



## Greece – Bulgaria

### **Brief Minutes and Decisions of the 1st Monitoring Committee Meeting**

**Thessaloniki**

**2nd of February 2023**

The Monitoring Committee (MC) of the Cross-Border Cooperation Programme INTERREG VI-A “Greece-Bulgaria 2021-2027” was convened according to the invitation document with the Protocol Number 4348 dated 18/01/2023 and was assembled on the 2nd of February 2023, in Thessaloniki, to discuss and take decisions on the following topics of the proposed agenda:

- Presentation of the new Programme
- Rules of procedure of the MC
- Information & Publicity issues
- Anti-fraud coordination service (AFCOS) / National Transparency Authority

The meeting was attended by 77 participants, including members with voting rights, members without voting rights and staff members of the Managing Authority (MA), the Joint Secretariat (JS) and the Bulgarian National Authority (NA).

Mr. George Zervos - Special Secretary for ERDF & CF Programmes of the Hellenic Ministry of Development and Investments and chairperson of the 1st MC meeting, welcomed the participants, confirmed the quorum, and requested the approval of the agenda from the MC. The draft agenda was approved and there was no conflict of interest declared by the participants.

Mr. Milen Obretenov, Director of Territorial Cooperation Management at the Bulgarian Ministry of Regional Development and Public Works (National Authority - NA), wished for a fruitful and successful continuation of the good cooperation between the NA and the Managing Authority/ Joint Secretariat (MA/JS) to achieve the new and ambitious goals set for the new period, with the support of the regional and local authorities, the entrepreneurship, and the communities of the cross-border area.

Mr. Ivan Fecenko, European Commission’s Desk Officer for Regional and Urban Policy, responsible for Interreg Greece-Bulgaria programme, expressed a few points concerning the new programme. As stated, after a few technical meetings with the Managing Authority the draft programme was received by the EC and the interservice consultation was launched, raising some comments on the draft programme. The final version received by the MA was well prepared and was approved by the EC. The final document addresses the most important cross-border cooperation challenges and reflects on the policy objectives 2- environment, 3-connectivity, and 4-social issues. The programme’s main priorities are focused on the environment, connectivity and mobility, education, culture, and tourism. It is worth mentioning that the programme contributes to climate and environmental objectives by 43%, whereas biodiversity is 15% of the programme’s EU budget. Mr. Fecenko also underlined that this is the 6<sup>th</sup> generation of the Interreg programme and this programme should support mainly projects that will increase the impact on the cross-

border region, whereas visible changes in the region are expected with the contribution of the EU funds. This is the reason why the territorial and thematic concentration are always reminded; this is the main objective, to spend most of the funds on activities with great effect on the cross-border territory. Concerning the governance of the programme, particular attention should be paid on the clarity of the projects, the transparency of the participation of all partners in all stages of the programme management and implementation, whereas particular attention will be given on visibility and communication. Finally, Mr. Fecencko thanked all participants who worked hard on the preparation/development of the new programme, especially the MA/JS, and wished everyone good luck with its implementation.

Mr. George Zervos expressed the Greek Ministry's gladness to host the 1<sup>st</sup> MC meeting for the 2<sup>nd</sup> Interreg Programme, after the realisation of the Greece-Cyprus programme's 1<sup>st</sup> MC meeting, whereas the MC meetings for the remaining 3 Interreg programmes are scheduled to take place soon. He expressed his satisfaction that the negotiations were completed successfully with the approval of the new sectoral, regional and cross-border cooperation programmes. He mentioned that the Greek Partnership Agreement was the first one to be approved by the EU, some sectoral programmes were among the first ones to be approved at European level whereas the cross-border cooperation programmes were also approved at a good ranking. He referred to the three (3) Axes of the new Programme: a more resilient and greener, a more accessible and a more inclusive Greece-Bulgaria region; and also highlighted the use of the small project funds. The total programme budget is almost 84 million euros in terms of public funding. He expressed the Ministry's will to activate the programme as soon as possible to prevent delays in the implementation and avoid having to rush at the end of the programme to reach the targets. Therefore, as he stated, the MA will issue very shortly a small model of calls to avoid fragmentation of the budget, to ensure sound management and to facilitate the procedures with a view to achieve the absorption targets and to implement projects with measurable results. The Ministry wishes problems to be resolved when they are caused without any delays, with the aim to better achieve all the common targets. As he mentioned, the MA will issue the timeline for the interventions and a written procedure will be activated for the approval of the selection criteria. There are two projects of strategic importance, the completion of the road in Smolyan and the completion of the road axis of Xanthi - Echinus and the second one is the improvement of the railway connection in Radomir – Kulata region, for which Mr. Zervos expressed the Ministry's commitment to launch their implementation very soon.

- **Presentation of the new Programme**, by Ms. Angeliki Bouziani, Head of the Managing Authority for ETCP.

Ms. Bouziani presented the key points of the new programme: the programme budget, the selected priorities with their policy and specific objectives, their intervention fields and indicators (output and result) and the foreseen calls for project proposals. The new programme was approved on the 13<sup>th</sup> of September 2022 by the European Commission.

- **Presentation on the Rules of procedure of the MC**, by Ms. Afroditi Lioliou, Member of Unit B1 of the MA.

Ms. Lioliou briefly presented the Rules of Procedures (RoP) of the Monitoring Committee, including: the composition, the mission and the tasks of the MC, the working language, the chairmanship and its tasks, the meetings' organization, the decision-taking procedure, and the impartiality of the MC. The RoP were approved by the MC members.

- **Presentation on the Information & Publicity issues**, by Christina Papageorgopoulou, Communication & Technical Assistance Officer of the JS.

Ms. Papageorgopoulou presented the main points of the new regulation (EU 2021/1059), the programme and project logos for the new period based on the Interreg brand produced by Interact programme, the main elements of the new programme website and social media and the Programme's aim to capitalise on existing results and knowledge in the new period, according to the Programme's Capitalisation Strategy.

- **Presentation of Anti-fraud coordination service (AFCOS)**, by Konstantinos Pavlikianis, Executive of AFCOS - National Transparency Authority of Greece

Mr. Pavlikianis briefly presented the pillars of AFCOS actions, its system for complaints management, some statistics on the complaints received in general and the ones concerning Interreg Programmes and the Greece-Bulgaria programme in specific.

### **Conclusions – Decisions**

- Mr. Zervos proposed the employment of the JS staff for the period 2014-2020 to be self-righteously renewed for the new period 2021-2027, according to the Greek legislation 4914/2022
- Concerning the vacant positions in the JS, Mr. Zervos proposed their occupation by the JS staff members of the Balkan-Med programme which will close on 31/12/2023 and will not be renewed in the new period 2021-2027.

The MC members did not express any comment/objection. Mr. Zervos thanked the members for their approval and underlined the importance of this decision for the employment of the JS staff of all Programmes to continue in the new programming period.

The Monitoring Committee **UNANIMOUSLY DECIDED to approve:**

1. the agenda of the 1st MC meeting;
2. the Rules of Procedure of the Programme's Monitoring Committee;
3. the transfer of the JS staff from the 2014-2020 Programme to the JS of the new Programme (2021-2027)
4. the occupation of the JS vacancies by the JS staff of the Balkan-Med Programme 2014-2020

END OF MEETING

### **THE CO – CHAIRING PERSONS OF THE MONITORING COMMITTEE**

**Ms. Desislava Georgieva**  
**Deputy Minister**

**Mr. George Zervos**  
**Special Secretary for ERDF & CF Programmes**

**Ministry of Regional Development and Public  
Works - Directorate General "Territorial  
cooperation management" - NA of the CP  
INTERREG V-A "Greece-Bulgaria 2014-2020"**

**Hellenic Ministry of Development & Investments**