|-----------------------|--|--|
| Priority axis: | 3 - A Better interconnected Cross-Border Area | |
| <i>Not applicable</i> | | |

2.A.1 Priority axis

| | |
|-----------------------------------|--|
| ID of the priority axis | 4 |
| Title of the priority axis | A Socially Inclusive Cross-Border Area |

- 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 through community-led local development

2.A.2 Justification for the establishment of a priority axis covering more than one thematic objective (where applicable)

Not applicable

2.A.3 Fund and calculation basis for Union support

| Fund | Calculation basis (total eligible expenditure or eligible public expenditure) |
|-------------|--|
| ERDF | Public |

2.A.4 Investment priority

| | |
|---|--|
| ID of the investment priority | 9a |
| Title of the investment priority | Investing in health and social infrastructure which contributes to national, regional and local development, reducing inequalities in terms of health status, promoting social inclusion through improved access to social, cultural and recreational services and the transition from institutional to community-based services |

2.A.5 Specific objectives corresponding to the investment priority and expected results

| | |
|--|--|
| ID of the specific objective | 8 |
| Title of the specific objective | To improve access to primary and emergency health care (at isolated and deprived communities) in the CB area |
| Results that the Member States seek to achieve with Union support | <p><i>Increased capacity and effectiveness of the primary health-care system – which exhibits better territorial and social coverage than secondary and tertiary health-care, and more specifically:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Increased diagnostic and therapeutic procedures provided at primary healthcare level and</i> • <i>increased quality and efficiency of primary health-care.</i> <p><i>Diversion of a significant volume of health care visits from secondary and tertiary facilities to primary care facilities.</i></p> <p><i>Increased access to healthcare for vulnerable groups and marginalised communities with high CB Mobility</i></p> |

Table 3: Programme-specific result indicators (by specific objective)

| Specific objective | | 8 - To improve access to primary and emergency health care (at isolated and deprived communities) in the CB area | | | | | |
|--------------------|--|--|----------------|---------------|---------------------|---|------------------------|
| ID | Indicator | Measurement unit | Baseline value | Baseline year | Target value (2023) | Source of data | Frequency of reporting |
| R0208 | Annual visits to primary healthcare | visits | 1,123,561.00 | 2013 | 1,235,917.00 | National Health Reports/Regional Health Units | 2018, 2020, 2023 |
| R0209 | Annual visits to secondary/tertiary healthcare | visits | 477,275.00 | 2013 | 421,097.00 | National Health Reports/Regional Health Units | 2018, 2020, 2023 |

2.A.6 Actions to be supported under the investment priority (by investment priority)

2.A.6.1 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

| | |
|---|---|
| Investment priority | 9a - Investing in health and social infrastructure which contributes to national, regional and local development, reducing inequalities in terms of health status, promoting social inclusion through improved access to social, cultural and recreational services and the transition from institutional to community-based services |
| <p>Specific Objective: <i>To improve access to primary and emergency health care (at isolated and deprived communities) in the CB area</i></p> <p>The purpose of the CP is to improve the effectiveness of the primary health care system - which exhibits a better territorial and social coverage than secondary and tertiary health care and hence covers better deprived communities - in order to divert a significant volume of health care services from hospitals to primary care facilities and indirectly manage to provide better health coverage to remote and/or socially excluded communities. As such it concentrates on actions that promote the quality and efficiency of primary care services and actions of CB added value such as tele-medicine and mobile health services.</p> <p>Expected results include both short-term (increased capacities) and medium/long-term results (increased access for vulnerable groups).</p> <p><u>Types of Actions:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Support centres of reference (for health threats, rare diseases, organ donation) and develop joint cross-border plans and principles for the sharing of human and information resources;• Promote cooperation between healthcare authorities by implementing the shared use of resources and expertise in the cross-border healthcare provision wherever added value can be achieved;• Support to renovation and equipping of existing and new primary health care practices in CB areas with serious limitations in access to primary health care;• Development of cross-border mobile services, telemedicine and telecare infrastructure and other technology-oriented health care provision methods | |

| | |
|--|---|
| Investment priority | 9a - Investing in health and social infrastructure which contributes to national, regional and local development, reducing inequalities in terms of health status, promoting social inclusion through improved access to social, cultural and recreational services and the transition from institutional to community-based services |
| <p>will be supported, in order to alleviate the local lack of healthcare workers;</p> <p>Main target groups:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • vulnerable population groups (e.g. disabled, poor, etc), population groups exhibiting high incidence of health problems and high CB mobility (e.g. Roma, transients, illegal migrants, etc), border-zone, or buffer areas with low access to health care <p>Types of beneficiaries:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community-based and Primary health care providers (only public sector stakeholders), Municipalities, and social enterprises engaged in health care provision; • Hospitals; • Medical Faculties of Universities. | |

2.A.6.2 Guiding principles for the selection of operations

| | |
|---|---|
| Investment priority | 9a - Investing in health and social infrastructure which contributes to national, regional and local development, reducing inequalities in terms of health status, promoting social inclusion through improved access to social, cultural and recreational services and the transition from institutional to community-based services |
| <p>Priority will be given to projects capitalizing on /continuing past successful experience and projects complementing past investments in the CB area.</p> <p>Also priority will be given to projects containing actions which increase the access to health-care of vulnerable groups (specific to the CB area) and inhabitants of hardly accessible geographic areas.</p> <p>Projects which can document the improvement of entrepreneurship conditions within the programming period and sustainability thereafter will be given preference over other projects.</p> | |

| | |
|--|---|
| Investment priority | 9a - Investing in health and social infrastructure which contributes to national, regional and local development, reducing inequalities in terms of health status, promoting social inclusion through improved access to social, cultural and recreational services and the transition from institutional to community-based services |
| <p>The following conditions will also be observed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Projects have to demonstrate a need for cross-border cooperation and clearly illustrate the contribution expected from each partner. Projects must define the precise need(s) addressed by the project, how this affects each partner, and the specific benefits expected from the cooperation. • Projects with broad area impacts/significance will receive priority over projects with localized effects. For the latter, it will be required to demonstrate and justify the relevance of their activities for the rest of the eligible area. • Projects shall meet the requirements of the General Regulation 1303/2013, article 7 concerning the implementation of the principles of non discrimination and accessibility to persons with disabilities • All infrastructure constructed should be informed by the risk assessments in compliance with EU Civil protection legislation (Decision 1313/2013/EC on the Union civil protection mechanism) to assess the projects' vulnerability to disaster risks, including longer-term expected effects from climate change. | |

2.A.6.3 Planned use of financial instruments (where appropriate)

| | |
|---------------------------------------|---|
| Investment priority | 9a - Investing in health and social infrastructure which contributes to national, regional and local development, reducing inequalities in terms of health status, promoting social inclusion through improved access to social, cultural and recreational services and the transition from institutional to community-based services |
| No financial instruments will be used | |

2.A.6.4 Planned use of major projects (where appropriate)

| | |
|---------------------------------------|---|
| Investment priority | 9a - Investing in health and social infrastructure which contributes to national, regional and local development, reducing inequalities in terms of health status, promoting social inclusion through improved access to social, cultural and recreational services and the transition from institutional to community-based services |
| No major projects will be implemented | |

2.A.6.5 Output indicators (by investment priority)

Table 4: Common and programme-specific output indicators

| Investment priority | 9a - Investing in health and social infrastructure which contributes to national, regional and local development, reducing inequalities in terms of health status, promoting social inclusion through improved access to social, cultural and recreational services and the transition from institutional to community-based services | | | | |
|----------------------------|---|------------------|---------------------|----------------|------------------------|
| ID | Indicator | Measurement unit | Target value (2023) | Source of data | Frequency of reporting |
| CO36 | Health: Population covered by improved health services | Persons | 632,000.00 | Programme MIS | Annually |
| O0204 | Number of health care institutions reorganized, modernized or reequipped | number | 12.00 | Programme MIS | Annually |
| O0205 | Number of health ICT systems developed | Number | 3.00 | Programme MIS | Annually |

2.A.4 Investment priority

| | |
|---|--|
| ID of the investment priority | 9c |
| Title of the investment priority | Providing support for social enterprises |

2.A.5 Specific objectives corresponding to the investment priority and expected results

| | |
|-------------------------------------|---|
| ID of the specific objective | 9 |
|-------------------------------------|---|

| | |
|--|--|
| Title of the specific objective | To expand social entrepreneurship in the CB area |
| Results that the Member States seek to achieve with Union support | <p><i>Growth of existing social enterprises and development new ones.</i></p> <p><i>Increased employment in social enterprises.</i></p> <p><i>Increased delivery of social services to communities in CB areas with poor socio-economic indicators (poverty, etc).</i></p> |

Table 3: Programme-specific result indicators (by specific objective)

| Specific objective | | 9 - To expand social entrepreneurship in the CB area | | | | | |
|--------------------|--|--|----------------|---------------|---------------------|------------------------------|------------------------|
| ID | Indicator | Measurement unit | Baseline value | Baseline year | Target value (2023) | Source of data | Frequency of reporting |
| R0210 | Social enterprise employees in the CB area | employees | 954.00 | 2014 | 1,004.00 | Social Enterprises Registers | 2018, 2020, 2023 |

2.A.6 Actions to be supported under the investment priority (by investment priority)

2.A.6.1 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

| | |
|--|---|
| Investment priority | 9c - Providing support for social enterprises |
| Specific Objective: <i>To expand social entrepreneurship in the CB area</i> | |
| Types of Actions: | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support for the establishment and provision of development support to Social Enterprises that offer innovative solutions, promote inclusive CB | |

| | |
|---|---|
| Investment priority | 9c - Providing support for social enterprises |
| <p>labour markets and social services accessible to all in the CB area;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support for social franchising which is the cross-border transfer of a social enterprise business model from one side of the border to the other. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Also, consistent with the Action Plans for Social Economy promulgated by both countries, the following cross-border actions could take place: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Running joint information campaigns/events (including seminars) for promoting social entrepreneurship, raising the awareness of local authorities, business and other interested parties about the opportunities and conditions for the development of social entrepreneurship. 2. Organisation of joint fora, in order to present best practices of social enterprises by region. 3. Joint approbation of best practices in the establishment of local-level social enterprises. 4. Establishing a network of educational and training companies with the secondary and tertiary schools for the acquisition of entrepreneurial, managerial and business skills in the sphere of social entrepreneurship. 5. Developing methodologies and conducting joint research on monitoring and on the assessment of the contribution of the social economy sector to the achievement of social and territorial cohesion in the CB area. 6. Business advice and guidance (business planning, coaching and mentoring by local collective institutions and public authorities, support with marketing); <p><u>Main target groups:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • unemployed, vulnerable groups, marginalized communities. <p><u>Types of beneficiaries:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social economy organisations (cooperatives/social enterprises, mutual societies, associations, foundations); NGOs; Non-Profit Organisations; collective institutions and public bodies active in the area of social economy. | |

2.A.6.2 Guiding principles for the selection of operations

| | |
|----------------------------|---|
| Investment priority | 9c - Providing support for social enterprises |
|----------------------------|---|

| | |
|---|---|
| Investment priority | 9c - Providing support for social enterprises |
| <p>Priority will be given to projects capitalizing on /continuing past successful experience and projects complementing past investments in the CB area. Also priority will be given to projects increasing the access of vulnerable groups (specific to the CB area) and the professionally and financially challenged groups to employment/services through social enterprises.</p> <p>The following conditions will also be observed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Projects have to demonstrate a need for cross-border cooperation and clearly illustrate the contribution expected from each partner. Projects must define the precise need(s) addressed by the project, how this affects each partner, and the specific benefits expected from the cooperation. • Projects with high potential for transferability will receive priority over other projects. • Projects shall meet the requirements of the General Regulation 1303/2013, article 7 concerning the implementation of the principles of non discrimination and accessibility to persons with disabilities | |

2.A.6.3 Planned use of financial instruments (where appropriate)

| | |
|---------------------------------------|---|
| Investment priority | 9c - Providing support for social enterprises |
| No financial instruments will be used | |

2.A.6.4 Planned use of major projects (where appropriate)

| | |
|---------------------------------------|---|
| Investment priority | 9c - Providing support for social enterprises |
| No major projects will be implemented | |

| | |
|----------------------------|---|
| Investment priority | 9c - Providing support for social enterprises |
|----------------------------|---|

2.A.6.5 Output indicators (by investment priority)

Table 4: Common and programme-specific output indicators

| | | | | | |
|----------------------------|--|-------------------------|----------------------------|-----------------------|-------------------------------|
| Investment priority | 9c - Providing support for social enterprises | | | | |
| ID | Indicator | Measurement unit | Target value (2023) | Source of data | Frequency of reporting |
| O0206 | Number of participants in social entrepreneurship projects promoting gender equality, equal opportunities and social inclusion across borders. | number | 50.00 | Programme MIS | Annually |

2.A.7 Performance framework

Table 5: Performance framework of the priority axis

| | | | | | | | |
|----------------------|-----------------------|--|--|---------------------------|----------------------------|-----------------------|---|
| Priority axis | | 4 - A Socially Inclusive Cross-Border Area | | | | | |
| ID | Indicator type | Indicator or key implementation step | Measurement unit, where appropriate | Milestone for 2018 | Final target (2023) | Source of data | Explanation of relevance of indicator, where appropriate |
| O0204 | O | Number of health care institutions reorganized, modernized or reequipped | number | 0 | 12.00 | Programme MIS | |
| F0204 | F | Eligible verified (certified) Expenditure of the Axis | Euro | 1,078,896 | 21,577,923.00 | Programme MIS | (n+3 = 2015) |

| Priority axis | | 4 - A Socially Inclusive Cross-Border Area | | | | | |
|---------------|----------------|--|-------------------------------------|--------------------|---------------------|----------------|--|
| ID | Indicator type | Indicator or key implementation step | Measurement unit, where appropriate | Milestone for 2018 | Final target (2023) | Source of data | Explanation of relevance of indicator, where appropriate |
| K0204 | I | Projects with at least one signed Contract of (technical - construction works or other) sub-projects | Number | 8 | 12.00 | Programme MIS | Projects that contribute to the above output indicator O0204 |

Additional qualitative information on the establishment of the performance framework

2.A.8 Categories of intervention

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

Tables 6-9: Categories of intervention

Table 6: Dimension 1 Intervention field

| Priority axis | | 4 - A Socially Inclusive Cross-Border Area | |
|---|--|--|---------------|
| | | Code | Amount (€) |
| 053. Health infrastructure | | | 11,641,234.00 |
| 081. ICT solutions addressing the healthy active ageing challenge and e-Health services and applications (including e-Care and ambient assisted living) | | | 1,000,000.00 |

| | | |
|---|---|--------------|
| Priority axis | 4 - A Socially Inclusive Cross-Border Area | |
| 113. Promoting social entrepreneurship and vocational integration in social enterprises and the social and solidarity economy in order to facilitate access to employment | | 5,700,000.00 |

Table 7: Dimension 2 Form of finance

| | | |
|-------------------------|---|-------------------|
| Priority axis | 4 - A Socially Inclusive Cross-Border Area | |
| | Code | Amount (€) |
| 01. Non-repayable grant | | 18,341,234.00 |

Table 8: Dimension 3 Territory type

| | | |
|--|---|-------------------|
| Priority axis | 4 - A Socially Inclusive Cross-Border Area | |
| | Code | Amount (€) |
| 01. Large Urban areas (densely populated >50 000 population) | | 7,500,000.00 |
| 02. Small Urban areas (intermediate density >5 000 population) | | 5,500,000.00 |
| 03. Rural areas (thinly populated) | | 5,341,234.00 |

Table 9: Dimension 6 Territorial delivery mechanisms

| | | |
|----------------------|---|--|
| Priority axis | 4 - A Socially Inclusive Cross-Border Area | |
|----------------------|---|--|

| Code | Amount (€) |
|--------------------|---------------|
| 07. Not applicable | 18,341,234.00 |

2.A.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 to enhance the administrative capacity of relevant partners to participate in the implementation of programmes (where appropriate)

| | |
|-----------------------|---|
| Priority axis: | 4 - A Socially Inclusive Cross-Border Area |
| <i>Not applicable</i> | |

2.B DESCRIPTION OF THE PRIORITY AXES FOR TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

2.B.1 Priority axis

| | |
|--------------|----------------------|
| ID | 5 |
| Title | Technical Assistance |

2.B.2 Fund and calculation basis for Union support

| Fund | Calculation basis (total eligible expenditure or eligible public expenditure) |
|-------------|--|
| ERDF | Public |

2.B.3 Specific objectives and expected results

| ID | Specific objective | Results that the Member States seek to achieve with Union support |
|-----------|---|--|
| 10 | To manage and implement the Cooperation Programme effectively and efficiently | <p>High absorption capacity for high quality projects which contribute to the objectives of the programme.</p> <p><i>Support structures</i> which enable:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the most effective and cost-efficient project selection procedures in line with the expected number of projects receiving support; |

| ID | Specific objective | Results that the Member States seek to achieve with Union support |
|----|--------------------|--|
| | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • informed decisions by programme management bodies and effective steering; and • beneficiaries performing their planned activities efficiently. <p><i>A monitoring and control system</i> that provides adequate insight in the regularity and quality of the supported actions with as <i>little administrative burden</i> to beneficiaries and programme bodies as possible.</p> <p>Increased awareness about the support provided by the programme to the CB region..</p> |

2.B.4 Result indicators

Table 10: Programme-specific result indicators (by specific objective)

| Priority axis | 10 - To manage and implement the Cooperation Programme effectively and efficiently | | | | | | |
|---------------|--|------------------|----------------|---------------|---------------------|----------------|------------------------|
| ID | Indicator | Measurement unit | Baseline value | Baseline year | Target value (2023) | Source of data | Frequency of reporting |

2.B.5 Actions to be supported and their expected contribution to the specific objectives (by priority axis)

2.B.5.1 Description of actions to be supported and their expected contribution to the specific objectives

| | |
|---|--------------------------|
| Priority axis | 5 - Technical Assistance |
| Specific Objective: To manage and implement the Cooperation Programme effectively and efficiently | |
| Types of Actions: | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• establish and manage Joint Secretariat and Infopoints:• programme management and steering:<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ organisation, preparation and facilitation of meetings of the programme steering bodies;○ evaluations, analysis and studies related to the delivery of the programme in support of the continuous improvement of its management and implementation.• monitoring, control and reporting:<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ an IT system for programme management, monitoring, audit and control;○ guidance and support to ensure adequate control of the programme at all levels (partners, controllers, partner State Bodies responsible for first level control) e.g. through seminars, guidance documents and counseling;○ coordinating and organising of programme level audit activities, including the (external) audits on operations and supporting the Group of Auditors;○ regular reporting to the European Commission on programme progress.• project generation and selection:<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ application forms, calls for proposals/terms of reference and guidance documents for potential applicants;○ assistance and advice to potential applicants before and during calls, e.g. through seminars, bilateral consultations and contacts, partner search forums,; | |

| Priority axis | 5 - Technical Assistance |
|---------------|---|
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ quality assessment of project applications (scoring); ○ risk assessment of projects. ● support to project partners: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ tools and guidance documentation (manuals, supporting operation beneficiaries implement their project); ○ assistance and advice to lead partners and partners on the implementation of their project e.g. through seminars on implementation procedures, first level control seminars, etc. ○ meetings, events and “on-the-spot visits” to projects to address progress, outputs and results as well as obstacles to implementation. ● communication, dissemination and promotion <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ development and maintenance of the programme website; ○ publishing of programme information and publications; ○ organisation of events to generate interest for participation in the programme, showcase and disseminate results of the programme supported projects to professional audiences and the wider public, and facilitate inter-operation interaction and cooperation. <p>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.</p> <p>Main target groups:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● potential project applicants and project partners of selected projects, steering committee, European commission <p>Types of beneficiaries:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● JS, MA, infopoints |

2.B.5.2 Output indicators expected to contribute to results (by priority axis)

Table 11: Output indicators

| Priority axis | | 5 - Technical Assistance | | |
|---------------|---|--------------------------|---------------------|----------------|
| ID | Indicator | Measurement unit | Target value (2023) | Source of data |
| O0207 | Number of employees (FTEs) whose salaries are co-financed by technical assistance | employees | 12.00 | Programme MIS |
| O0208 | Number of publicity and outreach events organized | Events | 15.00 | Programme MIS |

2.B.6 Categories of intervention

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

Tables 12-14: Categories of intervention

Table 12: Dimension 1 Intervention field

| Priority axis | 5 - Technical Assistance | |
|---------------|---|--------------|
| | Code | Amount (€) |
| | 121. Preparation, implementation, monitoring and inspection | 4,000,000.00 |
| | 122. Evaluation and studies | 500,000.00 |
| | 123. Information and communication | 1,250,000.00 |

Table 13: Dimension 2 Form of finance

| Priority axis | 5 - Technical Assistance | |
|---------------|--------------------------|--------------|
| | Code | Amount (€) |
| | 01.Non-repayable grant | 5,750,000.00 |

Table 14: Dimension 3 Territory type

| Priority axis | 5 - Technical Assistance | |
|-------------------|--------------------------|--------------|
| | Code | Amount (€) |
| 07.Not applicable | | 5,750,000.00 |

3. FINANCING PLAN

3.1 Financial appropriation from the ERDF (in €)

Table 15

| Fund | 2014 | 2015 | 2016 | 2017 | 2018 | 2019 | 2020 | Total |
|--------------|-------------|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|-----------------------|
| ERDF | 0.00 | 13,452,143.00 | 11,401,792.00 | 20,716,987.00 | 21,131,327.00 | 21,553,953.00 | 21,985,032.00 | 110,241,234.00 |
| Total | 0.00 | 13,452,143.00 | 11,401,792.00 | 20,716,987.00 | 21,131,327.00 | 21,553,953.00 | 21,985,032.00 | 110,241,234.00 |

3.2.A Total financial appropriation from the ERDF and national co-financing (in €)

Table 16: Financing plan

| Priority axis | Fund | 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) | Co-financing rate (f) = (a) / (e) (2) | For information | |
|--------------------|-------------|--|-----------------------|--------------------------------------|--|------------------------------|-------------------------------|---------------------------------------|------------------------------------|-------------------|
| | | | | | National public funding (c) | National private funding (d) | | | Contributions from third countries | EIB contributions |
| 1 | ERDF | Public | 17,200,000.00 | 3,035,295.00 | 3,035,295.00 | 0.00 | 20,235,295.00 | 84.9999962936% | | |
| 2 | ERDF | Public | 36,450,000.00 | 6,432,353.00 | 6,432,353.00 | 0.00 | 42,882,353.00 | 84.999998834% | | |
| 3 | ERDF | Public | 32,500,000.00 | 5,735,295.00 | 5,735,295.00 | 0.00 | 38,235,295.00 | 84.999980385% | | |
| 4 | ERDF | Public | 18,341,234.00 | 3,236,689.00 | 3,236,689.00 | 0.00 | 21,577,923.00 | 84.999974511% | | |
| 5 | ERDF | Public | 5,750,000.00 | 1,014,706.00 | 1,014,706.00 | 0.00 | 6,764,706.00 | 84.999985217% | | |
| Total | ERDF | | 110,241,234.00 | 19,454,338.00 | 19,454,338.00 | 0.00 | 129,695,572.00 | 84.999983037% | | |
| Grand total | | | 110,241,234.00 | 19,454,338.00 | 19,454,338.00 | 0.00 | 129,695,572.00 | 84.999983037% | | |

(1) To be completed only when priority axes are expressed in total costs.

(2) This rate may be rounded to the nearest whole number in the table. The precise rate used to reimburse payments is the ratio (f).

3.2.B Breakdown by priority axis and thematic objective

Table 17

| Priority axis | Thematic objective | Union support | National counterpart | Total funding |
|---------------|--|-----------------------|----------------------|-----------------------|
| 1 | Enhancing the competitiveness of small and medium-sized enterprises, the agricultural sector (for the EAFRD) and the fisheries and aquaculture sector (for the EMFF) | 17,200,000.00 | 3,035,295.00 | 20,235,295.00 |
| 2 | Promoting climate change adaptation, risk prevention and management | 12,000,000.00 | 2,117,647.00 | 14,117,647.00 |
| 2 | Preserving and protecting the environment and promoting resource efficiency | 24,450,000.00 | 4,314,706.00 | 28,764,706.00 |
| 3 | Promoting sustainable transport and removing bottlenecks in key network infrastructures | 32,500,000.00 | 5,735,295.00 | 38,235,295.00 |
| 4 | Promoting social inclusion, combating poverty and any discrimination | 18,341,234.00 | 3,236,689.00 | 21,577,923.00 |
| Total | | 104,491,234.00 | 18,439,632.00 | 122,930,866.00 |

Table 18: Indicative amount of support to be used for climate change objectives

| Priority axis | Indicative amount of support to be used for climate change objectives (€) | Proportion of the total allocation to the programme (%) |
|---------------|---|---|
| 2 | 17,680,000.00 | 16.04% |
| Total | 17,680,000.00 | 16.04% |

4. INTEGRATED APPROACH TO TERRITORIAL DEVELOPMENT

Description of the integrated approach to territorial development, taking into account the content and objectives of the cooperation programme, including in relation to regions and areas referred to in Article 174(3) TFEU, having regard to the Partnership Agreements of the participating Member States, and showing how it contributes to the accomplishment of the programme objectives and expected results

No integrated territorial development tools (CLLDs, etc) will be used by the programme. However, the territorial dimension plays a crucial role in the design of the programme, as many challenges have an important territorial dimension. These challenges include:

- surface water management: as most eligible area rivers are cross-border rivers, and sustainable management requires planning and interventions at river-basin level, upgrading the ecological status of area surface waters necessitates territorially integrated interventions;
- flood risk management: flood risk management is most effective when it is done at river-basin level and with a combination of upstream and downstream measures; as such it necessitates territorially integrated approaches;
- tourism development: one of the main drawbacks of eligible area tourism is the lack of integrated destinations, both in terms of the types of activities offered (i.e. thematic integration) and in terms of places and interest points to be visited by the tourists (i.e. territorial integration);
- biodiversity protection: CB area habitats exhibit a high degree of connectivity; as such successful biodiversity approaches necessitate territorially integrated approaches incorporating protected areas from both sides of the border;
- social inclusion: the CB area is home to many disadvantaged groups, most of which exhibit specific territorial concentrations (i.e. on the Rodopi mountainous zone, and in the districts of Kardzhali, Xanthi, and Rodopi);
- health services: the mountainous zone across the border (the Rodopi mountains) is an area where major obstacles to increased access of the local population to quality health services are concentrated.

In order to effectively address the above challenges, the programme encourages the development of “territorially and thematically integrated” projects. This is done by:

- combining complementary IPs within the same priority axis (as in the case of PA 2) and holding common calls for proposals;
- opening theme-specific calls for proposals, as in the case of the integrated tourist approaches;
- encouraging the inclusion of geographically-targeted actions in projects (e.g. in health-care); and

targeting specific interventions which complete territorially a specific transport network (as in the case of the Xanthi-Rudozem axis).

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

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 ERDF support for these actions

Not applicable

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

| Indicative amount of ERDF support (€) |
|---------------------------------------|
| 0.00 |

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

Not applicable

Table 20: Indicative financial allocation to ITI other than those mentioned under point 4.2 (aggregate amount)

| Priority axis | Indicative financial allocation (Union support) (€) |
|---------------|---|
| Total | 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 Member States and taking into account, where applicable, strategically important projects identified in those strategies (where appropriate)

(Where Member States and regions participate in macro-regional and sea basin strategies)

The eligible programme area is adjacent to two (2) EU sea basins for which macro-regional strategies are under development: (a) the Black Sea basin and (b) the Mediterranean Sea basin.

The **EU strategy for the Black Sea** is reflected in the EC communication on the Black Sea Synergy, adopted by the European Council in June 2007, and followed by a conference between EU and Black Sea Foreign Affairs Ministers in Kiev in 2008 that led to a joint statement initiating the Synergy.

The EU Parliament resolution “For an EU Strategy for the Black Sea Region to be launched” voted on 20/1/2011, set as the main objective *to establish an area of peace, democracy, prosperity and stability, founded on respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms and providing for EU energy security*.

The Black Sea Strategy is implemented by the new Black Sea 2014-2020 JOP (as per draft version of 5/11/2014), and has selected two Thematic Objectives (a) Business and SME development and (b) Environmental protection, climate change adaptation. Finally its specific objectives are to:

1. Promote *business and entrepreneurship* within the Black Sea Basin (with 2 sub-priorities: *1.1 Jointly promote business and entrepreneurship in the tourism and cultural sectors and 1.2 Increase cross-border trade opportunities and modernisation in the agricultural and connected sectors*) and
2. Promote coordination of *environmental protection* and joint reduction of marine litter in the Black Sea Basin. (with 2 sub-priorities: *2.1 Improve joint environmental monitoring, and 2.2 Promote common awareness-raising and joint actions to reduce river and marine litter*)

Both objectives are strongly related to two out of four “Greece-Bulgaria 2014-2020” priority axes

More specifically, the Greece-Bulgaria cooperation programme, contributes to the Black Sea strategy through the implementation of the following specific objectives and indicative actions:

S.O. 2 (Improve SME capacity to expand beyond local markets) contributes **to sub-priority 1.1** with actions such as: collaboration schemes between businesses and non-businesses (e.g. private museums) for the tourism/culture area; development and test control systems for branding of “green”, and “traditional” products respecting and promoting the CB area cultural and natural heritage; while S.O. 4 (Valorize CB area cultural and natural heritage for tourist purposes) contributes to 1.1 with actions such as: rehabilitation/protection of cultural assets of cross-border significance; actions that support the better interpretation of natural and cultural heritage; and CB area-wide cultural initiatives (such as joint events/actions promoting cultural identity, youth cross-border exchanges, cross-border exchanges of cultural events and actions to re-invent/preserve traditional jobs).

S.O. 2 (Improve SME capacity to expand beyond local markets) also contributes **to sub-priority 1.2** with actions such as: transfer and development of marketing models; creation of clusters or other types of “networks”; joint or common (horizontal) export support services; joint or common “special-purpose” business support facilities such as market places, exhibition halls, outlets, depots and logistics centres; and cross-border business-plans with pilot applications in the areas of cross-border trade and establishment of new cross-border “business organization models”.

S.O. 5 (Enhance the effectiveness of biodiversity protection activities) and S.O. 6 (Enhance water management) contribute **to sub-priority 2.1** with actions such as: CB frameworks and platforms for the interoperability of existing databases and the integration of management approaches; joint strategies & procedures; joint negotiation, mediation, participation and conflict resolution models; risk assessment & management models and strategies; CB eco-innovation partnerships and participation in European Innovation Partnerships.

The **EU strategy for the Mediterranean Sea basin**, having its origins in the Barcelona Declaration in 1995, was re-launched – as a planning process - in 2008 through the creation of the Union for the Mediterranean.

The new MED 2014-2020 programme (as per draft version of 17/3/2014), has selected four (4) priority axes:

PA1: Promoting Mediterranean *innovation capacity* to develop smart and sustainable growth (with one sub-priority *1.1. Increase transnational activity of innovative clusters and networks of key sectors of the MED area*),

PA2: Fostering *low-carbon strategies* and *energy efficiency* in specific MED territories: cities, islands and remote areas (with 3 sub-priorities *2.1 Raise capacity for better management of energy in public buildings at transnational level*, *2.2 Increase the share of renewable energy sources in energy mix strategies and plans in MED territories*, *2.3 Increase capacity to use existing low carbon transport systems and multimodal connections among them*),

PA3: *Protecting and promoting Mediterranean natural and cultural resources* (with two sub-priorities *3.1 Enhance the development of a sustainable and responsible coastal and maritime tourism in the MED area*, *3.2 Maintain biodiversity and natural ecosystems through strengthening the management and networking of protected species*) and

PA4: *A shared Mediterranean Sea* (with one sub-priority *4.1 Support the process of developing multilateral coordination frameworks and strengthening the existing ones in the Mediterranean for joint responses to common challenges*).

The above priorities exhibit strong synergies with two “Greece-Bulgaria 2014-2020” priority axes

More specifically, the Greece-Bulgaria cooperation programme, contributes to the Mediterranean strategy through the implementation of the following specific objectives and indicative actions:

S.O. 2 (Improve SME capacity to expand beyond local markets) contributes **to sub-priority 1.1** with actions such as: transfer and development of concepts for clustering and creating networks of SMEs to meet a larger scale, more diverse and/or more complex demand, creation of clusters or other types of “networks” (e.g. “value-chains”), and new cross-border “business organization models”. All actions under S.O.2 are focused on the RIS3 priority sectors of the CB area and promote innovation.

S.O. 5 (Enhance the effectiveness of biodiversity protection activities) contributes **to sub-priority 3.2** with actions such as: CB frameworks and platforms for the interoperability of existing databases and the integration of management approaches; joint strategies & procedures; joint negotiation, mediation, participation and conflict resolution models; risk assessment & management models and strategies; CB eco-innovation partnerships and participation in European Innovation Partnerships. All actions under S.O. 5 promote actively pro-active methods and the development or mainstreaming of innovative methods.

5. IMPLEMENTING PROVISIONS FOR THE COOPERATION PROGRAMME

5.1 Relevant authorities and bodies

Table 21: Programme authorities

| Authority/body | Name of authority/body and department or unit | Head of authority/body (position or post) |
|----------------------|---|--|
| Managing authority | Ministry of Economy, Infrastructures, Shipping and Tourism - Special Service "Managing the `European Territorial Cooperation` Objective Programmes" | Head of the Managing Authority; Tel: +302310469600; Fax: +302310469602 |
| Certifying authority | Ministry of Economy, Infrastructures, Shipping and Tourism - Special Service "Certifying and Verifications Authority of co Funded Programmes" - Units A,B,C | Head of the Paying Authority Tel: +302131500401 Fax: +302131500403 |
| Audit authority | Financial Control Committee (EDEL) Ministry of Finance - General Accounting Office of the State, Greece | General Director, Tel: +302103338373 Fax: +302103338200 |

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

- the Managing authority
 the Certifying authority

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

| Authority/body | Name of authority/body and department or unit | Head of authority/body (position or post) |
|--|---|---|
| Body or bodies designated to carry out control tasks | First Level Control, Bulgaria: Decentralized system established and coordinated by the Ministry of Regional Development and Public Works | BULGARIA : Minister of Regional Development and Public Works |
| Body or bodies designated to carry out control tasks | First Level Control, Greece: Ministry of Economy, Infrastructures, Shipping and Tourism, Greece - Special Service "Managing the `European Territorial Cooperation` Objective Programmes" - UNIT C | GREECE: Head of UNIT C Tel +30 2310469600 Fax +302310469602 |
| Body or bodies designated to be responsible for carrying out audit tasks | Bulgaria: Audit of EU Funds Directorate Ministry Of Economy | Director of the Audit of EU Funds Directorate Ministry Of Economy |
| Body or bodies designated to be responsible for carrying out audit tasks | Greece: The Audit Authority is the Financial Control Committee (EDEL), set up at the Ministry of Finance – General Accounting Office of the State), Greece. | General Director Tel: +302103338373 Fax: +302103338200 |

5.2 Procedure for setting up the joint secretariat

In accordance with Article 23(2) of the ETC Regulation, the Special Service Managing the `European Territorial Cooperation` Objective Programmes as Managing Authority (MA), after consultation with the participating countries, shall set up the Joint Secretariat (JS), hosted at the Managing Authority, Greek Ministry of Economy, Infrastructure, Shipping and Tourism. The JS will support and assist the managing authority (MA) and the monitoring committee (MC) in carrying out their respective functions. Moreover, it may assist the Audit Authority in organizing the meetings of the group of auditors, provide information to potential beneficiaries about funding opportunities under the programme and shall assist beneficiaries in the implementation of operations. The Rules of Procedures of the existing Joint Technical Secretariat shall be updated by the Managing Authority in agreement with the Member States participating in the programme in order to ensure adjustment to the new EU legal framework. The body responsible to set up the Rules of Procedure determining the exact functions and the role of the Joint Secretariat is the Managing Authority.

The Joint Secretariat will be physically located near the MA registered office (Article 23 par.2, Regulation 1299/2013)) and will be composed of a balanced number of staff members from the participating Member States. In principle, job profiles for each individual position within JS structure shall remain the same and a new position (A financial officer) shall be added in order to match the identified needs. This shall be confirmed by the national authorities of the participating countries. Job profiles shall be a part of the Description of the Management and Control System (DMCS). Should any new recruitment take place, the Managing Authority will ensure and safeguard that expertise gained in the programming period 2007-2013 will play a significant role and that gender equality will be ensured in the selection of staff members.

The selection

The Joint Secretariat is established and performs its duties according to:

- Article 43 Paragraph 1 of Law 4314/2014 "Management, control & implementation of the development interventions for the programming period as amended by Law 3840/2010 and is in force 2007-2013" (Government Gazette 265/23-12-2007)

5.3 Summary description of the management and control arrangements

The following section describes the implementation structure of the CBC Programme

Greece - Bulgaria 2014-2020. More detailed provisions will be included in the Description of the Management and Control System (DMCS), approved according to Article 124 of the CPR, and in the programme guidance documents (application and implementation manuals, Control & Audit Guidelines) which will form integral part of the DMCS. Guidance documents shall be adopted by the MC.

The official programme language is English.

Greece and Bulgaria, which are the participating states in the Programme, have established a shared management system to manage, coordinate and supervise the implementation of the programme.

5.3.a. Managing Authority

The Managing Authority of ETCPs is an administrative part the Special Secretariat for Managing of the Sectoral Operational Programmes of the ERDF and Cohesion Fund Programmes, within the Ministry for Economy, Infrastructure, Maritime Affairs and Tourism.

The Managing Authority is designated and performs its duties according to:

- Article 5 paragraph 1 (f) of Law 4314/2014 "Management, control & implementation of the development interventions for the programming period 2014-2020 (Government Gazette 265/A/23-12-2014)
- Common Decision 300782/YD 2984/30-4-2009 of the Minister of Interior and the Minister of Economy & Finance "Amendment and coding of N. 175294/DIOE196/7.6.2002 decision establishing a Special Service entitled "Service for managing the CI Interreg OPs" as it was subsequently amended

The Managing Authority (MA) shall be responsible for managing and implementing the Cooperation programme in accordance with the principle of sound financial management and carry out the functions set out in Article 72 and 125 of Regulation 1303/2013 and article 23 of Regulation 1299/2013.

The MA shall:

- a) support the work of the Monitoring committee and provide it with the information it requires to carry out its tasks, in particular data relating to the progress of the cooperation programme in achieving its objectives, financial data and data relating to indicators and milestones;
- b) draw up and, after approval by the Monitoring committee, submit to the Commission annual and final implementation reports;
- c) make available to intermediate bodies and beneficiaries information that is relevant to the execution of their tasks and the implementation of operations respectively;

- d) establish a system to record and store in computerised form data on each operation under the Cooperation programme necessary for monitoring, evaluation, financial management, verification and audit, including data on individual participants in operations, where applicable;
- e) ensure that the data referred to in point (d) is collected, entered and stored in the system referred to in point (d), and that data on indicators is broken down by gender.
- f) ensure that the implementation reports of the Cooperation programme referred to in article 14 of Regulation (EU) 1299/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council (on specific provisions for the support from the ERDF to the ETC goal – known as ETC regulation) are carried out in accordance with article 51 par.1 and 2 of the CPR;
- g) set up a Joint Secretariat after consultation with the Member States participating in the Programme and supervise the work of the Joint Secretariat (article 23 of ETC);
- h) prepare and submit for approval by the MC a communication strategy (article 115 and 116 of the CPR) of the Cooperation programme and an evaluation plan and designate contact persons to be responsible for information and publicity informing the Commission accordingly.
- i) ensure the establishment of a single website or a single website portal providing information on, and access to, all operational programmes in the participating Member States, including information about the timing of implementation of programming and any related public consultation processes;
- j) inform potential beneficiaries about funding opportunities under the cooperation programme;
- k) Publicise to Union citizens the role and achievements of cohesion policy and of the Programme through information and communication actions on the results of the Programme and operations.

Regarding the selection of operations, the Managing Authority shall:

- a) (draw up and, once approved by the Monitoring committee, apply appropriate selection procedures and criteria in accordance with the Union and national rules that:
 - i. ensure the contribution of operations to the achievement of the specific objectives and results of the relevant priority;
 - ii. are non-discriminatory and transparent;
 - iii. take into account the general principles of promotion of equality between men and women and non- discrimination and sustainable development
- b) ensure that a selected operation falls within the scope of the ERDF and can be attributed to a category of intervention of the cooperation programme;
- c) ensure that beneficiaries are informed of the specific conditions concerning the products or services to be delivered under the operation, the financing plan, the time limit

for execution and the financial and other information to be kept and communicated; satisfy itself that the beneficiary has the capacity to fulfil these conditions before the approval decision is taken; ensure that the procedure for evaluating proposals was carried out under the terms of the call for proposals, including the operations selection criteria approved by the Monitoring Committee;

d) ensure that the Lead beneficiary of an operation is provided with a document setting out the conditions for support of the operation, including the specific requirements concerning the products or services to be delivered under the operation, the financing plan, and the time-limit for execution

e) satisfy itself that the Lead beneficiary has the administrative, financial and operational capacity to fulfil the conditions referred to in point (c) before approval of the operation;

f) satisfy itself that, where the operation has started before the submission of an application for funding to the managing authority, applicable law relevant for the operation has been complied with;

g) ensure that operations selected for support from the ERDF do not include activities which were part of an operation which has been or should have been subject to a procedure of recovery in accordance with Article 71 of the CPR following the relocation of a productive activity outside the programme area;

Regarding the financial management and control of the Cooperation programme, the Managing Authority shall:

a) Ensure that each Member State shall designate the body or person responsible for carrying out verifications in relation to beneficiaries on its territory (the 'controller(s)') according to article 125, paragraph 4 of the CPR and article 23 of ETC. The managing authority shall satisfy itself that the expenditure of each beneficiary participating in an operation has been verified by a designated controller referred to in article 23 of ETC, within a period of three months of the submission of the documents. Verifications, pursuant to article 125 of the CPR paragraph 5, shall include the following procedures:

i. administrative checks, concerning the verification of expenses for each application of reimbursement, by the designated controllers of both countries ;

ii. on-the-spot checks of operations,

b) ensure that Lead beneficiaries involved in the implementation of operations are reimbursed on the basis of eligible costs actually incurred, maintain either a separate accounting system or an adequate accounting code for all transactions relating to an operation;

c) put in place anti-fraud measures adopting the national strategy for detection and prevention of fraud as drafted by Ministry of Economy, Infrastructure, Shipping and Tourism (April 2014);

- d) 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 the CPR;
- e) draw up the management declaration and annual summary referred to in points (a) and (b) of Article 59(5) of the Financial Regulation.

5.3.b. Bulgarian/Greek National Authorities

The institution supporting the activity of the MA in implementing the programme on the Bulgarian side will be the Ministry of Regional Development. Its competencies and responsibilities are to:

- a) support the MA in the implementation of the Programme;
- b) ensure the transfer of the national co-financing;
- c) ensure the availability of the amounts from the national cofinancing for the budget of the Technical Assistance priority;
- d) ensure access to information for the MA and Audit Authority in order to fulfil their respective tasks;
- e) ensure the compliance of the expenditures with Programme rules and Community rules and with the Programme's procedures, through an adequate control system;
- f) ensure the compliance with the Bulgarian national legislation regarding public procurement;
- g) designate the controllers responsible for carrying out the first level control for the partners located in the Republic of Bulgaria;
- h) nominate the representatives of the Republic of Bulgaria in the Monitoring Committee;
- i) ensure an adequate audit trail for the system concerning the implementation of the Programme in the Republic of Bulgaria;
- j) prevent, detect, correct and report the irregularities committed in the Republic of Bulgaria;
- k) inform the MA about any irregularity discovered or presumed to have happened on the territory of the Republic of Bulgaria, concerning the Programme;
- l) access the electronic system of the Programme (read-only access);
- m) ensure the necessary funds in case of funds decommitment at Programme level;
- n) ensure that beneficiaries, involved in the implementation of operations and reimbursed on the basis of eligible costs actually incurred, maintain either a separate

accounting system or an adequate accounting code for all transactions relating to an operation;

o) 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 from the CPR. With respect to Bulgaria's first level control (FLC) for ETC Greece – Bulgaria:

- for the period 2014-2020 Bulgaria shall establish a decentralised FLC system;
- the Minister of Regional Development or an authorised person by him/her will assign the FLC tasks to the controller(s) in accordance with applicable public procurement legislation or under existing labour law; and
- the cost for FLC verification shall be covered by the programme budget under PA "Technical assistance".

The Greek National Authority is the Ministry of Economy, Infrastructure, Shipping and Tourism.

5.3.c. Certifying Authority

The Certifying Authority is an administrative part of the General Secretariat of Public Investments and National Strategic Reference Framework (NSRF), within the Ministry for Economy, Infrastructure, Maritime Affairs and Tourism.

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 24 of ETC and 126 of CPR, and in particular for:

- a) certifying that they result from reliable accounting systems, are based on verifiable supporting documents and have been subject to verifications by the managing authority;
- b) drawing up the accounts referred to in point (a) of Article 59(5) of the Financial Regulation;
- c) certifying the completeness, accuracy and veracity of the accounts and that the expenditure (i) drawing up and submitting payment applications to the Commission, and 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 cooperation programme and complying with applicable law;

- d) 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 operational/cooperation programme;
- e) 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;
- f) 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;
- g) maintaining in computerised form accounting records of expenditure declared to the Commission and of the corresponding public contribution paid to beneficiaries;
- h) 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 Cooperation programme, by deducting them from the subsequent statement of expenditure;

According to Law 4314 / 2014 (Governmental Gazette 265 / 23-12-2014), Chapter A “For the management, control and application of developmental interventions for the programming period 2014-2020”, article 10 defines the framework of the Certifying Authority duties.

5.3.d. Audit Authority

The Audit Authority of the cooperation programme is the Financial Control Committee (EDEL), established at the Ministry of Finance (General Accounting Office of the State), Greece. The Financial Audit Committee consists of seven members and is independent of the Managing Authority and the Certifying Authority.

The Audit Authority shall be responsible for verifying the effective functioning of the management and control system of the cooperation programme. In this context, the Audit Authority shall be responsible for carrying out the functions envisaged in articles 25 of ETC and 127 of the CPR, and in particular for:

- a) ensuring that audits are carried out to verify the effective functioning of the management and control system of the cooperation programme;
- b) ensuring that audits are carried out on operations, on the basis of an appropriate sample, to verify expenditure declared to the Commission and in that respect determine the appropriate sampling method to be used in accordance with the requirements of article 59 par.5 of the Financial Regulation. The declared expenditure shall be audited based on a representative sample and, as a general rule on statistical sampling methods.

A non- statistical sampling method may be used on the professional judgment of the audit authority, in duly justified cases, in accordance with internationally accepted audit standards and in any case where the number of operations for an accounting year is insufficient to allow the use of a statistical method. In such cases, the size of the sample shall be sufficient to enable the audit authority to draw up a valid audit opinion in accordance with the second subparagraph of Article 59(5) of the Financial Regulation. The non-statistical sample method shall cover a minimum of 5 % of operations for which expenditure has been declared to the Commission during an accounting year and 10 % of the expenditure which has been declared to the Commission during an accounting year;

c) preparing, in accordance with article 127 par.4 of the CPR, within eight months of the adoption of the cooperation programme, an audit strategy for performance of audits, setting out the audit methodology, the sampling method for audits on operations and the indicative planning of audits to ensure that the main bodies are audited and that audits are spread evenly throughout the programming period; The Audit Authority shall submit the audit strategy to the Commission upon their request;

d) The Audit Authority shall draw up:

i. the 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;

ii. an audit opinion, in accordance with the second subparagraph of article 59 par. 5 of the Financial Regulation.

The Audit Authority shall ensure that the audit work takes account of internationally accepted audit standards.

In the course of carrying out its functions, the Audit Authority shall ensure that personal data and confidential information, received by it and/or audit bodies operating under its control, are protected.

5.3.e. Group of Auditors

The Audit Authority of the cooperation programme shall be assisted by a group of auditors comprising a representative from each Member State participating in the cooperation programme, carrying out the duties provided for in article 127 of the CPR. The group of auditors shall be set up within three months of the decision approving the cooperation programme. The group shall draw up its own rules of procedure. The group of auditors shall be chaired by the Audit Authority of the cooperation programme(25(2) of ETC). 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.

5.3.f. 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 cooperation 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 CPR.

In the framework of an 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.

When problems detected appear to be systemic in nature and therefore entail a risk for other operations under the cooperation programme, the Financial Control Committee shall ensure that further examination is carried out, including additional audits where necessary, to establish the scale of such problems.

5.3.g. Joint Secretariat

The Managing Authority, after consultation with the Member States represented in the programme area, shall set up a Joint Secretariat to be located near its registered office (Article 23 par.2, ETC).

The Joint Secretariat shall assist the Managing Authority, the Monitoring committee and the Joint Steering Committee in carrying out their respective duties. Moreover, it may assist the Audit Authority in organising the meetings of the group of auditors.

The JS shall have the following responsibilities:

- a) assist the MA in organising the meetings of the Monitoring committee and the Joint Steering Committee and provide all necessary documents to ensure the quality of the implementation of the OP in the context of its specific goals;
- b) draw up the criteria for selecting the operations and submit them to the Managing Authority for further actions;
- c) prepare the material concerning the call for proposals and submit it to the Managing Authority for further actions;
- d) provide information and assistance to (potential) beneficiaries. during the preparation of proposals and/or throughout the implementation period of the operations by all means considered appropriate;
- e) assist the MA and the Monitoring Committee in order to ensure that operations selected for funding comply with all applicable Community and national rules or guidelines;
- f) assist the MA in collecting and recording data and records required for financial management, monitoring, verification, audit and evaluation;
- g) assist the MA in collecting and keeping all documents relating to expenditure and audits, in order to ensure an effective audit trail in accordance with the requirements of article 125 par. 2 (d) of the CPR by all means considered appropriate;
- h) prepare annual reports, as well as the final report on the OP in cooperation with MA;
- i) support the MA to ensure compliance with information and publicity requirements referred to in article 115 and 116 of the CPR;
- j) prepare the Technical Assistance annual plan in cooperation with the MA;
- k) implement and monitor communication and publicity actions.

The functions and the role of the JS shall be determined, in agreement with the MA and the Member States participating in the Programme, in its rules of procedure. The JS shall comprise of a balanced number of staff members from the participating Member States.

5.3.h. Info Point

An Information Office shall be set up in Bulgaria as part of JS.

The main responsibilities of the Information Office shall be:

- a) to provide support to beneficiaries from the Bulgarian side during the preparation of proposals and throughout the period of implementation of operations;

b) to implement information and publicity actions at national level, in cooperation with the Joint Secretariat of the OP.

The Information Office shall be financed by the Programme Technical Assistance budget.

5.3.i. Reported opinion of an independent Body on the designation of the management structures of the Programme referred in art. 124 par. 2 of the CPR.

According to article 124 of the CPR “Procedure for the designation of the managing authority and the certifying authority”, an independent audit body assesses the fulfilment of the management and control systems laid down in articles 72, 73 and 74 of the CPR prior to the submission of the first application for interim payment to the Commission. The independent authority is the Audit Authority of the cooperation programme.

5.3.j. Responsibilities of the Lead Beneficiary and of Other Beneficiaries

For each operation, a lead beneficiary shall be appointed by the beneficiaries among themselves (article 13 par.1 of ETC). The lead beneficiary shall:

- a) lay down the arrangements with the other beneficiaries participating in the operation in an agreement comprising, inter alia, provisions guaranteeing the sound financial management of the funds allocated to the operation, including the arrangements for recovering amounts unduly paid according to article 27 par.2 of ETC. If the lead beneficiary does not succeed in securing repayment from other beneficiaries, the Member State, on whose territory the beneficiary concerned is located, shall reimburse the managing authority any amounts that were unduly paid to that beneficiary;
- b) assume responsibility for ensuring the implementation of the entire operation; shall ensure that the expenditure presented by all beneficiaries participating in the operation has been incurred for the purpose of implementing the operation and corresponds to the activities agreed between those beneficiaries and is in accordance with the document provided by the managing authority pursuant to Article 12(5);
- c) verify that the expenditure presented by other beneficiaries participating in the operation has been verified by a controller;
- d) ensure that the other beneficiaries receive the total amount of the contribution from the funds as quickly as possible and in full. Each beneficiary participating in the operation shall assume responsibility in the event of any irregularity in the expenditure which it has declared.

5.3.k. Certification of Expenditure and Financial Flows

5.3.k.i. Certification of Expenditure

The member state (Greece) designates the public authority “Special Service Paying Authority” as a “Certifying Authority” (Article 123 of CPR). The certifying authority shall be responsible 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 competent body, and for all other functions in accordance to article 126 of CPR. The verifications of expenditure of operations will be carried out according to article 125, paragraph 4 of CPR and article 23 of Reg. 1299/2013. The verification of expenditure for the Greek partners will be conducted under the responsibility of the competent Special Service of the Ministry of Development and Competitiveness.

5.3.k.ii Financial Flow of Public Expenditure

The Certifying Authority receives ERDF contribution payments from the European Commission. The Certifying Authority transfers the ERDF contribution to the lead beneficiaries. The lead beneficiaries are responsible for distributing the ERDF contribution to the beneficiaries concerned.

The Greek national contribution is ensured by the Ministry of Development and Competitiveness to the Greek beneficiaries. The national contribution of Bulgaria is ensured by the Ministry of Regional Development to the Bulgarian beneficiaries.

5.3.1 Monitoring

5.3.1.i Monitoring committee

The Monitoring committee of the OP is set up according to the provisions of article 47 par.1 of CPR. Its composition is decided by the participating Member States, taking into account that Member States shall be equally represented and complying with the partnership principle in managing, monitoring and evaluating the operations in all stages of programme implementation as laid down in article 5 of CPR..

The Monitoring committee shall be co-chaired by the designated representatives of the participating Member States or their substitutes. It shall be ensured that men and women are, as much as possible, equally represented on the Monitoring committee.

The Managing Authority attends the Monitoring committee meetings in an advisory capacity. Moreover, specialists or experts on economic, technical, social, scientific and other matters, depending on the agenda items, may be invited to attend the Monitoring committee meetings in an advisory capacity.

The Joint Secretariat undertakes the secretarial support to the Monitoring committee, mainly by organising the meetings, preparing the agenda and keeping the minutes.

The Monitoring committee shall draw up its own rules of procedure, within the institutional, legal and financial framework of the Member State where the programme Managing Authority is based, and approve them, in agreement with the Managing Authority, so that it can carry out its functions in accordance with CPR and ETC. At its initial meeting, the Committee shall adopt its rules of procedure.

The Monitoring committee shall be responsible for the functions set out in article 49 of CPR, and in particular it shall:

- a) consider and approve the criteria for selecting the operations - prior to launching the calls of proposals to be financed and within six months of the approval of the cooperation programme - and approve any revision of those criteria in accordance with programming needs;
- b) select the operations to be funded or delegate this task to a Joint Steering Committee;
- c) periodically review progress made towards achieving the specific targets of the cooperation programme on the basis of documents submitted by the Managing Authority;
- d) examine the results of implementation, particularly the achieving of the targets set for each priority axis and the evaluations;
- e) consider and approve the annual and final reports on implementation referred to in (article 14 (1) of ETC and article 50 (1) of CPR.;
- f) be informed of the annual control report, or of the part of the report referring to the cooperation programme concerned, and of any relevant comments the Commission may make after examining that report or relating to that part of the report;
- g) may propose to the Managing Authority any revision or examination of the cooperation programme likely to make possible the attainment of the ERDF's objectives referred to in article 3 or to improve its management, including its financial management;
- h) consider and approve any proposal to amend the content of the Commission decision on the contribution from the ERDF;
- i) approve the material of the call for proposals;
- j) approve the Technical Assistance annual plan;
- k) approve the evaluation plan and the communication plan.

Additionally, monitoring is ensured through the use of a set of quantified performance indicators, annual reporting and an annual review meeting, ex-ante and on-going evaluations. Analytical information on monitoring is provided in the full description of Monitoring and Control System.

5.3.m. Communication Strategy

As stipulated in article 116 of CPR, the Member States and the Managing Authority for the Cooperation programme shall draw up a communication strategy for the Programme so as to ensure the required publicity thereof. The information shall be addressed to the European Union citizens and beneficiaries at the aim of highlighting the role of the Community and ensure that assistance from the ERDF is transparent. Implementation of the communication strategy and the information and publicity requirements is described in Annex XII of CPR.

5.3.n. Electronic Exchange of Data

For the purposes of Articles 74 of CPR, all official exchanges of information between the Managing Authority, the Member States and the Commission shall be carried out using an electronic data exchange system.

According to the provisions of article 122 par.3 of CPR the Managing Authority shall ensure that no later than 31 December 2015, all exchanges of information between beneficiaries and itself, the certifying authority, the audit authority and intermediate bodies can be carried out by means of electronic data exchange systems. The systems referred to above shall facilitate interoperability with national and Union frameworks and allow for the beneficiaries to submit all information referred to in the first subparagraph only once.

5.3.o. Arrangements for the examination of complaints

In accordance with Article 74(3) of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013, a Complaint Panel, with specific rules of procedures and representatives, shall be set up.

In particular, any questions in relation to the assessments of proposed operations will be examined and answered by the MA/JS. Remaining complaints will be examined and answered jointly by the chair of the MC and the MA/JS. The chair may decide to refer back a complaint to the MC, should s/he judge it necessary. An overview of complaints examined and answered by the chair of the MC and MA/JS will be provided to the MC in the following meeting.

The same complaint procedure as described above will also apply to other stages of the project implementation controlled by programme bodies.

Further details about the programme's Complaint Panel arrangements will be provided in the management and control system description.

The Complaint Panel procedure set out above is without prejudice to any mechanism or process for legal redress at national level, in particular with regard to unsuccessful applicants

5.4 Apportionment of liabilities among participating Member States in case of financial corrections imposed by the managing authority or the Commission

The managing authority shall ensure that any amount paid as a result of an irregularity is recovered from the project via the lead partner. Project partners shall subsequently repay the lead partner any amounts unduly paid.

If the lead partner does not succeed in securing repayment from other project partner(s) or if the managing authority does not succeed in securing repayment from the lead partner or sole beneficiary, the EU Member State on whose territory the beneficiary concerned is located shall reimburse the managing authority based on Article 27 (3) of ETC regulation.

Details on the procedure will be included in the description of the management and control system to be established in accordance with Article 72 of CPR. In parallel to or after the reimbursement of the irrecoverable amount by the EU Member State to the Managing Authority, the Member State reserves the right to secure repayment from the project partner or sole beneficiary located on its territory, if necessary through legal action.

The Managing Authority shall be responsible for reimbursing the amounts concerned to the general budget of the Union in accordance with the apportionment of liabilities among the participating Member States as laid down in the cooperation programme and in Article 27 of ETC. With regards to financial irregularities being the subject of a Commission decision on the basis of Articles 144 to 147 CPR, financial consequences for the EU Member States are laid down in the section “liabilities and irregularities” below. Any related exchange of correspondence between the Commission and an EU Member State shall be copied to the Managing Authority. The Managing Authority will inform the audit authority/group of auditors where relevant.

5.4.a. Liabilities and irregularities

The Partner State will bear liability in connection with the use of the programme ERDF funding as follows:

1. For project-related expenditure granted to project partners, liability will be born individually by each Partner State proportionately, on the basis of the approved project budgets per partner located on each Partner State territory respectively;
2. In case of a systemic irregularity or financial correction (the latter decided by the Commission), the EU Member State will bear the financial consequences in

proportion to the relevant irregularity detected on the respective Member State territory. Where the systemic irregularity or financial correction cannot be linked to a specific EU Member State territory, the Member State shall be responsible proportionately to the population of project beneficiaries - per partner country - potentially affected, based on the projection of the specific error rate.

3. For technical assistance expenditure:
 1. Partner States shall bear joint liability for decisions of the monitoring committee in proportion to their respective share in the technical assistance budget;
 2. If technical assistance is used directly by a Partner State, this Partner State will bear full liability for this expenditure.

If the Managing Authority, or any EU Member State becomes aware of irregularities, it shall without any delay inform the liable EU Member State and the Managing Authority/Joint Secretariat. The latter shall ensure the transmission of information to the audit authority or group of auditors, where relevant. In compliance with Article 122 of CPR, each EU Member State is responsible for reporting irregularities committed by beneficiaries located on its territory to the Commission and at the same time to the Managing Authority. Each EU Member State shall keep the Commission as well as the Managing Authority informed of any progress of related administrative and legal proceedings. The Managing Authority shall ensure the transmission of information to the audit authority. If a Partner State does not comply with its duties arising from these provisions, the Managing Authority is entitled to suspend payments to all project partners located on the territory of this Partner State.

Member States may decide not to recover an amount unduly paid if the amount to be recovered from the beneficiary, excluding interest, does not exceed EUR 250 in contribution from the Funds.

Each Member State shall establish its own national rules regarding the procedure for the recovery of unduly paid funds to beneficiaries directly linked to financial corrections detected by the appropriate authorities within the operations funded under the cooperation Programme.

The Member States 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 Member State shall extend its investigation to cover all operations potentially affected.

5.5 Use of the Euro (where appropriate)

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

Article 28 of Regulation 1299/2013 is applicable and states that:

By way of derogation from Article 133 of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013, expenditure incurred in a currency other than the euro shall be converted into euro by the beneficiaries using the monthly accounting exchange rate of the Commission in the month during which that expenditure was: submitted for verification to the managing authority or the controller in accordance with Article 23 of this Regulation (reg 1299/2013, Article 28, option b).

The conversion shall be verified by the managing authority or by the controller in the Member State or third country in which the beneficiary is located.

5.6 Involvement of partners

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 monitoring committee

5.6.a Involvement of partners during programme preparation

The drafting of the Greece-Bulgaria 2014-2020 Cooperation programme was organized in compliance with the partnership approach as referred to in Article 5 of Regulation (EU) 24 No 1303/2013. The Joint Technical Secretariat of the Programme coordinated the process. A Joint Programming Committee (JPC) - as the main decision making body - and a Joint Programming Task Force (JPTF) - for discussing particular topics and draft proposals - were established in 2013. The JPC and JPTF were composed of national and regional representatives from the two countries participating in the Programme.

In addition three different stakeholder consultation phases were implemented during February – August 2014:

Phase A: Investigation of needs & priorities within a wide target-set of partners.

During February and March 2014 a survey was conducted using a structured questionnaire. The main aim was to gather as much knowledge about developmental challenges / needs of the CB area which have cross-border importance/impact or can be of great value to cross-border cooperation, and gain insight on aspects regarding the implementation of the current programme (good practices to be continued; problems to be corrected/avoided).

An open process of publicizing the survey was used (via the programme website, the MA website and links on other Greek and Bulgarian Ministry sites). Additionally, special notifications were sent via e-mail and follow-up calls to potential beneficiaries previously participated in calls for proposals. The website announcement and the e-mail notifications included:

- a description of the purpose of Consultation,
- a questionnaire to be completed by the stakeholders, and
- an explanatory note with directions regarding the completion of the questionnaire.

Inputs from this consultation were analyzed and systematized by the Technical Consultant supporting the drafting of the programme and presented to the Joint Task Force as the basis for elaborating the next phase of consultation. The inputs from this consultation phase were used in order to:

- supplement the findings of the analysis (needs/challenges) of the existing situation performed via statistical analysis and bibliographic review (Diagnostic Report) and finalize the SWOT analysis for the programme area; and
- form an opinion on the experience/institutional capacity of potential beneficiaries and programme areas which presented implementation problems in the current programming period (which later was used in the elaboration of the programme/section 2 of the programming document).

Phase B: Workshops with selected Stakeholders for the formulation of strategy and priorities:

This phase started immediately after the finalization of SWOT analysis and the Consultant's Diagnostic Report on the CB area existing situation and lasted for about 4 weeks (in May 2014).

The main aim was to incorporate proposals by the stakeholders regarding the prioritization of thematic objectives and investment priorities. Two (2) workshops were organized in total: 1 in Greece (Komotini) and 1 in Bulgaria (Sandanski). Participants-partners were requested to express interest and register in advance. Caution was taken to include all 3 categories of partners in line with the relevant EU regulations (see Article 4 of the C(2013) 9651 final).

The workshops were structured around specific issues to be analyzed by the participants:

- commenting on the Diagnostic Report by providing more documentation of specific needs/challenges that may have been overlooked by the Diagnostic Report;
- prioritization of the 11 thematic objectives for ERDF using a multi-criteria approach; (the criteria were: cross-border character, continuity with previous programming period, complementarity with mainstream programmes, relevance for CB area needs and challenges, demand by CB area stakeholders, and institutional capacity of potential beneficiaries to implement actions in the specific thematic objective); and

- suggesting types of interventions suitable to addressing the identified CB area needs/challenges.

Workshop participants were also offered the opportunity to submit their comments in writing within a 10-day period after the workshop to JTS.

The inputs from this consultation phase were used in order to:

- Select the thematic objectives to be incorporated in the programme. As explained in section 1, the selection of thematic objectives was based on a scoring method (using a 0-6 scale). The dimensions used for this scoring included: the recommendations from the on-going evaluation of the 2007-2013 programme, the recommendations of the Position Papers for Greece and Bulgaria as they were later incorporated in the respective Partnership Agreements, the findings from a consultation process conducted in 2013 for the Strategic Projects, the findings of a preparatory study conducted by the responsible Greek Ministry in order to identify Strategic Guidelines for ETC programmes and the rankings from Phase B consultation; and Select the intervention priorities and the indicative intervention types to be incorporated in the programme. A very important input into this process was the proposals submitted by workshop participants.

Phase C: Wide public consultation through internet.

An earmarked web page was created in order boost stakeholders' involvement and to collect their perspectives on the first programme draft. This web page contained the 1st draft of the European Territorial Cooperation Programme "Greece-Bulgaria 2014 – 2020" and the Financing Table by Priority Axis. It also contained a link to a questionnaire (using Google Forms), calling stakeholders to express their opinions on the appropriateness of strategy, on the specific objectives and the types of interventions selected, and the appropriateness of the financial allocation. They were also asked to contribute with proposals on appropriate types of interventions to be included in the programme by investment priority.

The announcement of the 3rd consultation phase was posted on various official web sites (MA, JTS, national authorities, etc) in order to reach the wider public. In addition, targeted dissemination was performed through emails to specific recipients (about 950 email addresses). This phase

(See:)

The inputs from this consultation phase were used in order to:

- finalize and complement the analysis section (section 1) of the programme document,;
- finalize and complement the indicative intervention types, target groups and programme beneficiaries included in section 2 of the programme document, especially as far as it concerned underrepresented groups; and
- shape many of the terms and conditions that were included in the programme (especially in the selection guidelines) with respect to ensuring compliance with horizontal principles.

5.6.b How the relevant partners will be involved in the implementation of the programme

The relevant partners who have participated in consultation during programme preparation and will participate in consultation procedures during programme implementation (article 5 CPR) are:

- public authorities that maintain territorial responsibility for the programme eligible areas (e.g. regional authorities, Municipalities, etc.);
- public authorities that maintain thematic/sectoral responsibility in the intervention areas of the cooperation programme (e.g. Ministries, Natura site management authorities, transport authorities, Universities, research or standards institutions, civil protection authorities, etc.);
- collective bodies that maintain thematic/sectoral responsibility in the intervention areas of the cooperation programme (e.g. Chambers of Commerce, professional associations, etc);
- civil society umbrella organizations and collective bodies that maintain thematic/sectoral responsibility in the intervention areas of the cooperation programme (e.g. associations of special or under-represented groups, national level charities, associations of specific purpose civil groups, etc)

The programme aims to take on board the partners' opinions during the implementation and evaluation of the Greece-Bulgaria 2014-2020 programme through the following mechanisms/procedures.

1. Through the operation of the Monitoring Committee. First, the composition of the MC will be designed in compliance with Article 5 of CPR and the Delegated Act for the Code of conduct of partnership. Second, the active involvement of CB area stakeholders in the operation of the Monitoring Committee will be ensured by publicizing the draft agendas of the MC meetings and a summary of the minutes. This will allow them to actively participate by sending in specific input and by being updated on the latest programme developments. In case any stakeholders are interested in sending input to the MC discussions, they should contact their national contact point, who will gather all inputs from the respective territory and forward them to MA in preparation to the MC meeting. Finally, the MA will publish a summary of the relevant decisions of the Monitoring Committee meetings in order to keep all area stakeholders informed of the outcomes.
2. As for the involvement in programme implementation, all CB stakeholders will be given the opportunity to participate at the inception meetings carried out before each call for proposals during which information will be disseminated from the MA to the potential beneficiaries but also input will be gathered from them.
3. Finally, all or a sample of CB area stakeholders will be considered for participation in the evaluation process (via targeted surveys) which will preferably be conducted in 2018 linking it to the appraisal for the performance framework.

6. COORDINATION

The mechanisms that ensure effective coordination between the ERDF, the European Social Fund, the Cohesion Fund, the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development and the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund and other Union and national funding instruments, including the coordination and possible combination with the Connecting Europe Facility, the ENI, the European Development Fund (EDF) and the IPA and with the EIB, taking into account the provisions laid down in the Common Strategic Framework as set out in Annex I to Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013. Where Member States and third countries participate in cooperation programmes that include the use of ERDF appropriations for outermost regions and resources from the EDF, coordination mechanisms at the appropriate level to facilitate effective coordination in the use of these resources

6.1 General Coordination Functions and Bodies

This section addresses the coordination with other EU-funded programmes. Ensuring a better coordination with other policies and programmes is necessary in order to strengthen the respective objectives of these programmes by promoting synergies and complementarities between them but also to avoid overlaps in double EU-financing of identical actions.

6.1.a Coordination Bodies in Greece

The Greek National Coordination Authority (NCA) - seated at the Greek Ministry of Economy, Infrastructure, Shipping and Tourism, coordinates all programmes of the Greek Partnership Agreement 2014-2020 including ERDF, the European Social Fund, the Cohesion Fund, and the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development. The Managing Authority for all European Territorial Cooperation Programmes in Greece (IPA II CBC Greece-fYROM and TNC programme Balkan-Mediterranean) - including the cooperation programme Greece-Bulgaria - is seated at the same Ministry as NCA, and ensures coordination with the Greek sectoral and regional programmes.

6.1.b Coordination Bodies in Bulgaria

The respective coordination functions with the Bulgarian sectoral and regional programmes is ensured by the Bulgarian National Authority which is the Ministry of Regional Development. The National Authority acts as Managing Authority for the IPA CBC Programmes managed by Bulgaria (Bulgaria-Turkey and Bulgaria-former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia cooperation programmes) and as a coordination authority with the Bulgarian mainstream Operational Programmes “Environment”, “Regions in Growth”, “Rural Development”, “Transport and Transport Infrastructure”, “Science and Education for Smart Growth”, “Innovation and Competitiveness”, “Human Resource Development”, “Good Governance” and “Development of the Fisheries Sector”

In addition the Managing Authority will seek for complementarities and synergies with the interventions of other programmes within the eligible area of the CP, by closely collaborating with the respective MAs and by participating in the Monitoring Committee meetings of other sectoral or regional operational programmes so as to ensure that there is no overlap and that the programmes do not function on a competitive basis. In that

framework, the Managing Authority of the CP Greece-Bulgaria 2014-2020 will need to collaborate with:

- the MAs and the Monitoring Committees of the Regional Operational Programmes of Central Macedonia and Eastern Macedonia-Thrace;
- the Bulgarian National Authority (for coordination with the IPA CBC Programmes Bulgaria-Turkey and Bulgaria-former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and the Bulgarian mainstream OPs “Environment”, “Regions in Growth”, “Transport and Transport Infrastructure”, “Innovation and Competitiveness”, “Human Resource Development”, and “Good Governance”),
- the MAs and the Monitoring Committee`s of the Greek sectoral programmes:
 - Transport infrastructure, environment and sustainable development;
 - Competitiveness, entrepreneurship and innovation; and
 - Human resource development, training and life-long learning.
- the MAs of the transnational cooperation programmes
 - Adriatic-Ionian programme;
 - Danube programme;
 - Black Sea basin ENI CBC programme; and
 - MED ETC programme.

On a bilateral coordination basis, the MA will coordinate the calls for proposals with the other operational programmes implementing interventions in the Greece-Bulgaria eligible area so as to achieve complementarity.

Also, as per the Greek Partnership Agreement 2014-2020, and in order to achieve better coordination of all ETC programmes, the Joint Coordination Committee between the Ministries of Development and Foreign Affairs will expand to include appropriate stakeholders and the National Info Point for the Adriatic-Ionian Programme.

As per the Bulgarian Partnership Agreement 2014-2020, the synergy between the interventions will be sought by elaborating analyses and identification of the areas where support under various programmes and plans can be used in a complementary manner.

The Monitoring Committee of the Cooperation Programme "Greece-Bulgaria 2014-2020", will be the focal body which will ensure coordination, and consider the synergies and complementarities with other programmes. Coordination and complementarity with the Greek and Bulgarian mainstream programmes and other cooperation programmes (which present synergies with the GR-BG cooperation programme) will be ensured through the participation of economic, technical, social, scientific experts and the representatives of other operational/cooperation programmes – on an “as needed” basis - in the cooperation programme Monitoring Committee meetings.

6.2. Coordination Mechanisms - Procedures

Coordination with Regional OP of Central Macedonia, Regional OP of Eastern Macedonia Thrace and the Bulgarian OP Regions in Growth.

The following mechanisms will be used by the MA for coordination with the 3 programmes that have a “regional” orientation covering territories of the eligible CB area:

- Cooperation programme “Antenna officers” (infor-point) will collect information regarding the “Regions in Growth” programme and will inform the MA;
- Awareness raising, capacity building and training of both potential beneficiaries and stakeholders regarding programme objectives, good practices, etc.;
- Publicity and promotion of programme/project results in order to increase visibility;
- Invitations to stakeholders from the eligible areas to participate in the development phases of the calls for proposals (both strategic and regular projects);
- Requirement from potential project partners to declare participation in similar actions in the past or on the present programming period (in order to assess overlap);
- Participation of MA staff in Monitoring Committee meetings of the 2 Greek regional operational programmes in order to keep informed of the calls for proposals, the selection of projects and their implementation progress, and to seek synergies/avoid overlaps.

In parallel, the National Authority staff in Bulgaria will participate in Monitoring Committee meetings of the OP Regions in Growth in order to keep informed of the calls for proposals, the selection of projects and their implementation progress, and to seek synergies/avoid overlaps.

Coordination with other Cross border and transnational programmes

The following mechanisms will be used by the MA for coordination with other cross-border and transnational programmes in which partners from the GR-BG eligible area can participate.

- Special Service Managing the `European Territorial Cooperation` Objective Programmes acts as the MA for the Balkan-Mediterranean programme and will work on the complementarities and synergies with the GR-BG cooperation programme; it also acts as the National Contact Point for all Transnational European Programmes and will be responsible for this coordination in Greece;
- In Bulgaria, the National Authority acts as the MA for the IPA CBC Programmes Bulgaria-Turkey and Bulgaria-former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and will work on the complementarities and synergies with the GR-BG cooperation programme;
- For all other relevant programmes, designated MA staff members will stay informed of programme developments and will participate in relevant meetings both in order to share knowhow and good practices and avoid programme overlaps.

Coordination with Sectoral Programmes and RIS3 networks

MA will participate in all relevant Committees and/or Networks established by NCA. More specifically, the MA will participate in the Coordination Network for Smart Specialization, the Evaluation Network, the Network for Horizontal Institutional Capacity issues and the National Environmental Network.

In addition the NCA constantly monitors all Greek sectoral programmes and informs all Special Services of the Ministry of Economy, Infrastructure, Shipping and Tourism

(including the MA responsible for the GR-BG cooperation programme) of the development in these programmes.

Respectively, in Bulgaria, the Ministry of Regional Development acting as the coordination body will constantly monitor the Bulgarian sectoral programmes and will inform MA on the development of these programmes. Especially as it pertains to the coordination of the GR-BG cooperation programme with the National Real Time Water Management System actions (OP Environment), representative/s from the Bulgarian Ministry of Environment and Water/National Water Management Centre, as well as other specialists or experts in economic, technical, social, scientific and other matters will be invited to attend the meetings of the cooperation programme Monitoring Committee – as relevant, and depending on the agenda items, and especially when preparing the Guidelines for applicants for every Call of proposals in order to avoid overlapping and to ensure complementarity, and when approving projects to be financed under each Call for proposals in order to ensure both demarcation and control on double financing with the OP Environment.

Coordination with ESF, CF, and EAFRD.

Considering the thematic focus of the GR-BG cooperation programme, the risk of overlapping between projects co-financed by this programme and those co-financed by the ESF, EAFRD Cohesion Fund is very limited.

However, the applicants will be asked to include information on the past, the current and the envisaged EU assistance and indicate how coordination and articulation with activities of other programmes will be carried out, especially to avoid overlaps.

Coordination with other Union Instruments

The coordination with other Union instruments addressing issues of relevance to GR-BG cooperation programme will be mainly carried out by checking carefully the coherence between them.

This relates mainly to the EU programmes LIFE, “Employment and Innovation”, “Start-Up Europe”, the Facility “Connecting Europe”, the “Asylum, Migration and Integration” Fund and the Fund for “European Aid to the most Deprived”.

Coordination with these programmes will be ensured through exchange of information between the Managing Authority (assisted by the Joint Secretariat) and the bodies in charge of the implementation of these programmes on calls for proposals, applications, projects and where relevant, results. This exchange of information will also include the potential redirection of project applicants towards a more suitable programme, where necessary, or direction of applicants to another programme for the acquisition of complementary funding.

More specifically, the programme MA will seek coordination with these programmes and financing means at European level by focusing especially at:

- synergies with the programme LIFE and more specifically possibilities for acquiring complementary funding to support information and communication including awareness raising campaigns, studies/surveys/modelling and scenario building, preparation/implementation/monitoring and evaluation of projects,

workshops/conferences and meetings, networking and best-practice platforms, financed under the third specific objective of LIFE for the priority area “Nature and Biodiversity”, as they relate to the activities envisaged under S.O. 5 of the cooperation programme; For that purpose the MA will cooperate with the respective structures in the respective Ministries of Environment (in Greece and Bulgaria). The responsible coordinating body with LIFE is the Ministry of Reconstruction of Production, Environment and Energy; MA will act only in an information dissemination capacity;

- synergies with the programme Employment and Social Innovation and more specifically under the micro-finance and social entrepreneurship axis and especially as it pertains to access to finance for social enterprises. The responsible coordinating body with FEAD is the Ministry of Labour, Social Insurance and Social Welfare; MA will act only in an information dissemination capacity;
- synergies with the programme Start-up Europe and more specifically complementary services through the matchmaking platforms, legal advice through the iLink network, and the Atlanta project for transnational accelerators;
- synergies with the Connecting Europe Facility – CEF and more specifically the possibility of acquiring complementary resources for funding portions of road sections needed to complete the TEN-T network in the border area; The responsible coordinating body with CEF is the Ministry of Reconstruction of Production, Environment and Energy; MA will act only in an information dissemination capacity;
- synergies with the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF) and more specifically the possibility for acquiring complementary funding for preparation studies for the GR-BG cooperation programme in the areas of identification of the needs of asylum seekers; the responsible coordinating body with AMIF is the Ministry of Interior and Administrative Reconstruction; MA will act only in an information dissemination capacity; and
- synergies with the Fund for European Aid to the most Deprived (FEAD) especially as it pertains to actions targeting mutual learning, networking and dissemination of good practices in the area of non-financial assistance to the most deprived persons. The responsible coordinating body with FEAD is the Ministry of Labour, Social Insurance and Social Welfare; MA will act only in an information dissemination capacity

The MA will collect information and ensure coordination regarding these instruments through the application process.

7. REDUCTION OF ADMINISTRATIVE BURDEN FOR BENEFICIARIES

Summary of the assessment of the administrative burden for beneficiaries and, where necessary, the actions planned accompanied by an indicative timeframe to reduce the administrative burden.

The on-going evaluation of the cooperation programme 2007-2013 identified some factors considered by the beneficiaries as imposing excess burdens/difficulties on them. The most commonly stated factors included:

- limited timeframe for the preparation of proposals and lack of mechanisms for finding project partners (the evaluation recommended a 2-3 month project preparation process and the creation of an open database for search for potential partners); all calls will be open for at least a 3-month period and an electronic application will be installed in the CP web-site through which beneficiaries can register and search for partners (operational before the 1st call for proposals);
- complicated application form (the evaluation recommended the elimination of redundant or repeated steps in completing it.); this will be accomplished through the application of e-cohesion.
- long project selection process (it was already shortened to less than the recommended by the evaluation 7-month period, within the implementation period);
- the centralized expenditure verification process for the Greek side (the decentralized Bulgarian system was assessed as less burdensome). The evaluation recommended the simplification of verification procedures; this will be accomplished mainly by carrying out control procedures via electronic data access.

All such changes, as well as the actions concerning the reduction of the administrative burden for beneficiaries listed below, will be detailed in the Programme Manual in order to take effect from the 1st call for proposals, unless indicated otherwise.

At National level several actions have been taken to streamline procedures in 2014-2020 programmes. These actions include:

- electronic signature of all public documents (to be implemented by end of 2016);
- interconnectivity of the central MIS system with localized MIS systems (e.g. of beneficiaries, the public electronic procurement system, etc) as per Directives 2014/24/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council (on Public Procurement) and Directive 2014/25/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council (on procurement by entities operating in the water, energy, transport and postal services sectors);(to become operational in beginning of 2016);
- integrated electronic exchange and electronic management of certain procedures and documents concerning inputs of beneficiaries and intermediary bodies to the MIS;
- automated messages to beneficiaries regarding their applications, comments, etc;
- control procedures by the certifying authority and the audit authority via electronic data access;

- electronic payments;
- electronic management of bidding/procurement procedures in line with the new Directives;
- electronic publicity/consultation procedures for all public actions.

Following the simplification of several central procedures at the level of beneficiaries (simplified environmental permitting process, process of expropriations, authorizations from archaeology, public procurement, etc.), supplementary simplifications are under consideration. These relate to further simplifying the funding/payment procedures, consolidation of public procurement legislation and adoption of standard documents for procurement notices.

In addition to the above in the Greece-Bulgaria 2014-2020 programme, simplification and harmonization will be sought in 4 main areas:

1. Streamlining and harmonization of implementation tools (HIT). The Greece-Bulgaria Programme will translate this into the refinement, implementation, and utilization of packaged documents developed by INTERACT in conjunction with all ETC Programmes, under the name of Harmonized Implementation Tools (HIT). These documents are targeted at ETC Programmes and projects by harmonizing and simplifying assessment criteria, project application forms, reporting forms, monitoring checklists, appeal procedures, eligibility of expenditures, indicators, and the sets of data required for monitoring. The programme will, adopt the ‘off the shelf’ ETC tools which can be smoothly integrated into an online monitoring system, and where necessary, it will add Programme specific elements.
2. E-cohesion tool in line with the requirements of art 122 p3 of CPR, the Programme will implement an IT solution embedding a set of simplification measures based on IT technologies, so called “e-cohesion”.

During the current programming period the JTS has elaborated the Electronic Beneficiary File which contains documents related to programmes beneficiaries. The use of that electronic file will be extended to all other authorities.

The MIS of the 2014-2020 period - which is currently been updated - will cover all issues of the CPR (Article 112(3)), and more specifically:

- beneficiaries do not have to enter the same data more than once in the system;
 - interoperability is guaranteed, which means that data entered by beneficiaries is shared between different bodies within the same cooperation programme;
 - the electronic audit trail complies with relevant articles of CPR (Articles 112 and 132) as well as with any national requirements on the availability of documents;
3. the system for electronic data exchange guarantees data integrity and confidentiality, authentication of the sender and storage in compliance with defined retention rules (Article 132 of the CPR).
 4. Simplification of procedures and Programme rules. One of the key elements to achieve a reduction of the administrative burden is the application of simplified

rules and procedures. In the GR-BG CP, the following measures are considered for implementation:

1. The introduction of simplified cost options, as regulated in Article 67 of CPR, in the field of supporting certain project activities will be applied to the maximum possible extent, (e.g. staff and administrative costs).
2. The implementation of the Delegated Act on General Rules on Eligibility of Expenditure for Cooperation Programmes when preparing the programme's eligibility rules and financial structures (e.g. budget lines). Harmonization of eligibility rules will reduce the need for beneficiaries participating in different programmes to study and understand various interpretations of eligibility rules. It will also simplify the work for the first level controllers.
3. Review and, if possible, streamlining of procedures for shared costs, in-kind contributions and other items related to the project budgets.
4. The GR-BG CP plans to apply the measures above from the beginning of the new programme period.

Lean management throughout all implementation processes The implementation processes within the GR-BG CP will be evaluated and monitored on an ongoing basis to enable continuous improvements during the programme period. The aim will be to reduce the administrative burden for beneficiaries and programme bodies, as well as to reduce the risk for administrative errors to a minimum.

8. HORIZONTAL PRINCIPLES

8.1 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 the Programme which supports several specific objectives with actions that focus fully on sustainable development, notably:

Priority 2/Specific Objective 2.1(Reduce impacts from (natural) disasters) with indicative actions: Adaptation/mitigation pilot actions (for specific risks) with positive mitigation effects. Building up a common knowledge base: data observation/processing capacities, mechanisms for the exchange of information and early warnings, joint risk prevention and emergency response plans, etc;

Priority 2/Specific Objective 2.3(Enhance water and soil management) with indicative actions: Development of CB eco-innovation partnerships and participation in European Innovatio- Partnerships in the areas of water management (pollution control and efficient use) and soil management (including contaminated lands; Pilot applications or mainstreaming of existing innovative methods/technologies in the areas of water management (pollution control and efficient use) and soil management (including

contaminated lands) and joint development of new methods; Promoting “green behavior” campaigns in the areas of water and soil management.

Priority 3/Specific Objective 3.2 (Improve transportation environmental impact) with indicative actions: Transport investments aiming at reducing the environmental footprint of transport activities (including transport services); Development of new technologies/methods for the design and implementation of environment-friendly transport infrastructures and systems.

The other Priority Axes 1 “A competitive and Innovative Cross-Border area” and 2 “A socially inclusive Cross-Border area” as well as the other Specific objectives of the 2nd and 3rd Axis, do not directly focus on sustainable development issues. However, it is quite likely that projects supported under those priorities also address aspects of sustainable development in their work. This may for instance be the case for SMEs or natural and cultural heritage related projects that focus on capacities and skills for eco-innovation, or projects that concentrate on the green technology sectors.

Project applicants under these Priority Axes 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. For that reason specific criteria will be included in order to ensure that no projects will produce negative impacts on the environment.

All projects funded by the Programme can incorporate efforts to ‘green’ their activities and/or minimize the carbon footprint of their activities, for example by:

- including environmental criteria in their procurement procedures (Green procurement procedures, GPP);
- adopting greening measures for the organization and implementation of events;
- giving preference to environmentally friendly transport options for short travel distances;
- following the procedures described in the environmental management system and certification (EMAS).

Consideration should be given to adopting a green business model encompassing the following principles and practices: Resource sufficiency (e.g. sharing models, ‘less is more’, higher energy efficiency, higher levels of recycling); Greater use of renewable energy; Implementing the concept of Eco-efficiency (e.g. enhancing resource productivity, giving preference to long-lasting materials over those with a short lifespan, slow-food, and slow-travelling); Efficiency beyond the market (use of open-source development software, wikis, shared knowledge environments, new non-monetized markets); Regional supply chain (reducing supply chain length and CO2 emissions); and Use of video conference facilities

More explicit environmental and climate change related criteria (on top and beyond of the guiding principles for the selection of operations) will be elaborated in the programme manual.

Further to the above, the programme has conducted a Strategic Environmental Assessment during its preparation and will apply Directive 2001/42/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council (on the assessment of the effects of certain plans and programmes on the environment) – as incorporated in the National Legal Framework - regarding Environmental Impact Assessment to certain projects (e.g. large construction projects, road works, etc)

8.2 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 ETC Programme GR-BG adopts social inclusion, which also implies equal opportunities and non- discrimination, as a horizontal principle, to be applied in relevant cases within the scope of the programme's action.

The Programme will strive to promote equal opportunities and prevent any discrimination based on for instance sex, racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation during its life cycle and in particular in relation to access to funding through the elaboration of appropriate project selection criteria (which will enforce the application of the equal treatment principle) during the preparation for the calls for proposals phases. It will also take into account the needs of the various target groups at risk of discrimination and in particular the requirements of ensuring accessibility for persons with disability.

The Priority Axis 4 focuses fully on social inclusion, notably with actions: to improve the effectiveness of the primary health care system - which exhibits a better territorial and social coverage than secondary and tertiary health care and hence covers better deprived communities; development of cross-border mobile services, telemedicine and telecare infrastructure; Support for the establishment and provision of development support to Social Enterprises that offer innovative solutions, promote inclusive CB labour markets and social services accessible to all in the CB area; Support for social franchising which is the cross-border transfer of a social enterprise business model from one side of the border to the other; and Support for the development and implementation of methodologies for monitoring and evaluation of social, economic and environmental impacts of social economy in the CB area. The target groups of both Axis 4 S.O.s are vulnerable groups and other under-privileged populations.

Additionally to Priority Axis 4, this horizontal theme also emerges under the specific objectives 1 and 2 dedicated to supporting SME development and entrepreneurship in the form of guiding principles for the selection of operations (e.g. priority to projects offering services in geographic areas that exhibit a lack of support systems, priority to supporting business extroversion and growth of businesses owned by underrepresented groups, and

the requirement for all projects to comply with Regulation 1303/2013, article 7 concerning the implementation of the principles of non discrimination and accessibility to persons with disabilities) . Even if the primary focus of this specific objective is not on addressing the equal opportunities/non-discrimination principle, it is anticipated that certain Interregional Cooperation Projects may emerge that focus on, the equal opportunities principle.

In addition, all 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 and what the impact of their project on men and women will be. 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 Cooperation Programme GR-BG will be able to monitor and demonstrate how the programme concretely contributed to equal opportunities and non-discrimination.

8.3 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 Programme will strive to promote equality between men and women throughout all stages of programme implementation, including the preparation, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of operations.

This cross-cutting theme could emerge for instance in projects under the specific objectives 1.1 and 1.2 dedicated to supporting SME development and entrepreneurship and the 4.2 to social enterprises. Under these specific objectives projects could for instance address the issue of promoting female entrepreneurship, support opportunities for women to play a more active role in innovation processes and in the formation of new enterprise. The development of such Projects as part of the wider thematic scope of these specific objectives would be welcomed by the programme bodies.

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 Cooperation Programme GR-BG will be able to monitor and demonstrate how the programme concretely contributed to equality between men and women. However, no specific selection criteria are foreseen to favour the development of projects dealing with this issue.

9. SEPERATE ELEMENTS

9.1 Major projects to be implemented during the programming period

Table 23: List of major projects

| Project | Planned notification / submission date (year, quarter) | Planned start of implementation (year, quarter) | Planned completion date (year, quarter) | Priority axes / Investment priorities |
|---------|--|---|---|---------------------------------------|
|---------|--|---|---|---------------------------------------|

9.2 Performance framework of the cooperation programme

Table 24: Performance framework (summary table)

| Priority axis | ID | Indicator or key implementation step | Measurement unit, where appropriate | Milestone for 2018 | Final target (2023) |
|---|-------|---|-------------------------------------|--------------------|---------------------|
| 1 - A Competitive and Innovative Cross-Border Area | CO05 | Productive investment: Number of new enterprises supported | Enterprises | 0 | 275.00 |
| 1 - A Competitive and Innovative Cross-Border Area | F0201 | Eligible verified (certified) Expenditure of the Axis | Euro | 1,011,765 | 20,235,295.00 |
| 1 - A Competitive and Innovative Cross-Border Area | K0201 | Selection of enterprises | Number | 6 | 9.00 |
| 2 - A Sustainable and Climate adaptable Cross-Border area | CO20 | Risk prevention and management: Population benefiting from flood protection measures | Persons | 0 | 747,000.00 |
| 2 - A Sustainable and Climate adaptable Cross-Border area | O0202 | Number of cultural and/or natural assets rehabilitated/protected | number | 3 | 10.00 |
| 2 - A Sustainable and Climate adaptable Cross-Border area | F0202 | Eligible verified (certified) Expenditure of the Axis | Euro | 4,328,824 | 42,882,353.00 |
| 2 - A Sustainable and Climate adaptable Cross-Border area | K0202 | Selected projects CO20 (Decision of approval) | Projects | 2 | 3.00 |
| 3 - A Better interconnected Cross-Border Area | CO13a | Roads: Total length of newly built roads, of which: TEN-T | km | 0 | 8.00 |
| 3 - A Better interconnected Cross-Border Area | F0203 | Eligible verified (certified) Expenditure of the Axis | Euro | 8,602,941.00 | 38,235,295.00 |
| 3 - A Better interconnected Cross-Border Area | K0203 | Projects with at least one signed Contract of technical - construction works sub-projects | number | 2 | 4.00 |
| 4 - A Socially Inclusive Cross-Border Area | O0204 | Number of health care institutions reorganized, modernized or reequipped | number | 0 | 12.00 |
| 4 - A Socially Inclusive Cross-Border Area | F0204 | Eligible verified (certified) Expenditure of the Axis | Euro | 1,078,896 | 21,577,923.00 |
| 4 - A Socially Inclusive Cross-Border Area | K0204 | Projects with at least one signed Contract of (technical - | Number | 8 | 12.00 |

| Priority axis | ID | Indicator or key implementation step | Measurement unit, where appropriate | Milestone for 2018 | Final target (2023) |
|---------------|----|--|-------------------------------------|--------------------|---------------------|
| | | construction works or other sub-projects | | | |

9.3 Relevant partners involved in the preparation of the cooperation programme

Respondents to phase A of public consultation (Questionnaire):

GREEK PARTNERS

Public partners

1. Aristotle University Thessaloniki - Laboratory of Heat Transfer and Environmental Engineering
2. Chemical Process and Energy Resources Institute / Center for Research and Technology Hellas (CPERI / CERTH)
3. Delta Municipality
4. Democritus University of Thrace
5. Doxato Municipality
6. Egnatia Odos S.A
7. Ministry of Macedonia and Thrace
8. Municipality of Iraklia
9. Municipality of Kavala
10. Municipality of Komotini
11. Municipality of Orestiada
12. Municipality of Pilea-Hortiatis
13. Municipality of Thermaikos
14. Municipality of Thessaloniki
15. National School of Public Health, Department of Parasitology Entomology and Tropical Diseases, National Malaria Reference Center, Specialized Laboratory for Molecular Diagnosis of Parasites, Laboratory of Medical Entomology
16. National School of Public Health (NSPH)
17. Region of Central Macedonia
18. Region of East Macedonia and Thrace
19. University of Macedonia (UoM) Department of Economics,
20. University of Macedonia, Business Administration Department

Socio-economic partners

1. Chamber of Small and Medium Sized Industries of Thessaloniki
2. Federation of Evros Craft Industries
3. Federation of Industries of Northern Greece
4. Hellenic Fashion Industry Association (SEPEE)
5. Interregional Cooperation at Scientific Computing in Interdisciplinary Science
6. Support Structure for Organisations of Social Economy and Entrepreneurship

Civil Society partners

1. National Confederation of Disabled People - N.C.D.P
2. The Smile of The Child

BULGARIAN PARTNERS

Public partners

1. Bansko Municipality
2. Bulgarian Ministry of Environment and Water (MOEW)
3. Eco Energy Foundation
4. Harmanli municipality
5. Ministry of Environment and Water / European and International Projects Directorate, Water Management Directorate
6. Municipality of Gotse Delchev
7. Municipality of Petrich
8. Municipality of Zlatograd
9. Municipality Satovcha
10. National Police Trade Union of Bulgaria
11. Region with Administrative Center the City of Kardzhali
12. Regional Administration of Smolyan
13. Regional Forestry Directorate - Kardzhali
14. Regional Municipalities Association "Maritza"
15. Road Infrastructure Agency - Bulgaria

Socio-economic partners

1. Bulgarian Industrial Association

Civil Society partners

1. Association for Education, Culture and Arts (AECA)

Participants to phase B of public consultation (Workshops):

1st workshop (Komotini)

GREEK PARTNERS

Public partners

1. Aristotle University of Thessaloniki
2. Decentralized Administration Macedonia-Thrace
3. Municipality of Drama
4. Inter-Municipal Cooperation of East Macedonia-Thrace
5. Democritus University of Thrace
6. Egnatia Odos S.A
7. Center for Research and Technology Hellas (CERTH)
8. Region of East Macedonia and Thrace
9. University of Macedonia

10. Regional Association of Eastern Macedonia-Thrace Municipalities
11. Regional Association of Central Macedonia Municipalities
12. Regional Fund of East Macedonia-Thrace
13. Region of Central Macedonia
14. Technological Educational Institute of East Macedonia-Thrace

Socio-economic partners

1. Greek-Bulgarian Chamber
2. Federation of Industries of Northern Greece
3. Rodopi Chamber of Trades and Crafts
4. Drama Chamber of Trades and Crafts
5. Thessaloniki Chamber of Trades and Crafts
6. Kavala Chamber of Trades and Crafts
7. Economic Chamber of Thrace
8. OMIKRON Ltd

Civil Society partners

1. ARSIS - Association for the Social Support of Youth
2. Inter-Balkan Environment Center
3. OIKOKOINONIA, Citizens' Initiative for the Support of social vulnerable groups
4. Management Body of Dadia-Lefkimi-Soufli National Park
5. Management Body of Nestos Delta-Vistonida-Ismarida National Park

BULGARIAN PARTNERS

Public partners

1. Association of Rhodopi Municipalities
2. Regional Administration Haskovo
3. Regional Administration Kardzhali
4. Regional Administration Smolyan
5. Regional Municipalities Association "Maritza"

2nd workshop (Sadanski)

GREEK PARTNERS

Public partners

1. Egnatia Odos S.A
2. Ministry of Macedonia and Thrace

Socio-economic partners

1. GNOSI ANAPTIXIAKI Business Development Consultants
2. Hellenic Fashion Industry Association (SEPEE)

BULGARIAN PARTNERS

Public partners

1. American University
2. BFSA - Blagoevgrad (Regional Dir. For Food Safety)
3. Fire Safety and Civil Protection Directorate
4. Government Administration (Undefined)
5. National Authority
6. Regional Administration of Blagoevgrad
7. Road Infrastructure Agency
8. Sandanski Municipality
9. Smolyan Regional Administration
10. South-west Univ.- "Neofit Rilski"
11. Strumyani Municipality
12. West Aegean Basin Directorate - Blagoevgrad

Socio-economic partners

1. Association Business Information and Consulting Center - Sandanski
2. BIC - Sandanski
3. Chamber of Commerce and Industry - Blagoevgrad

Civil Society partners

1. Press

Respondents to phase C of public consultation (Draft OP):

GREEK PARTNERS

Public partners

1. INAB/ CERTH
2. Municipality of Serres
3. Municipality of Thessaloniki
4. University of Macedonia
5. University of Macedonia

Socio-economic partners

1. Support Structure for Organisations of Social Economy and Entrepreneurship
2. Exhibitions Research Institute

Civil Society partners

1. Greek Biotope/Wetland Centre (EKBY)
2. Institute Mohamed Ali for the Research of Eastern Traditions (I.M.A.R.E.T.)
3. National Confederation of Disabled People - N.C.D.P.

4. OIKOKOINONIA, Citizens' Initiative for the Support of social vulnerable groups

BULGARIAN PARTNERS

Public partners

1. Municipality of Petrich
2. Road Infrastructure Agency

Civil Society partners

1. European Institute for Development

9.4 Applicable programme implementation conditions governing the financial management, programming, monitoring, evaluation and control of the participation of third countries in transnational and interregional programmes through a contribution of ENI and IPA resources

Not applicable

Documents

| Document title | Document type | Document date | Local reference | Commission reference | Files | Sent date | Sent By |
|--|---|---------------|-----------------|-----------------------|---|-------------|----------|
| Citizens' summary | Citizens' summary | 02-Sep-2015 | | Ares(2015)36284 47 | Citizens' summary | 03-Sep-2015 | niakdimi |
| Documentation on the assessment of the applicability and the fulfilment of ex-ante conditionalities | Documentation on the assessment of the applicability and the fulfilment of ex-ante conditionalities | 02-Sep-2015 | | Ares(2015)36284 47 | Documentation on the assessment of the applicability and the fulfilment of ex-ante conditionalities | 03-Sep-2015 | niakdimi |
| Report of the ex-ante evaluation | Report of the ex-ante evaluation | 02-Sep-2015 | | Ares(2015)36284 47 | Report of the ex-ante evaluation | 03-Sep-2015 | niakdimi |
| A map of the area covered by the cooperation programme | A map of the area covered by the cooperation programme | 02-Sep-2015 | | Ares(2015)36284 47 | A map of the area covered by the cooperation programme | 03-Sep-2015 | niakdimi |
| Confirmation of agreement in writing to the contents of the cooperation programme | Confirmation of agreement in writing to the contents of the cooperation programme | 02-Sep-2015 | | Ares(2015)36284 47 | Partner State Agreement - Greece Partner State Agreement - Bulgaria Programming Committee Agreement | 03-Sep-2015 | niakdimi |
| Intervention Logic | Supplementary information | 02-Sep-2015 | | Ares(2015)36284 47 | Intervention Logic | 03-Sep-2015 | niakdimi |
| Methodological Note | Supplementary information | 02-Sep-2015 | | Ares(2015)36284 47 | Methodological Note | 03-Sep-2015 | niakdimi |
| Information On The Methodologies And Criteria Applied To Select Indicators For The Performance Framework | Supplementary information | 02-Sep-2015 | | Ares(2015)36284 47 | Information On The Methodologies And Criteria Applied To Select Indicators For The Performance Framework | 03-Sep-2015 | niakdimi |

Submitted annexes by the Commission implementing regulation laying down the model of the programme

| Document title | Document type | Programme version | Document date | Local reference | Commission reference | Files | Sent date | Sent By |
|---|---|-------------------|---------------|-----------------|-----------------------|---|-------------|----------|
| Citizens' summary | Citizens' summary | 1.5 | 02-Sep-2015 | | Ares(2015)362844 7 | Citizens' summary | 03-Sep-2015 | niakdimi |
| Report of the ex-ante evaluation | Report of the ex-ante evaluation | 1.5 | 02-Sep-2015 | | Ares(2015)362844 7 | Report of the ex-ante evaluation | 03-Sep-2015 | niakdimi |
| Programme Snapshot 2014TC16RFCB022 1.5 | Snapshot of data before send | 1.5 | 03-Sep-2015 | | Ares(2015)362844 7 | Programme Snapshot 2014TC16RFCB022 1.5 el | 03-Sep-2015 | niakdimi |
| Confirmation of agreement in writing to the contents of the cooperation programme | Confirmation of agreement in writing to the contents of the cooperation programme | 1.5 | 02-Sep-2015 | | Ares(2015)362844 7 | Partner State Agreement - Greece Partner State Agreement - Bulgaria Programming Committee Agreement | 03-Sep-2015 | niakdimi |
| A map of the area covered by the cooperation programme | A map of the area covered by the cooperation programme | 1.5 | 02-Sep-2015 | | Ares(2015)362844 7 | A map of the area covered by the cooperation programme | 03-Sep-2015 | niakdimi |