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06.07.2022 12:48:06
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Α. Π.: ΥΠΕΝ/ΔΙΠΑ/70026/4783

Ημ/νία: 06/07/2022

<p>Greek Republic Ministry of Environment and Energy GENERAL DIRECTORATE OF ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY Directorate of Environmental Licensing Department C Tach. Address: 11 Alexandra St. 114 73, Athens Information: A. Sargianou Phone: 210 641 7953 e-mail: sec.dipa@prv.ypeka.gr</p>	<p>TO: MINISTRY OF DEVELOPMENT KAI INVESTMENTS Special Management Service Business Programs of the Objective "European Territorial Cooperation" abouziani@mou.gr</p>
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DECISION

**Subject: Environmental approval of the Interreg VI-A Cooperation Operational Programme
Greece-Bulgaria 2021-2027.**

**THE GENERAL DIRECTOR OF ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY
OF THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND ENERGY**

Taking into consideration:

1. The Common Ministerial Decision with protocol number YPECHODE/EFPE/ok.107017/2006 (B' 1225) "Assessment of environmental effects of certain plans and programs in compliance with its provisions Directive 2001/42/EC", as amended by Common Ministerial Decision no. 40238/2017 (B' 3759) and MFA/DIPA/38181/2695/2022 (B' 1923).
2. The document with protocol number 3485/14.1.2022 of the Special Service for the Management of Operational Programs of the "European Territorial Cooperation" Objective of the Ministry of Development and Investments (ap. YPEN/DIPA/3994/260/17.1.2022).
3. The e-mail of the Special Management Service dated 14/2/2022 of the Operational Programs of the "European Territorial Cooperation" Objective Ministry of Development and Investments.
4. The document with protocol number Interior/DIPA/18456/1157/24.2.2022 of the Ministry of the Interior's DIPA.
5. The document with protocol number 24471/4.3.2022 of the Managing Authority of "European Territorial Cooperation" Objective of the Ministry of Development and of Investments (protocol number MINISTRY/DIPA/27010/1785/18.3.2022).
6. The document with protocol number MFA/DIPA/28378/1874/23.03.2022 of the DIPA of the MFA, in which

the online posting of the SEA on the website http://www.greecebulgaria.eu/article/268_Strategic-Environmental-Assessment-of-Cooperation-Programme-Interreg-%E2%80%9CGreece-Bulgaria-2021-2027%E2%80%9D and in the context of the article 7 of the KYA under no. YPECHODE/EFPE/oc.107017/2006, requested:

6.1. From the Managing Authority of "European Territorial Cooperation" Programmes of the Ministry of Development and of Investments, as a Planning Authority, to publicize its launch consultation of the SEA and to give the interested public the opportunity to express its views.

6.2. From the Regional Councils of Central and Eastern Macedonia of Macedonia - Thrace to express their opinion on its content SEA and make available to the public, whenever requested, the information and details of SEA file.

6.3. From the following Public Authorities to express their opinion on its content of SEA:

6.3.1. Department of Spatial Planning of the Ministry of Environment and Energy.

6.3.2. Directorate of Climate Change and Atmospheric Quality Ministry of Environment and Energy.

6.3.3. Directorate of Natural Environment and Biodiversity Management, of Ministry of Environment and Energy.

6.3.4. Directorate of Forest Protection, Ministry of Environment and Energy.

6.3.5. Directorate of Waste Management, of the Ministry of Environment and Energy.

6.3.6. Water Environment Protection and Management Directorate, of Ministry of Environment and Energy.

6.3.7. General Secretariat of Tourism Policy and Development of the Ministry Tourism.

6.3.8. General Secretariat of Rural Development and Food of the Ministry of Rural Development and Food.

6.3.9. General Secretariat of the Aegean and Island Policy, of the Ministry Maritime and Island Policy

6.3.10. General Secretariat of Ports, Port Policy and Shipping of Investments, of the Ministry of Shipping and Island Policy.

6.3.11. General Secretariat of Culture of the Ministry of Culture and Sports.

6.3.12. General Secretariat of Transport of the Ministry of Infrastructure and Transportation.

6.3.13. General Secretariat of Infrastructure of the Ministry of Infrastructure and Transportation.

6.3.14. General Secretariat of Public Investments and NSRF, of the Ministry Development and Investments.

6.3.15. Special Service for Strategy, Planning and Evaluation (EFSSA), of Ministry of Development and Investments.

6.3.16. Department of Environment and Spatial Planning of the Region Eastern Macedonia and Thrace.

6.3.17. General Directorate of Development and Environment, of the Region Central Macedonia.

7. The document with protocol number 132100/04.04.22 of the General Directorate of Museum Restoration and of Technical Works of the Ministry of Culture and Sports, with which the above under no. (6) document to the Services of Newer Monuments and Technical Projects Eastern Macedonia and Thrace and Central Macedonia respectively, in order to express their opinion on the content of SEA (protocol number MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS/33570/2336/06.04.2022).

8. The document with protocol number YPEN/DDA/32478/583/28.04.2022 of the Waste Management Directorate of the Ministry of Environment and Energy, with no objections for SEA with remarks about the institutional planning of waste management (protocol number MEP/DIPA/41785/2942/28.04.2022).

9. The document with protocol number 175307/04.05.2022 of the General Directorate of Museum Restoration and Technical Works of the Ministry of Culture and Sports, without objection for SEA (protocol number MFA/DIPA/44211/3097/04.05.2022).
10. The document with protocol number 89796/1797/13.05.2022 of the Environment and Spatial Directorate Planning of the Region of Eastern Macedonia and Thrace, with a positive opinion and comments on the content of SEA (protocol number YPEN/DIPA/48166/3368/13.05.2022).
11. The document with protocol number 673/106808/31.05.2022 of the Directorate of Environment and Spatial Planning and Climate Change of the Ministry of Rural Development and Food, with views on SEA (protocol number MFA/DIPA/55154/3801/31.05.2022).
12. The e-mail of the Managing Authority of European Territorial Cooperation Programmes dated 07.06.2022 with attachments: i) The letter from the Ministry of Environment to the Bulgarian National Authority, ii) The unofficial translation of the above letter, iii) Table with the positions of the Administrative Authority (Ministry/DIPA/58568/4006/08.06.2022).
13. The document with protocol number 168875/2206/08.06.2022 of the Regional Administration of Eastern Macedonia and Thrace, with attached document no. 77/2022 (AD: 60037/AB-PSFG) Decision of a positive opinion with comments, of the Regional Council of Eastern Macedonia and Thrace (protocol number YPEN/DIPA/63117/4359/20.06.2022).

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the environmental approval of the Cooperation Program Interreg VI-A Greece-Bulgaria 2021-2027, based on the Strategic Environmental Assessment and the results of the public consultation, with the following conditions, limitations and directions, which should be observed during its specialization and implementation, with care of the Planning Authority, as well as all natural and legal persons who will participate in the above actions.

- A. Brief description of the Cooperation Programme Interreg VI-A Greece-Bulgaria 2021-2027** aims to encourage cross-border cooperation in order to increase the resilience of participating regions in the face of common challenges, which are, among others, economic transition, climate change and digitalisation, while at the same time cooperation will contribute in reducing economic and social inequalities. The programme area for Greek side includes the Region of Central Macedonia (regional units of Serres and Thessaloniki) and Region of Eastern Macedonia - Thrace, while for the Bulgarian side includes the regions of Blagoevgrad, Haskovo, Smolyan, Kardzhali.

The Interreg VI-A Greece-Bulgaria Cooperation Program 2021-2027 is based on the following Priorities / Policy Objectives:

- 1.** A more resilient and more ecological cross-border region of Greece - Bulgaria, with low carbon emissions, including climate change mitigation, circularity of activities and multimodality.
- 2.** A more accessible cross-border region of Greece - Bulgaria, with development and fostering sustainable, climate-resilient, smart and intermodal mobility.
- 3.** An inclusive Greece-Bulgaria cross-border region, with better employment conditions, strengthened health services, strengthened sectors of tourism and culture.

B. Variations imposed on the programme due to the incorporation of environmental dimension and conditions, restrictions and directions for protection and management of the environment that should accompany the approval of the programme.

B.I. Variations imposed on the program due to the incorporation of environmental dimension.

The structure and content of the Cooperation Program Interreg VI-A Greece- Bulgaria 2021-2027, as it is described in SEA, do not have to suffer variations before its approval, because the programme sufficiently integrates its environmental dimension.

B. II. Conditions, restrictions and directions for the protection and environmental management must accompany the approval of the programme.

For the full protection and the most rational management of the environment, the approval of the Interreg VI-A Greece-Bulgaria Cooperation Program 2021-2027 should be accompanied by the conditions, restrictions and directions that follow.

1. Comprehensive care for the prevention, limitation and treatment of impact on the environment should be a horizontal requirement during program implementation procedures. For this purpose the Planning Authority, within the framework of the programme management and implementation mechanism, must ensure that the actions of the programme will be characterized as sufficient environmental compatibility. Structural elements of this process may constitute, indicatively and not exclusively, the following:

- 1.1. Evaluation of the degree to which, during the planning and implementation of each action of the program, have been taken into account:

- 1.1.1. Regional and national commitments on climate change, both in regarding the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions as well as adaptation to the changes that have occurred or are occurring, such as above are reflected in the relevant national or regional plans.
- 1.1.2. Greek Law 4936/2022 "National Climate Law - Transition to climate neutrality and adaptation to climate change, urgent provisions for dealing with the energy crisis and protection of the environment" (A' 105) and the National Plan for Energy and Climate (B' 4893/2019), as applicable.
- 1.1.3. Greek Law 4819/2021 "Integrated framework for waste management - Incorporation of Directives 2018/851/EC and 2018/852/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 30 May 2018 amending Directive 2008/98/EC on waste and Directive 94/62/EC on packaging and packaging waste, organizational framework of the Hellenic Recycling Organization, provisions for plastic products and the protection of the natural environment, spatial planning, energy and related emergencies regulations" (A' 129) and the National Waste Management Plan (B' 185/2020), as applicable.
- 1.1.4. The National Air Pollution Control Programme (B' 182/2021).
- 1.1.5. The national strategy and European initiatives for biodiversity.
- 1.1.6. The spatial planning system (Greek Law 4759/2020 as applicable) and plans which have been approved for its implementation.

- 1.1.7. The directions and requirements of the River Basin Management Plans and Flood Risk Management Plans of the intervention areas of the programme.
 - 1.1.8. The developments at national and Union level concerning the integrated maritime policy, maritime spatial planning and blue growth.
 - 1.1.9. The 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the United Nations.
- 1.2. Cooperation Program Interreg VI-A Greece-Bulgaria 2021-2027, should ensure that the design, implementation and operation of the projects will be by:
- 1.2.1. Response to the principle of do not cause significant harm-DNSH (Article 9§4 of Regulation 2021/1060 on defining common provisions for the Funds of the Cohesion Policy 2021-2027), which refers to avoidance significant burdens on six environmental and climate objectives (climate change mitigation, climate change adaptation, sustainable use and protection of water and marine resources, circular economy, pollution prevention and control, protection of biodiversity and ecosystem restoration), where this required by EU law.
 - 1.2.2. Fulfillment of infrastructure resilience requirements in climate change (climate proofing of infrastructure), as these arise from the relevant institutional, technical and guiding texts of the European Commission.
 - 1.2.3. Compliance to environmental requirements set by each national regulatory framework of the environment and the environmental terms of each project.
 - 1.2.4. Ability and preparedness to evolve towards the requirements created by green and the digital transition.
 - 1.2.5. Avoid cumulative environmental impacts in areas with increased interventions' density.
2. For the protection of the natural environment and the rational natural resources management in design, implementation and operation of the investments that will implemented within the Interreg VI-A Greece-Bulgaria Cooperation Programme 2021-2027, the following directions should be followed:
- 2.1. *Site optimization*: infrastructure and investments should be characterized by suitable locations of their facilities, with priority within organized containers or within areas with increased suitability, minimizing the occupation of natural or semi-natural areas. Eligibility criteria should include with increased importance the utilization and/or rehabilitation of disturbed and degraded lands soils, while special care should be taken in the areas of soils where phenomena of desertification and erosion are observed. Special care is required also to ensure that highly productive agricultural land is used to meet nutritional needs.
 - 2.2. *Protection and restoration of natural units and landscapes and reinforcement of natural elements in urban areas*: The care for the landscape, as well as the continuity and coherence of the natural and urban space should constitute integral element of any form of spatial planning. In addition, special care should be given to the protection and promotion of nature elements within the cities, as well as their functional integration and interface with urban functions.
 - 2.3. *Limiting risks and nuisances to the natural environment*: Infrastructure and investments supported by the programme should incorporate plans limiting and dealing with risks of pollution or natural destruction environment (forest lands, agricultural ecosystems, marine environment etc.).
 - 2.4. *Avoiding changes in the qualitative and quantitative characteristics of water*: in the planning of infrastructure and investments, care should be taken to avoid or minimize changes in the quantitative and qualitative state of water.

- 2.5. *Protection of marine environment*: Prevention or minimization of impacts on marine environment, as well as protection of sensitive marine or coastal formations, should be a requirement for programme support for projects or investments in coastal or marine zones.
 - 2.6. *Incorporation of environmental innovation*: At programme level, integration of environmentally beneficial innovation technologies and methods should be encouraged, in particular as regards new, green forms of energy, energy efficiency and autonomy, the circular use of materials, energy and water, as well as integration of each project into the environment of its host area at the fullest.
 - 2.7. *Biodiversity protection*: The process of inclusion in the programme should incorporate criteria for biodiversity protection and the response of the supported investments towards conservation objectives of protected species and habitats, as well as control of compatibility with the provisions of the management plans of the areas in force. In particular actions of joint monitoring, management and restoration of ecologically interconnected protected areas separated by a border line but also green and blue infrastructures that support functions of ecological routes in the transboundary areas should be encouraged.
3. In order to protect the man-made environment, in the planning, implementation and operation of the infrastructure and investments that will be implemented in the framework of the programme, the following should be followed directions:
 - 3.1. *Improvement of the urban environment*: The building facilities of the projects should respond, to the maximum extent possible, to the principles of green building, minimized energy consumption and reduction in the contribution of the urban heat island effect.
 - 3.2. *Enhancing sustainable mobility*: Investments within or on the perimeter of urban areas should incorporate measures to encourage and facilitate the use of public transport, cycling and other environmentally friendly modes of transport such as e-mobility.
 - 3.3. *Enhancing safety in terms of avoiding accidents with environmental impact and/or minimizing their consequences*: In the planning of infrastructure and investments in or near urban areas, care attention be given to prevent accidents that could cause environmental degradation, as well as measures to limit and deal with their consequences as effectively as possible.
 4. In order to promote sustainable tourism development and culture in areas of high attractiveness, in the planning, implementation and operation of investments that will be included in the programme, continuous and balanced development of all sectors of the local economy should be sought maintaining the environmental and cultural structure particularity of the area. Actions to promote sustainable and thematic cultural routes at regional and macro-regional level, should be adapted to the needs of environmental protection.
 5. The implementation of proposals to deal with the environmental impacts that set forth in section 8.1 of the General Terms and Conditions becomes mandatory, as long as it does not conflict with the above.

C. Monitoring system of the significant environmental impacts from the programme implementation

1. Monitoring significant environmental impacts of the programme implementation should be carried out by collecting and processing data that

will be recorded during the operational monitoring of the implementation of the program, under the responsibility of the Planning Authority, using additional data and records from all available sources, especially in collaboration with the Environmental Services of the Program Regions.

2. The mechanism for monitoring the implementation of the program should include provisions for the collection of data:
 - 2.1. In the application of the conditions set in section B.II above.
 - 2.2. In environmental initiatives developed or enhanced by the programme.
3. The collection and processing of the above data will be carried out at the beginning of each year from the beginning of the implementation of the programme and the results will be reflected in an environmental monitoring report, which will be made public by posting it on the website of the Planning Authority, at the same time giving the opportunity to the interested public to express his views on the content of the report.
4. The implementation of the environmental monitoring proposals set out in section 8.2 of SEA becomes mandatory, as long as it does not contradict the above.

D. Period of validity of the decision

This decision is valid throughout the implementation of the program. In case of modification, it is necessary to comply with the procedures provided for in the Public Administration with protocol number ΥΠΕΧΩΔΕ/ΕΥΠΕ/οικ.107017/5.9.2006 (B' 1225), as applicable.

E. Disclosure and Other Provisions

The Planning Authority publishes this decision for public information, posting the decision on its official website, within ten days from receipt of (par. 11 of article 7 in conjunction with par. 9 of article 5 of the 107017/2006, as applicable). SEA is an integral part of this decision. Acts or decisions approving the programme must explicitly state this decision.

**THE GENERAL DIRECTOR OF ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY OF THE MINISTRY OF
ENVIRONMENT AND ENERGY**

KONSTANTINOS DIMOPOULOS

Suspended Act