

Annual Implementation Report
2016

CCI: 2014TC16I5CB010



JUNE 2017

PART A - DATA REQUIRED EVERY YEAR ("LIGHT REPORTS") (Article 50(2) of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013)

1. IDENTIFICATION OF THE ANNUAL/FINAL IMPLEMENTATION REPORT

CCI	2014TC16I5CB010
Title	Interreg IPA Cross-border Cooperation Programme "Greece – Albania 2014 – 2020"
Version	1
Reporting year	2016
Date of approval of the report by the Joint Monitoring Committee	23/06/2017

2. OVERVIEW OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE COOPERATION PROGRAMME (ARTICLE 50(2) OF REGULATION (EU) NO 1303/2013 AND ARTICLE 14(3)(A) OF REGULATION (EU) No 1299/2013)

Key information on the implementation of the cooperation programme for the year concerned, including on financial instruments, with relation to the financial and indicator data.

During 2016, there had been no major programme implementation problems. Nevertheless, it was a significant year for preparing and ensuring successful implementation of the Programme in the years to come. More specifically, significant challenges which had to be responded to and/or monitored included:

- Adaptation of structures and procedures to ensure shifting programme (and project) management from transitional management approach to shared (integrated) management.
- Coordination between the MA and the competent authorities of the cooperating countries and eventual conclusion of the Bilateral Agreement as part of the Financing Agreement, which was co-signed (trilaterally) by the Greek Ministry of Economy and Development, the Albanian Ministry of European Integration and the European Commission.
- The elaboration of a guidance paper on simplified cost option and procurement for beneficiaries, including methodology and practical examples.
- The elaboration of a guidance paper on state aid issues for both the Joint Secretariat and the beneficiaries, including criteria and practical examples.
- The performance evaluation of the existing Joint Secretariat staff which had been initially recruited for the Programme of the 2007-2013 period, in order to re-confirm extension of their recruitment for the "Greece-Albania" Programme of the 2014-2020 period, in line with the initial approval provided by the Joint Monitoring Committee. The JS staff evaluation was performed by a Joint Staff Evaluation Committee, which was composed of representatives of the cooperating countries and the Managing Authority and which worked in line with a predefined procedure.
- The setting up of a First Level Control (FLC) Register within the FLC Unit of the Managing Authority, as part of the partial restructuring of the FLC System in Greece.
- The setting up of a First Level Control (FLC) office at the Ministry of European Integration, General Directorate for Financing and Contracting of EU, World Bank and other donor funds,

Central Finance and Contracting Unit, (CFCU).

- Coordination with the Service which is responsible for adapting the Monitoring Information System (MIS) of the Programme to the regulatory requirements of the 2014-2020 period and the programme/project management needs identified by the Managing Authority in cooperation with the competent authorities of the cooperating countries. Full adaptation of the MIS is estimated in 2017.
- The description of the Management and Control System (MCS) in relation to the designation process of the MA and the CA of the Programme, which has been complex and long as regulatory requirements for programme management remain quite heavy. The whole procedure included necessarily, among other issues:
 - Consultations with competent authorities of the two cooperating countries, including extensive cooperation on the FLC level.
 - Taking on board some re-structuring and/or set up of services in both countries, including FLC.
 - Ensuring extensive adaptation of the Monitoring Information System (MIS) of the Programme, in order to ensure fulfillment of regulatory requirements and upgraded electronic management on both project and programme level.
 - Development of strategies to reply to demanding regulatory requirements, such as risk management and anti-fraud.
 - Launching of two (2) calls for project proposals
 - 12 info days for the dissemination of the Terms of References of 1st and 2nd call for proposals
 - Six (6) technical meetings for the smooth implementation of the programme took place
 - Different types of promotional material were developed in 2016.
 - Establishment of a Joint Complaints Committee (JCC) and its Rules of Procedures, for the examination of complaints, regarding the assessment and the selection of operations to be funded by the Programme, so as to ensure fair, just and unbiased treatment of all project proposals.

The MCS description was submitted to the Audit Authority (EDEL) via Protocol No. 300936/YD 1972/24-5-2017 and is currently under assessment in line with the provisions of the Reg. 1303/2013 (art. 124) and of the Guidance for Member States on Designation Procedure (EGESIF_14-0013-final -18/12/2014).

3. IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PRIORITY AXIS (ARTICLE 50(2) OF REGULATION (EU) NO 1303/2013)

3.1. Overview of the implementation

ID	Priority axis	Key information on the implementation of the priority axis with reference to key developments, significant problems and steps taken to address these problems
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1	Promotion of the environment, sustainable transport and public infrastructure	<p>The first priority axis includes two thematic priorities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (c) Promoting sustainable transport, information and communications networks & services and investing in cross-border water, waste & energy systems and facilities (b) Protecting the environment & promoting climate change adaptation & mitigation, risk prevention & management <p>A Call for Strategic project proposals under the thematic priority (c) of this PA was launched and closed in 2016. Three (3) Strategic Projects were approved under this thematic priority:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ WASTE RREACT ➤ SAVE_WATER ➤ AQUANEX <p>The total budget approved is 9.084.240,00 €. The project implementation has not started yet.</p> <p>A Call for ordinary project proposals under both thematic priorities (b) and (c) of this PA was launched and closed in 2016. The evaluation procedure was initiated in 2016, but will be finalised in 2017.</p>
2	Boosting the local economy	<p>The second priority axis also includes two thematic priorities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (d) Encouraging tourism and cultural and natural heritage (g) Enhancing competitiveness, the business environment and the development of small and medium-sized enterprises, trade and investment through, inter alia, promotion and support to entrepreneurship, in particular small and medium-sized enterprises, and development of local cross-border markets and internationalization <p>A Call for Strategic project proposals under one thematic priority (d) of this PA was launched and closed in 2016. One (1) Strategic Project was approved under this thematic priority, TACTICAL TOURISM, with a budget of 2.471.083,00 €.</p> <p>A Call for ordinary project proposals under both thematic priorities (g) and (d) of this PA was launched and closed in 2016. The evaluation procedure was initiated in 2016, but will be finalised in 2017.</p>

3	Technical Assistance	<p>Technical Assistance was activated in 2016 for the Programme Management part (Greek side):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ 11 info-days were organized in total for the promotion of the 1st and 2nd Call for Proposals. ➤ 1 JMC meeting was organized in Igoumenitsa (November 2016) for the approval of the projects under the 1st Call for Strategic Project Proposals. ➤ Promotional material was developed. ➤ The website was initiated, but not finalized. ➤ Six (6) Technical Meetings took place within 2016.
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3.2. Common and programme specific indicators (Article 50(2) of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013)

Data for common and programme-specific indicators by investment priority transmitted using the tables 1 to 2 below.

TABLE 1: Result indicators (by priority axis and specific objective); applies also to technical assistance priority axis

Automatic from SFC						ANNUAL VALUE										
ID	Indicator	Measurement Unit	Baseline Value	Baseline Year	Target Value (2023)	2014	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	Observations (if necessary)
	Volume of urban effluents under secondary treatment	million m3	30	2014	41,31	0	0	0								Although projects were approved, they were not yet activated.
	Percentage of solid waste managed sustainably	%	75	2014	79	0	0	0								Although projects were approved, they were not yet activated.
	% of cross-border vertical axes to Egnatia motorway either constructed or with sufficient maturity to be constructed	%	80,41	2014	100	0	0	0								
	Level of preservation of the protected natural CB areas	%	72,08	2015	79,29	0	0	0								

	Energy Efficiency Awareness Barometer	number	5,94 (on a 1-10 scale)	2015	7 (on a 1-10 scale)	0	0	0								
	Area damaged by forest fires (5-yr rolling annual average)	hectares	15010,89	2014	13450	0	0	0								
	Annual overnight tourist stays of the cross border area	Millions	9	2014	9,54	0	0	0								<i>Although projects were approved, they were not yet activated.</i>
	Active CB enterprises	Number	97883	2013	100000	0	0	0								

TABLE 2: Common and programme specific output indicators (by priority axis, investment priority); applies also to technical assistance priority axes).

	ID	Indicator (name of indicator)	Measurement unit	Target value ¹ (2023)	CUMULATIVE VALUE										<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Observations • (if necessary)
					2014	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	
Selected operations [forecast provided by beneficiaries]	CO20	Additional population served by improved water supply	inhabitants	50000	0	0	0								Although there are projects that have been approved, the corrected Application Forms have not been submitted. As a result the correct target values of the indicators have not been approved.
Fully implemented operations [actual achievement]					0	0	0								
Selected operations [forecast provided by beneficiaries]	CO21	Additional population served by improved wastewater treatment	inhabitants	24000	0	0	0								
Fully implemented operations [actual achievement]					0	0	0								

¹ Targets are optional for technical assistance priority axes.

Selected operations [forecast provided by beneficiaries]		Additional solid waste management capacity created	Tonnes/yr	4000	0	0	0								Although there are projects that have been approved, the corrected Application Forms have not been submitted. As a result the correct target values of the indicators have not been approved.
Fully implemented operations [actual achievement]					0	0	0								
Selected operations [forecast provided by beneficiaries]		Kilometres of CB road network studied	Km	30	0	0	0								
Fully implemented operations [actual achievement]					0	0	0								
Selected operations [forecast provided by beneficiaries]		No of square meters of border crossing buildings studied or constructed	m2	200	0	0	0								
Fully implemented operations [actual					0	0	0								

achievement]															
Selected operations [forecast provided by beneficiaries]	CO25	Surface area of habitats supported in order to attain a better conservation status	hectares	80000	0	0	0								
Fully implemented operations [actual achievement]					0	0	0								
Selected operations [forecast provided by beneficiaries]	CO34	Decrease of annual primary energy consumption of public buildings	Kwh/year	130000	0	0	0								
Fully implemented operations [actual achievement]					0	0	0								
Selected operations [forecast provided by beneficiaries]		People participating in awareness actions	participants	4300	0	0	0								

Fully implemented operations [actual achievement]					0	0	0									
Selected operations [forecast provided by beneficiaries]	CO23	Population benefiting from forest fire protection measures	inhabitants	11500	0	0	0									
Fully implemented operations [actual achievement]					0	0	0									
Selected operations [forecast provided by beneficiaries]	CO11	Increase in expected number of visits to supported sites of cultural and natural heritage and attractions	visits	13500	0	0	0									Although there are projects that have been approved, the corrected Application Forms have not been submitted. As a result the correct target values of the indicators have not been approved.
Fully implemented operations [actual achievement]					0	0	0									
Selected operations [forecast provided by	CO04	Number of enterprises receiving non-financial	Enterprises	160	0	0	0									

beneficiaries]		support														
Fully implemented operations [actual achievement]					0	0	0									

3.3 Milestones and targets defined in the performance framework (Article 50(2) of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013) – submitted in annual implementation reports from 2017 onwards

Reporting on financial indicators, key implementation steps, output and result indicators to act as milestones and targets for the performance framework (submitted starting with the report in 2017).

Milestones will be available after the forthcoming revision of the Programme and will be reported in 2018.

TABLE 3: Information on the milestones and targets defined in the performance framework

Priority Axis	Indicator Type (Key implementation step, financial, output or, where appropriate result)	ID	Indicator or key implementation step	Measurement unit, where appropriate	Milestone for 2018	Final target (2023)	2014	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	Observations (if necessary)

	indicator)																			

** Member States submit cumulative values for output indicators. Values for financial indicators are cumulative. Values for the key implementation steps are cumulative if the key implementation steps are expressed by a number or percentage. If the achievement is defined in a qualitative way, the table should indicate whether they are completed or not.*

3.4. Financial data (Article 50(2) of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013)

TABLE 4: Financial information at priority axis and programme level as set out in Table 1 of Annex II to Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) No 1011/2014² [Model for transmission of financial data]³ and table 16 of model for cooperation programmes under the European territorial cooperation goal

Where applicable, the use of any contribution from third countries participating in the cooperation programme should be provided (for example IPA and ENI, Norway, Switzerland)

The Programme is financed by the Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance (IPA II) and national contributions of the participating countries.

² OJ L 286, 30.9.2014, p. 1.

³ Structured data required for the report on YEI which is to be submitted in April 2015 in accordance with Article 19(3) and Annex II of Regulation (EU) No 1304/2013.

TABLE 5: Breakdown of the cumulative financial data by category of intervention (Article 112(1) and (2) of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013 and Article 5 of Regulation (EU) No 1304/2013) as set out in Table 2 of Annex II to Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) No 1011/2014 [Model for transmission of financial data] and tables 6-9 of Model for cooperation programmes

There has been no financial implementation during the reference period.

TABLE 6: Cumulative cost of all or part of an operation implemented outside the Union part of the programme area

1	2	3	4	5
	<p>The amount of ERDF support* envisaged to be used for all or part of an operation implemented outside the Union part of the programme area based on selected operations (EUR)</p>	<p>Share of the total financial allocation to all or part of an operation located outside the Union part of the programme area (%)</p> <p>(column 2/total amount allocated to the support from the ERDF at programme level *100)</p>	<p>Eligible expenditure of ERDF support incurred in all or part of an operation implemented outside the Union part of the programme area declared by the beneficiary to the managing authority (EUR)</p>	<p>Share of the total financial allocation to all or part of an operation located outside the Union part of the programme area (%)</p> <p>(column 4/total amount allocated to the support from the ERDF at programme level *100)</p>
<p>All or part of an operation outside the Union part of the programme area⁴</p>				

* ERDF support is fixed in the Commission decision on the respective cooperation programme.

⁴ In accordance with and subject to ceilings set out Article 20 of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013.

4. SYNTHESIS OF THE EVALUATIONS (Article 50(2) of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013)

Synthesis of the findings of all evaluations of the programme that have become available during the previous financial year, including the name and reference period of the evaluation reports used.

The Evaluation Plan was sent by MA/JS to the members of JMC for consultation on 28/07/2016 and it was finally approved by the JMC during the 2nd meeting of the JMC in Igoumenitsa (Greece) on the 24/11/2016.

Officially it was submitted via SFC to EC on 13/06/2017.

According to the evaluation plan of the programme, two types of evaluations will take place: an effectiveness and efficiency (implementation) evaluation and an impact evaluation.

The respective procurement will take place within 2017.

5. ISSUES AFFECTING THE PERFORMANCE OF THE PROGRAMME AND MEASURES TAKEN (ARTICLE 50(2) of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013)

a) Issues which affect the performance of the programme and the measures taken

The Commission will undertake a performance review in cooperation with the Managing Authority, in 2019.

Prior to that, a performance framework will be defined for the Programme, in accordance with Annex II of CPR Regulation. The Performance Framework will monitor the achievement of milestones, which will be set for each priority. This will facilitate the monitoring of the progress towards the attainment of the priorities' relevant objectives and targets.

The first reporting of milestones will be generated for year 2018.

Due to the early stage of the Programme's implementation, no issue has affected the Programme performance yet. The Managing Authority closely monitors all related issues and schedules to establish the Performance Framework within the first semester of 2017.

Implementation of the Programme for the year 2016:

Two calls for project proposal were launched and closed.

The 1st Call for **Strategic** Proposals was launched on 12th of February 2016 and the deadline was the 15th of May 2016. The total budget of this call was 11.000.000,00 €. Both Priority Axes were activated, while only 2 out the 4 thematic priorities and 2 out of the 6 specific objectives were engaged for this specific call:

Priority Axis 1 / Thematic Priority (c) / Specific Objective 1.1: Increase the capacity of CB infrastructure in transport, water and waste management

Priority Axis 2 / Thematic Priority (d) / Specific Objective 2.1: Preserve cultural and natural resources as a prerequisite for tourism development in the cross border area

For the promotion of the call and the information of the beneficiaries six (6) info-days took place in the framework of the 1st Call for Project Proposals; Three (3) in Greece and three (3) in Albania: Arta, Gjirokaster, Berat, Kastoria, Korce and Lefkada.

Six (6) Project proposals were submitted under this call; four under Priority Axis 1 and two under Priority Axis 2.

More specifically:

The proposals for strategic projects submitted under Priority Axis 1 were the following:

AQUANEX, LB is the Albanian Ministry of Environment - **Save_Water**, LB is the Region of Ionian Islands - **AQUION**, LB is the Decentralised Administration of Epirus and Western Macedonia and

WASTE RREACT, LB is the Region of Epirus

The proposals for strategic projects submitted under Priority Axis 2 were the following:

Tactical Tourism, LB is the Region of Gjirokaster - **TriPart**, LB is the Albanian Ministry of Urban Development

The total budget of the submitted proposals exceeded 15.000.000,00 €, approximately 11.000.000,00 € in Priority Axis 1 and almost 4.500.000,00 € in Priority Axis 2. The amount of 9,4 million € concerns the Greek beneficiaries, while the Albanian beneficiaries requested almost 6 million €.

Following the 2-phase evaluation procedure, the JMC met in Igoumenitsa for the 2nd JMC Meeting, where the main issue in the agenda concerned the approval of the projects to be funded under the 1st Call for Strategic Project Proposals. The decision of the JMC led to the approval of 4 projects, as follows:

Specific Objective	Acronym	Lead Beneficiary (LB)	Country (GR/AL)	Submitted Budget (€)	Approved Budget (€)
1.1	WASTE RREACT	Region of Epirus	GR	4.000.000	3.888.782
1.1	SAVE_WATER	Region of Ionian Islands	GR	3.500.000	3.482.822
1.1	AquaNEX	Albanian Ministry of Environment	AL	1.800.000	1.712.420
2.1	TACTICAL TOURISM	Regional Council of Gjirokaster	AL	2.500.000	2.471.083

The pre-announcement of the 2nd Call for **Ordinary** Project Proposals was published on the 13th of April 2016 with a reference on the submission period starting from 17th of May 2016 until the 05th of September 2016. One month later, on the 16th of May 2016, the 2nd Call for Ordinary Project Proposals was officially launched.

A first extension of the deadline, due to the great interest on the submission of project proposals, was approved by the JMC on the 29th of August 2016, moving the deadline to the 30th of September 2016, with the last proposals allowed to be received by the 7th of October 2016.

On the 29th of September 2016, the JMC approved a second extension of the call's deadline, due to the great interest on the submission of project proposals, for up to the 14th of October 2016, with that being also the final date for the receipt of project proposals.

The total budget of the 2nd Call for Project Proposals was almost 14 million €.

For the promotion of the call and the information of the beneficiaries 5 info-days took place in the framework of the 2nd Call for Project Proposals; 3 in Greece and 2 in Albania: Saranda, Preveza, Korce, Florina and Corfu

High interest was shown by the potential beneficiaries and a total number of 200 project proposals was submitted.

The total budget of the submitted project proposals reached more than 128 million €. The evaluation procedure was initiated at the end of 2016, but will be finalised in the mind of 2017.

Six (6) Technical Meetings were organized:

The **1st Technical Meeting** concerned the implementation of the technical assistance and the recruitment of the staff for the 2014 – 2020 period, together with the documents for the two calls for proposals.

The **2nd and 3rd Technical Meetings** were between the MA, JS and relevant stakeholders of the programme in the framework of consultations for a future call for project proposals and the achievement of specific indicators of the programme.

The **4th Technical Meeting** was between the JS and potential beneficiaries in order to provide information on funding opportunities and support for the preparation of project proposals.

The **5th Technical Meeting** was between JS, MA and National Authorities of the programme, in order to discuss problems encountered during the implementation of the programme, next steps to be taken and final arrangements for the organization of the EC Day in Krystalopigi.

The **6th Technical Meeting** concerned the evaluation procedure of the 2nd Call for Proposals, as well as preparatory activities for the JMC Meeting that followed.

In terms of **communication activities**, apart from the info-days, the Programme participated for the first time in the organization of an event for the EC Day, the 11 km running race from Krystalopigi in Greece, through the borders, to Bilisht in Albania.

Additionally, most of the **promotional material** was developed in 2016 and included: Pens, Notepads, Envelopes of all sizes for administrative use, Paper folders to be used in meetings and events, Bidges and Lanyards for the JMC Meetings, Leather folders for the members of the JMC

The new **website** of the Programme was also initiated in 2016 and will be finalized in the beginning of 2017.

'E-Cohesion'

The Greek integrated Management Information System (MIS) has been developed to support (initially) the mainstream Operational Programmes 2014-2020, ensuring full electronic management of data and procedures on both Programme and project level. More specifically, the MIS covers the specific requirements as set out in EU 1011/2014 (Article 9 prg1 & Article 10 prg1 & prg4) and EU 821/2014 (Article 8 prg1) focusing particularly:

1. on the electronic exchange of information between beneficiaries and management and control bodies (i.e. enabling reduction of administrative burden for beneficiaries)
2. on the facilitation of interoperability between National and Union legal frameworks, while allowing beneficiaries to submit once all information related to the electronic data exchange (i.e. enabling electronic data exchange on programme implementation level)

The Managing Authority is in close cooperation with the Special Service of MIS, in order to finalize the electronic system that is going to fulfill the requirements concerning "E-Cohesion" in relation to all European territorial cooperation (INTERREG) programmes, under the responsibility of the MA.

As such, the above MIS is currently undergoing some necessary adaption to ensure coverage of the specific features of INTERREG Programmes 2014-2020. Full adaptation of the MIS is estimated in 2017.

b) OPTIONAL FOR LIGHT REPORTS, otherwise it will be included in point 9.1 (Article 50(4) of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013)

An assessment of whether progress made towards targets is sufficient to ensure their fulfilment, indicating any remedial actions taken or planned, where appropriate

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6. CITIZEN'S SUMMARY (Article 50(9) of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013)

A citizen's summary of the contents of the annual and the final implementation reports shall be made public and uploaded as a separate file in the form of annex to the annual and the final implementation report

7. REPORT ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF FINANCIAL INSTRUMENTS (Article 46 of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013)

Where the managing authority decided to use financial instruments it must send to the Commission a specific report covering the financial instruments operations as an annex to the annual implementation report.

No financial instruments will be used.

8. WHERE APPROPRIATE, PROGRESS IN PREPARATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF MAJOR PROJECTS AND JOINT ACTION PLANS (Article 101(h) and Article 111(3) of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013 and Article 14(3)(b) of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013)

8.1. Major projects

No major projects will be implemented.

TABLE 7: Major projects

Project	CCI	Status of MP 1. completed 2. approved 3. submitted 4. planned for notification/submission to Commission	Total investments	Total eligible costs	Planned notification/submission date (if applicable) (year, quarter)	Date of tacit agreement / approval by Commission (if applicable)	Planned start of implementation (year, quarter)	Planned completion date (year, quarter)	Priority Axis/Investment priorities	Current state of realisation – financial progress (% of expenditure certified to Commission compared to total eligible cost)	Current state of realisation - physical progress Main implementation stage of the project 1. completed/in operation; 2. advanced construction; 3. construction; 4. procurement; 5. design	Main outputs	Date of signature of first works contract ⁵ (if applicable)	Observations (if necessary)

⁵ In the case of operations implemented under PPP structures the signing of the PPP contract between the public body and the private sector body (Article 102(3) of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013).

Significant problems encountered in implementing major projects and measures taken to overcome them.

Any change planned in the list of major projects in the cooperation programme

8.2. Joint action plans

Progress in the implementation of different stages of joint action plans

No Joint Action Plans are foreseen for the Programme.

TABLE 8: Joint action plans

Title of the JAP	CCI	Stage of implementation of JAP 1. completed 2. > 50% implemented 3. Started 4. approved 5. submitted 6. planned	Total eligible costs	Total public support	OP contribution to JAP	Priority axis	Type of JAP 1. normal 2. pilot 3. YEI	[Planned] submission to the Commission	[Planned] start of implementation	[Planned] completion	Main outputs and results	Total eligible expenditure certified to the Commission	Observations (if necessary)

Significant problems encountered and measures taken to overcome them

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PART B - REPORTING SUBMITTED IN YEARS 2017, 2019 AND FINAL IMPLEMENTATION REPORT (Article 50(4) of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013 and Article 14(4) of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013)

9. ASSESSMENT OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE COOPERATION PROGRAMME (Article 50(4) of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013 and Article 14(4) of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013)

9.1 Information in Part A and achieving the objectives of the programme (Article 50(4) of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013)

FOR EACH PRIORITY AXIS - Assessment of the information provided above and progress towards achieving the objectives of the programme, including the contribution of the ERDF to changes in the value of result indicators, when evidence is available from evaluations

During 2016 two (2) calls for proposals have been launched. Four (4) projects have been approved under the 1st call (end of 2016) and the evaluation of the 2nd call is expected to be finalized in 2017. Given that none of the approved projects have started their implementation, no specific values for indicators are available. Nonetheless, given the size and the character of the approved strategic projects, it is obvious that project outputs and results certainly contribute to the indicators and the objectives of the Programme.

9.2. Specific actions taken to promote equality between men and women and to promote non-discrimination, in particular accessibility for persons with disabilities, and the arrangements implemented to ensure the integration of the gender perspective in the cooperation programme and operations (Article 50(4) of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013 and Article 14(4), subparagraph 2, (d) of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013)

An assessment of the implementation of specific actions to take into account the principles set out in Article 7 of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013 on promotion of equality between men and women and non-discrimination, including, where relevant, depending on the content and objectives of the cooperation programme, an overview of specific actions taken to promote equality between men and women and to promote non-discrimination, including accessibility for persons with disabilities, and the arrangements implemented to ensure the integration of the gender perspective in the cooperation programme and operations

The issues of equality between men and women and non-discrimination (including accessibility for persons with disabilities) are very important for the Programme. This is justified through the following actions:

- Projects: There is a distinctive field where the applicants have to state and justify the contribution of their projects towards these issues, for each case separately. This field is evaluated in the 1st phase of project evaluation and is an on-off criterion. This means that projects failing to justify how their projects will contribute to or respect the European Horizontal Principles, will be rejected and not further evaluated.

- Programme actions/ Information and Publicity:

*First of all the Programme's Communication Overall Strategy has been finalized after consultations with the National Federation for Disabled Persons (GR), in order to be proactive and to insist on the respect and application of the conditions foreseen. As stated in the strategy "The Member States will ensure that equality between men and women and the integration of the gender perspective is promoted during the various stages of implementation of the Funds and any discrimination based on sex, racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation will be avoided. Special attention will be given to providing women as well as people with disabilities living in the eligible border region with equal opportunity to access to information. The Programme's web site to be established will include special features to support people whose eyesight is damaged. In case of organising publicity events – information session, seminars, workshops, and conferences - the venue of the event will be chosen in a way that direct access to people in wheelchairs will be possible, in order to enable their participation. In some cases special services may be needed to enable people with disabilities to access to information. For example deaf people may require interpretation, while blind or physically handicapped people may require personal assistance during events. The invitation for these events will include a question whether the participant needs any assistance and if yes, what kind of. Assistance to disabled people during information events will be organised and such support services will be financed under the TA budget". The revised Communication Strategy of the Interreg IPA CBC Programme "Greece – Albania 2014 – 2020" was approved during the 2nd JMC Meeting in Igoumenitsa, Greece (11/2016).

*The website was procured and assigned with respect to the protocols and technical specifications suggested by the National Federation for Disabled Persons (GR). As soon as the website will be finalized and operable, the National Federation for Disabled Persons (GR) will be requested to test it and suggest any corrections.

*All the info-days took place in locations with provisions for the accessibility of disabled persons.

*Through the implementation Information and Publicity Guide, the project beneficiaries will be obliged to respect the conditions not only on the accessibility of disabled persons, but also the respect of equality between men and women and non-discrimination on all aspects of project implementation; information and publicity actions, but also procurements, recruitment procedures, etc. All these obligations are explicitly stated in the 'Information and Publicity Guide' which states clearly: "The objective of non-discrimination refers to the prohibition of any discrimination based on any ground such as sex, race, colour, ethnic or social origin, genetic features, language, religion or belief, political or any other opinion, membership of a national minority, property, birth, disability, age or sexual orientation. Article 19 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the EU provides the legal base for EU legislation combating discrimination. Moreover, Article 7 of Regulation 1303/2013 refers to the promotion of equality between men and women and non-discrimination. Besides the legal obligations, there is a strong economic argument, also linked to the achievement of the Europe 2020 targets, to work towards a more equal and diverse society as demonstrated by a wide range of studies, including by the OECD. Hence, mainstreaming gender and non-discrimination on project level and particularly in communication strategy is a key factor in successful dissemination of project results.

In particular, accessibility is ensuring that disabled people can access the communication channels (website, promotional material, venues etc.) and that there are no barriers that prevent this. In other words, making something accessible means providing alternative means (formats or options) to access what's on offer if the "standard" offer is not accessible.

The best way to embed inclusive communications across the project lifecycle is to develop an inclusive communication policy that clearly sets out a commitment to inclusion. The length and complexity of this policy will be determined by many factors, ie. nature of project, profile of main target groups, size of partnership, scope of beneficiary institutions, budget resources, human resources, etc.

Examples of promoting accessible and inclusive communication at project level:

• Accessibility of venues: Make sure that any conference/seminar/meeting rooms or other venues are accessible and reachable.

• Accessibility of information material: Some audiences may need alternate formats in order to benefit from the information to be shared, such as larger print, tactile or oral formats for people who are blind or visually impaired. Others may need a modification of the content in order to make use of the information. People with cognitive and developmental disabilities present a widely varied audience whose individual members may benefit from modified content, as well as alternate formats.

• Accessibility of information on the Web: Many of the suggestions presented to make printed materials more readable and comprehensible can also be applied to documents that are presented on the World Wide Web. Multi-media files on the Web can help reinforce the printed words. For example, an audio version can be provided, where the words are read aloud.

Beneficiaries need to keep the project website simple and clear. It is advised that the website is accessible according to Web Accessibility Initiative (WAI) guidelines of the World Wide Web Consortium (W3C). To help with navigation, use simple icons/colors to identify elements of the site or pages to be accessed. Keep navigation tools in the same place on each page. Consistency in design will guide the visitor".

9.3. Sustainable development (Article 50(4) of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013 and Article 14(4), subparagraph 2, (e) of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013)

An assessment of the implementation of actions to take into account the principles set out in Article 8 of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013 on sustainable development, including, where relevant, depending on the content and objectives of the cooperation programme, an overview of the actions taken to promote sustainable development in accordance with that Article

Necessary steps have been taken to ensure that environmental protection requirements, resource efficiency, climate change mitigation and adaptation, biodiversity, disaster resilience. One of the main priorities of the INTERREG IPA Cross Border Cooperation Programme Greece-Albania 2014-2020 is to protect the environment. Based on this priority the overall strategy of the cross border area was set and the corresponding priority axes and thematic priorities were selected.

In addition, proposed activities of the submitted proposals are evaluated for the expected environmental consequences according to the S.E.A. of the Programme.

9.4. Reporting on support used for climate change objectives (Article 50(4) of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013)

Figures calculated automatically by the SFC2014 based on categorisation data.

Optional: clarification on the given values

9.5 Role of partners in the implementation of the cooperation programme (Article 50(4) of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013 and Article 14(4), subparagraph 1, (c) of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013)

Assessment of the implementation of actions to take into account the role of partners referred to in Article 5 of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013, including involvement of the partners in the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the cooperation programme

During 2016 two (2) calls for proposals have been launched. Potential beneficiaries of the programme have shown a strong interest in the Programme as they actively participated in the eleven (11) Info Days of the respective calls (organized by the MA/JS/MEI). This strong interest was confirmed by the submission of a significant number of project proposals under these two calls for project proposals and especially under the 2nd call for project proposals..

There is no contribution of the partners to the evaluation of the Programme, as the evaluation is foreseen to start in 2017.

10. OBLIGATORY INFORMATION AND ASSESSMENT ACCORDING TO ARTICLE 14(4), SUBPARAGRAPH 1 (A) AND (B), OF REGULATION (EU) No 1299/2013

10.1 Progress in implementation of the evaluation plan and the follow-up given to the findings of evaluations

An evaluation plan has been prepared and approved by the Joint Monitoring Committee Meeting on 24/11/2016. The evaluation plan has been developed according to the provisions of IPA Implementing Regulation (EU) 447/2014, article 41, par. 3 and Regulation (EU) No. 1303/2013, (CPR), Regulation (EU) No. 1299/2013 (ERDF Reg., article 14) and the Commission guidance documents on monitoring and evaluation and on evaluation plans.

The evaluation plan sets out the evaluation strategy for the entire implementation period of the Programme, taking into account lessons learned from evaluations made in previous programming periods and the budgetary framework. It sets out the framework to properly plan and implement quality Programme evaluations with the aim to secure the Programme's effectiveness, efficiency and impact. It covers both impact and implementation evaluations aiming at, on one side, capturing the effects of the intervention and, on the other side, looking at how the Programme is being implemented and managed.

The theory based methods are selected to be used in the evaluations of the Interreg IPA CBC Programme “Greece - Albania 2014-2020”. Compared to the counterfactual methods which will be mainly quantitatively based, the theory based methods are expected to give more composite (qualitative, as well as quantitative) knowledge about how and why the Programme has an impact.

10.2 The results of the information and publicity measures of the Funds carried out under the communication strategy

This report covers the year 2016 which was also the first year of actual implementation, with the submission of two calls; one for strategic and one for ordinary project proposals, and the approval of four strategic project proposals. Therefore, the JS and MA opted for an in-house evaluation, aiming to self-assess the implementation of the Communication Strategy and to decide on the steps that will have to be taken.

According to the EC Regulation no 1303/2013, the JS/ MA shall inform the JMC for each operational Programme of the following:

- The Communication Strategy and progress in its implementation
- Information and publicity measures carried out
- The means of communication used.

The Annual Reports shall include:

- Examples of information and publicity measures for the Programme carried out when implementing the Communication Strategy;
- The specific arrangements for the information and publicity measures, including where applicable, the electronic address at which such data may be found;
- The content of any major amendments to the Communication Strategy.

In this regard, one revision of the Communication Strategy was approved by the JMC, during the 2nd JMC Meeting in Igoumenitsa (11/2016) and it concerned:

- Additions according to the Commission’s guidelines
 - Inclusion on a chapter on Social Responsibility
 - Inclusion on a chapter on social media
 - Adjustment of the output and result indicators to the new Regulation/ Commission Guidelines
- Inclusion of the Regulation 1303/2013 where applicable
 - Chapters 1.1 & 3.3
- Changes in the format (so that all documents of the Programme look alike)
- Minor corrections

- The reference to the Programme Manual was corrected to “Programme and Project Manual
- Reference to the organization of EC Days was added to the Communication Strategy

The JS/ MA evaluate the information and publicity actions that are expected to be organized in the framework of the Programme. The evaluation of these actions takes place based on their contribution to the achievement of the goals of the Communication Strategy and in accordance with qualitative and quantitative objectives, based on the nature of the actions.

Output indicators:

Indicator	Indicative target value ⁶	Value achieved by 31/12/2016	Comments/ explanations
Number of events (info-days, conferences, seminars, fairs, Programme annual events etc.)		Fourteen (14)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2 Launching Events; one in Greece and one in Albania (Korca) • 6 Info-days on the 1st Call for Strategic Project Proposals • 5 Info-days on the 2nd Call for Ordinary Project Proposals • 2016 -Running Marathon co-organised with the IPA CB Programme “Greece-Albania 2007 - 2013” Programme and the ‘Balkan – Mediterranean 2014-2020’ Transnational Programme.

⁶ Indicative target values have not been define for the Interreg IPA CBC Programme “Greece – Albania 2014 – 2020”

Number of participants per event		770	Info-days – 1 st Call: 321 Info-days – 2 nd Call: 369 EC-Day 2016: 80 runners
Number of news articles (including Programme's website, articles developed for other media, press releases, press conferences, etc)		59	Website: 39 News (12 on the calls) 14 Events Article sent to newspapers/ news sites: 6
Number of social media posts		51	Facebook: 22/ followers 76 Twitter: 29 tweets/ followers 39 LinkedIn: 32 connections
Website statistics		23860 (www.interreg.gr) 42018 (www.greece-albania.eu)	The number refers to the total number (not individual) of hits on the Programme's website (www.greece-albania.eu), as well as on the news item related to the Programme in the Managing Authority's website (www.interreg.gr)
Types of communication material produced		7	Paper Folders, pens, notepads, brochure, jigsaw puzzles, leather folders,

			banners.
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Result indicators:

Indicator	Baseline value⁷	Indicative target value⁸	Value achieved by 31/12/2016⁹	Comments/ explanations
Raised awareness about the Programme and its funding opportunities among potential beneficiaries				
Raised awareness about project outputs and Programme results				
Improved knowledge about procedures for applying/ claiming funding				
Increased Capacity for effective project implementation (LP seminars, guidance, etc)				

⁷ Baseline values have not been defined for the Interreg IPA CBC Programme “Greece – Albania 2014 – 2020”

⁸ Indicative target values have not been defined for the Interreg IPA CBC Programme “Greece – Albania 2014 – 2020”

⁹ After the definition of the baseline and target values, the Interreg IPA CBC Programme “Greece – Albania 2014 – 2020” will initiate an online and physical (during events) research to define the values achieved per year.

<p>Raised satisfaction with the information provided within the Balkan-Mediterranean Programme among potential beneficiaries</p>				
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According to the schedule for the implementation of Communication Actions, there are 3 stages of Communication:

- 1st stage (2015 – 2016): General Information about the Programme (inaugural event)
- 2nd Stage (2016 – 2020): Creation of an opinion about the Programme and its actions among the various target audiences, easy access to particular actions and to the opportunities that it offers, creation of a disposition to participate in the financing opportunities
- 3rd Stage (2020 – 2023): Dissemination of the results and benefits achieved

The Programme has successfully completed the 1st stage with the organization of the Programme's launching event during 2015.

Towards the achievements set for the 2nd stage, most of the envisaged activities have been implemented:

- Hoisting of the EU Flag on May 09
- Implementation of annual activities (EC-Day)
- Widespread use of the Internet (electronic registration, promotion of events, dissemination of presentations, etc)
- Publication and distribution of special information guides (Programme and Project Manual, Information and Publicity Guide)
- Systematic Organisation of thematic meetings and seminars with the potential beneficiaries (info-days for the application procedure and documents for the 2 calls for proposals)
- Utilisation of available information networks to approach potential beneficiaries (the events were announced in the website and local/ regional newspapers)

The goals of both the 1st and 2nd stage have been achieved mainly during the promotion of the 2 calls for project proposals that were launched in 2016. The large number of info-days in all participating regions covered all eligible areas of the Programme. The results that prove the achievement of the goals are:

- High number of proposals submitted
- Low number of proposals that did not pass the 1st phase evaluation; this shows that the information provided during the info-days was accurate and the message was passed.
- High number of new beneficiaries getting involved in projects (approximately 45% of the participants in the info-days were beneficiaries that were not activated during the previous programming period).

It is important to stress though, that this stage is on-going, as the Programme's resources have not been fully activated yet.

The successful implementation of the Communication relies also in the projects themselves. Since the project implementation is not yet initiated, major achievements are still expected.

Specific quality issues on the implementation of information and publicity measures

Corporate identity and key visuals

The Programme has opted to join the Joint Branding Initiative of Interreg Programmes under one single brand name and one single logo. The Programme's logo and visual identity is aligned to the one commonly applied throughout Europe. The initiative has been extended to projects as well, as all projects will be required to follow the same branding instructions, thus creating an homogenized visual identity.

Target audience: beneficiaries vs other target groups

The Programme has successfully reached the "internal" target audiences. The high number of participants in the communication events, specifically designed for potential and final beneficiaries, as well as the high number of proposals submitted in the framework of the 2 calls for project proposals proves that potential and final beneficiaries are well informed about the opportunities offered by the Programme.

However, the JS/MA acknowledge that the Programme has not yet been as successful in approaching other target groups listed in the Communication Plan, such as local, regional, national, European, but also specialized mass media and the general public. These audiences have been reached but not extensively. The most important tool for the approach of the general public is the EC-Day; through popular publicity events, citizens are informed about the Programme and projects implemented in the area. A clear communication product is expected in the near future, especially with the support of the projects as the bulk of the Programme's promotion will be channeled through their communication activities.

Appropriate, coherent and effective communication tools

Special focus has been placed on the Programme's website, being the main communication channel, as in all ETC Programmes across Europe. The website will host very substantial content and frequent updates. In terms of information, networking and communicating opportunities, the website is clearly a very useful resource for project and potential beneficiaries, as well as the media and the general public.

The website of the Programme is being currently redesigned from scratch, in order to better accommodate the demands of the 2014 – 2020 programming period. It will provide information to potential beneficiaries regarding the Programme, IPA, the EU finding opportunities (Calls and respective documents), important documentation available as downloads regarding all aspects of project implementation, FAQs, information on the approved projects, list of beneficiaries. An updated list with operations will be published. Each approved project will have its own page on the Programme's website. The website will also contain sections of news, events, partner search facility.

The main features of the website will be in line with the modern trends in web design. Moreover, it will offer visual harmonization with the Interreg family (including the Programme logo). Content-wise, there will be an effort to move from a technical terminology to jargon-less content.

Is the Programme's media outreach satisfactory?

Mass-media and press at local, regional and national level have been identified as "external" target groups and information multipliers by the Programme's Communication Strategy. In practice the media outreach has been based on press releases, which are widely disseminated and published, but were not part of a wider campaign, which, in turn, could have substantial impact on the Programme's outreach to the wider public.

Key steps for the future:

- Annual Communication Plan: the annual information on communication activities provided to the members of the JMC could evolve into a detailed Annual Operational Communication Plan, including an annual budget for communication. This could help the Communication Officer of the JS to question the impact of the previous year's activities and to adapt the strategy according to the changing needs. The Annual Communication Plan for 2017 included also a review/ reporting for the activities implemented during 2016. It was approved during the 2nd JMC Meeting in Igoumenitsa (11/2016).
- Extend communication to "external" target groups: Media and press, mainly at local and regional level, opinion formers, decision makers, beneficiaries of other EU Programmes and European Institutions and the wider public should be reached in a more "aggressive" way.
- Avoid the use of acronyms and specialized terminology in the publications, news or website.

- Incorporate messages throughout the Programme’s communications; in introductions, subheadings, quotes and in newsletters, brochures, publications, and website. The Programme should take advantage of the impact delivered by the constant repetition of key words and slogans.
- Exploitation of local media: Initiate a series of featured stories by local journalists, which could be uploaded in the Programme’s website and social media profiles. Stories should be written in the local language and translated in English, creating a pool of features on the Programme’s impact. Articles could highlight the contribution of the EU to the regions development.
- Territory evokes place and cooperation evokes people: choose visual elements that convey a message.
- Storytelling creates and identity of the Programme and conveys the message that this is what territorial cooperation is about: working on the ground, improving real people’s lives and environment.
- Closer networking with beneficiaries from a communication perspective: Clear information and publicity rules & guidelines for beneficiaries are already published. Additionally, all communication tools that can be of interest to an external audience can be promoted on the websites of the national, regional and local authorities that participate to the Programme.
- Social media represent low-cost tools that are used to combine technology and social interaction with the use of words. Social media shall give the Programme a voice and a way to communicate with peers, potential beneficiaries and the general public. They offer the opportunity to reach the widest audience and they are seen as a tool for raising awareness. Social media provide a platform for generating interaction with present and potential beneficiaries as well as with relevant stakeholders, while at the same time they contribute to the efforts to spread the Programme’s message in a relaxed and conversational way. The Programme’s social media profiles will be active from January 2017 active in Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn and Instagram.

Conclusion

The assessment concluded that the Communication Strategy is being implemented in a way guided by the need for Programme activation and acceleration. The implementation of the Communication Strategy could be respectively characterized as very satisfactory, since the

first implementation stage has been fully implemented and the second implementation stage is still ongoing, though implemented in its biggest part.

In general, as far as the communication is concerned, the Programme is on the right track and the communication goals will be fully achieved within the timeframe indicated in the Communication Strategy. However, a number of weaknesses and delays have been identified (values of the indicators, survey for result indicators, etc) and the JS/ MA is already moving towards their solution, by taking on board the key steps suggested in this document.

11. ADDITIONAL INFORMATION WHICH MAY BE ADDED DEPENDING ON THE CONTENT AND OBJECTIVES OF THE COOPERATION PROGRAMME (Article 14(4), subparagraph 2 (a), (b), (c) and (f), of REGULATION (EU) No 1299/2013)

11.1 Progress in implementation of the integrated approach to territorial development, including sustainable urban development, and community-led local development under the cooperation programme

11.2 Progress in implementation of actions to reinforce the capacity of authorities and beneficiaries to administer and to use the ERDF

11.3 Contribution to macro-regional and sea basin strategies (where appropriate)

The Interreg IPA CBC Programme “Greece-Albania 2014-2020” conforms with EU Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region (EUSAIR). More specifically contributes to the above strategy as follows:

Priority axis 1 contributes directly to thematic pillars 2 and 3 by creating transport, water & waste management infrastructure and by supporting actions for the protection of the environment, and for risk prevention.

Priority axis 2 contributes directly to thematic pillar 4 by protecting and promoting cultural and natural assets and by promoting the tourist potential of the cross border area, while it also contributes indirectly to thematic pillar 1, by supporting entrepreneurship especially in the agro-food sector, and to the extent that projects concerning fishing/aquaculture and other marine productive activities are included during implementation. It also contributes to the first cross-cutting theme directly through the support of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and the promotion of actions targeting the incorporation of research & development in the productive process.

11.4 Progress in the implementation of actions in the field of social innovation

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12. Financial information at priority axis and programme level (Articles 21(2) and 22(7) of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013)

For the purpose of assessing progress towards the achievement of milestones and targets set for financial indicators in the years 2018 and 2023, table 4 of Part A of this Annex shall have the following two additional columns:

13	14
Data for the purpose of the performance review and performance framework	
Only for report submitted in 2019: Total eligible expenditure incurred and paid by beneficiaries and certified to the Commission by 31/12/2018 Article 21(2) of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013	Only for final implementation report: Total eligible expenditure incurred and paid by beneficiaries by 31/12/2023 and certified to the Commission Article 22(7) of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013

PART C - REPORTING SUBMITTED IN YEAR 2019 AND FINAL IMPLEMENTATION REPORT
(Article 50(5) of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013)

13. SMART, SUSTAINABLE AND INCLUSIVE GROWTH

Information and assessment of the programme contribution to achieving the Union strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth.

14. ISSUES AFFECTING THE PERFORMANCE OF THE PROGRAMME AND MEASURES TAKEN – PERFORMANCE FRAMEWORK (Article 50(2) of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013)

Where the assessment of progress made with regard to the milestones and targets set out in the performance framework demonstrates that certain milestones and targets have not been achieved, Member States should outline the underlying reasons for failure to achieve these milestones in the report of 2019 (for milestones) and in the final implementation report (for targets).