

Citizen's Summary of the 2020 Greece - Bulgaria Annual Implementation Report

INTERREG V-A Cooperation Programme Greece -Bulgaria 2014-2020
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What is the Programme all about?

The Programme supports territorial cooperation in the border area between Greece and Bulgaria. Its aim is to address needs and challenges that are common for the two neighbouring countries.

The eligible Programme area is consisted of two Greek and two Bulgarian regional administrations. Situated at the south-east border of the European Union, it occupies a surface of approximately 40.000 square km and it is inhabited by a population of 2.7 million people. The area is primarily rural, mountainous and sparsely populated. Demographically the city of Thessaloniki is predominant, concentrating approximately 40% of the area's population. There are also ten (10) urban agglomerations of more than 50.000 inhabitants that accumulate for 38.2% of the area's population and twenty five (25) smaller concentrations with a population ranging from 10.000 to 50.000 inhabitants.



The Programme is co-financed by the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) with 110.723.408,00€. Its total budget is 130.262.835,00€, including national contributions from the two countries. At the core of the Programme, lays the aim is to facilitate issues of cross-border nature that are addressed more efficiently on a bilateral basis. To this extent, it focuses on the thematic objectives of the EU2020 Strategy that have the greater value for the cross-border area.

The Programme's scope is consisted of following **four (4) Priority Axes**:

Priority Axis 1 - A Competitive and Innovative Cross - Border Area



Competitiveness of SMEs

Projects under PA 1 focus on entrepreneurship, paying particular attention to the competitiveness and the innovative capacity of the local economy. Their aim is to strengthen the ability of the area's economic actors to operate more efficiently and to expand their entrepreneurial operations on national and international level.

Priority Axis 2 - A Sustainable and Climate Adjustable Cross - Border Area



Environment and resource efficiency

The Axis is aiming at the protection, conservation and promotion of the local natural and cultural heritage. Project under PA2 include integrated bilateral activities such as the protection of the local flora and fauna, the sustainable use of water resources, the co-management of natural hazards, the restoration and promotion of cultural sites and the enhancement of the area's attractiveness as a whole.



Combating climate change

Priority Axis 3 - A Better Interconnected Cross-Border Area



Sustainable transport

PA3 is dedicated to the improvement the regional accessibility and mobility by connecting secondary and tertiary nodes of the area with international highways and Transnational European Transport Networks. This is achieved through the Strategic Project with the acronym CROSSBO which serves the operation of the TEN-T axis Plovdiv – Smolyan – Rudozem – Xanthi and of secondary local networks.

Priority Axis 4 - A socially inclusive Cross-border area



Social inclusion

Priority Axis 4 is focusing on social inclusion, a core matter for the sustainable development of the cross-border area. With the aim to reduce regional disparities of provided health services, projects under PA4 invest on medical infrastructures, rural health care spots and establishment of applications for people living in remote areas. Equal economic prospects are also addressed by the Axis, through projects on social entrepreneurship and the creation of employment opportunities for people that belong to vulnerable groups of the population.

2020 in a Nutshell

2020 was a challenging year for the Program's implementation as it had to adapt to the harsh new reality posed by the pandemic outburst. In spite of the unprecedented circumstances, the following key milestones took place during the year:

- **72 Small and Medium Enterprises**, with an equal division between the two countries, were approved to **receive financial aid** of 12.289.830,12 € in total. The purpose of the aid is to support the SMEs in investing on new technologies, expanding their production capabilities and creating sustainable synergetic schemes in the cross-border area.

- **25 new projects** were approved, with the aim **to promote of entrepreneurship** by facilitating the economic exploitation of new ideas and fostering the creation of new firms. The total approved budget of the action is 14.468.758,40 €, an amount that is directed to 115 **beneficiaries** from the **local entrepreneurial and academic community** such as Business Chambers, Professional and Collective Associations, NGOs and Non-Profit-Organizations, Regional Development Agencies, Business Networks, Universities and Research Institutes of the CB area.
- **2 new projects** with a total budget of 2.484.851,10 € were contracted under Priority Axis 2 - **A Sustainable and Climate Adjustable Cross - Border Area**. Moreover, an **extra amount** of 1.904.476,82 € was awarded to eight on-going projects **for incorporating additional activities** to their implementation.

- The **Strategic Project** with the acronym **CROSSBO** and a total budget of €38,802,558.00 was under full implementation. The aim of the project is to increase the **mobility within** and improve the **accessibility of** the cross-border area. To that extent, it foresees the creation a new border check point (Dimario – Rudozem), development of new road network, as well as significant improvements to the already existing local infrastructures.



Border Crossing Check Point Dimario - Rudozem panoramic view of on-going works

- Through the Call for Additional Activities, **an extra amount** of 1.858.501,37€ was **nominated to six projects** of Priority Axis 4. The major part of funds, meaning **1.794.877,15 €** were directed to investment priority 9a and particularly dedicated **to actions for combating the COVID-19 pandemic**.

What about spending?

Until the end of 2020, the total **certified expenditure** was **47,059,206.80 €** while the total eligible amount of **expenditure declared** by beneficiaries to the Managing Authority until 31/12/2020 was **49.954.941,29 €**.

For further information, please consult our websites at <http://www.greece-bulgaria.eu> and <http://www.interreg.gr>