

**INTERREG IPA CROSS-BORDER COOPERATION
PROGRAMME "GREECE – ALBANIA 2014-2020"**

4th JOINT MONITORING COMMITTEE MEETING

**5th October 2018
Regional Council Conference Room
Preveza, Greece**

Brief Minutes & Decisions

The Joint Monitoring Committee (hereinafter referred to as JMC) of the Interreg IPA Cross-Border Cooperation Programme "Greece-Albania 2014-2020" convened for its 4th Joint Monitoring Committee Meeting on October 5th, 2018 in Preveza, Greece, following an invitation by the Hellenic Managing Authority of European Territorial Cooperation Programmes (hereinafter MA of ETCP), in agreement with the co-chairs.

Ms Dominic Zaralidou, Legal Advisor to the Special Secretary of ERDF & CF funded sectoral Ops, Ministry of Economy & Development, who substitutes Ms Evgenia Fotoniata Special Secretary of ERDF & CF funded sectoral Ops, Ministry of Economy & Development, who is Chair of the Committee, welcomed the participants, wished a fruitful 4th Joint Monitoring Committee Meeting.

The Chair then passed the floor to Mrs Genola Velo, Advisor to the Minister for Europe and Foreign Affairs, who is Co-Chair of the Committee. Ms Velo wished a fruitful 4th Joint Monitoring Committee Meeting.

The floor was then passed to Mr Csaba Hende, Programme Manager at DG Regio European Commission, who welcomed the members, wished a successful meeting.

The floor was then passed to Ms Angeliki Bouziani, Head of the MA of ETCP, who welcomed the members and wished a successful meeting.

The floor was then passed to Mr Pervin Gjukuria, General Consul of Albania in Ioannina, who introduced himself and wished a fruitful meeting.

The chair confirmed that quorum was achieved, asked all members of the Joint Monitoring Committee to sign a Declaration of Impartiality and Confidentiality, requested that the draft agenda is adopted and opened the 4th Joint Monitoring Committee Meeting.

The Chair then passed the floor to Mr George Papadopoulos, Joint Secretariat Coordinator of the Interreg IPA Cross-border Cooperation Programme "Greece-Albania 2014-2020", who presented the Programme's State of Play.

Mr Csaba Hende mentioned that there will be a need to modify the Financing Agreement due the previous Programme modifications. As well he mentioned that the Programme modification is a very bureaucratic procedure (and the financing modification as well); therefore he asked that any possible future modification should be merged in one and to be well-justified. Moreover Mr Hende clarified that all expenditure that will be paid out and incurred by the beneficiaries by the end of 2018 and certified in the beginning 2019 will contribute to the achievement of the milestone 2018 of the performance framework.

Mr Gentian Xhaxhiu mentioned that it is not clear in the State of Play why although the budget of the 2nd Call was about 13.000.000 euro, in the end the budget of the approved projects is almost the double. Then he asked if the

Albanian beneficiaries have been informed of the pre-financing procedure and the guarantee. Regarding the performance framework, Mr Xhaxhiu asked what would be the worst case scenario.

Mr Papadopoulos replied that the State of Play reflects the actual amounts of the Calls for project proposals and separately the actual amounts of the projects approved under each Call. Regarding whether the Albanian beneficiaries have been informed of the procedure for the pre-financing, Mr Papadopoulos mentioned that the beneficiaries were informed of the procedure during the Info-days, as well as during the technical meetings organised for each project. As for the worst-case scenario regarding the performance framework, the amounts of expenditure made is about half compared to the best-case scenario (about 400.000 euro per priority axis).

The Chair then passed the floor to Ms Despoina Panagiotopoulou, private consultant responsible for the First Assessment of the Interreg IPA Cross-border Cooperation Programme "Greece-Albania 2014-2020", who presented the Proposed Methodology of the Programme's first assessment.

The Chair then passed the floor to Mr Vasilis Charitantis, Officer of the Managing Authority Unit B2, who presented the Risk Assessment and Management Tool for 2018.

The Chair then passed the floor to Mr Thanasis Vladikas, Officer of the Managing Authority Unit A, who presented the Anti-Fraud Strategy.

The Chair then passed the floor to Ms Anna Koktsidou, Communication Officer of the Interreg IPA CBC Programme "Greece-Albania 2014-2020", who presented the Technical Assistance and the methodology used regarding the equal division of Office and Administration costs (MA, JSs General Administration Costs).

Ms Koktsidou also presented the Information & Publicity and Annual Communication Plan for 2019.

The floor was then passed to Ms Evgenidou, Financial Officer of the JS, who presented the Project proposal proposed for funding under the 3rd Targeted Call.

Ms Nanopoulou from the State General Accounting Office (EDEL) asked about the procedure followed in order to ensure that there has been no State Aid for the project under the 3rd Targeted Call. Ms Nanopoulou also asked if there are any projects under the previous Calls which are subject to State Aid.

Mr Papadopoulos explained that the Call was submitted to the Special Service for State Aid and the JS received their opinion, according to which there is no State Aid elements, provided that all studies concerned are tendered.

Ms Bouziani described the procedure followed by the Managing Authority for all Programmes including the Greece-Albania Programme before the launching a Call and no project has been proved to have State Aid elements.

The floor was then passed to Ms Kallitsari, who presented the Call Package of the 4th Call for Projects Proposals. Ms Kallitsari informed the members that the Call has been forwarded to the Managing Authority of State Aid in order to give its opinion regarding the existence or not of State Aid. The JMC will be informed accordingly. Furthermore, it was suggested that the changes in the Programme Manual regarding the project modification procedures (art 3.17) of the 4th Call Package should apply also to the projects approved under the 1st, 2nd and 3rd Call for Project Proposals, for better monitoring of the project modifications.

At this point, Ms Zaralidou, as Chair, read out an official letter sent by the Hellenic Ministry of Foreign Affairs about their request for inclusion of the construction of a 45 km public road in the Albanian side in the 4th Call. The chair pointed out that this kind of project could be submitted under Specific Objective 1.1 (Increase the capacity of CB infrastructure in transport, water and waste management). However, as the 4th Call does not address SO 1.1, it is not possible for such a project to be submitted under this Call. The JMC members agreed with the position.

Extensive discussion took place on the 4th Call.

Ms Mavria as representative of the NSRF National Coordination Authority for the Implementation of the Operational Programmes of the Ministry of Economy and Development referred to the five Programme indicators which have not been achieved up to now. The 4th Call will cover only 3 out the 5 indicators, therefore, she asked for the time frame of the next Call which will cover the other 2 indicators.

Ms Bouziani replied that the two countries are working closely on the subject and there will be an answer to this question within the next two months.

Mr Xhaxhiu suggested that we should not penalize the beneficiaries who participate in a project proposal in case one of the other beneficiaries has submitted more than two proposals. Ms Kalogianni suggested that the restriction of maximum two proposals per beneficiary should be one per priority axis. Discussion followed on the subject and the JMC decided to leave the restriction as presented on the Call by the JS.

Mr Xhaxhiu suggested that the maximum amount of participants should be four for both SO. The JMC approved this change in the 4th Call.

Mr Xhaxhiu also suggested that there should be no restriction in SO 1.3 to participate only public bodies. Mr Papadopoulos explained that this was decided because energy efficiency upgrading of public buildings cannot be implemented by NGOs. Mrs Sagona explained that the strategy of the

programme focus on the upgrading the public buildings. Therefore, it is not possible for NGOs to contribute in this specific strategy.

Mr Xhaxhiu suggested that the restriction of the beneficiaries to be operational for at least 24 months before the launching of the Call should be changed to 12 months. Mr Papadopoulos explained that this restriction was put in order to have experienced and capable beneficiaries who will be able to implement the projects. Ms Sagona further explained that in order to evaluate the financing capacity of the beneficiaries the MA/JS demand their tax declarations for the last 3 years. Thus, if we change the criterion regarding the experience of a beneficiary to 12 months, the MA will not be in a position to check their financing capacity.

Mr Xhaxhiu proposed that a minimum budget per beneficiary should be 200.000 euro for SO 1.3 and 100.000 euro for SO 2.1. The JMC approved this proposal.

Mr Xhaxhiu requested that the Call is launched by the end of October or beginning of November 2018.

Mr Xhaxhiu also suggested that the budget reduction should be no more than 20%. Mr Papadopoulos mentioned that during the 2nd Call there have been very few cases where more than 20% was deducted. The JS always seeks realistic budgets for serious proposals and good outcomes. Mrs Sagona pointed out that all the budget reductions based on the approved Methodology for the optimization of the project budget that was demanded by Audit Authority of the Programme avoiding arbitrary reductions.

Mr Xhaxhiu also suggested that a Joint Steering Committee is established to assist the JMC in the approval of the 4th Call projects for funding. Mr Papadopoulos explained that according to the Programme the JMC is responsible for the final approval of the projects for funding. Ms Sagona reminded that this issue was discussed in the beginning of the Programme implementation among MA/JS and National Authorities and it was decided not to establish a JSC, as the final decision for the approval of the projects is made by the JMC.

Following the discussions, the Joint Monitoring Committee (JMC) decides unanimously to approve as presented by the MA/JS:

- The Annual Communication Plan for 2019
- The project for funding under the 3rd Targeted Call. The JMC members authorises the MA/JS to proceed with a technical meeting with the partnership and finalise the budget of the project. The JMC will be informed accordingly.

- The full Application package of the 4th Call [Restrictions of the Call, Programme and Project Manual, Project Selection Criteria, etc.]
- The changes in the Programme Manual regarding the project modification procedures (art 3.17) of the 4th Call Package will apply also to the projects approved under the 1st, 2nd and 3rd Call for Project Proposals, for better monitoring of the project modifications.
- The JMC acknowledges the fact that a Joint Steering Committee may be set up in accordance with the Programme Manual for the future Calls.

At the end of JMC meeting, Brief Minutes and Decisions were drafted by the MA/JS and the Chairperson read them out to all JMC members to comment.

Finally, the document was signed by the two co-chairpersons.

The Co-Chairpersons of the Joint Monitoring Committee

Chair

Ms Dominic Zaralidou

Co-Chair

Ms Genola Velo

Legal Advisor to the Special
Secretary for ERDF & CF
Hellenic Ministry of Economy &
Development

Advisor to the Minister for Europe and
Foreign Affairs
Albanian Ministry for Europe and
Foreign Affairs

Attachments:

1. Agenda of the 4th Joint Monitoring Committee Meeting
2. Participant's list of the 4th Joint Monitoring Committee Meeting