

Interreg - IPA CBC Greece - Albania



**4th Deliverable:
Final Evaluation Report**

**Update of the first evaluation of implementation and impact of the
Interreg IPA CBC Programme Greece - Albania 2014-2020**

Contracting Authority:

**MANAGING AUTHORITY OF EUROPEAN TERRITORIAL
COOPERATION PROGRAMMES**

Contractor:



April 2021

Table of contents

Executive Summary.....	4
Επιτελική Σύνοψη	9
Përmbledhje Ekzekutive	14
1. Introduction	19
1. The Interreg IPA CBC Programme "Greece-Albania 2014-2020"	21
2. Evaluation methodology	25
3. CP management structure and status of CP implementation	28
3.1 Overall programme management structure, stakeholders and instruments	28
3.2 Status of implementation of the cooperation programme	30
3.2.1 Calls for proposal	30
3.2.2 Events (call and non-call related)	33
3.2.3 Financial implementation, fulfillment of performance framework targets	35
3.2.3 Evaluation of output and results indicators	42
4. Objective A. Analysis of the effectiveness and efficiency of the Programme management structures	47
4.1 Evaluation question A1. Effectiveness of co-operation between the programme authorities (Managing Authority/ Joint Secretariat, Certifying Authority, Audit Authority, JMC and national authorities) to fulfil their programme management tasks	47
4.2 Evaluation question A2. Effectiveness of the Joint Monitoring Committee (role, decisions)	53
4.3 Evaluation question A3. Effectiveness of the operation of the Albanian National Bodies	56
4.4 Evaluation question A4. Effectiveness of the operation of the national first level control systems	57
5. Objective B. Analysis of the effectiveness and efficiency of the management of the entire project cycle (project generation, assessment, selection, monitoring, reporting, reimbursement).....	62
5.1 Evaluation question B1: Effectiveness of project generation in the different calls	62
5.2 Evaluation question B2: Effectiveness of the application procedure, project assessment and selection process in the different calls	63
5.3 Evaluation questions B3: Effectiveness of support for the project implementation	66
6. Objective C. Monitoring System: analysis of the functionality and effectiveness of the programme monitoring system	74
6.1 Evaluation question C: Monitoring Information System: analysis of the functionality and effectiveness of the Programme MIS	74
7. Objective D. Analysis of the implementation of the Communication Strategy.....	78
7.1 Evaluation question D1: Quality and effectiveness of the Programme communication strategy	78
7.2 Evaluation question D2: Effectiveness of communication activities at Partner Country level	85
7.2 Evaluation questions D3: Quality of the communication strategy implementation at project level	87
8. Objective E. Analysis of progress in achieving the results of each specific objective, including potential bottlenecks and capacity of each Specific Objective to generate projects.....	91

8.1 Evaluation question E: Analysis of progress in achieving the results of each specific objective, including potential bottlenecks and capacity of each Specific Objective to generate projects ... 91

9. Conclusions – Recommendations – Lessons learnt 105

10. Findings per Evaluation Question 111

Executive Summary

The present document is about the update of the first Evaluation of the implementation of the Programme Interreg IPA CBC Greece – Albania for the 2014-2020 period.

The evaluation focuses on the efficiency and effectiveness of the Programme, as well as the achievement of its objectives. Moreover, it examines the impact of the Programme on the cross-border area and the need or not for any redistribution of resources in the Programme.

The above project includes the evaluation of the communication strategy and the result and outputs indicators of the Programme. Also it aims to support of MA/JS for the integration of the relevant evaluation elements in the Annual Implementation Report for the year 2020, as well as in a potential revision of the Programme.

The communication strategy has also been examined, considering the strategic role performed by communication in supporting the Programme implementation and the engagement of stakeholders. According to this consideration, there is a focus on how the Communication strategy contributed to a greater visibility of the Programme and to awareness raising in the Programme area, and whether or not the Programme communication actions proved effective towards applicants and beneficiaries.

The Interreg IPA CBC Programme Greece – Albania 2014-2020 approval came with the Commission’s Implementing Decision C (2015) 5482 of 30th July 2015. and was amended twice. The first amendment -approved by Decision C(2017)6809 of 12.10.2017- concerned the adoption and the incorporation of the “Performance Framework” in the programming document, and further elaboration on the Complaints Procedures, while the second amendment -approved by Decision C (2018)559 of 14.02.2018- concerned the incorporation of an additional funding of €10.000.000 EU contribution.

The year 2016 was the first year of implementation, with the organization of two Launching Events one in Greece and one in Albania and the launching of two calls; one for strategic and one for ordinary project proposals.

The evaluation procedure for the first Call for Strategic projects was concluded within 2016 and four (4) Strategic Projects were approved.

The year 2017 was very significant in terms of the initiation of the projects, hence programme implementation. In 2017 the evaluation procedure for the second Call for Ordinary Projects was concluded and forty-one (41) Ordinary Projects were approved during the 3rd Joint Monitoring Committee (JMC) Meeting, held on 14/07/2017 in Korçe. Moreover, 45 Technical Meetings took place during 2017, for the finalization of documents for the approved projects of both calls. Regarding the Technical Assistance of the Programme, this is being implemented in the framework of two projects; one for the Greek part of the budget and one for the Albanian part.

During 2018 two Calls were launched. The 3rd Targeted Call for Project Proposals was open from 02/08/2018 to 01/10/2018. One (1) Targeted Project proposal was unanimously approved by the JMC at its 4th meeting in Preveza on the 5th October 2018. The 4th Call for

Ordinary Projects was launched on the 17th October, with a deadline of submission on the 28th of February 2019 and 19 projects were approved.

The 5th Call for Targeted Proposals was launched on 25th of November 2019 and the deadline was the 24th of January 2020. One project was approved.

In total, 66 projects have been approved under the five (5) Calls of the Interreg IPA CBC Programme Greece – Albania 2014 – 2020. The majority of the approved projects are implemented under Specific Objectives S.O. 2.1 (28 projects), S.O. 1.1 (12 projects) and S.O. 1.3 (11 projects). Fifteen (15) projects are implemented under the rest Specific Objective (S.O.1.2: 3 projects, S.O.1.4: 3 projects and S.O. 2.2: 9 projects). Finally, 1 project under S.O. 1.3 was not implemented.

Concerning the financial implementation of the programme, Priority Axis 1 has been allocated with the largest amount (58%) for funding by the Programme followed by Priority Axis 2 (37%). Both Priority Axes show a small rate in verified expenditures until 31.12.2020 (18% for PA1 and 23% for PA2), while PA3 (technical Assistance) has 48% of verified expenditures.

Regarding the progress of the indicators that were selected during the approval of the Programme, it seems that the result indicators have shown high progress from the baseline values that have been set in the Programme Document. On the other hand, the output indicators show minor progress, according to the progress reports. However, having in mind that all projects are under the main phase of implementation during the period under examination and that the main activities are planned to take place in the current and following year, the target values are expected to be achieved by the end of 2023.

Summarizing the findings, the following conclusions are drawn per evaluation objective:

Objective A. Effectiveness of the Cooperation Program (CP)

The Evaluator, having taken into account the results of the opinion research (primary and secondary), concludes that the high level of cooperation of the beneficiaries with the management structures of the program (MA / JS, CA, AA) is evident. However, there is some room for optimizing the tools and procedures of the Programme, as well as the communication tools and those that can ensure a continuous and consistent workflow. The most useful tools in the preparation of the proposals are the info-days and the answers that are provided through the website in the FAQs section, as well as through e-mails.

In addition, it is clear that the selection procedures are considered transparent and meritocratic.

Objective B. Analysis of the effectiveness and efficiency of the management of the entire project cycle (project generation, assessment, selection, monitoring, reporting, reimbursement)

From the evaluation work in relation to the submission procedures, the high satisfaction of the beneficiaries results from the clarity of the Calls for Proposals and its annexes, the submission procedures and the functionality of the submission forms. Moreover, a high level of satisfaction was expressed in relation to the support provided by MA / JS during the preparation of the proposals. The use of transparent and meritocratic selection criteria and

procedures did not leave much room for sound complaints, a fact that justifies the small number of complaints submitted.

With regard to project support procedures, the Evaluator, taking into account the results of the surveys, concludes that there were selected projects that met the required conditions, since the application selection procedures and the information provided to the JMC members were pertinent.

However, there were some problems mainly due to bureaucratic procedures as well as delays due to the fact that the Albanian beneficiaries had to pay part of the pre-financing with their own resources, while another significant reason for delays in the timely implementation of some of the planned actions arose from the spread effects of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Objective C. Monitoring System: analysis of the functionality and effectiveness of the program monitoring system

Regarding the use of MIS, the high satisfaction of the beneficiaries is evident both in terms of its functionality, the simplicity of its structure, the possibilities provided and the training material for its use.

Objective D. Analysis of the implementation of the Communication Strategy

As it can be seen from the findings, the Programme on the one hand has clearly identified the issues of Communication Strategy through the relevant programme text, and by the Implementation & Publicity Guide and Capitalization Strategy, and on the other hand has succeeded through the use of various communication methods to achieve the aim of the objectives of 2 out of the 3 planned stages, i.e., the 1st stage concerning the provision of general information about the Programme and the 2nd stage concerning the formation of an opinion on the Programme from different common - objectives. Regarding the 3rd stage concerning the dissemination of the results, the publicity actions have been implemented to a small extent due to the fact that the projects have not been completed, as well as due to the restrictions imposed by the spread of the pandemic on the organization of live events and actions of publicity.

Objective E. Analysis of progress in achieving the results of each specific objective, including potential bottlenecks and capacity of each Specific Objective to generate projects

Taking into account the findings of the survey of JMC members, it appears that the 66 selected projects serve the objectives of the programme to a very large extent. In fact, a significant portion of JMC members say that they have had enough information to design Calls for Proposals to different target groups in a strategic way.

It is worth noting that there are a number of changes that have an impact on the majority of S.O. of the programme, which raises the need for reform of the Programme in order to serve new needs and priorities.

The above findings as a result of the secondary review and primary surveys of JMC members, beneficiaries and FLC bodies, lead the Evaluator to draw the following conclusions:

- A negative point in terms of the effectiveness of the program are the delays that occurred during the start and implementation of the projects, especially to beneficiaries on the Albanian side of the eligible area, and therefore the backlog of output indicators and absorption of the available budget.
- Since the projects are still being implemented, it is logical that the output and result indicators have not been achieved to the desired degree. However, it is estimated that the satisfaction of the outflow indicators will be achieved with the completion of the projects by 2023.
- The efficiency of the program until 31/12/2020 is low since only 22% of the approved budget has been verified. However, there are no problems with budget overruns, efficiency and differentiation of the unit cost of implementation of the interventions in relation to the projected costs during the design of the Programme.
- The rapidly changing socio-economic conditions, as well as the new data set in all areas by the COVID-19 pandemic, raise the need for a review of rational intervention in the framework of the strategic plan.
- As the Third Revision of the Programme is already to be concluded, which mainly regarded a more streamlined redistribution of available resources, no further revision is needed.
- Although the 3rd stage of the Communication Strategy has not progressed much from the beginning of the implementation of the Programme until 31/12/2020, so far they have achieved a large percentage and despite any difficulties due to COVID-19, the objectives for general information in relation to the programme and the formation of targeted perception and knowledge about the programme in specific target audiences have been met. In particular, the Evaluator considers that the information on the Programme, its role, objectives, results and impact, as well as the contribution of the European Union and the ERDF to stakeholders are sufficient. In addition, comprehensive and timely information was provided on the participation of potential beneficiaries in the Programme, the terms and criteria that must be met, while it seems that the stakeholders were informed to a very satisfactory degree, about their role in communicating the Programme. In fact, the project website and info-days are the main information and communication tools of all involved, in contrast to the social media related to the Programme.

In view of the above, a key recommendation is to set more stringent and effective criteria to ensure the required managerial and administrative capacity of the beneficiaries, in addition to those assessed during the quality phase of the evaluation of funding applications, which can contribute in part to the best administration and implementation of projects. Thus, for example, the previous successful implementation of Interreg projects in the previous period could be an element of evaluation, setting as evidence the budget absorption rate, timely contracting with contractors and compliance with contractual obligations, any financial corrections, etc.

In addition, the continuous training of the beneficiaries through material that will be provided both by the website and the info-days that are already very useful tools but also through the social media of the Programme which should become more attractive and provide more essential information regarding the beneficiaries of the projects, is recommended.

Finally, with regard to the issue of indicators, it is appropriate to set a methodological framework for determining the prices declared in the MIS, in order to allow their objective control during the administrative and on-the-spot verifications by the primary control, by the JS executives during the approval of the progress reports, but also when conducting evaluations.

Επιτελική Σύνοψη

Το παρόν έγγραφο αποτελεί την επικαιροποίηση της πρώτης (2η) Αξιολόγησης της πορείας εφαρμογής του Προγράμματος «IPA - CBC Ελλάδα - Αλβανία» του Στόχου Ευρωπαϊκή Εδαφική Συνεργασία της Περιόδου 2014-2020.

Η αξιολόγηση εστιάζει στην αποδοτικότητα και την αποτελεσματικότητα του Προγράμματος, στην επίτευξη των στόχων αυτού, στις επιπτώσεις του Προγράμματος στη διασυνοριακή περιοχή και στη διαπίστωση ανάγκης ή όχι για τυχόν ανακατανομή των πόρων στο Πρόγραμμα.

Στο παραπάνω έργο συμπεριλαμβάνεται η αξιολόγηση της στρατηγικής επικοινωνίας, των δεικτών αποτελέσματος και εκροών του Προγράμματος καθώς και η υποστήριξη της ΕΥΔ για την ενσωμάτωση των σχετικών στοιχείων της αξιολόγησης στην Ετήσια Έκθεση υλοποίησης του έτους 2020, καθώς και σε δυνητική αναθεώρηση του Προγράμματος.

Η επικοινωνιακή στρατηγική επίσης εξετάστηκε, λαμβάνοντας υπόψη τον στρατηγικό ρόλο που διαδραματίζει η επικοινωνία στην υποστήριξη της εφαρμογής του προγράμματος και της συμμετοχής των ενδιαφερομένων. Υπό αυτή τη θεώρηση, έμφαση δίνεται στον τρόπο με τον οποίο η επικοινωνιακή στρατηγική συνέβαλε στη μεγαλύτερη προβολή του προγράμματος και στην αύξηση της ευαισθητοποίησης στην περιοχή του προγράμματος και εάν οι δράσεις επικοινωνίας του προγράμματος αποδείχθηκαν ή όχι αποτελεσματικές έναντι των αιτούντων και των δικαιούχων.

Το πρόγραμμα Interreg IPA CBC «Ελλάδα - Αλβανία 2014-2020» εγκρίθηκε με την Απόφαση C(2015) 5482 της Ευρωπαϊκής Επιτροπής, στις 30 Ιουλίου 2015 και τροποποιήθηκε δύο φορές. Η πρώτη τροποποίηση - που εγκρίθηκε με την απόφαση C(2017)6809 της 12.10.2017 - αφορούσε την έγκριση και την ενσωμάτωση του «Πλαισίου απόδοσης» στο έγγραφο προγραμματισμού και την περαιτέρω επεξεργασία των διαδικασιών ενστάσεων, ενώ η δεύτερη τροποποίηση – που εγκρίθηκε με την απόφαση C(2018)559 της 14.02.2018 - αφορούσε την ενσωμάτωση πρόσθετης χρηματοδότησης 10.000.000 ευρώ συνεισφοράς της ΕΕ.

Το έτος 2016 ήταν το πρώτο έτος υλοποίησης του Προγράμματος, με τη διοργάνωση δύο Εναρκτήριων Εκδηλώσεων - μια στην Ελλάδα και μια στην Αλβανία - και τη δημοσίευση δύο Προσκλήσεων, μία για Στρατηγικά Έργα και μία για Κοινά Έργα.

Η διαδικασία αξιολόγησης για την πρώτη Πρόσκληση για Στρατηγικά Έργα ολοκληρώθηκε εντός του 2016 και εγκρίθηκαν τέσσερα (4) Στρατηγικά Έργα.

Το έτος 2017 ήταν πολύ σημαντικό όσον αφορά στην έναρξη υλοποίησης των έργων και επομένως και του Προγράμματος. Το 2017 ολοκληρώθηκε η διαδικασία αξιολόγησης για τη δεύτερη πρόσκληση και σαράντα ένα (41) έργα εγκρίθηκαν κατά τη διάρκεια της 3ης συνεδρίασης της κοινής επιτροπής παρακολούθησης (JMC), που πραγματοποιήθηκε στις 14/07/2017 στο Korçe. Επιπλέον, πραγματοποιήθηκαν 45 Τεχνικές Συναντήσεις κατά τη διάρκεια του 2017, για την οριστικοποίηση εγγράφων για τα εγκεκριμένα έργα και των δύο προσκλήσεων. Όσον αφορά στην τεχνική βοήθεια του προγράμματος, αυτό εφαρμόζεται

στο πλαίσιο δύο «έργων»: ένα για το ελληνικό μέρος του προϋπολογισμού και ένα για το αλβανικό μέρος.

Κατά το έτος 2018 δημοσιεύθηκαν δύο Προσκλήσεις. Η 3^η Πρόσκληση για Υποβολή Στοχευμένων Προτάσεων ήταν ανοιχτή από τις 02/08/2018 έως 01/10/2018. Μια πρόταση (1) εγκρίθηκε από την Κοινή Επιτροπή Παρακολούθησης (JMC) κατά την 4η συνεδρίαση της, στην Πρέβεζα στις 5 Οκτωβρίου 2018. Η 4^η Πρόσκληση για Κοινά Έργα δημοσιεύθηκε στις 17 Οκτωβρίου 2018, με καταληκτική ημερομηνία υποβολής την 28^η Φεβρουαρίου 2019 και στο πλαίσιο της εγκρίθηκαν 19 έργα.

Η 5^η πρόσκληση δημοσιεύθηκε στις 25/11/2019 και είχε καταληκτική ημερομηνία 24/02/2020. Εγκρίθηκε ένα έργο.

Συνολικά έχουν εγκριθεί 66 έργα η πλειοψηφία των οποίων εντάσσεται στον Ε.Σ. 2.1 (28 έργα, στον Ε.Σ. 1.1 (12 έργα) και στον Ε.Σ. 1.3 (11 έργα). Δεκαπέντε (15) έργα υλοποιούνται στο πλαίσιο των υπολοίπων Ε.Σ. (Ε.Σ.1.2: 3 έργα, Ε.Σ.1.4: 3 έργα and Ε.Σ. 2.2: 9 έργα). Η σύμβαση ενός έργου του Ειδικού Στόχου 1.3, έληξε χωρίς υλοποίηση.

Όσον αφορά στο οικονομικό αντικείμενο του Προγράμματος, ο Άξονας Προτεραιότητας 1 συγκεντρώνει το μεγαλύτερο ποσό εγκεκριμένου προϋπολογισμού (58%) και ακολουθεί ο Άξονας Προτεραιότητας 2 με 37%. Και στους δύο Α.Π. καταγράφεται μικρό ποσοστό επαληθευμένων δαπανών έως 31.12.2020 (18% για τον Α.Π.1 και 23% για τον Α.Π.2), ενώ ο Α.Π.3 εμφανίζει επαληθευμένες δαπάνες κατά 48% του εγκεκριμένου προϋπολογισμού.

Όσον αφορά στην πρόοδο των δεικτών που επιλέχθηκαν κατά την έγκριση του Προγράμματος, φαίνεται ότι οι δείκτες αποτελεσμάτων έχουν διαμορφώσει υψηλή πρόοδο σε σχέση με τις τιμές βάσεις που καθορίστηκαν στο Προγραμματικό Έγγραφο. Ωστόσο, οι δείκτες εκροών επιδεικνύουν χαμηλή πρόοδο, σύμφωνα με τις εκθέσεις προόδου. Όμως, λαμβάνοντας υπόψη ότι όλα τα έργα βρίσκονται στην κύρια φάση υλοποίησης κατά την περίοδο εξέτασης και ότι οι κύριες δραστηριότητες προγραμματίζονται να πραγματοποιηθούν κατά το τρέχον και το επόμενο έτος, οι τιμές-στόχοι αναμένεται να επιτευχθούν έως το τέλος του 2023.

Συνοψίζοντας τα ευρήματα προκύπτουν τα εξής συμπεράσματα ανά αξιολογητικό στόχο:

Στόχος Α. Αποτελεσματικότητα του Προγράμματος Συνεργασίας

Ο Αξιολογητής, λαμβάνοντας υπόψη τα αποτελέσματα των ερευνών (πρωτογενής και δευτερογενής), συμπεραίνει ότι διαφαίνεται το υψηλό επίπεδο συνεργασίας των δικαιούχων με τις δομές διαχείρισης του προγράμματος (ΜΑ/JS, CA, AA). Ωστόσο υπάρχουν κάποια περιθώρια για βελτιστοποίηση των εργαλείων και των διαδικασιών διαχείρισης του Προγράμματος, καθώς και των εργαλείων επικοινωνίας αλλά και εκείνων που μπορούν να διασφαλίσουν συνεχή και συνεκτική ροή εργασιών. Ως περισσότερο χρήσιμα εργαλεία κατά την προετοιμασία των προτάσεων αναδεικνύονται οι info-days και ακολουθούν οι απαντήσεις μέσω της ιστοσελίδας στην ενότητα FAQs, καθώς και μέσω e-mails.

Επιπλέον είναι εμφανής ότι οι διαδικασίες επιλογής κρίνονται ως διαφανείς και αξιοκρατικές.

Στόχος Β. Ανάλυση της αποτελεσματικότητας και της αποδοτικότητας της διαχείρισης ολόκληρου του κύκλου έργου (παραγωγή έργου, αξιολόγηση, επιλογή, παρακολούθηση, υποβολή εκθέσεων, επιστροφή χρημάτων)

Από το αξιολογητικό έργο σε σχέση με τις διαδικασίες υποβολής, προκύπτει η υψηλή ικανοποίηση των δικαιούχων από τη σαφήνεια της πρόσκλησης και των παραρτημάτων της, των διαδικασιών υποβολής αλλά και από τη λειτουργικότητα των εντύπων υποβολής. Επίσης υψηλού επιπέδου ικανοποίηση εκφράστηκε σε σχέση με την υποστήριξη που παρείχε η ΜΑ/JS κατά την προετοιμασία των προτάσεων. Η αξιοποίηση διαφανών και αξιοκρατικών κριτηρίων και διαδικασιών επιλογής δεν άφηναν και πολλά περιθώρια για ευσταθείς ενστάσεις, γεγονός και το οποίο δικαιολογεί το μικρό αριθμό υποβληθέντων ενστάσεων.

Σε σχέση με τις διαδικασίες υποστήριξης των έργων, ο Αξιολογητής λαμβάνοντας υπόψη και τα αποτελέσματα των ερευνών, συμπεραίνει ότι επιλέχθηκαν έργα που τηρούσαν τις απαιτούμενες προϋποθέσεις, καθώς οι διαδικασίες επιλογής των αιτήσεων και η παρεχόμενη πληροφόρηση στα μέλη της JMC ήταν κατάλληλες

Ωστόσο, παρατηρήθηκαν κάποια προβλήματα κυρίως λόγω γραφειοκρατικών διαδικασιών αλλά και καθυστερήσεων λόγω του γεγονότος ότι οι Αλβανοί δικαιούχοι έπρεπε να καταβάλλουν με ιδίους πόρους μέρος της προ-συγχρηματοδότησης, ενώ μια άλλη σημαντική αιτία καθυστερήσεων στην έγκαιρη υλοποίηση μέρους των προβλεπόμενων δράσεων προέκυψε από τις επιπτώσεις της εξάπλωσης της πανδημίας COVID-19.

Στόχος Γ. Σύστημα παρακολούθησης: ανάλυση της λειτουργικότητας και της αποτελεσματικότητας του συστήματος παρακολούθησης του προγράμματος (MIS)

Αναφορικά με τη χρήση του MIS, διαφαίνεται η υψηλή ικανοποίηση των δικαιούχων τόσο ως προς τη λειτουργικότητά του, την απλότητα της διάρθρωσής του, των παρεχόμενων δυνατοτήτων αλλά και το υλικό εκπαίδευσης για τη χρήση του.

Στόχος Δ. Ανάλυση της εφαρμογής της Επικοινωνιακής Στρατηγικής

Όπως φαίνεται από τα ευρήματα, το Πρόγραμμα αφενός έχει σαφώς προσδιορισμένα τα θέματα της Επικοινωνιακής Στρατηγικής μέσα από το οικείο προγραμματικό κείμενο, αλλά και από τον Implementation & Publicity Guide και την Capitalization Strategy, αφετέρου έχει κατορθώσει μέσα από τη χρήση ποικίλων επικοινωνιακών μεθόδων να επιτύχει τους στόχους των 2 από τα 3 προβλεπόμενα στάδια, δηλαδή του 1^{ου} σταδίου που αφορά στην παροχή γενικών πληροφοριών για το Πρόγραμμα και του 2^{ου} σταδίου που αφορά στη διαμόρφωση γνώμης για το Πρόγραμμα από διαφορετικά κοινά – στόχους. Σχετικά με το 3^ο στάδιο που αφορά στη διάχυση των αποτελεσμάτων, οι ενέργειες δημοσιοποίησης έχουν υλοποιηθεί σε μικρό βαθμό λόγω του ότι τα έργα δεν έχουν ολοκληρωθεί, καθώς επίσης και λόγω των περιορισμών που επιβλήθηκαν από την εξάπλωση της πανδημίας στη διοργάνωση εκδηλώσεων δια ζώσης και δράσεων δημοσιότητας.

Στόχος Ε. Ανάλυση της προόδου στην επίτευξη των αποτελεσμάτων κάθε συγκεκριμένου στόχου, συμπεριλαμβανομένων πιθανών σημείων σύγχυσης και ικανότητας κάθε συγκεκριμένου στόχου για τη δημιουργία έργων

Λαμβάνοντας υπόψη τα ευρήματα της έρευνας στα μέλη της JMC, διαφαίνεται ότι τα 66 έργα που επιλέχθηκαν έργα εξυπηρετούν τις στοχεύσεις του προγράμματος σε πολύ μεγάλο βαθμό. Μάλιστα σημαντική μερίδα των μελών της JMC δηλώνει ότι είχαν επαρκή πληροφόρηση για να σχεδιάσουν προσκλήσεις που απευθύνονταν σε διαφορετικές ομάδες στόχους με στρατηγικό τρόπο.

Αξίζει να επισημανθεί ότι υπάρχουν μια σειρά αλλαγών που έχουν αντίκτυπο στην πλειοψηφία των S.O. του προγράμματος, γεγονός που επισύρει την ανάγκη για αναμόρφωση του Προγράμματος προκειμένου να εξυπηρετεί νέες ανάγκες και προτεραιότητες.

Τα παραπάνω ευρήματα όπως προκύπτουν από τη δευτερογενή επισκόπηση και τις πρωτογενείς έρευνες στα μέλη της JMC, τους δικαιούχους και τους φορείς FLC, οδηγούν τον Αξιολογητή στη διατύπωση των εξής **συμπερασμάτων**:

- Αρνητικό σημείο όσον αφορά στην αποτελεσματικότητα του προγράμματος αποτελούν οι καθυστερήσεις που σημειώθηκαν κατά την έναρξη και την υλοποίηση των έργων, ιδιαίτερα σε δικαιούχους της αλβανικής πλευράς της επιλέξιμης περιοχής, και ως εκ τούτου και η υστέρηση της επίτευξης των δεικτών εκροών αλλά και απορρόφησης του διαθέσιμου προϋπολογισμού.
- Δεδομένου ότι τα έργα βρίσκονται ακόμη σε στάδιο υλοποίησης, είναι λογικό οι δείκτες εκροών και αποτελέσματος να μην έχουν επιτευχθεί στον επιθυμητό βαθμό. Ωστόσο εκτιμάται ότι θα επιτευχθεί η ικανοποίηση των δεικτών εκροής με την ολοκλήρωση των έργων ως το 2023.
- Η μέχρι 31/12/2020 αποδοτικότητα του προγράμματος είναι χαμηλή καθώς μόλις το 22% του εγκεκριμένου προϋπολογισμού έχει επαληθευτεί. Ωστόσο δεν εντοπίζονται προβλήματα υπερβάσεων προϋπολογισμού, αποδοτικότητας και διαφοροποίησης του μοναδιαίου κόστους υλοποίησης των παρεμβάσεων σε σχέση με τα προβλεπόμενα κόστη κατά τον σχεδιασμό του Προγράμματος.
- Οι ταχείς κοινωνικο-οικονομικές μεταβαλλόμενες συνθήκες, καθώς και τα νέα δεδομένα που έθεσε σε όλους τους τομείς η πανδημία του COVID-19, εγείρουν την ανάγκη για αναθεώρηση της λογικής παρέμβασης στο πλαίσιο της στρατηγικής προγράμματος.
- Δεδομένου ότι ήδη ολοκληρώνεται η Τρίτη αναθεώρηση του Προγράμματος που αφορούσε κυρίως σε μια πιο εξορθολογισμένη ανακατανομή των διατιθέμενων πόρων, δεν κρίνεται σκόπιμη άλλη αναθεώρηση.
- Αν και δεν έχει προχωρήσει πολύ το 3^ο στάδιο της Επικοινωνιακής Στρατηγικής από την έναρξη υλοποίησης του Προγράμματος μέχρι 31/12/2020, μέχρι στιγμής έχουν επιτευχθεί σε μεγάλο ποσοστό και παρά τις όποιες δυσκολίες λόγω COVID-19, οι στόχοι για γενικότερη πληροφόρηση σε σχέση με το πρόγραμμα αλλά και η διαμόρφωση στοχευμένης αντίληψης και γνώσης για το πρόγραμμα σε ειδικά κοινά – στόχους. Ειδικότερα, ο Αξιολογητής κρίνει ως επαρκή την πληροφόρηση για το Πρόγραμμα, τον ρόλο του, τους στόχους, τα αποτελέσματα και τον αντίκτυπό του, καθώς και την συνεισφορά της Ευρωπαϊκής Ένωσης και του ΕΤΠΑ στα ενδιαφερόμενα μέρη. Επιπλέον, εξασφαλίστηκε η ολοκληρωμένη και έγκαιρη ενημέρωση για τη συμμετοχή των δυνητικών δικαιούχων στο Πρόγραμμα, τους όρους και τα κριτήρια που πρέπει να πληρούνται, ενώ φαίνεται πως ενημερώθηκαν

σε πολύ ικανοποιητικό βαθμό οι εμπλεκόμενοι φορείς, σχετικά με τον ρόλο τους στην επικοινωνία του Προγράμματος. Μάλιστα η ιστοσελίδα του έργου και τα info-days αποτελούν τα κύρια εργαλεία πληροφόρησης και επικοινωνίας όλων των εμπλεκόμενων, σε αντίθεση με τα social media που σχετίζονται με το Πρόγραμμα.

Λαμβάνοντας υπόψη τα παραπάνω μια βασική σύσταση είναι να τεθούν πιο αυστηρά και αποτελεσματικά κριτήρια που να εξασφαλίζουν την απαιτούμενη διαχειριστική και διοικητική ικανότητα των δικαιούχων, πλέον αυτών που αξιολογούνται κατά την ποιοτική φάση της αξιολόγησης των αιτήσεων χρηματοδότησης, που να μπορεί να συμβάλει εν μέρει στην καλύτερη διοίκηση και υλοποίηση των έργων. Έτσι για παράδειγμα η πρότερη επιτυχημένη υλοποίηση έργων Interreg στην προηγούμενη περίοδο θα μπορούσε να αποτελέσει ένα στοιχείο αξιολόγησης θέτοντας ως στοιχεία τεκμηρίωσης το ποσοστό απορροφητικότητας του προϋπολογισμού, την έγκαιρη συμβασιοποίηση με αναδόχους και ανταπόκριση στις συμβατικές υποχρεώσεις, τυχόν δημοσιονομικές διορθώσεις, κλπ.

Επιπλέον συνίσταται η συνεχής εκπαίδευση των δικαιούχων μέσα από υλικό που θα παρέχεται τόσο από την ιστοσελίδα και τα info-days που ήδη αποτελούν πολύ χρήσιμα εργαλεία αλλά και μέσα από τα social media του Προγράμματος τα οποία θα πρέπει να γίνουν πιο ελκυστικά και να παρέχουν πιο ουσιώδη πληροφόρηση όσον αφορά στους δικαιούχους των έργων.

Τέλος όσον αφορά στο θέμα των δεικτών είναι σκόπιμο να τεθεί ένα μεθοδολογικό πλαίσιο καθορισμού των τιμών που δηλώνονται στο MIS, ώστε να επιτρέπεται και ο αντικειμενικός έλεγχος τους κατά τις διοικητικές και επιτόπιες επαληθεύσεις από τον πρωτοβάθμιο έλεγχο, από τα στελέχη της ΚΓ κατά την έγκριση των αναφορών προόδου, αλλά και κατά τη διενέργεια των αξιολογήσεων.

Përmbledhje Ekzekutive

Dokumenti aktual ka të bëjë me azhurnimin e Vlerësimit të parë të zbatimit të Programit Interreg IPA CBC Greqi - Shqipëri për periudhën 2014-2020.

Vlerësimi përqendrohet në efikasitetin dhe efektivitetin e Programit, si dhe arritjen e objektivave të tij. Për më tepër, ai shqyrton ndikimin e Programit në zonën ndërkufitare dhe nevojën ose jo për ndonjë rishpërndarje të burimeve në Program.

Projekti i mësipërm përfshin vlerësimin e strategjisë së komunikimit dhe treguesve të rezultateve dhe rezultateve të Programit. Gjithashtu ai synon të mbështesë MA / JS për integrimin e elementeve përkatëse të vlerësimit në Raportin Vjetor të Zbatimit për vitin 2020, si dhe në një rishikim të mundshëm të Programit.

Strategjia e komunikimit është përfshirë gjithashtu duke marrë parasysh rolin strategjik të kryer nga komunikimi në mbështetjen e zbatimit të Programit dhe angazhimin e palëve të interesuara. Sipas këtij konsiderata, ka një fokus në atë se si strategjia e komunikimit kontribuoi në një dukshmëri më të madhe të Programit dhe në ngritjen e vetëdijes në fushën e Programit, dhe nëse veprimet e komunikimit të Programit rezultuan efektive ndaj aplikuesve dhe përfituesve.

Miratimi i Programit Interreg IPA CBC Greqi - Shqipëri 2014-2020 erdhi me Vendimin Zbatues të Komisionit C (2015) 5482 të 30 Korrikut 2015, dhe është ndryshuar dy herë. Ndryshimi i parë, i miratuar me vendimin C(2017)6809 të datës 12.10.2017 - në lidhje me adoptimin dhe integrimin e "kuadrit të performancës" në dokumentin e programimit, dhe përgatitja e mëtejshme e procedurave të ankimit, ndërsa ndryshimi i dytë, i miratuar me vendimin C (2018)559 të datës 14.02.2018, kishte të bënte me integrimin e një fondi shtesë prej 10.000.000 EURO.

Viti 2016 ishte viti i parë i zbatimit, me organizimin e dy Ngarjeve të Fillimit një në Greqi dhe një në Shqipëri dhe fillimi i dy thirrjeve; një për propozimet strategjike dhe një për projektet e zakonshme.

Procedura e vlerësimit për Thirrjen e parë për projekte strategjike u përmbyll brenda vitit 2016 dhe katër (4) Projekte Strategjike u miratuan.

Viti 2017 ishte shumë domethënës për sa i përket fillimit të projekteve, pra i zbatimit të programit. Në vitin 2017 përfundoi procedura e vlerësimit për Thirrjen e dytë për Projekte të Zakonshme dhe dyzet e një (41) Projekte të Zakonshme u miratuan gjatë Takimit të 3-të të Komitetit të Përbashkët të Monitorimit (JMC), mbajtur më 14/7/2017 në Korçë. Për më tepër, 45 Takime Teknike u zhvilluan gjatë vitit 2017, për finalizimin e dokumenteve për projektet e miratuara të të dy thirrjeve. Sa i përket Asistencës Teknike të Programit, kjo po zbatohet në kuadrin e dy "projekteve"; një për pjesën greke të buxhetit dhe një për pjesën shqiptare.

Gjatë vitit 2018 u lançuan dy Thirrje. Thirrja e 3-të e synuar për Propozimet e Projekteve ishte e hapur nga 02/08/2018 deri më 01/10/2018. Një (1) Propozim i Projektit të synuar u miratua unanimisht nga JMC në takimin e tij të 4-të në Prevezë në 5 Tetor 2018. Thirrja e 4-

të për Projektet e Zakonshme u lançua në 17 tetor, me një afat të dorëzimit në 28 shkurt 2019 dhe u miratuan 19 projekte.

Thirrja e 5-të për Propozimet e Synuara u lançua më 25 nëntor 2019 dhe afati i fundit ishte 24 Janari 2020. Një projekt u miratua.

Në total, 66 projekte janë aprovuar në bazë të pesë (5) Thirrjeve të Programit Interreg IPA CBC Greqi - Shqipëri 2014 - 2020. Shumica dërrmuese e projekteve të miratuara zbatohen nën S.O. 2.1 (28 projekte), S.O. 1.1 (12 projekte) dhe S.O. 1.3 (11 projekte). Pesëmbëdhjetë (15) projekte janë zbatuar nën pjesën tjetër të S.O. (S.O.1.2: 3 projekte, S.O.1.4: 3 projekte dhe S.O. 2.2: 9 projekte). Më në fund, 1 projekt nën S.O. 1.3 nuk ishte zbatuar.

Lidhur me zbatimin financiar të programit, Aksi Prioritar 1 është caktuar me shumën më të madhe (58%) për financim nga Programi i ndjekur nga Aksi Prioritar 2 (37%). Të dy Akset tregojnë një normë shumë të vogël në shpenzimet e verifikuara deri më 31.12.2020 (18% për PA1 dhe 23% për PA2), ndërsa PA1 ka 48% të shpenzimeve të verifikuara.

Lidhur me ecurinë e treguesve që janë zgjedhur gjatë miratimit të Programit, duket se treguesit e rezultateve kanë treguar progres të lartë nga vlerat fillestare që janë vendosur në Dokumentin e Programit. Sidoqoftë, rezultatet tregojnë progres të vogël, sipas raporteve të progresit. Sidoqoftë, duke pasur parasysh që të gjitha projektet janë nën fazën kryesore të zbatimit në këtë fazë dhe se aktivitetet kryesore janë planifikuar të ndodhin në vitin aktual dhe vitin pasues, vlerat e synuara pritet të arrihen deri në fund të vitit 2023.

Duke përmbledhur gjetjet, konkluzionet e mëposhtme nxirren për objektivat vlerësimi:

Objektivi A. Efektiviteti i Programit të Bashkëpunimit (CP)

Vlerësuesi, duke marrë parasysh rezultatet e sondazheve të opinionit, konkludon se niveli i lartë i bashkëpunimit të përfituesve me strukturat menaxhuese të programit (MA / JS, CA, AA) është i dukshëm. Sidoqoftë, ekziston një hapësirë për të optimizuar mjetet dhe procedurat e Programit, si dhe mjetet e komunikimit dhe ato që mund të sigurojnë një rrjedhë të vazhdueshme dhe të qëndrueshme të punës. Mjetet më të dobishme në përgatitjen e propozimeve janë ditët e informacionit dhe përgjigjet vijnë përmes faqes së internetit në pjesën e FAQ, si dhe përmes postës elektronike.

Për më tepër, është e qartë që procedurat e përzgjedhjes konsiderohen transparente dhe meritokratike.

Objektivi B. Analiza e efektivitetit dhe efikasitetit të menaxhimit të të gjithë ciklit të projektit (gjenerimi i projektit, vlerësimi, përzgjedhja, monitorimi, raportimi, rimbursimi)

Nga puna e vlerësimit në lidhje me procedurat e paraqitjes, kënaqësia e lartë e përfituesve rezulton nga qartësia e ftesës dhe anekseve të saj, procedurat e dorëzimit dhe funksionalitetin e formularëve të paraqitjes. Për më tepër, një nivel i lartë kënaqësie u shpreh në lidhje me mbështetjen e ofruar nga MA / JS gjatë përgatitjes së propozimeve. Përdorimi i kriterëve dhe procedurave transparente dhe meritokratike të përzgjedhjes nuk la shumë hapësirë për ankesa të shëndosha, fakt që justifikon numrin e vogël të ankesave të paraqitura.

Në lidhje me procedurat e mbështetjes së projektit, Vlerësuesi, duke marrë parasysh rezultatet e sondazheve, arrin në përfundimin se kishte projekte të zgjedhura që plotësonin

kushtet e kërkuara, pasi që procedurat e përzgjedhjes së aplikimit dhe informacioni i ofruar anëtarëve të JMC ishin përkatëse.

Sidoqoftë, kishte disa probleme kryesisht për shkak të procedurave burokratike, si dhe vonesave për faktin se përfituesit shqiptarë duhej të paguanin një pjesë të para-financimit me burimet e tyre, ndërsa një tjetër arsye e rëndësishme për vonesat në zbatimin në kohë të disa prej veprimet e planifikuara lindën nga përhapja e efekteve të pandemisë COVID-19.

Objektivi C. Sistemi i Monitorimit: analiza e funksionalitetit dhe efektivitetit të sistemit të monitorimit të programit

Në lidhje me përdorimin e MIS, kënaqësia e lartë e përfituesve është e dukshme si për nga funksionaliteti i tij, thjeshtësia e strukturës së tij, mundësitë e ofruara dhe materiali trajnues për përdorimin e tij.

Objektivi D. Analiza e zbatimit të Strategjisë së Komunikimit

Siç mund të shihet nga gjetjet, Programi nga njëra anë ka identifikuar qartë çështjet e Strategjisë së Komunikimit përmes tekstit përkatës të programit, dhe nga Udhëzuesi i Zbatimit dhe Publikimit dhe Strategjia e Kapitalizimit, nga ana tjetër ka pasur sukses përmes përdorimit të metoda të ndryshme të komunikimit për të arritur qëllimin e objektivave të 2 nga 3 fazat e planifikuara, dmth., faza e parë në lidhje me sigurimin e informacionit të përgjithshëm në lidhje me programin dhe faza e dytë në lidhje me formimin e një opinioni mbi programin nga objektiva të ndryshëm të përbashkët. Lidhur me fazën e tretë në lidhje me shpërndarjen e rezultateve, veprimet publicitare janë zbatuar në një masë të vogël për shkak të faktit se projektet nuk kanë përfunduar, si dhe për shkak të kufizimeve të vendosura nga përhapja e pandemisë në organizatë të ngjarjeve të drejtpërdrejta dhe veprimeve të publicitetit.

Objektivi E. Analiza e progresit në arritjen e rezultateve të secilit objektiv specifik, përfshirë ngushtimet e mundshme dhe kapacitetin e secilit Objektiv specifik për të gjeneruar projekte

Duke marrë parasysh gjetjet e sondazhit të anëtarëve të JMC, duket se 66 projektet e zgjedhura u shërbejnë objektivave të programit në një masë shumë të madhe. Në fakt, një pjesë e konsiderueshme e anëtarëve të JMC thonë se ata kanë pasur informacion të mjaftueshëm për të hartuar ftesa për grupe të ndryshme të synuara në një mënyrë strategjike.

Vlen të përmendet se ka një numër ndryshimesh që kanë një ndikim në shumicën e S.O. të programit, i cili ngre nevojën për reformim të Programit në mënyrë që t'u shërbejë nevojave dhe përparësive të reja.

Gjetjet e mësipërme si rezultat i rishikimit sekondar dhe sondazheve primare të anëtarëve të JMC, përfituesve dhe organeve të FLC, e çojnë Vlerësuesin të nxjerrë përfundimet e mëposhtme:

- Një pikë negative në drejtim të efektivitetit të programit janë vonesat e ndodhura gjatë fillimit dhe zbatimit të projekteve, veçanërisht për përfituesit në anën shqiptare të zonës së aplikimit, dhe për këtë arsye numri i treguesve të prapambetur dhe thithja e buxheti

- Meqenëse projektet janë duke u implementuar, është logjike që treguesit e rezultateve nuk janë arritur në shkallën e dëshiruar. Sidoqoftë, vlerësohet se kënaqësia e treguesve të daljeve do të arrihet me përfundimin e projekteve deri në vitin 2023.
- Efikasiteti i programit deri më 31/12/2020 është i ulët pasi që vetëm 22% e buxhetit të aprovuar është verifikuar. Sidoqoftë, nuk ka probleme me tejkalimet buxhetore, efikasitetin dhe diferencimin e kostos njësi të zbatimit të ndërhyrjeve në lidhje me kostot e parashikuara gjatë hartimit të Programit.
- Kushtet socio-ekonomike që ndryshojnë me shpejtësi, si dhe të dhënat e reja të vendosura në të gjitha fushat nga pandemia e COVID-19, rritin nevojën për një rishikim të ndërhyrjes racionale në kornizën e planit strategjik.
- Meqenëse pritet tashmë rishikimi i tretë i programit, i cili kryesisht konsideronte një rishpërndarje më të efektshme të burimeve të disponueshme, nuk ka nevojë për rishikim të mëtejshëm.
- Megjithëse faza e 3-të e Strategjisë së Komunikimit nuk ka përparuar shumë që nga fillimi i zbatimit të Programit deri më 31/12/2020, deri më tani ata kanë arritur një përqindje të madhe dhe pavarësisht nga ndonjë vështirësi për shkak të COVID-19, objektivat për informacioni i përgjithshëm në lidhje me programin dhe formimin e perceptimit dhe njohurisë së synuar në lidhje me programin në audienca specifike të synuara. Në veçanti, Vlerësuesi vlerëson se informacioni mbi Programin, roli, objektivat, rezultatet dhe ndikimi i tij, si dhe kontributi i Bashkimit Evropian dhe ERDF për palët e interesuara janë të mjaftueshme. Për më tepër, u dha informacion gjithëpërfshirës dhe me kohë mbi pjesëmarrjen e përfituesve të mundshëm në Program, termat dhe kriteret që duhet të plotësohen, ndërsa duket se palët e interesuara ishin informuar në një shkallë shumë të kënaqshme, për rolin e tyre në komunikimin e Programit. Në fakt, faqja në internet e projektit dhe ditët e informacionit janë mjetet kryesore të informacionit dhe komunikimit të të gjithë të përfshirëve, në kontrast me mediat sociale që lidhen me Programin.

Në funksion të sa më sipër, një rekomandim kryesor është vendosja e kriterëve më të rrepta dhe efektive për të siguruar kapacitetin e kërkuar menaxherial dhe administrativ të përfituesve, përveç atyre të vlerësuar gjatë fazës së cilësisë së vlerësimit të aplikimeve për financim, të cilat mund të kontribuojnë pjesërisht në administrimin dhe zbatimin më të mirë të projekteve. Kështu, për shembull, zbatimi i mëparshëm i suksesshëm i projekteve Interreg në periudhën e mëparshme mund të jetë një element vlerësimi, duke vendosur si provë shkallën e përthithjes së buxhetit, kontraktimin në kohë me kontraktorët dhe pajtueshmërinë me detyrimet kontraktuale, çdo korigjim financiar, etj.

Për më tepër, trajnimi i vazhdueshëm i përfituesve përmes materialit që do të sigurohet nga faqja e internetit dhe ditët e informacionit që tashmë janë mjete shumë të dobishme, por edhe përmes mediave sociale të Programit, të cilat duhet të bëhen më tërheqëse dhe të ofrojnë informacione më thelbësore në lidhje me rekomandohet përfituesit e projekteve.

Në fund, në lidhje me çështjen e treguesve, është e përshtatshme të vendoset një kornizë metodologjike për përcaktimin e çmimeve të deklaruara në MIS, në mënyrë që të lejojë

kontrollin e tyre objektiv gjatë verifikimeve administrative dhe në vend nga kontrolli primar, nga drejtuesit e JS gjatë aprovimit të raporteve të progresit, por edhe kur kryejnë vlerësime..

1. Introduction

The present output is the third deliverable of the project "Update of the First evaluation of implementation and impact of the Interreg IPA CBC Programme Greece – Albania 2014-2020" of the European Territorial Cooperation Objective of the programming period 2014-2020.

Evaluation is a strategic tool for managing, correcting and reprogramming an intervention, as it is an operational text in the sense that it is a management tool and a roadmap of Programmed actions. It also has the required dynamic character. Even if it is detailed, it is general in nature, with the provision of future updates for the needs of the Programme. When used effectively, it promotes the culture of organizational learning and enhances accountability to achieve goals and results. However, in order to fully play this role, particular attention should be paid to the formulation of the findings and recommendations, as well as to the possible lessons to be drawn.

In particular, for the Interreg IPA CBC Programme "Greece-Albania 2014-2020" and according to the Article 54 of the Common Provision Regulation 1303/2013, evaluations are carried out to improve the design and implementation quality of the Programmes, as well as to assess effectiveness, efficiency and impact. Moreover, according to Article 56.3 of the same Regulation, during the programming period, the managing authority shall ensure that evaluations, including evaluations to assess effectiveness, efficiency and impact, are carried out for each Programme on the basis of the evaluation plan and that each evaluation is subject to appropriate follow-up in accordance with the EU rules. At least once during the programming period, an evaluation shall assess how support from the European Structural & Investment (ESI) Funds has contributed to the objectives for each priority.

In the past, evaluations focused more on implementation and absorption of resources. The emphasis is now on evaluating the achievement of the expected results and the impact assessment.

The approved Evaluation Plan of the Cooperation Programme will cover the period until the end of 2023 and will assess the progress in achieving the objectives by the Programme, in the communication strategy, and the relativity of the Cooperation Programme with current cross-border needs and expectations. This assessment will be a tool to evaluate whether the programme's specific objectives are already covered by a sufficient number of approved projects, but also to identify possible gaps that should be taken into account in the forthcoming calls for proposals. What is being evaluated is whether the Programme is in line with the planned goals. In addition, the External Evaluation can lead to important findings regarding the Programme administration and to propose measures in order weaknesses to be overcome.

The overall tasks of the specific Evaluation are to:

- improve the quality of evaluations through proper planning, including identification and collection of necessary data (Article 54(2) CPR)
- enable informed Programme management and policy decisions on the basis of

evaluation findings

- provide a framework to plan impact evaluation (Article 56(3) CPR)
- ensure that evaluations provide inputs for annual implementation and progress reports
- facilitate the synthesis of findings from different Participating States by the Commission and the exchange of available evidence

The specific objectives as far as the impact evaluation is concerned are to evaluate:

- whether the Programme succeeded in achieving the objectives of each priority,
- whether the Programme contributed to the target of the IPA II objectives.

1. The Interreg IPA CBC Programme "Greece-Albania 2014-2020"

Cross border cooperation policy is about establishing links across national boundaries to enable joint approaches to common problems and opportunities. The present Programme constitutes a set of proposals for the interventions envisaged under the terms of the cross border cooperation of European Territorial Cooperation for the period 2014-2020 and the IPA II specific objectives on the regional integration and territorial cooperation involving EU Member States and IPA II beneficiary countries. The Interreg IPA Cross-Border Cooperation Programme "Greece – Albania 2014-2020" has been approved by the European Commission decision C(2015) 5482 final of 30th July 2015.

As the successor to the IPA Cross-Border Programme "Greece – Albania 2007-2013" it will attempt to capitalize on the experience gained and the lessons learned by the participants and the implementing structures in order to bring cooperation to a new level.

The global objective of the Programme is "to find the balance between sustainable regional development and enhancement of cross-border cooperation among local population & regional institutions, in accordance with EU & national policies, in order to address common challenges through joint interventions".

The **eligible cross-border area** spreads from the Ionian Sea to the Prespa lakes, and includes:

- the Regional Units of Grevena, Kastoria, Florina, Arta, Thesprotia, Ioannina, Preveza, Zakynthos, Kerkyra, Kefallinia and Lefkada in Greece, and
- the Region of Vlorë, the Region of Gjirokastër, the Region of Korçë and the Region of Berat in Albania.

The **eligible cross-border area** covers an area of 28,526 km² (17.445 km² for Greece cross-border area and 11.081 km² for Albania cross-border area) with a total population of 1,339,804 inhabitants (729.687 inhabitants for Greece cross-border area and 610.117 inhabitants for Albania cross- border area) (census data of 2011).

Programme Strategy-Selected Thematic Objectives and Specific Objectives

The strategy of the Cooperation Programme is served by the following three Priority Axes and the following individual thematic priorities:

- ✓ Priority Axis 1: Promotion of the environment, sustainable transport and public infrastructure
- ✓ Priority Axis 2: Boosting the local economy
- ✓ Priority Axis 3: Technical Assistance

Thematic Priorities:

- c) Promoting sustainable transport, information and communication networks and services and investing in cross-border water, waste and energy systems and facilities (Priority Axis 1),
- b) Protecting the environment & promoting climate change adaptation & mitigation, risk prevention & management (Priority Axis 1),
- d) Encouraging tourism and cultural and natural heritage (Priority Axis 2),
- g) Enhancing competitiveness, the business environment and the development of small and medium-sized enterprises (Priority Axis 2).

The following Table presents the Priority Axes, Thematic Priorities and Specific objectives of the Programme.

Table 1-1 – Priority Axes, Thematic Priorities and Specific objectives of the Programme

Priority axis	Thematic priority	Specific objective(s)
1	(c): Promoting sustainable transport, information and communications networks & services and investing in cross-border water, waste & energy systems and facilities	1.1: Increase the capacity of cross border infrastructure in transport, water & waste management
	(b): Protecting the environment & promoting climate change adaptation & mitigation, risk prevention & management	1.2: Increase the effectiveness of environmental protection & sustainable use of natural resources
		1.3: Increase energy-efficiency and the use of RES.
		1.4: Improve the effectiveness of risk prevention and disaster management with a focus on forest fires
2	(d): Encouraging tourism and cultural and natural heritage	2.1: Preserve cultural and natural resources as a prerequisite for tourism development of the cross border area.
	(g): Enhancing competitiveness the business environment and the development of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), trade and investment	2.2: Improve cross-border capacity to support entrepreneurship, business survival and competitiveness

The specific objectives of each thematic priority and the main **expected results** of the Programme are expected to be:

SO 1.1 Increase the capacity of cross-border infrastructure in transport, water and waste management

- Increased share of water resources used sustainably.

- Increased capacity for wastewater treatment.
- Increased share of solid waste managed sustainably.
- Improved maturity of cross-border accessibility interventions

SO 1.2 Increase the effectiveness of environmental protection & sustainable use of natural resources

- Better management of natural-protected sites.
- Improved institutional capacity and coordinated policies in environmental protection and sustainable use of natural resources.

SO 1.3 Increase energy efficiency and the use of RES

- Reduced overall energy consumption in the public sector.
- Increased share of energy from RES in the public sector.
- Increased population awareness regarding energy efficiency.

SO 1.4 Improve the effectiveness of risk prevention and disaster management with a focus on forest fires

- Improved cross border preparedness for effective management of natural disasters.
- Coordinated decision making tools and early warning systems.
- Reduction of damages from forest fires.
- Improved Civil Protection – Better Informed Public.

SO 2.1 Preserve cultural and natural resources as a prerequisite for tourism development of the cross-border area

- Contribute to growth in the tourist business sector
- Improved capacity to sustainably use natural and cultural resources in the cross-border area.
- Preserved/protected/promoted cultural and natural assets

SO 2.2 Improve cross-border capacity to support entrepreneurship, business survival and competitiveness

- Improved capacities of regional actors/facilities to support the development/growth of businesses
- Improved cross-border business survival

- Collaborative schemes of businesses.
- Increase in exports of CB businesses.

2. Evaluation methodology

The purpose of the "update of the first evaluation" of the Interreg IPA CBC Programme "Greece – Albania" 2014-2020, as in the first evaluation, is to assess the efficiency and effectiveness of the programme management system, as well as to set the ground for the future direction of the impact evaluations to be carried out after 2020. Based on the outcomes of the evaluation and the recommendations of the evaluation team, the programme bodies should be able to correct/ improve/ modify/ develop the programme management and implementation in order to be more efficient, effective and capable of reaching the programme results.

The evaluation will focus, like the first evaluation, on efficiency and the effectiveness of the Program, in achieving its objectives and in determining whether there is a need to update the intervention logic and in any allocation of new resources and/or redistribution of resources in the Program.

Evaluation procedures are also linked to the Programme Communication Strategy, since, through evaluations, results and impact of projects will be identified, and then publicized and disseminated. In particular, the progress of the projects, their results, the achievement of their objectives, the general impact or the impact on specific sectors and the demonstrative practices, will be publicized. As a result, the External Evaluator will assess the communication strategy and support Managing Authority for the integration of evaluation results in the Annual Implementation Report of 2020, as well as in a possible revision of the Programme.

The External Evaluator will examine the achievement of the Programme objectives, set in the framework of the Europe 2020 Strategy and the EUSAIR macro-regional strategy. It is noted that the external evaluation will feed the Annual Report of 2020 with data and information related to the achievement of milestones and targets, as defined in the framework of the Interreg IPA CBC Programme Greece - Albania 2014-2020.

In this context, the External Evaluator will ensure that the response to each evaluation question is based on evidence and in-depth analysis. The External Evaluator should use different types of evaluation methods (quantitative and qualitative) and data sources in order to formulate the answers. Responses should address the key terms of questions, identifying the indicators and evaluation criteria used to answer the question, and disclose the rationale followed in the analysis.

With regard to the Conclusions and Proposals resulting from the Programme Evaluation, the External Evaluator will compile a report with the conclusions reached in response to the evaluation questions and will proceed to comprehensive, realistic and feasible proposals to improve the effectiveness of the programme.

Also, the External Evaluator will include a special section (s.s. "lessons learnt") which will summarize useful conclusions from the implementation of the Programme so far, which can

be used in the writing of the new Cooperation Programme for the programming period 2021-2027.

The **evaluation questions**, that the External Evaluator is called to answer are, grouped under the following headings - effectiveness, efficiency, appropriateness, coherence, complementarity, sustainability, added value of the EU, relevance, simplification and reduction of administrative burdens, concern the following:

A. Effectiveness of the Cooperation Programme (CP)

B. Performance Framework of the Cooperation Programme

C. Efficiency of the Cooperation Programme

D. Update of Intervention Logic in the framework of the Programme Strategy

E. Review of the Cooperation Programme

F. Preparation for the Impact Evaluation

G. Evaluation of the Communication Strategy

The Contractor will be based, inter alia, on the material and results of the first evaluation of the Programme, the new implementation data to date as well as in the Study for the calculation of the achievement price of five (5) result indicators of the INTERREG IPA CBC Programme "Greece-Albania 2014-2020", prepared for the Managing Authority of European Territorial Cooperation Programmes.

Thus, to provide additional data, the External Evaluator apart from the desk research to the relevant literature thus the interact Terms of References and guidelines, the Management and Control System of the Programme, the MIS and Evaluation studies of other Interreg Programmes, will also conduct a qualitative research.

Specifically, this update of the first evaluation will follow a methodological design which will be based to a mix of techniques - mostly qualitative - that enables an assessment of management and implementation practices.

The evaluation will use the following information sources:

- Review and analysis of programme documents provided by the programme;
- Pilot interviews (semi-structured) with programme bodies.
- Analysis of FLC data;
- Online-survey on project partners covering rejected proposals and approved projects and addressing LPs of the 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th and 5th calls.
- Online – survey to programme bodies;
- Meetings with MA/JS in order to gain a deeper understanding of the implementation processes and to discuss the evaluation procedure and findings.

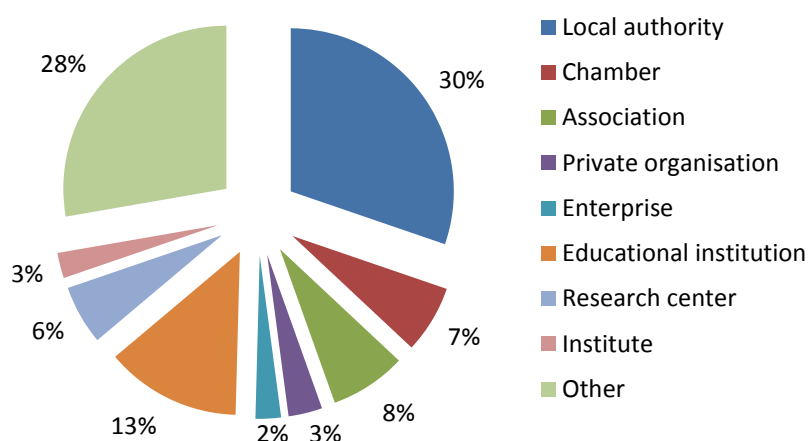
The External Evaluator’s team implemented an online survey covering the whole population of actors and face to face interviews, analysis at the project level and comparison with other cases. In particular an Online-survey was conducted addressed to 1st) programme bodies 2nd) project partners covering approved projects of the 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th and 5th calls and 3rd) FLC Greek and Albanian bodies:

Specifically, the questionnaire was sent to **32** Greek authorities and **13** Albanian authorities and was answered by **14** Greek and **10** Albanian authorities respectively.

Moreover, the questionnaire was sent to **90** Greek and **87** Albanian beneficiaries and answered by **70** Greek beneficiaries and **49** Albanian beneficiaries.

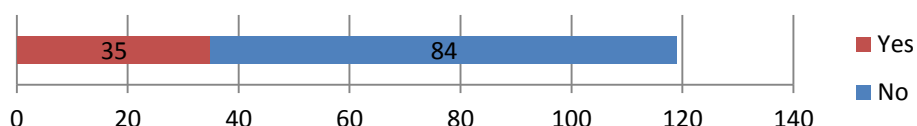
The sample of the research consists of various beneficiaries (Figure 2.1). Indicatively, there are Local authorities (30%), Educational Institutions (13%), Associations (8%), Chambers (7%), Research centers (6%), and other types of organizations (such as Central Authorities, Central Authority, NGO, Ecclesiastical organizations, Central Government bodies.

Figure 2.1 - Type of organization of beneficiaries participated in the research



According to the Figure 2.2, 84 beneficiaries have participated in an Interreg Programme more than one time, while 35 of them is the first time they are a part of an Interreg Programme.

Figure 2.2 - Participation in an Interreg Programme



3. CP management structure and status of CP implementation

3.1 Overall programme management structure, stakeholders and instruments

The management and implementation of the cooperation Programme involves a wide range of actors and a complex and highly differentiated set of processes to achieve the stated results. The “ecosystem” of actors is described in a simplified way in the illustration below.

Figure 3.1 - Operational Correlation of the Entities that are engaged in the Management and Control System of the Interreg IPA II CBC Programme Greece – Albania 2014 – 2020

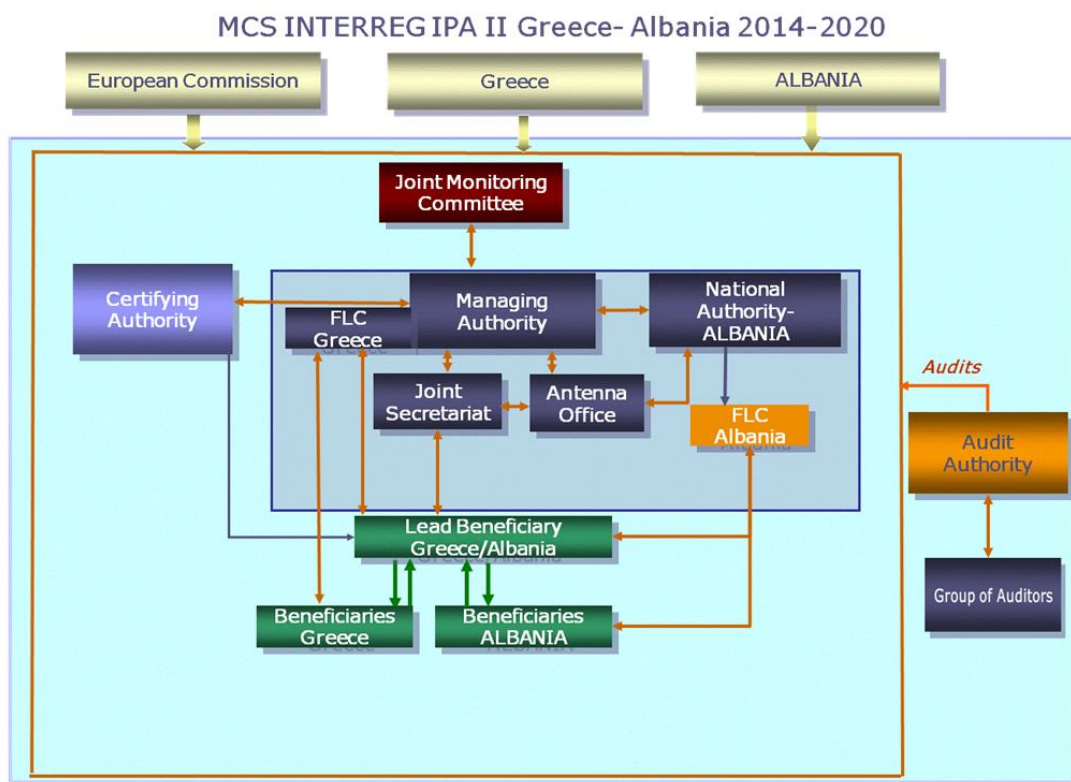


Figure 3.1 shows the operational correlation among the entities that are engaged in the Management and Control System:

- The Joint Monitoring Committee was established, both countries being equally represented complying with the partnership principle in managing, monitoring and evaluating the operations at all stages of the Programme implementation. The Committee comprises 18 members with voting right and 26 members without voting

right. The JMC consists of representatives from all the Regions of eligible area, the relevant ministries, representatives from socio-economic entities as well as all the structures involved in the MCS (certifying authority, audit authority etc).

- The Managing Authority is the responsible body for the sound management of the programme, which comes under the “SPECIAL SECRETARIAT FOR EUROPEAN REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT FUND AND COHESION FUND PROGRAMMES’ within the Greek Ministry of Development and Investments” within the Greek Ministry of Economy and Development as per Article 5, paragraph 1 (f) of Greek Law 4314/2014.
- The Joint Secretariat is based in Thessaloniki at the premises of the Managing Authority according to Article 43, paragraph 1 of Greek Law 4314/2014.
- Certifying Authority is the Special Service “Certifying and Verifications Authority of Co-funded Programmes” within the Greek Ministry of Economy and Development.
- Audit Authority is the Financial Audit Committee (EDEL), which comes under the General Secretariat for Financial Policy of Ministry of Finance, was established by Article 11 of Law The *Group of Auditors*, supports the Audit Authority to carry out its duties as provided for in Article 25(2) of Regulation (EC) No 1299/2013. The GoA is comprised of representatives from the relevant audit authorities of both cooperating countries. Thus, the GoA is independent from the national bodies responsible for first level control carried out under Article 23 (4) of Regulation (EC) No 1299/2013 and for the certification of expenditure and the Monitoring Committee of the Programme. The Albanian audit authority is the Audit Agency for the Accredited Assistance of European Programmes (Albanian Audit Authority), using its own resources.
- The First Level Controllers are the persons responsible for carrying out the verifications of expenditure (i.e. First level Control) in relation to beneficiaries located in its territory of Greece and Albania and designated by each country participating in the Programme, according to Article 23 paragraph (4) of Regulation (EU) 1299/2013. In Greece the Controllers shall be registered in the Registry of Controllers which has been set up with the Ministerial Decision for the “Establishment of a Register of First Level Controllers” of the Minister of Economy and Development according to article 43(3) of Law 4314/2014.
- The Beneficiaries are the bodies that are participating in an operation/project and are responsible for its implementation according to the Programme.

In the Albanian Territory, the relevant bodies involved in the management of the Programme are presented in a Bilateral Agreement concluded among Greece and Albania. More specifically:

- The Albanian National Authority is the Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs and is in charge for the overall management of the Programme, mainly on the Albanian side, and co-operates closely with the Managing Authority in the programming and

implementation of the relevant cross-border Programmes establishing common co-ordination mechanisms. The Albanian National Authority is responsible for the implementation of the Programme according to provisions of Chapter III of Regulation (EC) 447/2014.

- The Albanian National IPA Coordinator (NIPAC) - this role is covered *ex-officio* by the Albanian Minister for Europe and Foreign Affairs. The tasks of the NIPAC are defined in Article 4 of the IPA II Implementing Regulation (447/2014). NIPAC ensures coordination within the IPA II beneficiary's administration and with other donors and a close link between the use of IPA II assistance and the general accession process. As regards "territorial cooperation" policy area, the NIPAC is supported by the Albanian Operating Structure for Territorial Cooperation, known also as Albanian National Authority for Territorial cooperation.
- The Antenna office of the Joint Secretariat is based in Saranda (Albania). The Antenna Office has the same duties with the JS Office in Thessaloniki, related with the assistance and support of both the Managing Authority and the Albanian National Authority. It is composed of one person and it is located to Sarande.
- The First Level Control Office (FLCO in Albania) - Albania has established a centralized verification of expenditure system at national level. The verifications of expenditures of the Albanian beneficiaries under this programme are carried out by the First Level Control (FLCO) Office, under the supervision of the Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs. The FLCO is responsible for performance of administrative verifications as well as on the spot checks to cover the additional verifications from financial, technical and physical aspects of projects co-financed from INTERREG IPA CBC Programme Greece – Albania. The office is staffed by the Head of the office and two First Level Controllers. The cost for the Albanian FLC staff is covered by the Technical Assistance project budget.

3.2 Status of implementation of the cooperation programme

3.2.1 Calls for proposal

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. A total of six project proposals were submitted. Four project proposals under Specific Objective 1.1 (Increase the capacity of CB infrastructure in transport, water & waste management) and two project proposals under Specific Objective 2.1 (Preserve cultural and natural resources as a prerequisite for tourism development of the cross border area). Four strategic project proposals were approved during the 2nd JMC Meeting in Igoumenitsa (Greece) on 24/11/2016. Three strategic project proposals under Specific Objective 1.1 with a total budget of € 9.065.553,03 and one project proposal under Specific Objective 2.1 with a budget of € 2.471.083.

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 5th 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 €. The total number of submitted project proposals was 200. 41 Projects were approved during the 3rd JMC Meeting, on 14/07/2017 in Korce (Albania). Eight project proposals under Specific Objective 1.1 with a total budget of €6.572.105.89; three project proposals under Specific Objective 1.2 with a total budget of €1.247.331.72; four project proposals under Specific Objective 1.3 with a total budget of €2.129.135,87; two project proposals under Specific Objective 1.4 with a total budget of €905.955.00; fourteen project proposals under Specific Objective 2.1 with a total budget of €8.304.409.59 and nine project proposals under Specific Objective 2.2 with a total budget of €5.145.876.98.

The **3rd Call for Targeted Proposals** was launched on 2nd of August 2018 and the deadline was the 1st of October 2018. The total budget of this call was €7.200.000. The 3rd Call for Project Proposals of the "Greece-Albania 2014-2020" Programme opened only for Specific Objective 1.1 under the Priority Axis 1, which is to increase the capacity of CB infrastructure in transport, water & waste management and with targeted interventions the studies on the vertical axis of Egnatia Motorway: Igoumenitsa – Sagiada -Mavromati and the update/renewal of the current infrastructure in the border crossing point "Qafe Bote" as well as the improvement of the surrounding spaces. One targeted project proposal was approved during the 4th JMC Meeting in Preveza (Greece) on 5/10/2018 with a total budget of €7.149.040.

The **4th Call for Targeted Proposals** was pre-announced on 25/07/2018 and it was launched on 17/10/2018. Applicants were invited to submit their Project Proposals electronically via MIS targeting both Priority Axes of the Programme between 17/10/2018 and 31/01/2019. In the framework of this Call the total available budget was 9.000.000,00€ (Union Support and National Counterpart). An extension of the deadline was taken by the Joint Monitoring Committee of the INTERREG IPA Cross-border Cooperation Programme "Greece Albania 2014-2020", via the 29th Written Procedure moving the deadline to the 28th of February 2019.

The Call was open to both Priorities Axes, two of the four Thematic Priorities and two of the six related Specific Objectives (Specific Objective 1.3 and Specific Objective 2.1) of the Programme. A total of fifty two (52) project proposals were submitted under both priority axes and two specific objectives. Specific objective 2.1 (Preserve cultural and natural resources as a prerequisite for tourism development of the cross border area) attracted the greatest interest, under which forty-three (43) project proposals were submitted. Nine (9)

project proposals under Specific Objective 1.3 (Increase energy efficiency and the use of RES) were also submitted.

Nineteen project proposals were approved during the 5th JMC Meeting in Berat (Albania) on 20 & 21/06/2019 with a total budget of €16.910.052,22.

The 5th Call for Targeted Proposals was launched on 25th of November 2019 and the deadline was the 24th of January 2020. An extension of the deadline was taken by the Joint Monitoring Committee of the INTERREG IPA Cross-border Cooperation Programme "Greece Albania 2014-2020", via the 44th Written Procedure moving the deadline to the 24th of February 2020.

The total budget of this call was €2.500.000. The 5th Call for Project Proposals was a Targeted Call and it was open only for Specific Objective 1.4 under the Priority Axis 1.

One targeted project proposal was approved with a total budget of €2.499.23,98.

The following table provides an overview of launched calls.

Table 3-1 – Calls for Project Proposals Overview

Calls for Project Proposals Overview						
Call	Procedure	Submission period	No. of applicants	Selected projects	Timeframe of Selection	Max. project duration
1st Call for Strategic Proposals	1st step Website application	12/02/2016 - 15/05/2016	6	4	~ 6 months (JMC decision for approval: 24/11/2016)	36 months
2nd Call for Ordinary Project Proposals	1st step Website application	17/5/2016 - 14/10/2016	200	41	9 months (JMC decision for approval: 14/7/2017)	24 months
3rd Call for Targeted Project Proposals	1st step Website application	2/8/2018 - 1/10/2018	1	1	~ 0,5 month (contr. Date: 5/10/2018)	30 months
4th Call for Ordinary Project Proposals	1st step Website application	17/10/2018 - 28/02/2019	52	19	~ 4 months (JMC decision for approval: 21/6/2019)	24 months
5th Call for Targeted Project Proposals	1st step Website application	25/11/2019 - 24/02/2020	1	1	1,5 month (JMC decision for approval: 13/4/2020)	30 months

3.2.2 Events (call and non-call related)

The following events were conducted by the MA/JS at Programme level till 31/12/2020¹:

Events

1. One Launching Event of the Programming Period 2014-2020 was organized in Thessaloniki (GR) in June 2015.
2. One Launching Event of the Programming Period 2014-2020 was organized in Korca, (AL) in November 2015.
3. 6 Info-days were organised in total for the promotion of the 1st Call for Strategic Project Proposals in Feb-March 2016 in both countries
4. 5 Info-days were organised in total for the promotion of the 2nd Call for Ordinary Project Proposals in June-July 2016 in both countries
5. 1 Running Marathon (11 km running race from Krystallopigi in Greece, through the borders, to Bilisht in Albania) took place on 25/09/2016 as part of the EC day 2016 celebration. The event was co-organised with the IPA CB Programme "Greece-Albania 2007 - 2013", and the 'Balkan – Mediterranean 2014-2020' Transnational Programme.
6. 1 event on promoting the No-plastic Challenge was organized on 05/09/2017 at the Port of Argostoli, Kefalonia (GR) as part of the EC day 2017 celebration. The event was co-organised with the 'Balkan – Mediterranean 2014-2020' Transnational Programme.
7. 4 Info-days on project implementation of the 1st and 2nd Calls were organized (2 in Greece and 2 in Albania) in May-June 2018.
8. 1 EC Day 2018 event was organized in Konitsa (GR) in September 2018, with the title 'For a World full of Colours'.
9. 2 EC 2019 events (Treasure Hunt) were organized, one in Gjirokastra, and a second one in the area of Vikos-Aoos UNESCO Global Geopark and Konitsa, with the cooperation of the project THEMA.
10. The 1st Prespes School Games was organized in Lemos, from 11 to 12 May 2019 with the participation of Students from the municipalities of Prespes, Resen και Pustec in basketball and running sports games with the aim to support joint actions in the cross-border region.
11. 6 Info-days on the 4th call for project proposals were organized (2 in Greece, in Arta on 7/12/2018 and in Ioannina on 18/02/2020 and 4 in Albania, in Vlora on 20/11/2018, in Korca on 22/11/2018, in Gjirokaster on 25/02/2020 and in Korca on 26/02/2020).

¹ In section 7.1 (Evaluation questions D1) is presented the table of the Output indicators of the Communication Actions that have already been implemented.

12. 2 seminars on Management Information System (MIS) was organized (1 in Athens, Gr on 30/10/2018 and 1 in Thessaloniki (GR) on 27/11/2018) by the Managing Authority of ETC Programmes and the Special Service of MIS.
13. 1 communication seminar was organized in Ioannina (GR) on 28/03/2019.

JMC Meetings

- The 1st JMC meeting convened in Tirana (AL) on the 10/11/2015.
- The 2nd JMC meeting was organized in Igoumenitsa (GR) on 24/11/2016 for the approval of the projects under the 1st Call for Strategic Project Proposals.
- The 3rd JMC Meeting was organised in Korce (AL) on 14/07/2017 for the approval of the projects submitted under the 2nd Call for Ordinary Project Proposals.
- The 4th JMC was organized in Preveza (GR) for the approval of the project submitted under the 3rd Call for Targeted Project Proposals and the approval of the 4th Call for Ordinary Project Proposals Package.
- The 5th JMC was organized in Berat (AL) on 20 & 21/06/2019 for the approval of the projects submitted under the 4th Call for Ordinary Project Proposals.
- The 6th JMC was organized via Webex on 12/11/2020.

Technical Meetings

- 1 technical meeting took place at Tirana (AL) on the 10/11/2015 between the Managing Authority, the MEI, as well as representatives from Greek and Albanian Audit Authorities, in order to prepare the establishment of the Group of Auditors, as well as to discuss the status of the Description of Management and Control System documents.
- Seven (7) technical meetings for the smooth implementation of the Programme took place:
 - 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 Authority 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 Meetings* was 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 *7th Technical Meeting* concerned the evaluation procedure of the 2nd Call for Proposals, as well as preparatory activities for the JMC Meeting that followed.
- 45 Technical Meetings took place during 2017, concerning the smooth Programme implementation and the negotiation of the budget of the approved projects of the 1st and 2nd Calls.
 - 7 Technical Meetings took place during 2018, concerning the smooth programme implementation other issues regarding the 3rd and 4th Calls for Project Proposals.
 - 6 Technical Meetings took place during 2019 concerning smooth project implementation.

3.2.3 Financial implementation, fulfillment of performance framework targets

In this part, only the basic data was analysed, as the projects are still in the phase of implementation.

At Table 3.2 is presented the allocation of the total funding per Priority Axis and Programme Level. The funding available for projects which amounts to 54.076.734,00€ has been distributed as follows: Priority Axis 1: 31.152.837,00€, Priority Axis 2: 18.692.694,00€ and Priority Axis 3: 4.231.203,00€.

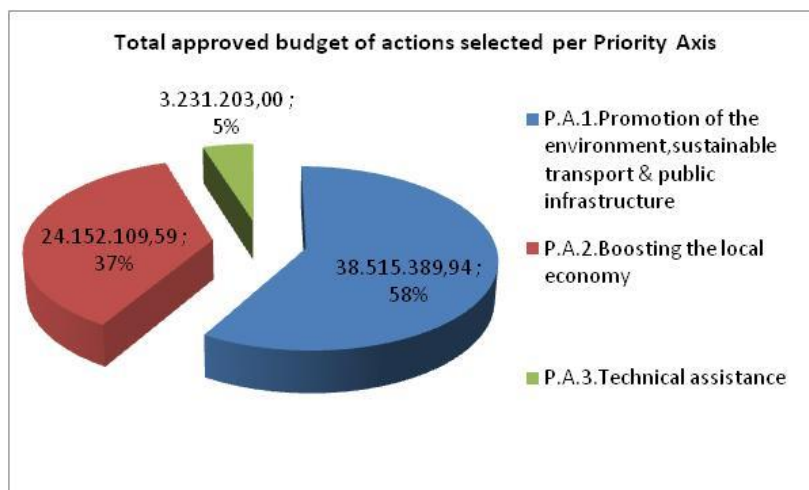
Table 3-2 – Credits of priority Axis on the basis of the Cooperation Programme

Credits of Priority Axis on the basis of the operational program					
Priority Axis	Fund	District Category	Basis for calculating EU support	Total Funding (in euros)	Funding rate
1	ERDF/IPA	Objective 3	Total Eligible cost	31.152.837,00	85,00%
2	ERDF/IPA	Objective 3	Total Eligible cost	18.692.694,00	85,00%
3	ERDF/IPA	Objective 3	Total Eligible cost	4.231.203,00	85,00%
Total	ERDF/IPA			54.076.734,00	
Overall Total				54.076.734,00	

The actions that are implemented under Priority Axis 1 had the largest amount of the total approved budget, which is 38.515.389,94€, while the actions of Priority Axis 2 had a total

approved budget of 24.152.109,59€, that correspond to the 37% of the total budget of the approved projects (Figure 3.2). It has to be mentioned that in the 3rd modification of the "Interreg IPA CBC Greece – Albania 2014-2020" Programme, a shifting of the excess amount of 1.000.000 € (total funding) from the 3rd priority axis of the Programme to the other two priority axes was decided. The total budget of the Programme remained unchanged.

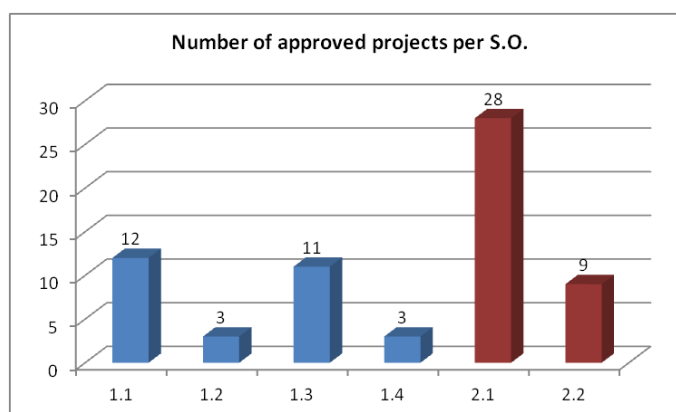
Figure 3.2 - Total approved budget of actions selected per Priority Axis (in euros)



Number of projects

So far, 66 projects have been approved under the Calls of the Interreg IPA CBC Programme Greece – Albania 2014 – 2020. 65 projects are implementing since the contract with HCU Energy Optimization project has been expired with no implementation. As it is presented at Figure 3.3, 29 projects are implemented under Specific Objectives of Priority Axis 1 while the majority is implemented under Priority Axis 2 (37 projects). It has to be mentioned that the majority of the approved projects are implemented under S.O. 2.1 (28 projects), S.O. 1.1 (12 projects) and S.O. 1.3 (11 projects) - 10 projects without HCU Energy Optimization)..

Figure 3.3 - Number of approved projects per Specific Objective

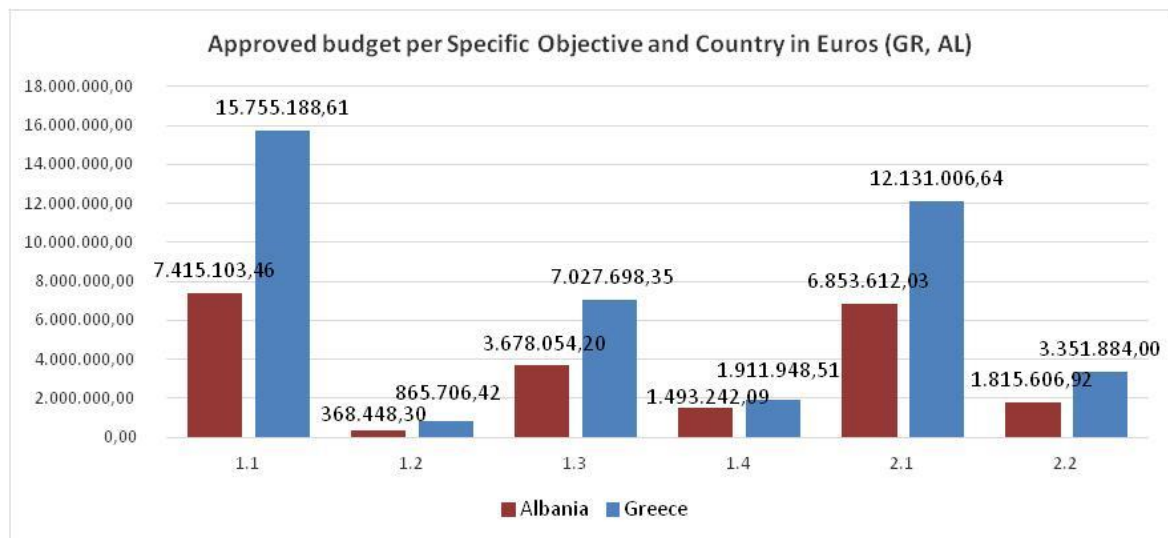


Number of beneficiaries

As illustrated in Figure 3.4, in general the Greek beneficiaries have greater approved budgets than the Albanian beneficiaries.

As a result of the project allocation that was previously mentioned (Figure 3.4), the highest total projects budget of beneficiaries from both countries is observed in S.O. 1.1, S.O. 2.1, and S.O. 1.3., while the lowest approved budget is being implemented under S.O. 1.2 and S.O. 1.4.

Figure 3.4 - Approved budget per Specific Objective and Country in Euros (GR, AL)



Furthermore 89 Greek beneficiaries (165 participations) are participating in approved projects of the 5 Calls that are under implementation. The majority of the Greek beneficiaries are partners in projects that are implemented under the 2nd Call of Ordinary Project Proposals (70 beneficiaries with 105 participations²) with a total approved budget of 16.704.737,64€. In addition, 14 Greek partners (18 participations) are participating in approved projects on the 1st Call for Strategic Project Proposals, with total budget that amounts to 7.720.581,79€ (Figure 3.5, Figure 3.6). Also, 29 beneficiaries (with 40 participations) are participating in approved projects on the 4th Call for Ordinary Project Proposals, with a total approved budget of 10.477.633,10€. Only 1 partner is participating in approved projects on the 3rd and 5th Call for Targeted Project Proposals, with a total budget of 6.140.480,00€.

Figure 3.5 - Number of partners per call (GR)

² 68 beneficiaries with 103 participations without the HCU Energy Optimization project that has been expired with no implementation

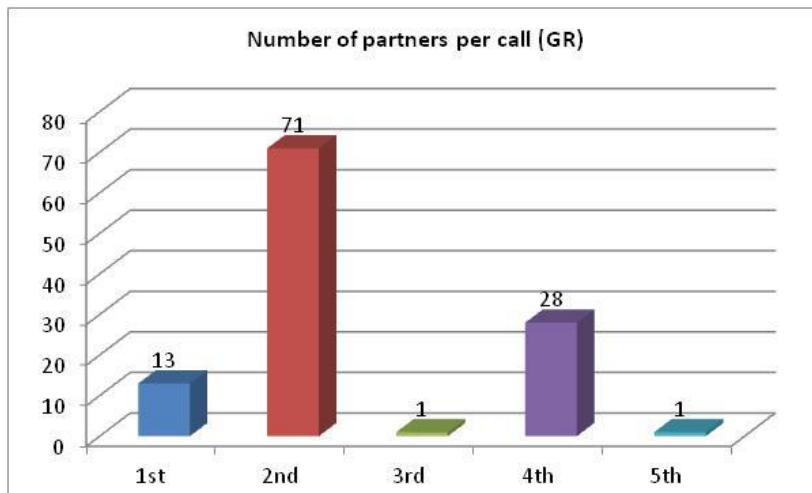
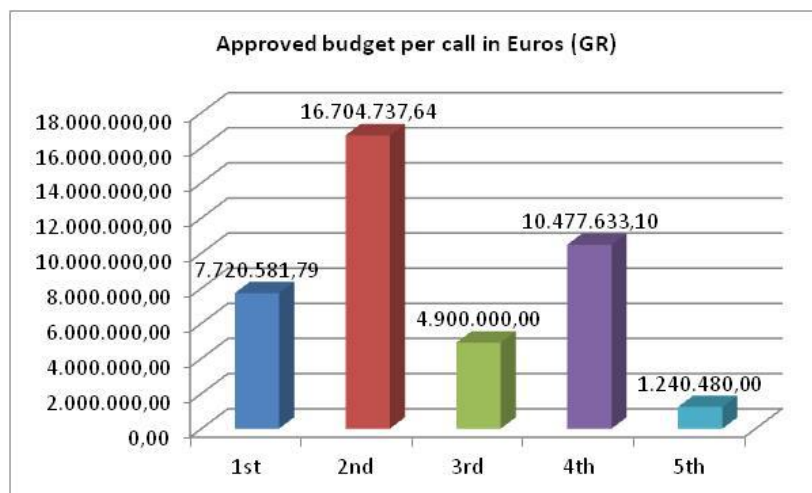
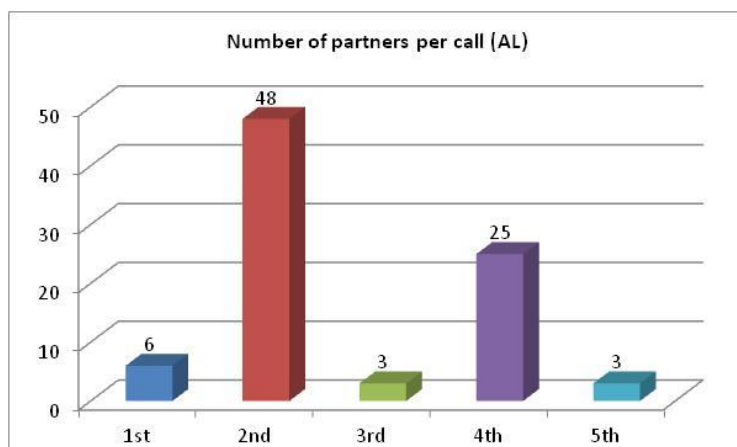
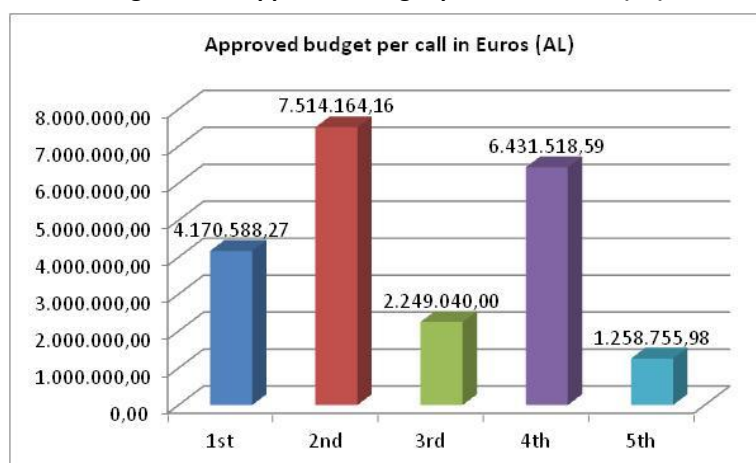


Figure 3.6 - Approved budget per call in Euros (GR)



At the same time, as illustrated in Figures 3.7 and 3.8, 67 Albanian beneficiaries are participating in approved projects that are currently under implementation with a total approved budget of 21.544.017,01€. The majority of the Albanian beneficiaries are partners in projects that are implemented under the 2nd Call of Ordinary Project Proposals (48 beneficiaries with 87 participations) with a total approved budget that amounts to 7.514.164,16€, while 25 Albanian partners (with 31 participations) are participating in approved projects on the 4th Call for Ordinary Project Proposals, with total budget of 6.431.518,59 €. There are only 6 partners participating in approved projects on the 3rd and 5th Call for Targeted Project Proposals, with total budget of 3.507.795,98€.

Figure 3.7 - Number of partners per call (AL)

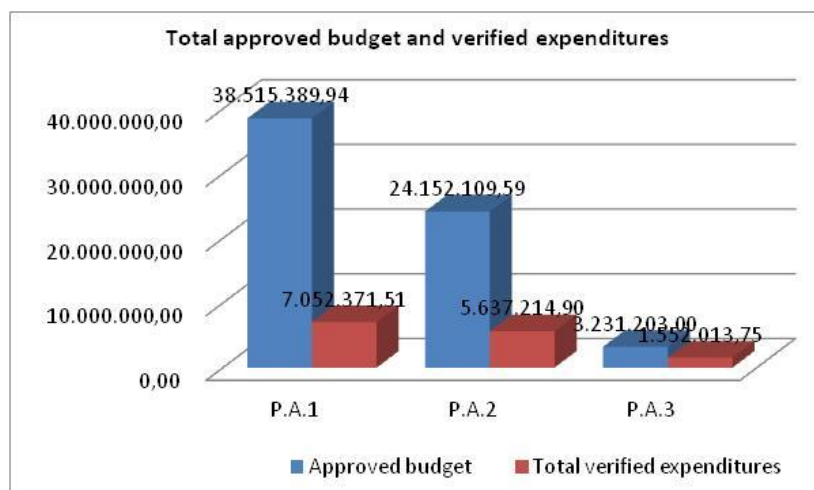

Figure 3.8 - Approved budget per call in Euros (AL)


Priority Axis 3 is the one with the highest rate of **verified expenditures until 31.12.2020**, while for the projects that are being implemented under Priority Axis 2 there are verified expenditures that amount to 5.637.214,90€ (23% of total approved budget). Finally, as it is shown in table 3.3 and in figure 3.9, the total verified expenditures amount to 14.241.600,16€ (22% of the approved budget).

Table 3-3 – Approved budget and total verified expenditure per Priority Axis in Euros, until 31.12.2020

	Approved budget	Total verified expenditures	% of approved budget
P.A.1	38.515.389,94	7.052.371,51	18%
P.A.2	24.152.109,59	5.637.214,90	23%
P.A.3	3.231.203,00	1.552.013,75	48%
TOTAL	65.898.702,53	14.241.600,16	22%

Figure 3.9 - Approved budget and total verified expenditure per Priority Axis in Euros



Official complaints

It is worth mentioning that concerning the 1st, 3rd and 5th Call for Strategic Proposals of the Interreg IPA CBC Programme "Greece-Albania 2014-2020", no official complaints were submitted by the potential beneficiaries.

During the 2nd Call for Ordinary Project Proposals, 35 official complaints were submitted by the lead beneficiaries of 35 project proposals that were not approved for funding (17.5% of the total project proposals submitted). Only 12 of 35 complaints were approved by the JMC, following the proposal by the Joint Complaints Committee (table 3.5). Furthermore, it has to be mentioned that the majority of the complaints were submitted by LPs of not approved project proposals under S.O. 2.1. (8 complaints) and S.O. 2.2 (6 complaints).

In addition, during the 4th Call for Ordinary Project Proposals, 8 official complaints were submitted by the lead beneficiaries of 8 project proposals that were not approved for granting (15.4% of the total project proposals submitted) and only 2 of them were approved by the JMC, following the proposal by the Joint Complaints Committee (table 3.6).

Table 3.4 – Number of complaints on 2nd call

Specific Objective	Projects with submitted complaints	Number of Approved Complaints	Number of Rejected Complaints
1.1	9	4	5
1.2	4	0	4
1.3	5	2	3
1.4	3	2	1
2.1	8	4	4
2.2	6	0	6
TOTAL	35	12	23

Table 3.5 – Number of complaints on 4th call

Specific Objective	Projects with submitted complaints	Number of Approved Complaints	Number of Rejected Complaints
2.1	7	2	5
1.3	1	0	1
TOTAL	8	2	6

3.2.3 Evaluation of output and results indicators

In this part, the implementation phase is evaluated through the progress observed through the indicators selected during the approval of the Programme.

The indicators shown in the current section are those that were found in the 2nd modification of the Programme Document.

The selected indicators per Priority Axis and Specific Objective and their performance are the following:

Priority Axis 1: Promotion of the environment, sustainable transport and public infrastructure

Specific Objective 1.1 Increase the capacity of CB infrastructure in transport, water & waste management

Indicator Code	Name of the Indicator	Mesurement Unit	Type of Indicator	Data Source	Baseline Value according to Programme Document	Target Value according to Programme Document	Value until 31/12/2020
1	SFC Volume of urban effluents under secondary treatment	million m3	Result	Greek Ministry of Environment / Albanian Ministry of European Integration - Bi-annually	30,00	41,31	39,49
2	Percentage of solid waste managed sustainably	%	Result	Solid Waste Management Bodies - Bi-annually	75,00	79,00	73,40
3	SFC of crossborder vertical axes to Egnatia motorway either constructed or with sufficient maturity to be constructed	%	Result	Egnatia Odos S.A - Annually	80,41	100,00	0,00
CO20	SFC Additional population served by improved water supply	Inhabitants	Output	Programme Management Information System (MIS) - Annually		214.637	0
CO21	SFC Additional population served by improved wastewater treatment	Inhabitants	Output	Programme Management Information System (MIS) - Annually		13.500,00	0,00
CO21b	SFC Additional solid waste management capacity created	Tonnes/yr	Output	Programme Management Information System (MIS) - Annually		7.000,00	991,26
CO21c	SFC Kilometers of CB road network studied	Km	Output	Programme Management Information System (MIS) - Annually		30,00	0,00
CO21d	SFC Number of square meters of border crossing buildings studied or constructed	m2	Output	Programme Management Information System (MIS) - Annually		200,00	0,00

For S.O. 1.1, 1 out of 3 result indicators have shown progress from the baseline values that were determined in the Programme Document.

Specifically, Indicator 1 for the Volume of urban effluents under secondary treatment, has a value of 39,49 million m³ having a value of 95.6% of the target value of 2023 (41,31 million m³/yr). In particular, for the Greek eligible area the total incoming effluents was estimated at 29.437.250 m³ while for the Albanian eligible area was estimated at 10.055.000 m³.

As for indicator 2 Percentage of solid waste managed sustainably, the attained value is 73,4%. In particular, the percentage of solid waste managed sustainably in the Greek CB area was estimated at 99% while the percentage for the Albanian CB area was estimated at 34%. In total the volume of solid waste generated is calculated 505.743,89 tones and the volume of solid waste managed sustainably is calculated 371.114,83 tones which is the 73,4% of the total solid waste. The value of the indicator 2 is lacking behind by 5,6 percentage points to the target value for 2023. However, having in mind the interventions planned to take place in the current and next year, the target value is expected to be achieved by the end of 2023.

The calculation of the 2 aforementioned result indicators was done through a survey conducted under the contract “Provision of technical assistance to the Managing Authority and Joint Secretariat of the Programme INTERREG IPA CBC Greece-Albania 2004-2020 for the calculation of attained values for 5 result indicators of the Programme INTERREG IPA CBC Greece-Albania 2014-2020, in view of the annual implementation report” that was concluded in May 2020.

Regarding indicator 3 for the Cross-Border vertical axes to Egnatia motorway either constructed or with sufficient maturity to be constructed, it will be calculated after the completion of the COMOBILION project that is under implementation.

Regarding the output indicators, their calculation is made according to the values declared through the progress reports that are submitted to the MIS by the project beneficiaries. As seen in the tables, minor progress is declared for the indicator CO21b - Additional solid waste management capacity created, with a value of 991,6 tones / year (14,16% of the target value). The other 4 output indicators have a declared value of 0, which is explained due to the fact that all projects are under implementation at this phase.

Specific Objective 1.2 Increase the effectiveness of environmental protection & sustainable use of natural resources

ΕΙΔΙΚΟΣ ΣΤΟΧΟΣ	Indicator Code	Name of the Indicator	Mesurement Unit	Type of Indicator	Data Source	Baseline Value according to Programme Document	Target Value according to Programme Document	Value until 31/12/2020
1.2	5	Level of preservation of the protected natural CB areas	%	Result	Survey bi-annually	72,08	79,29	74,52
1.2	CO25	SFC Surface area of habitats supported in order to attain a better conservation status	Hectares	Output	Programme Management Information System (MIS) - Annually		72.250,00	19.000,00

As for S.O. 1.2, the result indicator 5 - Level of preservation of the protected natural CB areas, has shown progress from the baseline value. The attained value has been calculated after the conclusion of the bi-annual field survey conducted for the purposes of the current evaluation. The value of the indicator has been calculated at 74,52 which shows a 2,08% progress in the last two years since the value for 2018 was calculated at 73,00.

Regarding output indicator CO25 - Surface area of habitats supported in order to attain a better conservation status, value is calculated at the 26,30% of the target value as declared by the projects implemented under S.O. 1.2, which is considered as satisfactory as the projects are under implementation.

Specific Objective 1.3 Increase energy-efficiency and the use of RES

Indicator Code	Name of the Indicator	Mesurement Unit	Type of Indicator	Data Source	Baseline Value according to Programme Document	Target Value according to Programme Document	Value until 31/12/2020
6	Energy Efficiency Awareness Barometer	number, (on a 1-10 scale)	Result	Survey bi-annually	5,94	7,00	7,19
CO34	SFC Decrease of annual primary energy consumption of public buildings	Kwh/year	Output	Programme Management Information System (MIS) - Annually		1.100.000,00	78.000,00
CO34b	SFC People participating in awareness actions	Participants	Output	Programme Management Information System (MIS) - Annually		35.000	1.853

As for S.O. 1.3, the result indicator 6 - Energy Efficiency Awareness Barometer, has shown significant progress from the baseline value and has exceeded to target value by 2,71%. The attained value has been calculated after a field survey conducted during the current update of the Programme’s evaluation.

Regarding the output indicators, the value for indicators CO34 - Decrease of annual primary energy consumption of public buildings and CO34b - People participating in awareness actions, is showing very small progress. In the first case, we see a value of 7,09% of the target value, while in the second case a value of 5,29% of the target value. It must be noted again that the small progress can be justified by the fact that the projects are under implementation, while in the second case for participation in awareness actions, the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic, have to also be taken into consideration for the organization of events.

Specific Objective 1.4 Improve the effectiveness of risk prevention and disaster management with a focus on forest fires

ΕΙΔΙΚΟΣ ΣΤΟΧΟΣ	Indicator Code	Name of the Indicator	Mesurement Unit	Type of Indicator	Data Source	Baseline Value according to Programme Document	Target Value according to Programme Document	Value until 31/12/2020
1.4	7	SFC Area damaged by forest fires 5yr rolling annual average	Hectares	Result	European Forest Fire Information System - Annually	15.010,89	13.450,00	8.387,00
1.4	CO23	Population benefiting from forest fire protection measures	Inhabitants	Output	Programme Management Information System (MIS) - Annually		115.000	0

Regarding S.O. 1.4, result indicator 7 - Area damaged by forest fires 5yr rolling annual average, compared to the 13,450 ha target value, the attained value is significantly reduced (by 37%). In particular, for the 2015-2019 period, the total burned areas in the CB eligible area was 8.387 ha (1.791 in the Greek CB area and 6.596 in the Albanian CB area). Compared to the 5-yr average 15.010,89 ha of the previous period (2010-2014), there has been significant improvement (- 34%) in the CB area. This was mostly attributable to the statistics on the Albanian side³ (- 42%), while on the Greek side there was a small increase (+ 12%).

Should the same weather conditions prevail in the next 4-yr period and there is no deterioration due to climate change (i.e. increased temperatures, winds, etc), the 2023

³ Albania has a new law (Legal Act no. 152/21.12. 2015) "On fire protection and rescue service" and a new document (Dec. 2018) on Forest Policy until 2030. Both documents place great importance on awareness measures, skills upgrade of H.R and early warning systems. Also, there are specific forest protection plans for Natura 2000 areas (we have identified at least one for the Shkoder area). However, we were unable to locate specific plans or actions that have been implemented in the eligible CB area.

target value is expected to be attained. It has to be noted that the calculation of this result indicators was done through a survey conducted under the contract “Provision of technical assistance to the Managing Authority and Joint Secretariat of the Programme INTERREG IPA CBC Greece-Albania 2004-2020 for the calculation of attained values for 5 result indicators of the Programme INTERREG IPA CBC Greece-Albania 2014-2020, in view of the annual implementation report” that was concluded in May 2020.

Regarding the output indicator CO23 - Population benefiting from forest fire protection measures, the calculation is made according to the values declared through the progress reports that are submitted to the MIS by the project beneficiaries. The declared value is 0, which is considered due to the fact that all projects are under implementation at his phase.

Priority Axis 2: Boosting the local economy

Specific Objective 2.1 Preserve cultural and natural resources as a prerequisite for tourism development of the cross border area

ΕΙΔΙΚΟΣ ΣΤΟΧΟΣ	Indicator Code	Name of the Indicator	Measurement Unit	Type of Indicator	Data Source	Baseline Value according to Programme Document	Target Value according to Programme Document	Value until 31/12/2020
2.1	9	SFC Annual overnight tourist stays of the cross border area	Million Annual Stays	Result	ELSTAT / INSTAT - Bi-annually	9,00	9,54	13,30
2.1	CO11	SFC. Increase in expected number of visits to supported sites of cultural and natural heritage and attractions	Visits	Output	Programme Management Information System (MIS) - Annually		21.000	5.675

Regarding S.O. 2.1, result indicator 9 - Annual overnight tourist stays of the cross border area, compared to the 9,54 target value, the attained value is greatly increased (by 39%). In particular, for the Albanian eligible area, a breakdown of the 2018 national overnight stay data was estimated by the Ministry of Tourism and Environment at 1.717.625 overnight Stays, while for the Greek eligible area the total overnight stays were estimated at 11.583.351 by the Ministry of Tourism and Environment/ELSTAT. The 2023 target value is already exceeded and – unless the current trends are reversed – it is expected that the 2023 attained value will also exceed the target value of the indicator. It has to be noted that the calculation of this result indicators was done through a survey conducted under the contract “Provision of technical assistance to the Managing Authority and Joint Secretariat of the Programme INTERREG IPA CBC Greece-Albania 2004-2020 for the calculation of attained values for 5 result indicators of the Programme INTERREG IPA CBC Greece-Albania 2014-2020, in view of the annual implementation report” that was concluded in May 2020.

Regarding the output indicator CO11 - Increase in expected number of visits to supported sites of cultural and natural heritage and attractions, the attained value is at the 27,02% of the target value.

The projects are under implementation and the actual effect of the COVID-19 pandemic remains to be examined on the achievement of the target values.

Specific Objective 2.2 Improve cross-border capacity to support entrepreneurship, business survival and competitiveness

ΕΙΔΙΚΟΣ ΣΤΟΧΟΣ	Indicator Code	Name of the Indicator	Measurement Unit	Type of Indicator	Data Source	Baseline Value according to Programme Document	Target Value according to Programme Document	Value until 31/12/2020
2.2	8	SFC. Active CB enterprises	Number	Result	Greek Ministry of Economy/ INSTAT - Bi-annually	97.883	100.000	164.702
2.2	CO04	Number of enterprises receiving non-financial support	Enterprises	Output	Programme Management Information System (MIS) - Annually		450	417

Regarding S.O. 2.2, result indicator 8 - Active CB enterprises, compared to the 100.000 target value for 2023, the attained value is already exceeding it (by approx. 65%). For the Albanian eligible area, according to INSTAT data, the number of active businesses has been slowly rising in the recent years (in particular the percentage of change the period 2014-2018 was estimated at 65%). For the Greek eligible area, according to the Independent Public Revenue Authority, it is noted a remarkable increase in the number of active enterprises between 2014 and 2018 (135%), especially in the Ionian Islands and some of the NUTS3 areas of Epirus (most likely driven by the increase in tourist arrivals over these years, as most increases are noted in trade, accommodations & restaurants and other services).

Thus the largest part of this result is attributable to the phenomenal bounce-back of the Greek economy in the CB area, most likely related to the increase in tourist arrivals (also see next indicator). As tourism is an especially volatile sector, this result may not persist in the future. Already for 2020 we expect to record losses due to the coronavirus public health crisis, but given the already large overachievement of this indicator, it is expected that the 2023 target value will be attained.

It has to be noted that the calculation of this result indicators was done through a survey conducted under the contract “Provision of technical assistance to the Managing Authority and Joint Secretariat of the Programme INTERREG IPA CBC Greece-Albania 2004-2020 for the calculation of attained values for 5 result indicators of the Programme INTERREG IPA CBC Greece-Albania 2014-2020, in view of the annual implementation report” that was concluded in May 2020.

Regarding the output indicator CO04 - Number of enterprises receiving non-financial support, the attained value is at the 92,67% of the target value, which is very close to the target value which is expected to be achieved in 2021.

The projects are under implementation and the actual effect of the COVID-19 pandemic remains to be examined on the achievement of the target values.

4. Objective A. Analysis of the effectiveness and efficiency of the Programme management structures

Objective A will address the overall management system of the programme and will be divided into five specific evaluation topics A1 to A4.

4.1 Evaluation question A1. Effectiveness of co-operation between the programme authorities (Managing Authority/ Joint Secretariat, Certifying Authority, Audit Authority, JMC and national authorities) to fulfil their programme management tasks

This point will address the interplay of the central administrative bodies in the programme.

Each authority has specific functions and responsibilities which are determined by the regulatory requirements and specified in the cooperation programme (CP), and in the description of the Management and Control System. The designation of functions was already completed and is not subject to the evaluation. The main focus is on the effective workflow and information flow between the programme authorities which is a key element of a successful programme implementation.

This activity will address the following evaluation questions:

- How are the interactions between the programme bodies and if their functions and responsibilities are clearly established?
- Are the programme management system and related structures set up in an effective and efficient way?
- Have the MA and JS sufficient capacities to fulfill their tasks?

Evaluation findings A1

The Managing Authority established an integrated management structure with separate functions within its organisation. The MA, as the central management body, works closely together with the Certifying Authority and supports the Audit Authority and the Group of Auditors in their activities; and furthermore coordinates and supervises the Management and Control System of the Programme and control activities. MA is fully staffed and functional. Unit B2 of the MA is responsible for the Management and Monitoring of the Interreg IPA CBC Programme “Greece – Albania 2014-2020”.

The Certifying Authority is responsible for the drawing up and submission of the payment applications, certifications, payment requests and annual accounts to the EU Commission. CA cooperates with the MA.

The Joint Secretariat (JS) is the body set up by the MA after consultation with the Participating countries represented in the Programme, according to Article 23 (2) Regulation (EU) 1299/2013, to assist the Managing Authority and the Joint Monitoring Committee in

carrying out their respective duties. The JS supports the MA for organising the meetings of the Monitoring Committee and provides all the necessary documentation in order to ensure the qualitative implementation of the Cooperation Programme in the frame of its special objectives. Moreover, provides information to potential Beneficiaries regarding the funding opportunities through the Cooperation Programme and assists the Beneficiaries during the implementation phase of their projects.

The Joint Monitoring Committee (JMC) is the body set up by the participating countries to review the overall effectiveness, quality and coherence of the implementation of all projects towards meeting the objectives set out in the Interreg IPA CBC Programme "Greece – Albania 2014 – 2020", the financing agreements and the relevant strategy papers, according to Article 38 of Regulation (EU) No 447/2014 and Articles 49 and 110 of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013. The JMC and the managing authority shall carry out monitoring by reference to indicators laid down in the relevant cross-border cooperation Programme, in accordance with Article 16 of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013. The Joint Monitoring Committee's overall task is to ensure the overall effectiveness, quality and coherence of implementation of all projects towards meeting the objectives set out in the Interreg IPA CBC Programme "Greece – Albania 2014 – 2020", the financing agreements and the relevant strategy papers, according to articles 38 of the Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) 447/2014 and articles 49 and 110 of Regulation EU 1303/2013. The JMC examines and approves any proposal made by the Managing Authority in cooperation with the Albanian Operating Structure for any amendment to the Programme and propose, if appropriate, any revision or amendment of the cross border Programme in order to improve its performance in achieving its target. Also, it can make observations to the Managing Authority regarding implementation and evaluation of the Programme including projects related to the reduction of the administrative burden on beneficiaries. Finally, is the responsible Body for selecting the operations to be funded under the Interreg IPA II CBC Programme "Greece – Albania 2014 – 2020", according to article 39 par.1 of the Commission Regulation 447/2014 and decide on complaints addressed to the Joint Complaint Committee of the Managing Authority regarding its decision on the selection of operations.

The Group of Auditors, supports the Audit Authority to carry out its duties as provided for in Article 25(2) of Regulation (EC) No 1299/2013. The GoA is comprised of representatives from the relevant audit authorities of both cooperating countries. Thus, the GoA is independent from the national bodies responsible for first level control carried out under Article 23 (4) of Regulation (EC) No 1299/2013 and for the certification of expenditure and the Monitoring Committee of the Programme. The Albanian audit authority is the Audit Agency for the Accredited Assistance of European Programmes (Albanian Audit Authority), using its own resources.

The single Audit Authority is the institution responsible for ensuring the effective functioning of the Management and Control system of the cooperation Programme. In this context, the AA shall be responsible for carrying out the functions envisaged in Article 37 of Regulation (EU) 447/2014, Article 127 of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013 and Article 25 of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013.

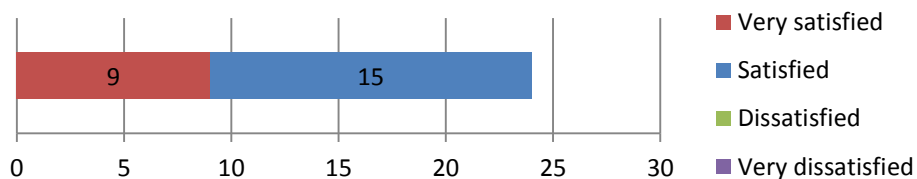
Generally all structures from the previous Programming period maintain their responsibilities for the current Programme. In this way, the accumulated knowledge and experience is providing continuity and institutional sustainable capacity.

Although, the Joint Secretariat is not fully staffed (two positions are vacant, that of the (1) Communication and Technical Assistance Officer and that of the (2) Administrative Assistant), the most of the above mentioned Authorities are fully staffed, which in combination with the acquired know-how, gives them the ability to carry out their tasks effectively and efficiently. This is also confirmed by the responses of the beneficiaries that participated in the online survey.

Also, according to the respondents, there is excellent cooperation among the JMC members and the MA/JS, which also contributes in high institutional sustainable capacity.

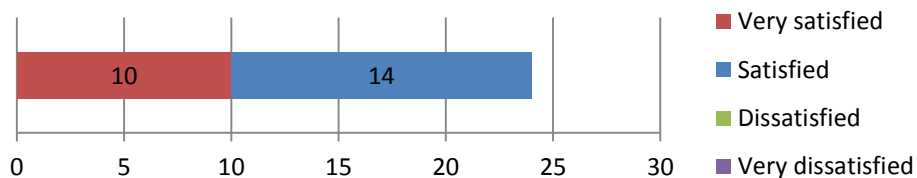
According to Figure 4.1, 15 respondents stated satisfied while 9 respondents are very satisfied with the cooperation with the MA/JS (e.g. mutual trust and confidential cooperation, quick responses to emails etc.)

Figure 4.1 – Satisfaction level with the cooperation with the MA/JS



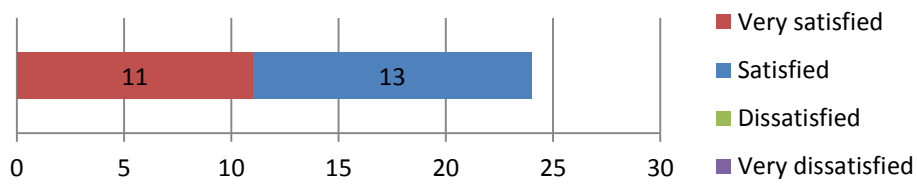
Regarding the respondents’ satisfaction with their cooperation with CA (e.g. mutual trust and confidential cooperation, quick responses to emails etc.), all of them declared that they are satisfied or very satisfied with the cooperation with the CA (Figure 4.2).

Figure 4.2 – Satisfaction level with their cooperation with CA



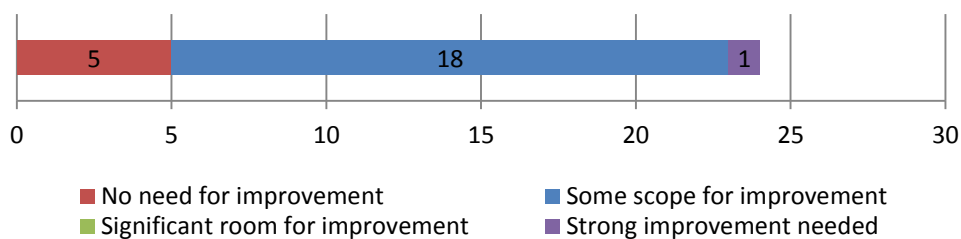
According to Figure 4.3, 13 respondents stated satisfied, while 11 respondents are very satisfied with the cooperation with the AA (e.g. mutual trust and confidential cooperation, quick responses to emails etc.)

Figure 4.3 – Satisfaction level with their cooperation with AA



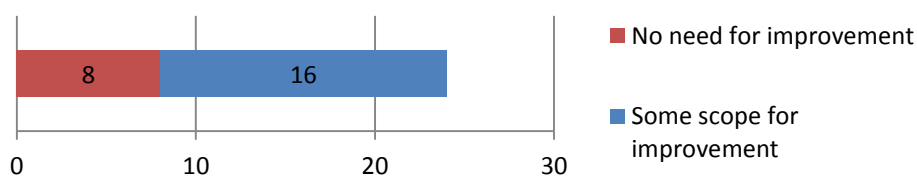
Regarding the effectiveness of the Programme management tools and procedures, the majority of the respondents authorities (19 in total) argued that there is scope for improvement, while 5 of them stated that there is no need for improvement (Figure 4.4).

Figure 4.4 – Effectiveness of management tools and procedures of the Programme



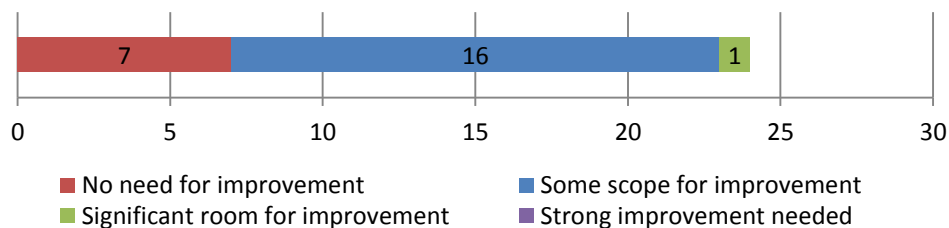
Also, 16 of the 24 respondents stated that there is some space of improvement on the appropriate tools that can ensure continuous and efficient communication with other Programme Bodies (CA, AA, Albanian National Bodies) with support of appropriate tools (Figure 4.5).

Figure 4.5 – Evaluation of tools for Continuous and efficient communication with other Programme Bodies



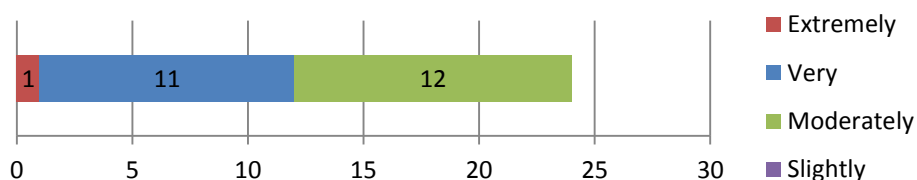
According to Figure 4.6 the majority of respondents authorities (17) agree that there is space of improvement on the appropriate tools that can ensure ongoing and coherent workflow and successful information management, while 7 authorities are satisfied with these tools and stated that there is no need for improvement.

Figure 4.6 – Evaluation of tools for ongoing and coherent workflow and successful information management



Regarding the effectiveness of measures undertaken to enhance stakeholders' involvement, at project and Programme level, 12 out of the 24 respondents stated extremely and very satisfied and the rest 12 respondents stated moderately satisfied (Figure 4.7).

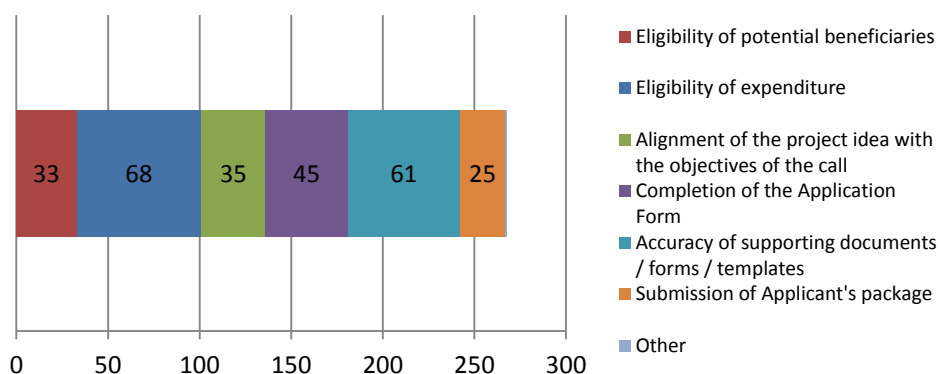
Figure 4.7 – Effectiveness of undertaken measures to enhance stakeholders' involvement



In this part of the study, it is interesting to mention the beneficiaries' opinions regarding clarifications, related to the submission procedures and the supportive actions that beneficiaries used during the preparation of their proposals.

According to Figure 4.8, the main fields that the beneficiaries needed clarifications from the Joint Secretariat are related to the submission procedures. **The main subject needed to be clarified is related to the eligibility of expenditure (57,1%)**. Other critical issues that beneficiaries needed clarifications were related to the accuracy of the supporting documents / forms (51,3%), the completion of the application form (37,8%), the alignment of the project idea with the objectives of the call (29,4%), the eligibility of potential beneficiaries (27,7%), and finally the submission of the applicant's package (21%).

Figure 4.8 - Fields that need clarification



Figures 4.9 – 4.13 illustrate the supportive actions that come first when the potential beneficiaries prepare their proposals. Taking account the responses “very” and “extremely”, the most supportive actions were the presentations during the info days/workshops and the answers given to the questions submitted”. In particular, **81 of respondents were very and extremely satisfied with the information that was given from the presentations during the info days / workshops. Also, 77 respondents expressed their satisfaction with the answers “very” and “extremely” for clarifications and consultancy they received from the Joint Secretariat through e-mail, and also 76 of respondents were very or extremely satisfied from the answers they received through the FAQs.** An interesting finding comes from the beneficiaries’ responses regarding their satisfaction from telephone communication. Particularly, 14 respondents declared that they are not at all satisfied, while 51 respondents mentioned that they are neither satisfied nor dissatisfied. Finally, almost half of the beneficiaries that answered the question, seem to be moderately satisfied with the consultancy they received through the social media related to the Programme.

Figure 4.9 - Supportive actions when preparing proposals: Frequent asked questions and answers

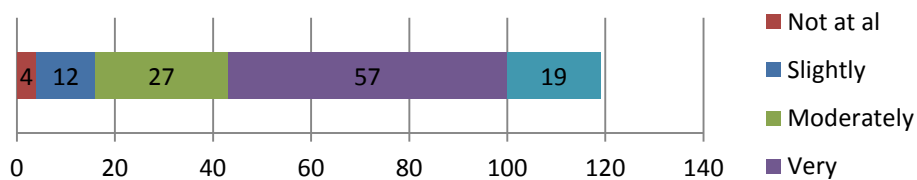


Figure 4.10 - Supportive actions when preparing proposals: Questions, consultancy and clarifications through e-mail

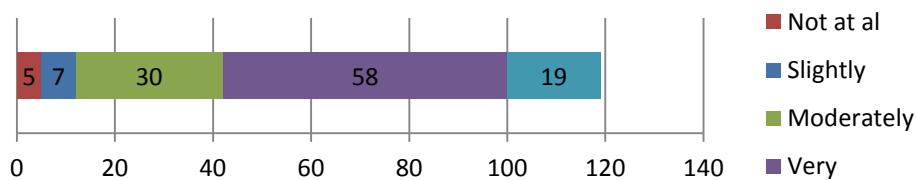


Figure 4.11 - Supportive actions when preparing proposals: Communication by telephone

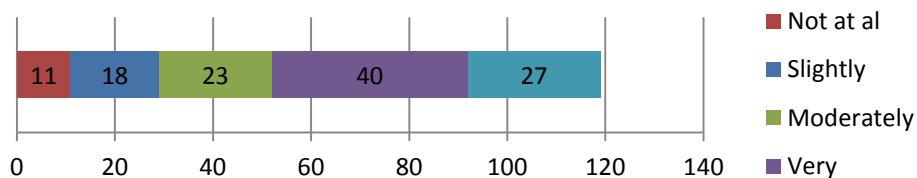


Figure 4.12 - Supportive actions when preparing proposals: The presentations during the infodays/workshops

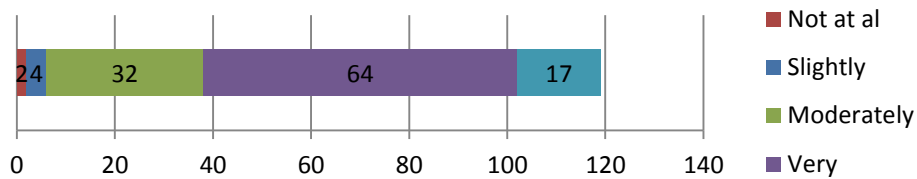
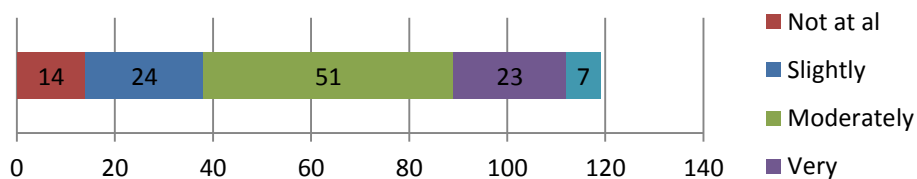


Figure 4.13 - Supportive actions when preparing proposals: Social media related to the programme



4.2 Evaluation question A2. Effectiveness of the Joint Monitoring Committee (role, decisions)

This point will assess the provision of information to the JMC, discussion culture in the JMC, the effectiveness of decision making in relation to all JMC-tasks, leadership, and involvement of participating countries.

This activity will address broadly the following evaluation questions:

- Are decision-making processes at programme level clear and transparent?
- Is the implementation of the decisions on programme level fast and efficient?

Evaluation findings A2

The Joint Monitoring Committee (JMC) is the body set up by the participating countries to review the overall effectiveness, quality and coherence of the implementation of all projects towards meeting the objectives set out in the Interreg IPA CBC Programme “Greece – Albania 2014 – 2020”, the financing agreements and the relevant strategy papers, according to Article 38 of Regulation (EU) No 447/2014 and Articles 49 and 110 of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013. The Joint Monitoring Committee comprises of 18 members with voting right and 26 members without voting right.

So far, between 2015 and November 2020 six JMC meetings have been held:

- 2015: 1st JMC Meeting (10/11/2015, Tirana, Albania).
- 2016: 2nd JMC Meeting (24/11/2016, Igoumenitsa, Greece).
- 2017: 3rd JMC Meeting, (14/07/2017, Korçe, Albania)

- ☑ 2018: 4th JMC Meeting, (05/10/2018, Preveza, Greece)
- ☑ 2019: 5th JMC Meeting, (21/06/2019, Berat, Albania)
- ☑ 2020: 6th JMC Meeting, (12/11/2020, via Webex)

Specifically:

The Joint Monitoring Committee convened its **1st meeting** in Tirana, Albania on the 10th of November 2015. The meeting was attended by members of the Managing Authority, the Albanian National Authority, the Joint Secretariat, the European Commission - DG REGIO, Greek and Albanian Ministries, the Special Service of Institutional Support, the Single Paying Authority, the Audit Authority and regional stakeholders. During this Joint Monitoring Committee meeting, the two application packages for the first two Calls for Project Proposals which had been prepared by the Managing Authority / Joint Secretariat were presented to the members of the Committee. During this meeting the following were approved:

- ☑ the Rules of Procedure of the Joint Monitoring Committee
- ☑ the launching of two written procedures on the application package of the 1st (Strategic) and 2nd Call for Projects Proposals
- ☑ the Communication Plan of the Interreg IPA Cross-border Cooperation Programme “Greece–Albania 2014–2020”
- ☑ the Technical Assistance Multiannual Budget Plan of the Interreg IPA Cross-border Cooperation Programme “Greece–Albania 2014–2020”
- ☑ an authorization to the JTS of the “Greece-Albania 2007-2013” to provide the necessary legal and administrative actions for the activation of the Interreg IPA II Cross–border Cooperation Programme “Greece - Albania 2014 - 2020”

The 2nd JMC meeting was held in Igoumenitsa on 24/11/2016, where the main issue in the agenda concerned the approval of the projects to be funded under the 1st Call for Strategic Project Proposals. Also, an evaluation plan has been prepared and approved by the JMC as well as the revised Communication Strategy of the Interreg IPA CBC Programme “Greece – Albania 2014 – 2020” was approved during the 2nd meeting. 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 3rd JMC meeting was held in Korca on 14/07/2018 for the approval of the projects submitted under the 2nd Call for Ordinary Project Proposals.

The 4th JMC meeting was held in Preveza on 05/10/2018 for the approval of the project for funding under the 3rd Call and the approval of the 4th Call for Ordinary Project Proposals Package.

The Joint Monitoring Committee convened its 5th meeting in Berat on 21/06/2019 for the approval of the projects for funding under the 4th Call. Also the Annual Implementation Report for 2018 presented.

Finally, the 6th JMC meeting was held via Webex on 12/11/2020. In the JMC meeting, the 3rd Programme Revision was decided as well as the Annual Communication Plan for 2021.

In the following figures, the authorities’ opinions are presented regarding clarity, transparency, adequacy and effectiveness level of the decision-making process.

According to Figure 4.14, **22 out of 24 respondents declared that almost always or often, decision making processes are clear and transparent.** Only two Authorities stated that they are sometimes satisfied with the clarity and transparency of the decision-making processes.

Figure 4.14 - Clarity and transparency of decision-making process

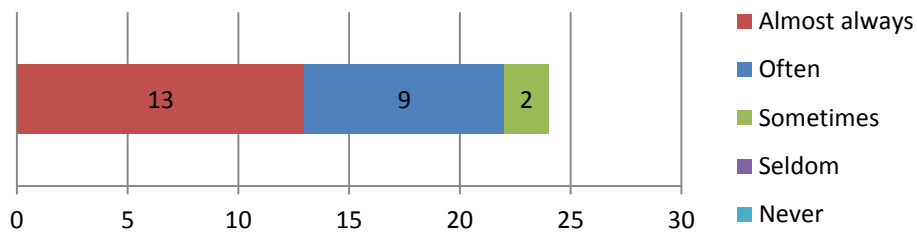
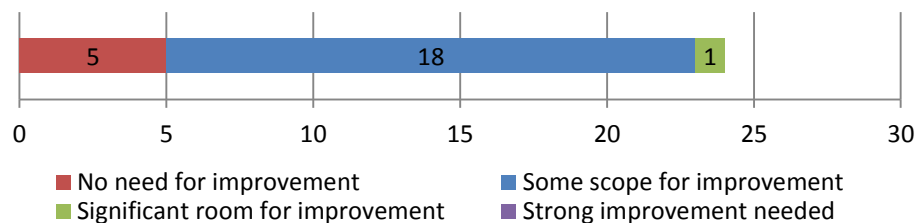


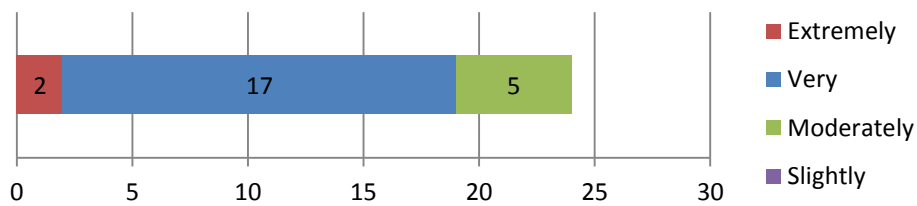
Figure 4.15 shows that the majority of respondents authorities (18) feel that there is scope for improvement in order to increase the adequacy and effectiveness level of the decision-making processes. Also, 5 respondents stated that they are clearly satisfied with the effectiveness of the decision-making processes, while 1 of them responded that there is significant room for improvement.

Figure 4.15 – Adequacy and effectiveness of decision-making process



Regarding the organization of the Monitoring Committee procedures (taking into account the consequences from the covid-19 pandemic), the majority of the respondents (19 out of 24) stated that is rather or very efficient and effective (Figure 4.16).

Figure 4.16– Efficiency and effectiveness of the organizational procedures of the Monitoring Committee



4.3 Evaluation question A3. Effectiveness of the operation of the Albanian National Bodies

This point will assess if the National bodies in Albania provide adequate support to the programme and have adequate resources to fulfil their main functions.

This activity will address the following evaluation questions:

- Are the programme management related structures set up in an effective and efficient way?

Evaluation findings A3

According to the Head of Operating Structure of Albania, the main problem that must be tackled is the Implementation of projects financed under this Programme during the Covid-19 pandemic situation.

Furthermore, the Head of Operating Structure considers that the decision- making processes are often quite clear and transparent. However, she stated that there is still some space of improvement in terms of adequacy and effectiveness. Although she is quite satisfied for the ongoing and coherent workflow, she stated that there are still areas for improvement regarding the reduction of administrative burden for applicants and beneficiaries. However, the Head of the Operating Structure, is quite satisfied with the cooperation with the MA / JS, regarding mutual trust and confidential cooperation, effective and efficient communication, etc., as well as she expressed satisfaction for the communication between JMC members despite the difficulties due the Covid-19 pandemic situation.

Finally, as a member of JMC, she expressed high satisfaction to the organization of the Monitoring Committee procedures and in particular to procedures for project selection or project rejection.

4.4 Evaluation question A4. Effectiveness of the operation of the national first level control systems

This point assesses if the FLC system in each country is well established, operational; if controllers have adequate qualifications and resources to fulfil their main functions in a timely manner (administrative verifications of each application for reimbursement by beneficiaries and on-the-spot verifications of individual operations proportionate to the risk level) and if there is a procedure in force for checking the Controllers.

This activity will address the following evaluation questions:

- Is the FLC system well established, operational and efficient in terms of human capacity compared to the number of beneficiaries and allows the validation of expenditures in time?
- Is there a procedure in force regarding the check of the Controllers?
- Is there a procedure in force regarding the supervision by the MA of the FLC systems?

Evaluation findings A4

According to Article 125 of the Regulation (EU) 1303/2013 and Article 23 of the Regulation (EU) 1299/2013 (ETC), the Managing Authority of European Territorial Cooperation Programmes bears the responsibility to carry out all necessary functions for the management verifications. This is to verify that the co-financed products and services have been delivered and that expenditure declared by the beneficiaries has been paid and that it complies with applicable law, the cooperation Programme and the conditions for support of the operation. To this end, the verifications shall include Administrative Verifications in respect of each application for reimbursement by beneficiaries and on-the-spot Verifications of operations.

Alternatively, according to Article 23 of the Regulation (EU) 1299/2013 (ETC), the Member States and third countries under certain conditions could bear responsibility for management verifications. In that case, each member state and third country shall set up a control system which will verify that the co-financed products and services have been delivered, the legality and regularity of the expenditure declared by beneficiaries for operations which are carried out in its territory and their compliance with the applicable EU and national law, the Cooperation Programme and the conditions for support of the operation.

The FLC System in Greece is decentralised. Unit C "Verification of Expenditure" of the Special Service for Managing ETC Programmes (MA), has been designated responsible for the verification of expenditure made by Beneficiaries located in Greece and participating in operations of European Territorial Cooperation (ETC/INTERREG) Programmes through the Ministerial Decree 109 283 / EYΘY 1012/4-11-2015.

The FLC System in Albania is centralised. For the verification of expenditure made by Beneficiaries located in Albania, the responsible structure is the First Level Control Office designated by the Albanian Operating Structure, within the Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs.

It has to be noted that due to the consequences from the COVID – 19 pandemic, a new methodology was issued by the MA suggesting specific flexibility rules for on-the spot verifications, taking into account that the quality of verifications should not be put at risk.

The MA suggested six (6) adjustment points which were considered applicable within the framework of the First Level Control System of the cooperating countries as described in the MCS in force.

The First Level Control System of each cooperating country of the Programme is described below:

GREECE

For Greek Beneficiaries of ETC Programmes, the Unit C “Verification of Expenditure” of the MA has been designated as the body responsible to carry out the verification of expenditure (Ministerial Decree 109 283 / EYΘY 1012/4-11-2015).

The verifications are carried out by a Register of Controllers/ (“MEE” or “MEE INTERREG”) which was established at the MA following an “open call for expression of interest” to natural persons, Greek or EU citizens. A three-member Committee selects the Controllers. The enrolment to the Register is made in accordance with a Decision of the Special Secretary for ERDF & CF Funded Sectoral Ops. Further information and details are described in the Ministerial Decree for the “Establishment of a Register of Controllers” of the Minister of Economy and Development according to article 43(3) of Law 4314/2014.

The MA of ETC Programmes, in order to carry out administrative and on the spot verifications, according to Paragraphs 4 and 5 of Article 125 of the Regulation (EU) 1303/2013 and paragraphs 4 and 5 of Article 23 of the Regulation (EU) 1299/2013, selects Controllers only from the Registry.

The selection of controllers is made taking into consideration the following indicative criteria:

- The type of project e.g. infrastructure projects, technical studies, environmental projects, cultural heritage projects, social orientation projects, touristic – business-oriented projects etc.
- Procurement type and procedures.
- Services (specialization according to the deliverables).
- Experience in financial management / monitoring / audit/controls of similar type and services.
- Specialized professional experience.

It is possible for the MA of ETC Programmes to set additional criteria taking into consideration the nature and importance of the project. The Controllers will carry out administrative and on-the-spot verifications according to Article 125 of the of the Regulation (EU)1303/2013.

The first time that a Beneficiary submits to the Unit C of the MA a Request for Verification of expenditure, Unit C estimates the verification needs in terms of specialties, areas of expertise and professional experience of the Controllers, taking into account the nature and specificities of each project and identifies the categories of the members of the Register which will be activated. Depending on the nature of the project and where deemed appropriate for the verifications of its physical and financial object, a group of controllers with different specialties may be appointed. In order to facilitate the conduction of the verifications (e.g. refusal/lack of ability of the Controller to undertake his/her duties), Unit C proceeds preferably, with a random selection of at least three members of the Register. Then, the MA issues a Decision for the selection of controller/s, in which the framework of cooperation with the controllers is also described. This Decision is communicated to the Beneficiary, in order to proceed to the relevant award of the service contract with a Controller according with its legal framework. The beneficiary chooses one of the proposed controllers and the Controller is appointed. The remuneration of the Controller for the administrative and on-the-spot verifications is determined by the Ministerial Decree and is paid by the project's budget.

The award of the service contract from the Beneficiary is copied to Unit C of the MA. Then, Unit C forwards the electronic file to the Controller for verification (and/or informs him/her for the submission of the appropriate data to the MIS) and determines whether an administrative and/or an on – the – spot verification is carried out, keeping the Beneficiary always informed. Since now the verification of expenditures is done completely through the MIS, the Controller and Beneficiary communicate directly for the supporting documentation regarding the verification of expenditures. The communication is done through the MIS and all communication is copied to Unit C automatically through the MIS.

In order for the next verifications to be carried out, the Beneficiary forwards the electronic file, directly to the Controller through the MIS, putting always in copy the Unit C of the MA. Unit C determines when an administrative on – the – spot verification is carried out and informs the Controller and the Beneficiary with an according decision. The Controller and the Beneficiary decide on the specific date copying their decision to Unit C.

The procedure of the selection and contracting of a Controller(s) is performed whenever a selection of a Controller is necessary (e.g. because of refusal of the selected Controller(s) to undertake his/her duties, force majeure, etc.).

For the verification of Technical Assistance's expenditure, where the MA is the Beneficiary of such operations, the award of the service contract to the Controller shall be done by the MA, according to the procedures applicable to Technical Assistance operations and following a proposal on selected Controllers by the Unit C' to the Unit D' of the MA, copied to the Head of the MA.

According to the responses of the **Unit C', Managing Authority ETC:**

- There are **changes** (e.g. legal, administrative etc) affecting part of the FLC System as declared in the MCS.
- There is **no need to update** the guidelines for the verifications.
- **59 projects have been checked** the period from 1/7/2018 to 31/12/2020. **There have been findings for the 27 of them.**
- **12 on-the spot verification visits** were made for the period from 1/7/2018 to 31/12/2020.
- **193 verifications** (from both administrative and on the spot verifications) have been done in the period from 1/7/2018 to 31/12/2020.
- **18 Controllers were checked** in the period from 1/7/2018 to 31/12/2020. There are certain findings that include the following:
 - Missing or incorrect supporting information or documentation
 - Non eligible expenditure due to false reporting period
 - The controller has been informed for a specific finding through e-mail, according to the approved MCS of the Programme.
 - Selection criteria not related and proportionate to the subject matter of the contract for a tender procedure.

ALBANIA

Albania has established a centralized First level control system. The respective FLC Unit is staffed and is operating. The verifications of expenditures of the Albanian beneficiaries under this Programme are carried out by the First Level Control (FLCO) Office, under the supervision of the Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs.

The FLCO is responsible for performance of administrative verifications as well as on the spot checks to cover the additional verifications from financial, technical and physical aspects of the project co-financed from INTERREG IPA CBC Programme Greece – Albania.

The office is staffed by the Head of the office and two First Level Controllers. The cost for the Albanian FLC staff is covered by the Technical Assistance project budget.

The First Level Control function is ensured by the FLCO which examines the administrative and accounting documents in all **(100%) operations** with regard to the:

- principle of effectiveness: to ensure that the expenditure has actually been incurred by beneficiaries for the project implementation;
- principle of legitimacy: to ensure that the expenditure is in accordance with the EU and national legislation;
- principle of localization of the co-financed operation: to ensure that the expenditure has been paid for an operation realized in the eligibility area of the Programme.

Otherwise for these activities realized outside the eligible area and in respect to article 20 of the Regulation (EU) 1299/2013, it must be demonstrated that the activities are of benefit for the Programme; e.g., justification is provided in the project application for support;

- principle of documentary evidence: to ensure that the expenditures paid has been proved by receipted invoices or accounting documents of equivalent probative value.

The First level control office ensures that the expenditure of a beneficiary can be verified within a period of three (3) months following the submission of the documents by the beneficiaries.

With regard to the specifics of the contract, checks will be performed on the results achieved - supplies delivered, services provided, works executed or project implemented from the point of view of scope, quantity, quality, time schedule, contract value, type, nature and aim.

Also, according to the primary data that evaluator collected, the only authority responsible for first level control, that participated in the research was the Albanian Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs.

According to the responses of the Albanian Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs:

- There are **no changes** (e.g. legal, administrative etc) affecting any part of the FLC System as declared in the MCS.
- The Albanian Ministry is **fully functional** and **staffed**.
- There is **no need to update** the guidelines for the verifications.
- **48 projects have been checked** till 31/12/2020.
- **48 on-the spot verification visits** have been made till 31/12/2020.
- **198 certifications** (from both administrative and on the spot verifications) have been completed until 31/12/2020.
- **2 Controllers were checked** till 31/12/2020 and there are not any findings.

5. Objective B. Analysis of the effectiveness and efficiency of the management of the entire project cycle (project generation, assessment, selection, monitoring, reporting, reimbursement)

Objective B will be divided into three specific activities:

- project assessment
- selection process
- support for the project implementation

5.1 Evaluation question B1: Effectiveness of project generation in the different calls

This point will address the first phase of project preparation, support and assesses the following aspects:

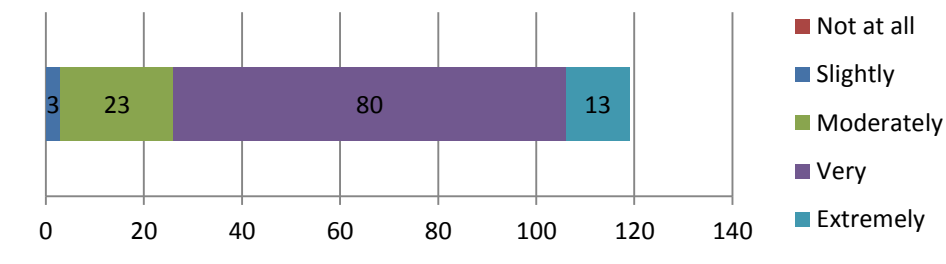
- Provision of tools to support project generation and applicants
- Satisfaction of the applicants with the tools according to the online survey
- Generated applications according to their geographical distribution

This activity will address the following evaluation questions:

- Is the programme using the right tools for reaching the applicants?
- How transparent and effective is the application process in terms call of procedures, tools provided and support to applicants?
- Was the support towards the applicants adequate?
- Do the applicants need further support during the preparation phase? Is this support necessary through the use of certain tools?

Evaluation findings B1

Figure 5.1 refers to the beneficiaries’ satisfaction to the completeness of the Call for proposals and its annexes. Specifically, **80 out of the 119 respondents declared very satisfied with completeness of the Call for proposals**, while 23 of respondents are neither satisfied nor dissatisfied with it. Finally, 13 of beneficiaries are extremely satisfied with the IPA CBC Programme Greece – Albania call for proposals’ completeness.

Figure 5.1 - Completeness of the Call for proposals and its annexes

5.2 Evaluation question B2: Effectiveness of the application procedure, project assessment and selection process in the different calls

This point will address the drafting and submission procedure of project proposals, assessment of applications, decision for the approval of projects and the signing of the subsidy contract.

The following aspects will be assessed:

- Drafting and submission of project applications
- Assessment procedure and related complaints

This activity addresses the following evaluation questions:

- Are the project selection criteria and assessment procedure sound, transparent and fair, effectively supporting the selection of the best quality cross border projects?

Evaluation findings B2

The next figures present the **beneficiaries' opinions** related to project preparation and submission procedures.

Figure 5.2 is relevant to the clarity of the Call for proposals and its annexes. **A significant percentage of respondents** beneficiaries (67.2% meaning 80 out of 119), declared that **they are very satisfied** with the clarity of the IPA CBC Programme Greece – Albania call for proposals, while 28 are neither satisfied nor dissatisfied extremely satisfied. Moreover, 9 of the beneficiaries referred that they are extremely satisfied and only 2 seem to be slightly satisfied with the call for proposals' clarity.

Figure 5.2 - Clarity of the Call for proposals and its annexes

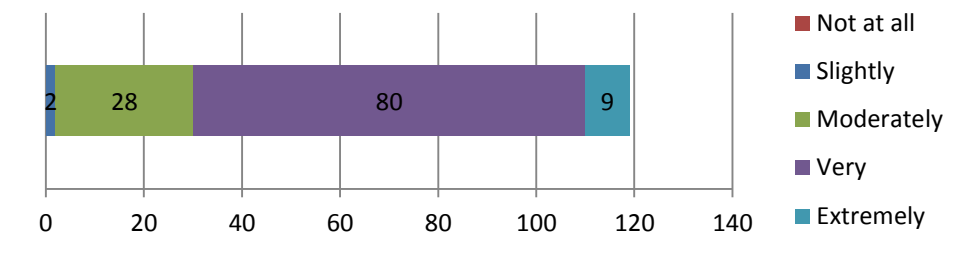


Figure 5.3 refers to the functionality of the standard submission forms/templates according to the beneficiaries' opinion. 64 respondents beneficiaries mentioned that the submission forms/templates are very functional, while only 1 beneficiary stated that the submission forms/templates are not at all functional and 7 beneficiaries assumed that the submission forms/templates are slightly functional. 10 respondents are extremely satisfied with the functionality of the submission forms/templates, while 37 of them are neither satisfied nor dissatisfied.

Figure 5.3 - Functionality of the submission forms/templates

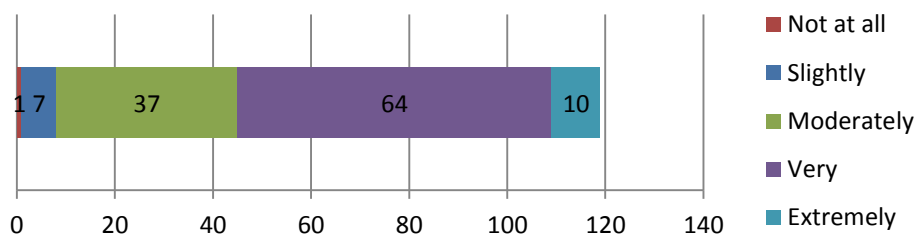
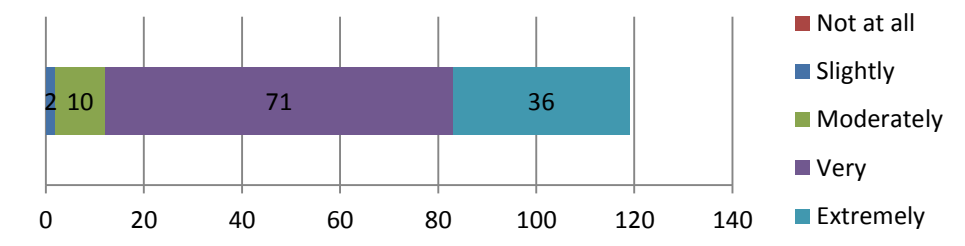


Figure 5.4 presents the beneficiaries' opinion related to the Managing Authority / Joint Secretariat support during the preparation of their proposal. In particular, 71 are **very satisfied with the support of the Managing Authority / Joint Secretariat** (50%), while 36 respondents are extremely satisfied. 2 of the respondents said that they are slightly satisfied while 10 respondents are neither satisfied nor dissatisfied.

Figure 5.4 - Managing Authority / Joint Secretariat support during the preparation of proposals



According to Figure 5.5, **the majority of beneficiaries (89%)** are clearly satisfied with the promptness, effectiveness and understanding of the Managing Authority / Joint Secretariat staff on the call for project proposals. Specifically, 81 respondents are very satisfied, 25 are extremely satisfied, while 13 beneficiaries answered as moderately satisfied.

Figure 5.5 - Promptness, effectiveness and understanding of the Managing Authority / Joint Secretariat staff on the call for project proposals

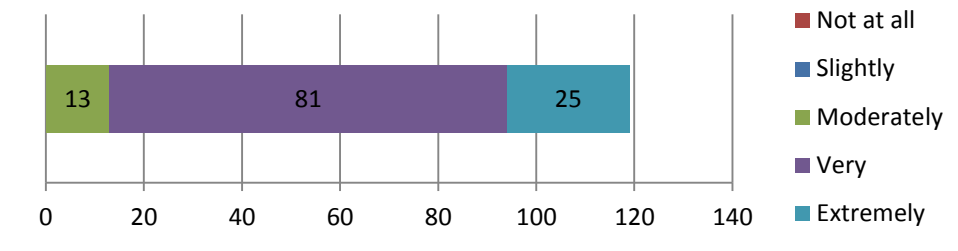
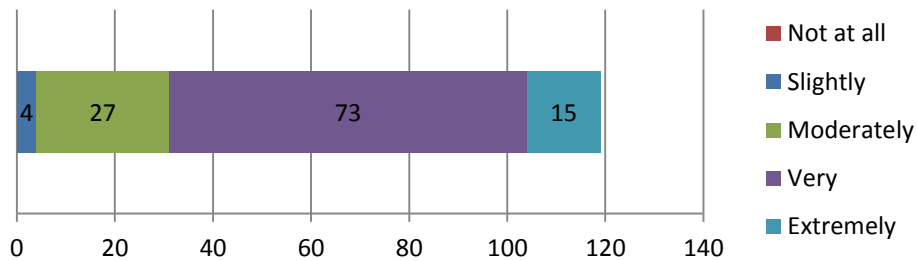
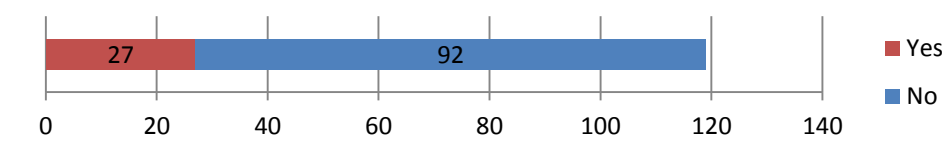


Figure 5.6 illustrates the satisfaction of beneficiaries concerning the clarity of the submission procedures. 73 beneficiaries are very satisfied with the clarity of the submission procedures, while 15 respondents answered as extremely satisfied. Also, 27 are moderately satisfied, while only 4 of them are slightly satisfied.

Figure 5.6 - Clarity of submission procedures



According to Figure 5.7, the majority of beneficiaries (92 out of 119) did not submit a complaint in case that they participated in a project proposal that was not approved for funding. As for the 36,5% of beneficiaries that replied that they wouldn't submit a complain and taking account the transparency of the selection procedure, the percentage is considered as reasonable since the most common reason for not submitting a complaint is the belief that **the possibilities of acceptance by the according Committee would be little**. Some beneficiaries seem to be **satisfied with the process**, while other declared that they **respect the decision** of the authorities.

Figure 5.7 – Submission of complaints in case of rejection

It is worth mentioning that in the 1st, 3rd and 5th Calls for Strategic Proposals of the Interreg IPA CBC Programme “Greece-Albania 2014-2020”, no official complaints were submitted by the applicants.

Table 5.1 – Programme Authority

Specific Objective	Projects with submitted complaints	Number of Approved Complaints	Number of Rejected Complaints
1.1	9	4	5
1.2	4	0	4
1.3	6	2	4
1.4	3	2	1
2.1	15	6	9
2.2	6	0	6
TOTAL	43	14	29

5.3 Evaluation questions B3: Effectiveness of support for the project implementation

This point will address support for beneficiaries, monitoring and reporting, reimbursement, controls, payments. The following aspects will be assessed:

- Contracting
- Support in the start-up phase by MA/JS
- Reporting obligations
- Verification of expenditures, payments
- Monitoring visits by MA/JS
- Project changes
- Capitalisation of project results
- Management of complaints

This activity addresses the following evaluation questions:

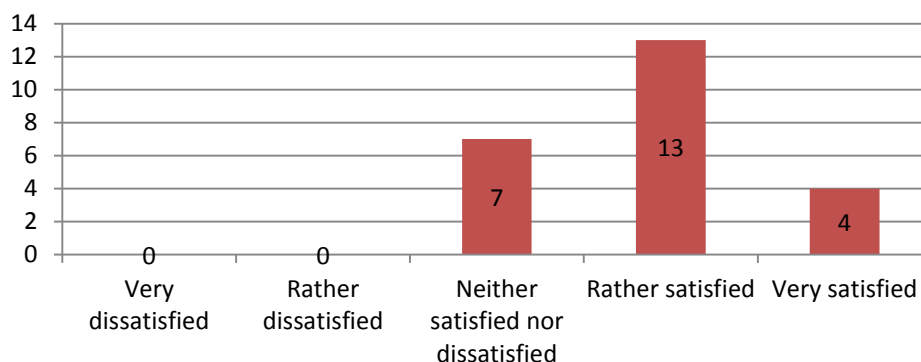
- How well is the programme supporting the beneficiaries during the project implementation?
- Is the reporting and monitoring process set up in an efficient way? (e.g. allowing the qualitative monitoring of the outputs, verification of the project progress and achievements, reimbursement of the beneficiaries in due time, reducing the risk of de-commitment and financial corrections)?
- Has the programme set adequate measures to reduce the administrative burden of beneficiaries?

Evaluation findings B3

The JMC members rated the following questions related to the Selection of projects procedure from 1 – 5, with 5 being the best score:

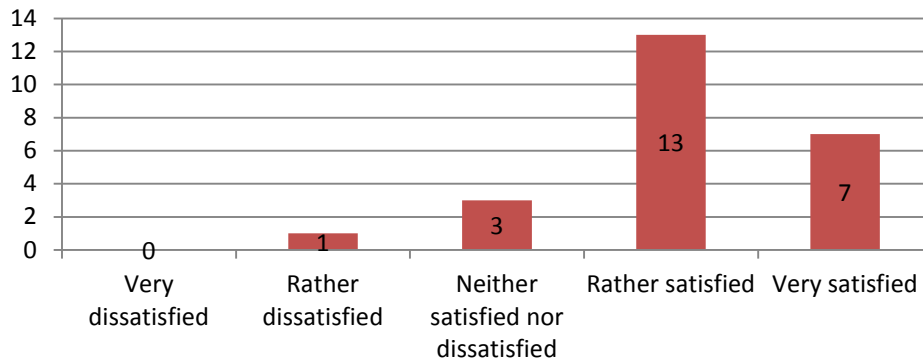
At Figure 5.8 the JMC members’ opinions are presented related to the procedure on the decision of the methodology for project selection. **17 of the respondents stated that this procedure is adequate**, while 7 seem to be neither satisfied nor dissatisfied with the adequacy of the procedure.

Figure 5.8 – Procedure on the decision of the methodology for project selection



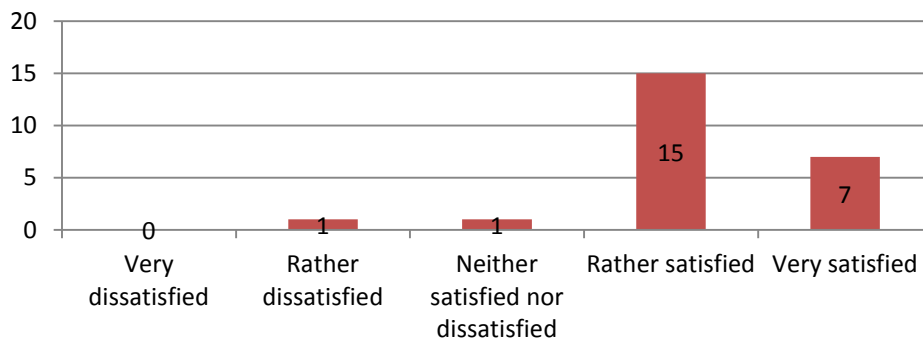
According to Figure 5.9, **20 out of 24 JMC members stated that the information on the assessment and the ranking list provided timely for the decision for project selection of the JMC**. On the other hand, 3 respondents stated that they are neither satisfied nor dissatisfied with the sufficiency of the information provided and only one of them seems to be rather dissatisfied.

Figure 5.9 – Information on the assessment and the ranking list



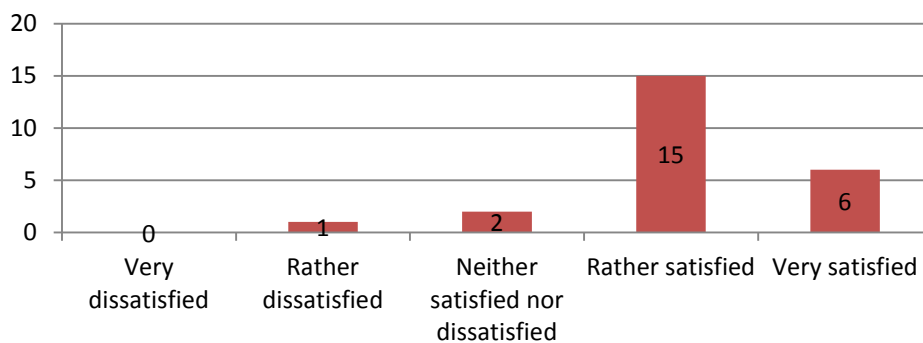
Moreover, the majority of the JMC members (22 out of 24) stated that they are satisfied with the possibility to express their opinion on the assessment of the applications (Figure 5.10).

Figure 5.10 – Opinion expression on the assessment of the applications



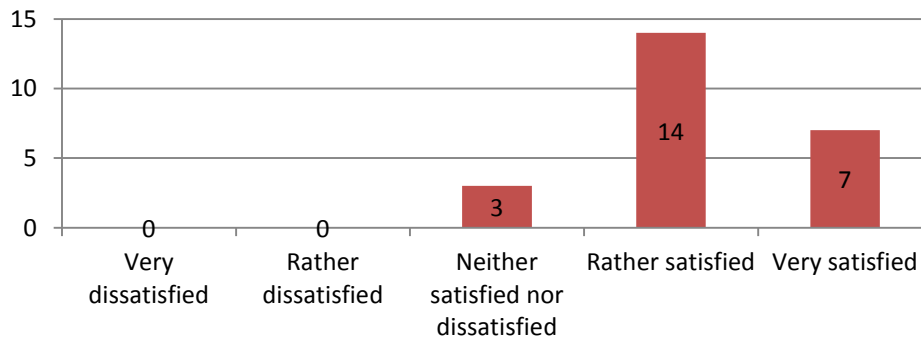
According to Figure 5.11, the majority of the JMC members (21 out of 24) stated that the information provided by the MA/JS is sufficient to formulate their opinion for the rejection of applications. Only 1 respondent seems to be rather dissatisfied with the sufficiency level of the information provided to them.

Figure 5.11 – Information for the rejection of applications



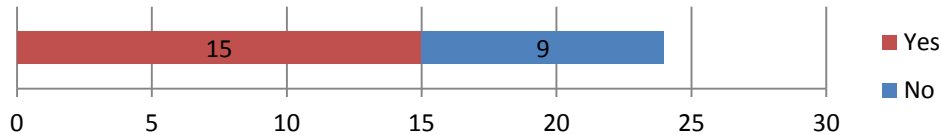
Furthermore, 21 out of 24 JMC members mentioned that they have adequate information on the complaints received about the selection of projects and outcomes of the Joint Complaint Committee (Figure 5.12). Also, 3 respondents seem to be neutral about the adequacy of the information provided to them.

Figure 5.12 – Information on the complaints received about the selection of projects and outcomes



Specifically, according to Figure 5.13, 15 out of 24 respondents authorities stated that the Programme has set adequate measures to reduce the administrative burden of applicants and beneficiaries, while 9 of them considers that further measures should be taken.

Figure 5.13 – Measures to reduce the administrative burden of applicants and beneficiaries

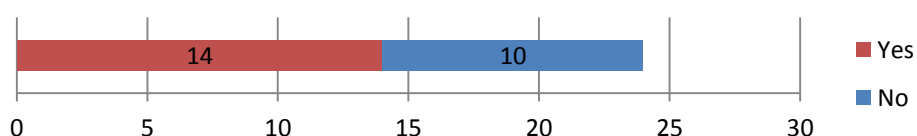


The next figures present the **JMC’s opinions** related to problems in the granting of the resources.

Regarding the delays and other problems in the contracting procedure, 14 respondents stated that there were delays, while 10 of them said that everything was on time (Figure 5.14). The main delays that the respondents mentioned are the following:

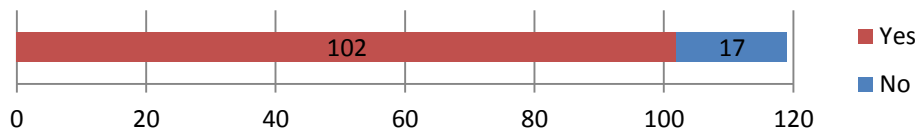
- Lack of resources of the Albanian beneficiaries
- Not adequate information on IPA funds management
- Pre - financing amount (grant) should be allocated to the beneficiary before certifying the procedures on the first phase (for the Albanian Beneficiaries)

Figure 5.14 – Delays or other problems in the granting of the resources



Besides the above-mentioned delays it must be noticed that the majority of the projects faced delays and problems in the implementation of projects due the pandemic crisis of Covid-19. In particular, as Figure 5.15 illustrates according to the beneficiaries’ answers, 102 project beneficiaries faced such problems and only 17 beneficiaries answered that they didn’t have such problems.

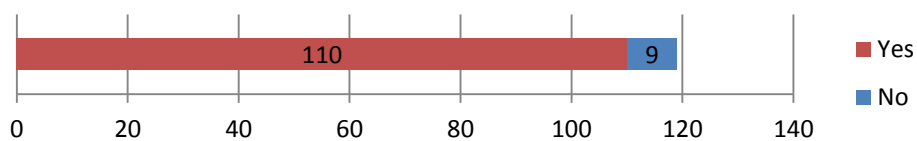
Figure 5.15 – Delays or other problems delay in the implementation of projects due the pandemic crisis of Covid-19?



The next figures present the **beneficiaries’ opinions** related to funding and implementation procedures.

According to beneficiaries’ opinions, 110 respondents have submitted a progress report, while 19 of them have not submitted a report yet (Figure 5.16).

Figure 5.16 - Progress report



It is worth mentioning that the majority of the responding beneficiaries (113 out of 119) stated that the guidelines for the submission of progress reports are adequate and only 6 of them seem to think that they should be enriched (Figure 5.17).

Figure 5.17 – Adequacy of the guidelines for Progress report submission

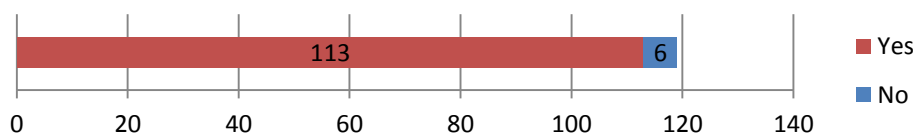
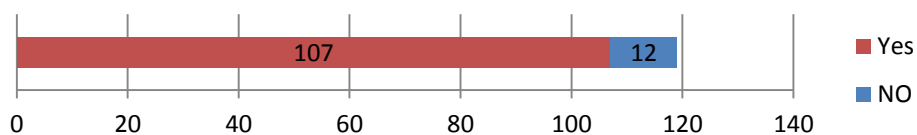


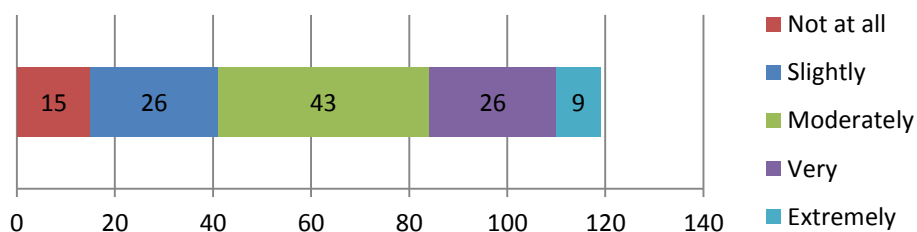
Figure 5.18 presents the beneficiaries opinion about the guidelines for verification procedures. In particular, 107 beneficiaries declared that they have submitted a request for the verification of their expenditures, while 12 have not submitted a request yet.

Figure 5.18 – Submission a request for verification of expenditures



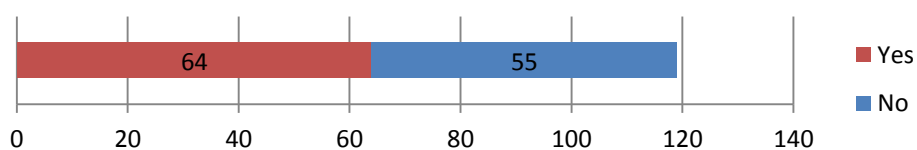
Also, it seems that the beneficiaries think that a need for updating the guidelines for verification control is needed. In particular, 43 beneficiaries think that moderate changes to the guidelines for verification control are needed, while 26 beneficiaries stated that there the need is very urgent and 9 of them think that there is extreme need – 65,55% of the total responses. On the opposite side, 15 out of 119 respondents think that there is no need for any change and 26 beneficiaries stated that there is a slight need – 34,45% of the total responses (Figure 5.19).

Figure 5.19 – Need for update of guidelines for verification control



According to the beneficiaries’ opinions, 64 respondents stated that an on-the spot verification control has been performed for their projects, while for 55 of them it has been not performed yet (Figure 5.20).

Figure 5.20 – On-the spot verification control



It seems that there is not a clear aspect concerning the adequacy and efficiency of the guidelines and procedure for the on-the spot verification control. In particular, 64 beneficiaries seem to be very and extremely satisfied, while 47 of them are neither satisfied nor dissatisfied. Only 8 beneficiaries answered as dissatisfied from the adequacy and efficiency of the guidelines and procedure for the on-the spot verification control (Figure 5.21). It has to be noted that due to the consequences from the COVID – 19 pandemic, a new methodology was issued by the MA suggesting specific flexibility rules for verifications, taking into account that “quality” of verifications should not be put at risk.

Figure 5.21 – Adequacy and efficiency of the guidelines and procedure for on-the spot verification control

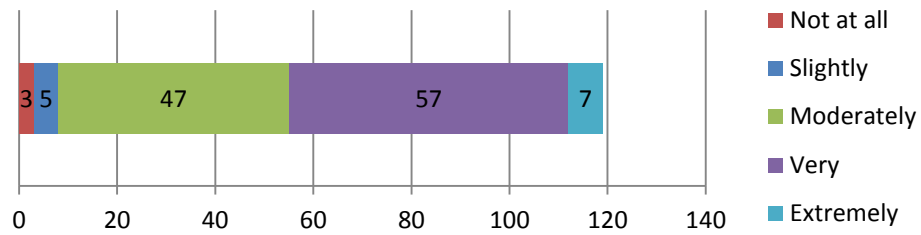
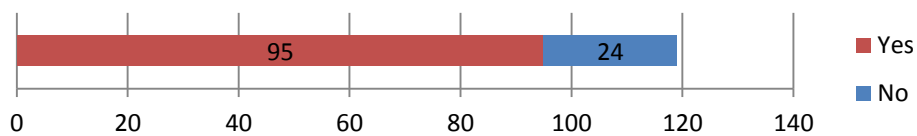


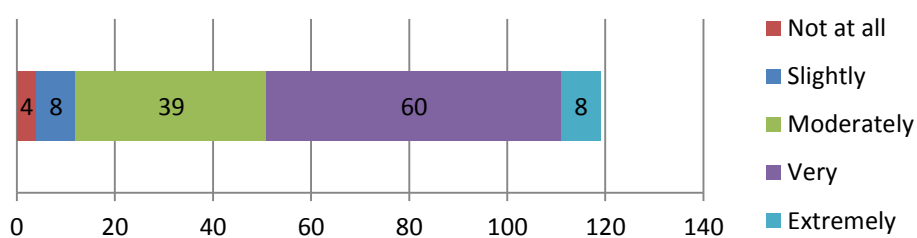
Figure 5.22 shows how many beneficiaries have submitted a funding allocation request. In particular, the majority of them (95 out of 119) declared that they have submitted a request for funding allocation, while 24 have not submitted a request yet.

Figure 5.22 – Submission of funding allocation request



Concerning the efficiency of the procedure for funding allocations, 68 beneficiaries seem to be very and extremely satisfied, while 39 of them are neither satisfied nor dissatisfied. Only 12 beneficiaries stated a degree of dissatisfaction from the efficiency of the funding allocation procedure (Figure 5.23).

Figure 5.23 – Efficiency of the procedure for funding allocation



According to Figure 5.24, **the majority of beneficiaries (114 out of 119) are clearly satisfied with the cooperation with the staff of the Managing Authority / Joint Secretariat** during the project implementation. It is worth noting that only 5 respondents mentioned that they are slightly or moderately satisfied respectively, with the cooperation offered by the staff of the Managing Authority / Joint Secretariat.

Figure 5.24 - Cooperation with the staff of the Managing Authority / Joint Secretariat during the project implementation

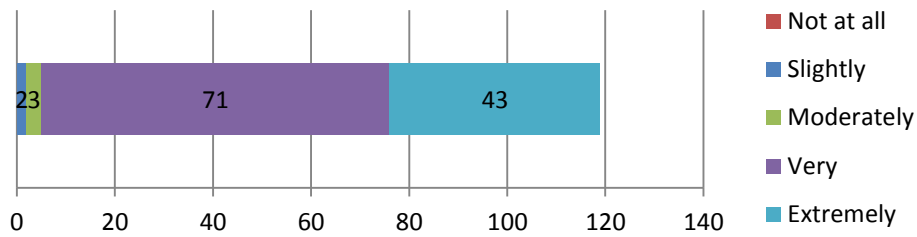
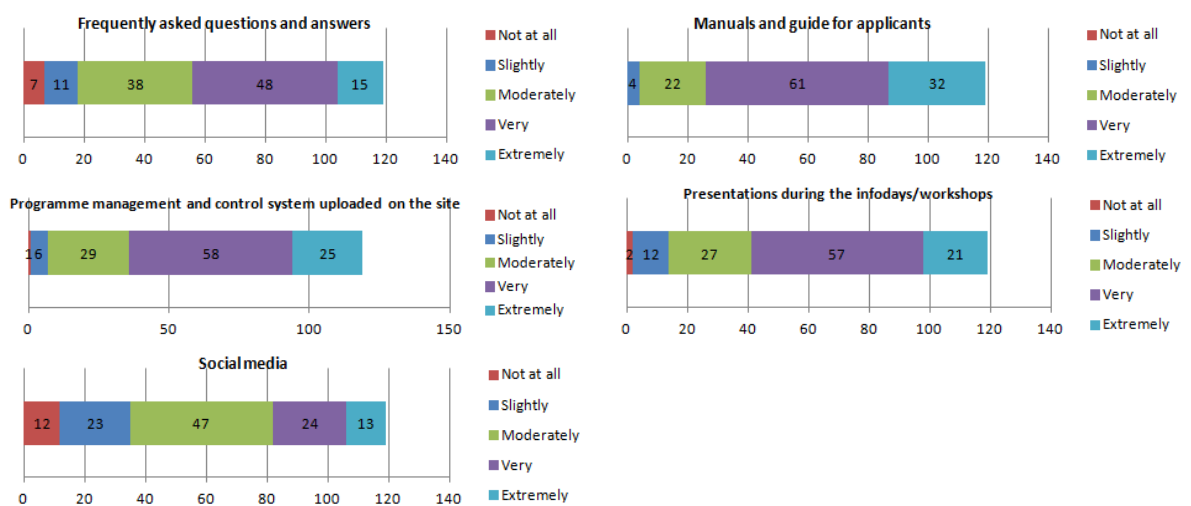


Figure 5.25 presents the supportive actions used by the beneficiaries, in order to manage their project and their level of satisfaction. In particular, the use of Manuals and guide for applicants is satisfying for 93 beneficiaries. Also, the presentations during the info days/workshops seem to be very helpful for the beneficiaries as 78 of them seem to be satisfied with this supportive action.

63 and 83 of beneficiaries, respectively, are satisfied with the support they receive from the Frequently Asked Questions and the Management and Control System published in the website of the Programme.

Finally, it seems that beneficiaries don't make enough use of the social media related to the Programme, as only 37 of them are very or extremely satisfied by making use of the certain tool.

Figure 5.25 - Supportive actions that beneficiaries use, in order to manage their project



6. Objective C. Monitoring System: analysis of the functionality and effectiveness of the programme monitoring system

6.1 Evaluation question C: Monitoring Information System: analysis of the functionality and effectiveness of the Programme MIS

This objective will assess the following aspects:

- Legal requirements
- Introduction of the system
- Capacity of MIS to support the management system of the programme
- Access of relevant programme bodies to the monitoring system
- Completeness and quality of the collected data including relevant data for evaluation and performance framework
- Collection of relevant information in the IT-system which can be used for communication activities at programme level

This activity addresses the following evaluation questions:

- How is the programme management system functioning? Is the monitoring system effectively supporting the management system of the programme?
- How can the monitoring system support the information activity? How can it be improved?
- Have all important data been collected and included in the system?

Evaluation findings C

The Managing Authority (MA) of the European Territorial Cooperation Programmes (ETC) uses the Monitoring Information System (MIS) described analytically in the 4314/2014 Law, adjusted to the requirements of managing and monitoring Cooperation Programmes (CP).

The purpose of the MIS is:

- the managing of information from the highest level (Programme) to the lowest level (Project and expenditures),
- the conducting of management procedures in an electronic - automated way. The creation of the appropriate files for every stage of implementation and the management of a project and its legal commitments.

- ❑ the coverage of all dimensions of management, including economic and physical scope, time schedule, administrative and institutional framework,
- ❑ the coverage of all management stages in the scope of programming and implementing projects and Programmes,
- ❑ the creation and printing of reports with statistical data of selected projects (e.g. location of activities, economic statistical data of beneficiaries etc.),
- ❑ the electronic exchange of information with the European Commission (EC) Database "System for Fund Management in the EU" (SFC).

To this purpose, the operations and controls included in the MIS aim to:

- to ensure the relationships that must exist between the Programmes' levels,
- to enable Managers/People in Charge to monitor if commitments are met effectively there is sufficient compliance to the commitments,
- to enable Managers/People in Charge to implement modifications, if needed, to the appropriate levels,
- to enable Managers/People in Charge to monitor the implementation progress,
- to enable Managers/People in Charge to assess efficiently results and impact of various actions undertaken.

The MIS for the ETC Programmes (MIS-INTERREG), consists of a number of applications, complete and complementary with each other, which ensures its proper functioning. The offered services are the following:

MIS users include all the involved Authorities/Bodies, National Authorities and specifically:

- Project Beneficiaries: Partners from both countries
- Management Bodies (Managing Authority, Joint Secretariat and National Authorities)
- First Level Control authorities
- Certifying Authority
- Audit Authority (EDEL) / Group of Auditors (GoA)
- Horizontal NSRF services
- European Union's services

Access to the MIS is possible either directly through an interactive user interface (web application) or through a technical interface that allows data transmission.

The specific user roles are defined in accordance with the provisions of the Management and Control System and they follow the functions and responsibilities of the partnership in which they belong. So, Beneficiaries have four available access rights (Read only, Edit, Submission (except Application Form), Submission (Application Form) according to their role in the partnership. Users from the JS and the MA have according access rights, as well as the availability to confirm the entries of beneficiaries and proceed to their own. Also, the total number of Beneficiaries involved in a project, and not only the Lead Beneficiary, have a “read-only access” of the submitted proposal, even in the stage prior to the submission.

More specifically, according to the user role, the following apply:

- Lead Beneficiaries have the right to fill in MIS forms regarding the following:
 - Application Form. The Lead Beneficiaries submit the Application Form for evaluation. Where the evaluation of the proposal to be funded is positive, then the Lead Beneficiaries re-submit a validated Application Form, according to the observations of the MA/JS/Monitoring Committee (MC). The version of the Application Form changes according to the type of modification of the AF
 - Progress Reports
 - Request for funding (Greek Beneficiaries)

All project beneficiaries have the right to fill in the MIS forms regarding the Tables of Expenditure and the Expenditure Verification Requests.

- The MA/JS has the right to read and validate the following:
 - Application Form.
 - Progress Reports.
 - Tables of Expenditure/Certification of Expenditures/Verification Report (from Unit C).

The users that have rights to fill in forms, enter data and documents to the MIS for which they have the authority, as well as any updates needed, and have the ability to attach documents. Users have the responsibility for the timely submission and for the accuracy, quality and completeness of these data. The MIS supports data entry by performing a series of logical validation checks and by offering many tools and reports to users, in order to carry out their work.

Finally, the MIS screens, where the data is inserted as well as printed, is in the Programme’s official language (English), while the Greek language is also an option.

The MIS for European Territorial Cooperation Programmes is adequate and in place.

The next figures present the **beneficiaries’ opinions** related to the Management Information System.

Regarding the beneficiaries’ responses on the Management Information System, **65.55% of the beneficiaries** are very or extremely satisfied with it (Figure 6.1). 5,88% of the respondents declared that the MIS slightly meets their needs for implementation and management of the project. Moreover, 28.57% of respondents are neither satisfied nor dissatisfied with the use of the MIS.

Figure 6.1: Satisfaction of Beneficiaries with MIS

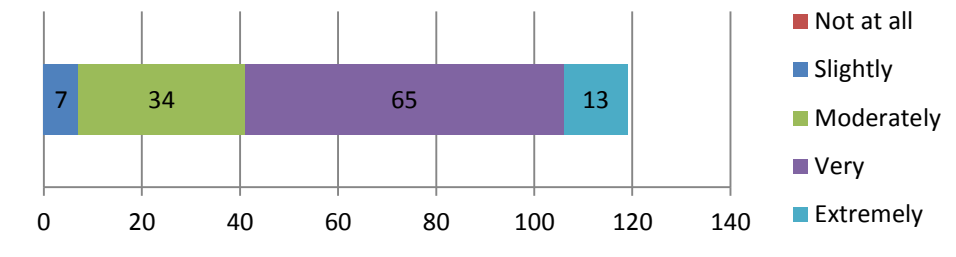
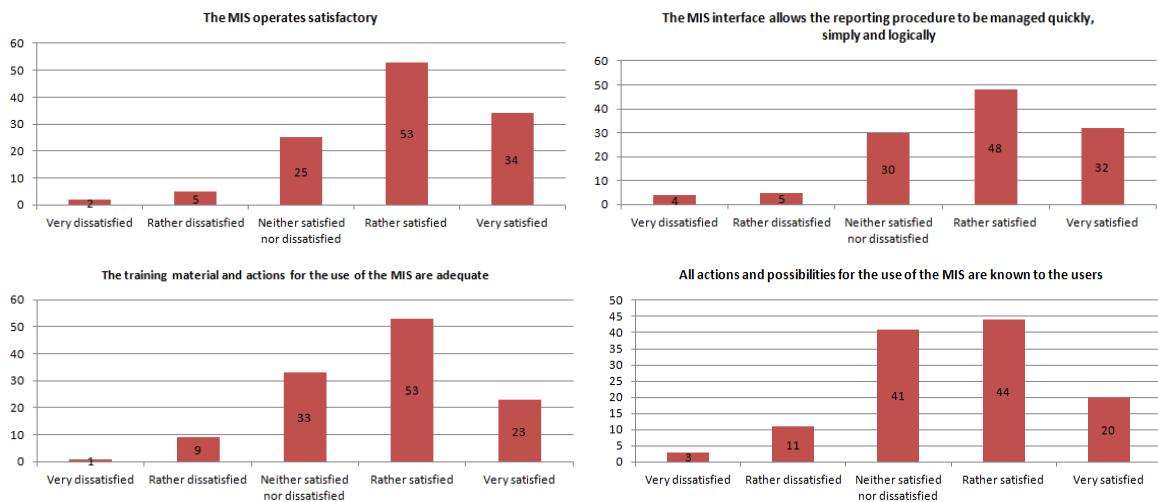


Figure 6.2 shows the beneficiaries’ overview of the Management Information System. In general, the majority of the respondents (87) are satisfied with the Interreg MIS and only 7 seem to be less satisfied with it. Concerning the MIS interface and its ease of management, 80 respondents are satisfied with it, 9 are not pleased and 30 expressed moderate opinions about it.

Regarding the adequacy of the training material for the use of the MIS, the majority of the beneficiaries (76) are rather or very satisfied, 10 of them are not pleased and 33 seem to be neither satisfied nor dissatisfied.

Finally, 64 beneficiaries declared that they have knowledge of all actions and potentials of the MIS, while 41 out of 119 respondents expressed moderate opinion.

Figure 6.2: Overview of the MIS by Beneficiaries



7. Objective D. Analysis of the implementation of the Communication Strategy

The evaluation assesses the effectiveness of communication activities at different levels:

- Programme level
- Partner Country level
- Project level

7.1 Evaluation question D1: Quality and effectiveness of the Programme communication strategy

The evaluation assesses both the quality of the communication strategy and the effectiveness of its implementation:

- Outline of the communication strategy and resources for its implementation
- Operational planning of the communication activities by annual work plans
- Implementation status and effectiveness of the planned communication activities and communication tools to implement the communication strategy
- Achievement of communication result and impact indicator target values by end of 2020

This activity addresses the following evaluation questions:

- Is the strategy for programme communication and the yearly plans sound?
- Does communication contribute to reaching the specific programme objectives?
- How effective are the approaches and activities for reaching the communication objectives (e.g. for involving competent partners)?
- Are all the indicators foreseen in the Communication Strategy fulfilled at this stage of the programming period?

Evaluation findings D1

The following documents have been taken under consideration for the communication and publicity actions of the Programme:

- *Communication Strategy*. It was presented and approved during the 2nd JMC Meeting of the Interreg IPA II Cross-Border Cooperation Programme "Greece – Albania 2014-2020. The Communication Strategy defines in detail the necessary information and publicity

measures for the communication of the Cooperation Programme, is foreseen by Regulation (EU) No.447/2014, which also defines the content and the strategy of the information and publicity actions. It is worth to mention that in 2018, 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.

- *Information and Publicity (I&P) Guide*. It is a manual that includes requirements for all beneficiaries and implementing contractors of beneficiaries and financing agreements in order to comply with EU Regulations and Guidelines regarding their communication activities. The manual mainly covers the way the EU identity should be promoted. It sets out requirements and guidelines for websites, written material, press conferences, presentations, invitations, signs, commemorative plaques and all other tools used to highlight EU participation in projects/ interventions. In addition, it offers tools designed to enable the development of a dynamic communication strategy.
- Finally, in the framework of consolidating the capital built by the Programme, a Capitalization Strategy was prepared and approved by the members of the Joint Monitoring Committee in June 2019. The Capitalization strategy aims to increase the visibility of the Programme and projects results to citizens and key decision makers as well as to transfer of project-generated knowledge and to support good policy making. For achieve these aims, the capitalization strategy includes a brief description for proposed actions and tools.

According to the schedule for the implementation of Communication Actions, there are 3 stages of Communication Strategy:

1st stage (2015 – 2016): General Information about the Programme (inaugural event)

2nd Stage (2016 – 2020): Creation of a particular image 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 during 2016:

- ↳ Hosting of the EU Flag on May 2018 at the Managing Authority premises
- ↳ 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 4 calls for project proposals that were launched in 2016 and 2019. The large number of info-days in all participating regions covered all eligible areas of the Programme.

Regarding the results of the 5 Calls for proposals, it can be said that they prove the achievement of the goals, since:

- A high number of proposals submitted
- A low number of proposals did not pass the 1st phase evaluation; this shows that the information provided during the info-days was accurate and the message was passed.
- A high number of new beneficiaries got involved in projects.

2016 was the first year of actual implementation of the communication strategy, with the launch of two calls. Also, 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

Following the launching of two calls in the previous year, and the respective info-days that followed, 2017 was also the year of evaluation. In this regard, 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.

Regarding the 3rd stage (2020-2023), as the projects are not fully implemented, no results have been produced yet.

The MA/JS also participates in the networks of the INTERACT Programme that focus on capitalization and dissemination of project results.

On the 17th of November 2020, DIADYMA SA, as a beneficiary of the Greece-Albania Programme, participated in the “Green Trip Project - Greenpoint Mob: Local Waste Management Unit of Kastoria/Green point infrastructure - Greece Route 2” with subject “Nothing goes to waste”. In this project from “EU in my region”, an employee of DIADYMA SA, Evgenia Karapatsiou who is responsible for the reuse centers management, discussed via Instagram live with the influencer Alexandra Diona.

Also it is worth mentioning that all the approved projects have the obligation to send **data to keep.eu** which is a free, comprehensive and searchable database on Territorial Cooperation projects, project partners and programmes (including cross-border cooperation programmes within the scope of the Instrument for Pre-Accession and the European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument). It covers the financing periods starting in 2000.

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.

EC-DAY 2017(05/09/2017)

During 2017, the Programme participated in the celebration of the European Cooperation Day (EC-DAY) for 2017 in Argostoli, Kefalonia (GR). The 2017 –EC-DAY “No Plastic Challenge” was co-organised with the ‘Balkan – Mediterranean 2014-2020’ Transnational Programme. More than 400 people were informed about the Programme and its environmental values.

EC-DAY 2018 (28/9/2018)

The activity implemented was titled “For a world full of colours” and was in line with the theme adopted by Interact on “Painting our Future Together”. The activity involved pupils from Konitsa and took place at the Central Municipal Library of Konitsa. The pupils were informed about what EU does and the benefits of EU and the Programme in their area. More than 100 pupils participated in the event. Cotton Bags and drawing material were distributed to the participants, as part of the effort.

EC-DAY 2019 (28&29/9/2019)

The activity implemented was titled "Treasure Hunt". Two events took place, one at Kipoi Epirus (Greece) with 43 participants and one in Gjirokaster (Albania) with 40 participants. In the areas of Vikos-Aoos UNESCO Global Geopark with the cooperation of the project THEMA, the Treasure Hunt was based on a story of a wedding back in the previous century, in 1928. The father of the bride offered the groom with a contract with all the things he gave as presents to the new couple.

in the areas of Gjirokastra, Benja and Permet with the cooperation of the project THEMA, the Treasure Hunt was based on a story of a little boy grew to be a great "chronican" of the stone city and his "Chronicle in Stone" is the testament that hides a great value treasure to be discovered.

LOGO of the Programme

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.

Website of the Programme

In 2017, the new website of the Programme was finalized and is operational from 2017. It provides 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.. The website also contains sections of news, events, partner search facility. The main features of the website are in line with the modern trends in web design. Moreover, it offers visual harmonization with the Interreg family. Thus the website is the main tool that beneficiaries use in order to communicate with MA/JS.

Events

- In 2015, one Launching Event of the Programming Period 2014-2020 was organized in Thessaloniki (GR) in June and one Launching Event was organized in Korca, (AL) in November.
- 6 Info-days were organised in total for the promotion of the 1st Call for Strategic Project Proposals in Feb-March 2016 in both countries
- 5 Info-days were organised in total for the promotion of the 2nd Call for Ordinary Project Proposals in June-July 2016 in both countries

- 4 Info-days were organized on project implementation of the 1st and 2nd Calls (2 in Greece and 2 in Albania) in May-June 2018.
- 3 Info-days were organized for the promotion for the 4th call for project proposals.
- In 2019, one Communication Seminar was organized in March 2019 in the eligible area to inform and train the Projects Communication Managers on the Programme requirements regarding information and publicity (Information and Publicity Guide, Communication and Dissemination Rules, Introduction on Social Media, etc).

Finally, the European Commission's Green Trip - Ding Dong campaign, "Ready for the Green Challenge" which launches local sustainability initiatives to encourage young people to play an active role in combating climate change, is implemented. The Ding Dong Green Challenge is an initiative of the European Commission's Directorate-General for Regional and Urban Policy (DG REGIO).

The European Commission selected Greece along with 4 other countries (Germany, Belgium, Portugal, Lithuania) to implement the Green Road Trip (Green Internet Trip).

The campaign is addressed at young people aged between 18-24, a critical age group that is difficult to reach with the classic ways of communication.

Local social media influencers from the selected regions visit eligible areas in order to highlight "green" projects / actions / initiatives and show their benefits to local communities.

One of the projects selected by the Commission, after a proposal from the Joint Secretariat, participating in the "EU in my region" campaign, is the WASTE REACT project ("Interreg IPA CBC Greece-Albania 2014-2020") (Route 2) .

It is worth noting that due to the COVID-19 pandemic, planned events did not take place, but the program proceeded to the production and distribution of protective masks.

Output indicators:
Table 7.1 – Output Indicators of the Communication Strategy 2015-2017

Indicator	Number of events (info-days, conferences, seminars, fairs, Programme Annual events, etc.)					Number of participants				
	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Value achieved by 31/12/2019	2	14	1	7	2		770	400	432	102
Comments / explanations	2 opening events took place, 1 in Thessaloniki during launching of the 2014-2020 PP of the ETC Programmes on 22nd & 23rd of June 2015 and 1 in Vlore (AL) on the 20th November 2015	1) 2 launching events: 1 in Greece & 1 in Albania 2) 6 Info-days on the 1st Call for Strategic Project Proposals 3) 5 Info-days on the 2nd Call for Ordinary Project Proposals 4) 2016 Running Marathon so-organised with the IPA CB Greece-Albania 2007-2013 Programme and the Balkan-Mediterranean 2014-2020 Transnational Programme	EC-DAY 2017 "no plastic challenge", co-organised with the Balkan-Mediterranean 2014-2020 Transnational Programme	1) EC Day 2018 on Project Implementation 2) 4 Info-days on 3) 3 Info-days on 4th Call	1)EC Day 2019 Communication Seminar 2) EC-Day 2019, a Treasure Hunt in Vikos-Aoos UNESCO Global Geopark		Info-days 1st call: 321 Info-days 2nd call: 369 2016 EC-DAY: 80 runners	2017 EC-DAY: 400 participants	EC Day 2018: 100 4 info-days on Proj. Implementation: 215 3 info-days on 4th Call: 117	1) EC-Day Communication seminar: 19 participants 2)EC-Day: 83 participants

7.2 Evaluation question D2: Effectiveness of communication activities at Partner Country level

The evaluation will assess the following aspects:

- The capacity of Antenna Office and Albanian National Bodies to fulfil their communication tasks
- The effectiveness of support provided by the JS to Antenna Office and Albanian National Bodies in order to deliver their communication activities

This activity addresses the following evaluation questions:

- How does communication at national level contribute to the implementation of the overall communication strategy?
- How is it possible to improve the visibility of the programme?

Evaluation findings D2

Communication activities should be properly planned in all Projects.

The implementation of the Information and Publicity Strategy has to start as soon as the project has been approved. The project's requirements for communication activities are indicated in detail in the Project Beneficiaries Guidebook for Information and Publicity. This Guidebook is prepared in order to help the beneficiaries, who deal with Projects funded by the Interreg IPA II Cross-border Cooperation Programme "Greece-Albania 2014-2020" to comply with EU Regulations and Guidelines and stay aligned with their responsibilities concerning information and publicity measures.

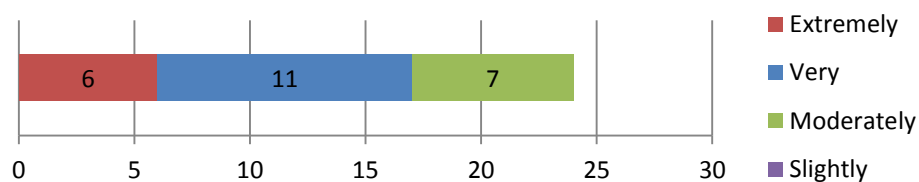
According to this Guidebook, communication has to focus on highlighting the role of the EU as a beneficiary and on the achievements and impact of the action, not on administrative or procedural milestones. In order to maximise the impact of communication efforts, beneficiaries must keep in mind that:

- Activities need to be timely
- Information used must be accurate
- The right audience(s) should be targeted
- Messages should be interesting for target audience(s)
- Activities should be appropriate in terms of resources spent and expected impact

At the following pages the results of the online survey are presented, regarding information and publicity actions, in accordance with the **responses of authorities and beneficiaries**.

The majority of JMC members (17 out of 24) are extremely or very satisfied with the contribution of communication strategy of the Programme to the goal of greater visibility and awareness (Figure 7.1).

Figure 7.1 – Contribution of communication strategy of the Programme to a greater visibility and awareness



According to the beneficiaries’ opinions, as illustrated in Figure 7.2, **68,9% of the correspondents declared that the information and publicity actions implemented by the Managing Authority/Joint Secretariat are very sufficient**, 15,4% of beneficiaries stated that the information and publicity actions are moderately sufficient, and only 17,7% of them state the opinion of furtherly organizing such actions for the sufficiency of information and publicity actions. Finally there is one respondent that stated the publicity actions are not at all sufficient.

Figure 7.2 - Information and publicity actions implemented by the Managing Authority/Joint Secretariat

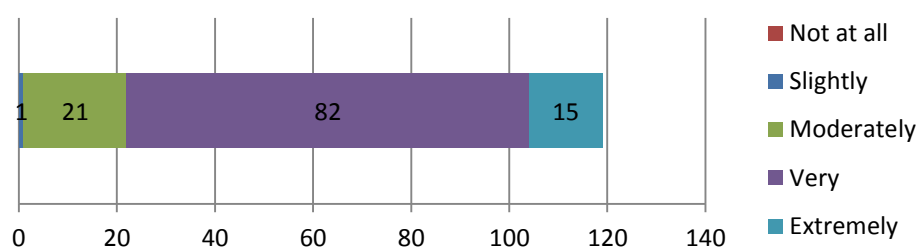
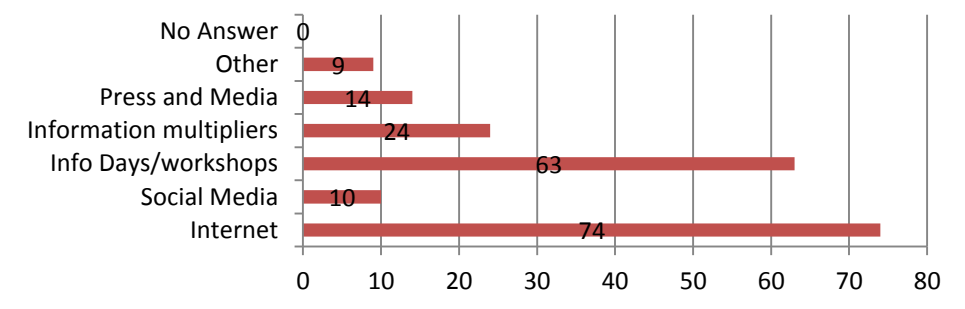


Figure 7.3 shows the publicity actions that the beneficiaries used to submit an application for funding. The **Programme website is the first source of information** (62,2%), while the participation in info days or workshops represents also a large share of the answers (52,9%). Moreover, 10 respondents declared that have been informed through the social media as a useful mean for information, 24 respondents mentioned that they were informed in submitting an application for funding by information multipliers, among other choices (relevant bodies to the Programme, managing authorities etc.). Also, 14 respondents were informed by press and media (8,4%). Apart from the above answers there were also

beneficiaries that have been informed by other source such as other beneficiaries and potential partners and External Experts.

Figure 7.3 - Publicity actions through which beneficiaries are informed to submit application for funding



7.2 Evaluation questions D3: Quality of the communication strategy implementation at project level

The evaluation will assess the following aspects:

- Availability of qualified project communication managers and sound communication plans (online-survey)
- The effectiveness of support provided by the JS to projects in order to deliver their communication tasks (online-survey)

This activity addresses the following evaluation questions:

- How effectively is communication planned and carried out at project level for involving relevant target groups and achieving the planned project outputs and results as well as supporting their transfer and sustainability?

Evaluation findings D3

The next figures present the **beneficiaries' opinions** related to the communication issues.

First of all, regarding the communication plan that applied by the Managing Authority / Joint Secretariat, the majority of the respondents agree and strongly agree that it is fueled continuously by corresponding actions and it uses a variety of communication tools. Also, according to Figure 7.4, the majority of the beneficiaries agree and strongly agree that the content of the communication plan is understandable and supports the submission of proposals. Only two beneficiaries seems to have issues in fully apprehending the content of the plan.

Figure 7.4 - Communication plan applied by the Managing Authority / Joint Secretariat

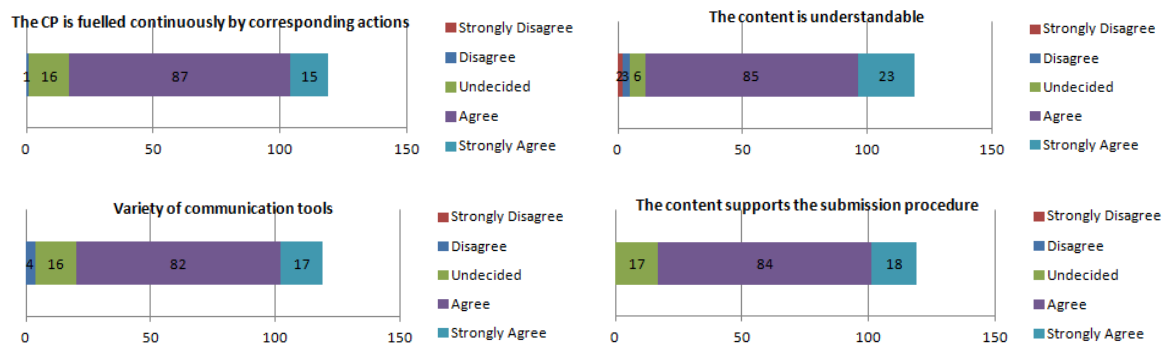
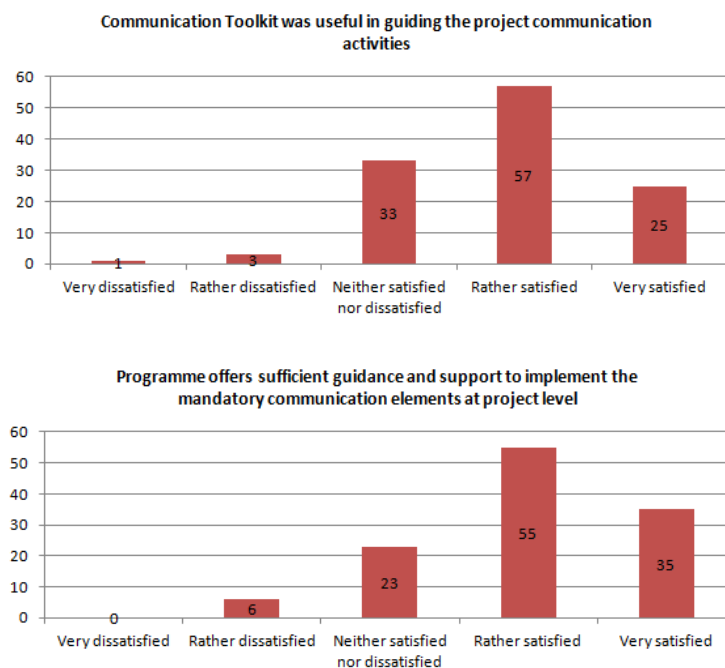


Figure 7.5 illustrates the effectiveness of support provided by the Joint Secretariat to Communication issues. In general, **respondents seem to be satisfied with the support provided by the Joint Secretariat**. 82 out of 119 beneficiaries mentioned that they are satisfied with the Communication Toolkit in guiding their project communication activities, while 88 respondents are satisfied with the guidance and support offered by the programme in order to implement the mandatory communication elements and the visual identity guidelines, such as the project logo and visual identity. Also 85 of the 119 beneficiaries are rather and very satisfied with the communication training for approved projects, while 87 of them declared their satisfaction with the communications actions that were organized in order to face the problems from the covid-19 pandemic. It is worth noting that only a minor percentage of beneficiaries seem to express some level of dissatisfaction for the specific issues.

Figure 7.5 - Effectiveness of the support provided by the Joint Secretariat to Communication issues



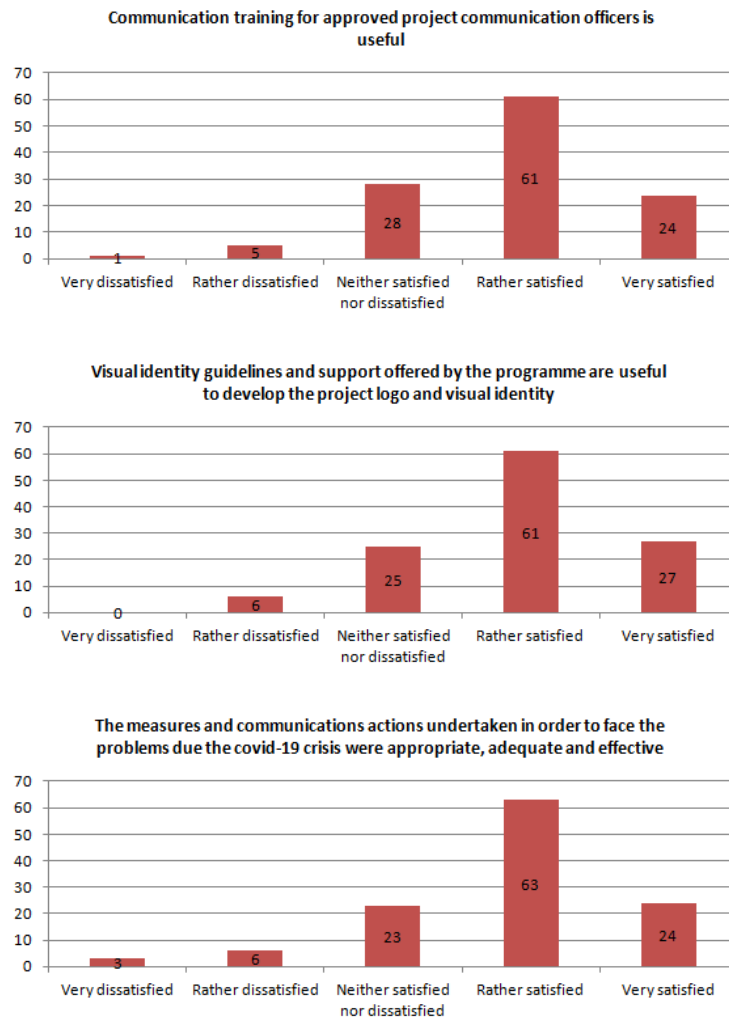


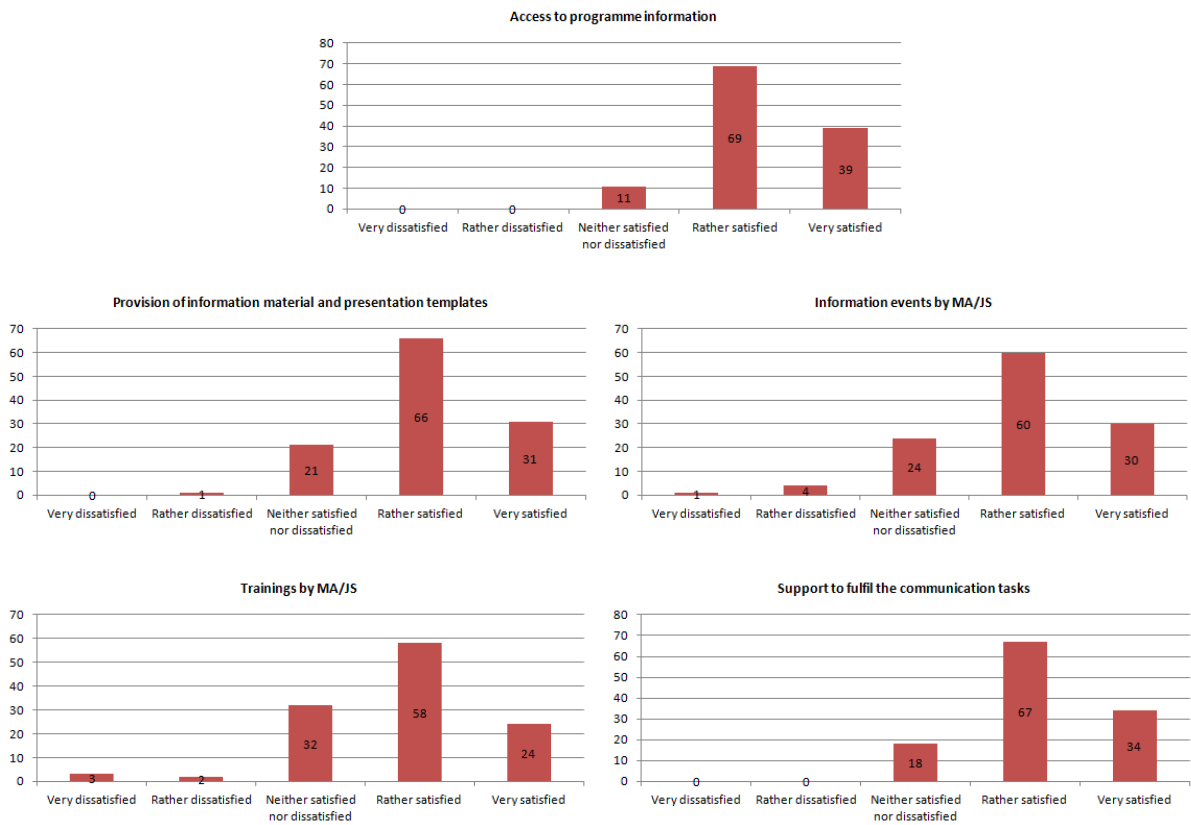
Figure 7.6 shows the effectiveness of support by the Managing Authority/Joint Secretariat to fulfil the tasks of the Interreg Programme projects. Regarding the access to Programme information by the Managing Authority/Joint Secretariat, 108 beneficiaries seem to be clearly satisfied, while only 11 of them expressed moderate satisfaction.

The majority of respondents are also satisfied with the information material and presentation templates given to the beneficiaries by the Managing Authority/Joint Secretariat, while only one of them seems to be rather dissatisfied.

Moreover, 90 beneficiaries are very pleased with the information events organized by the Managing Authority/Joint Secretariat while only 5 seem satisfied. 82 beneficiaries have received adequate training for the project implementation, however 5 beneficiaries state that, in their opinion, they are not adequately trained.

Finally, 101 respondents declared that they are satisfied with the support of the Managing Authority/Joint Secretariat to fulfil the communication tasks, while only 11 of them seem to be neither satisfied nor dissatisfied.

Figure 7.6 - Effectiveness of support by the Managing Authority/Joint Secretariat to fulfil the tasks of the Interreg Programme projects



8. Objective E. Analysis of progress in achieving the results of each specific objective, including potential bottlenecks and capacity of each Specific Objective to generate projects

8.1 Evaluation question E: Analysis of progress in achieving the results of each specific objective, including potential bottlenecks and capacity of each Specific Objective to generate projects

Evaluation questions task E

The evaluation assesses the level of achievement of the expected results by analyzing the first, second and third call projects and the achievements so far. The evaluation combines statistical analysis, which allows a first assessment, with a qualitative analysis. The assessment is carried out at the level of specific objectives and expected results.

The evaluation will assess the following aspects:

- Key figures on the 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th and 5th calls
- Screening of approved projects
- Progress according to indicators
- Target groups

This activity addresses the following evaluation questions:

- What is the progress in achieving the overall programme goal and the results of each specific objective?
- What is the progress of the programme in relation to milestones and targets defined in the performance framework?
- What is the potential of each specific objective to generate projects?
- Are the relevant target groups of the programme successfully involved as beneficiaries? How is the participation in terms of public and private actors as well as in relation to the geographical coverage of the programme area?
- Have synergies been created between the projects and the EUSAIR?

Key figures on the 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th and 5th call:

In the 1st, 2nd and 4th Calls for Proposals, 64 projects with an average funding of **828 thousands euro per project** were selected. The 2 Targeted Projects that was selected under the 3rd and the 5th Call for proposals have a total budget of €9.648.275,98.

The majority of projects are contributing to SO2.1 (28 out of 66), followed by SO1.1 (12 out of 66 while one project has been ended without any implementation) and SO1.3 (11 out of 66). 298 beneficiaries were selected for funding from all five call. This sums an average of 4.5 beneficiaries per project. The first call projects had 27 beneficiaries, the second call 192 participants, the third call 4 beneficiaries, the fourth call had 71 beneficiaries and, finally the fifth call had 4 beneficiaries.

Regarding the set milestones, the Programme's performance framework sets in total 4 milestones, two per Priority Axis. The milestones regarding the number of approved projects have already been achieved. The milestones regarding verified expenditures due to delays in the projects' implementation and the consequences from the COVID-19 pandemic are not expected to be achieved for 2020.

Also, it is worth noted that:

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 as an on-off criterion. This means that projects failing to justify how their projects will contribute to or respect the European Horizontal Principles, are considered ineligible, are 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. 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 website was procured and assigned with respect to the protocols and technical specifications suggested by the National Federation for Disabled Persons (GR).
 - All the info-days took place in locations with provisions for the accessibility of disabled persons.

- Through the implementation Information and Publicity Guide, 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".

Concerning **sustainable development**, 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 **authorities' opinions** related to measures of the Programme, in order to promote equal opportunities between men and women against discrimination, there were common responses among respondents:

- There are relevant evaluation criteria which gives **additional score** to the projects that **promote equal opportunities**
- The Programme promotes gender equality by **counting** the percentage of women participating in interventions and **calculating** the percentage of support allocated to women
- The Programme encourages **policies that promote equal opportunities**
- Equal opportunities is something that have been followed in **every activity**.

Regarding the planned measures of the Programme to promote **sustainable development**, respondents stated the following:

- It promotes two very important sectors - **agro-food industry** and **sustainable tourism**

- **“Environmental protection and sustainable development”** is one of the main Priority Axes of the Programme
- There are measures that ensure that interventions will not harm the environment and a solid **environmental impact analysis** is necessary for major interventions, as well

Finally, concerning the contribution of the Programme to promote sustainable development **horizontal principles**, respondents argued that:

- It promotes sustainable development through horizontal principals, by **giving priority to agro-food industry and sustainable tourism**
- It promotes sustainable development with the **selection of operations** which include contribution to **energy efficiency, renewable energy use, reduction of waste, recycling** etc.
- There are respective evaluation criteria which give **additional score** to the projects that contribute to the sustainable development horizontal principle.

The next figures present the **JMC’s members opinions** related to the achievement of the Programme’s priorities, the relation of the selected projects with other EU Policies and special issues.

Figure 8.1 illustrates the contribution of the selected projects to the achievement of Programme priorities. Specifically, **19 respondents out of 24 are very satisfied with the contribution of the projects to the Programme priorities** while 2 of them are **extremely** satisfied and 3 of them are moderately satisfied.

Figure 8.1 – Contribution of the selected projects to the achievement of Programme priorities

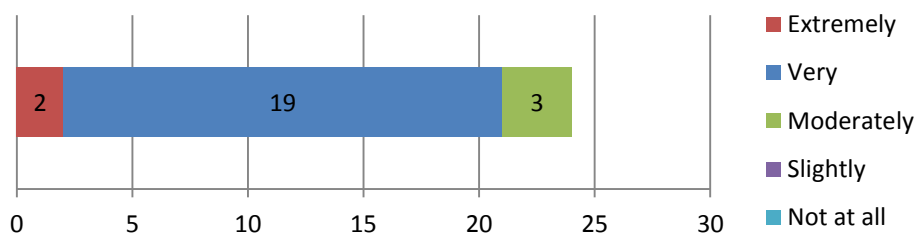
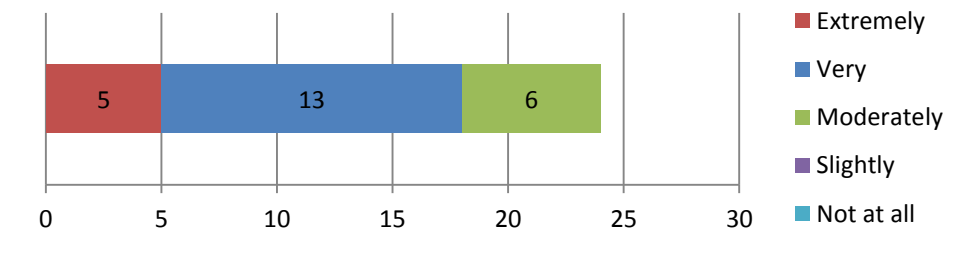


Figure 8.2 shows the respondents’ opinion regarding the relation of the selected projects with other EU Policies. In particular, **13 respondents out of 24 are clearly convinced that the selected projects take into a high level consideration other EU Policies (EU 2020, EUSAIR etc)**, while 6 Authorities moderately agree with this statement.

Figure 8.2– Relevance of Selected Projects with other EU Policies

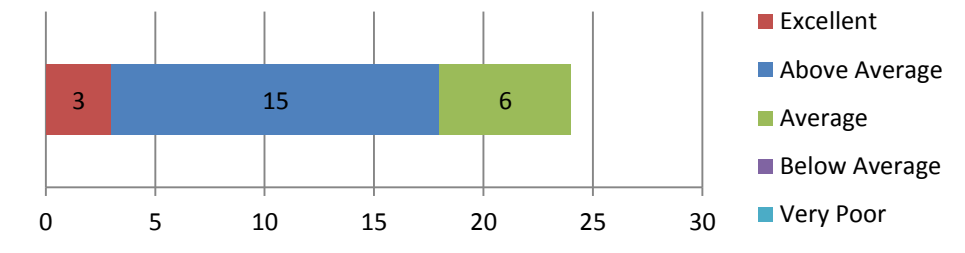


At the following pages the results of the online survey are presented, regarding the progress of every S.O., according to the Survey.

[SO 1.1 Increase the capacity of cross-border infrastructure in transport, water and waste management](#)

According to Figure 8.3, the progress of S.O. 1.1 is at a positive level, given that 18 out of 24 respondents stated that progress is above average or excellent. 6 respondents stated that the progress is average.

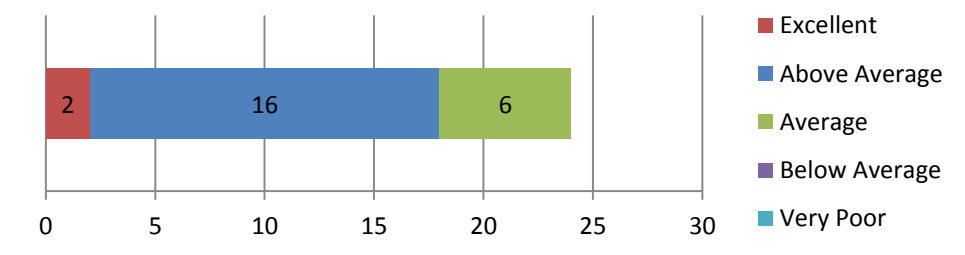
Figure 8.3 – Progress towards S.O. 1.1. based on selected projects



[SO 1.2 Increase the effectiveness of environmental protection and sustainable use of natural resources](#)

According to Figure 8.4, the progress of S.O. 1.2 is at a positive level, given that almost 75% of the respondents stated that the progress is above average or excellent, while 6 respondents declared that the progress is average.

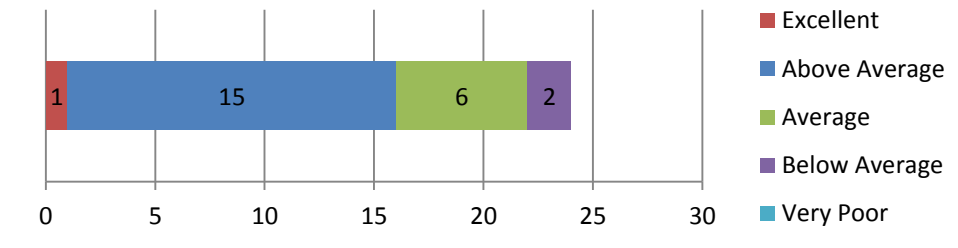
Figure 8.4 – Progress towards the S.O. 1.2



S.O. 1.3 Increase energy efficiency and the use of RES

According to Figure 8.5, the progress of S.O. 1.3 is at a positive level, given that almost **67% of the respondents stated that progress is above average or excellent**. However, there are 2 respondents that consider the progress of the certain SO as below average.

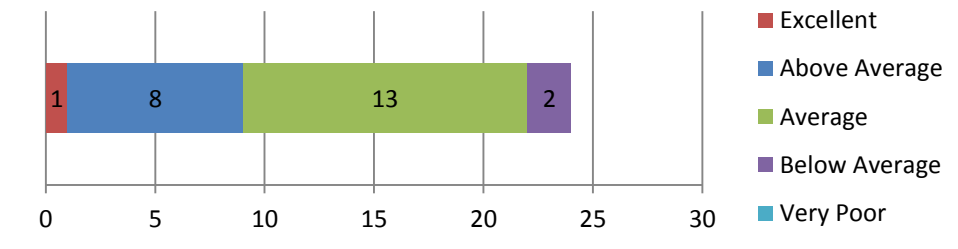
Figure 8.5 – Progress towards S.O. 1.3 based on selected projects



S.O. 1.4 Improve the effectiveness of risk prevention and disaster management with a focus on forest fires

According to Figure 8.6, the progress of S.O. 1.4 is at an average level, given that 13 out of 24 respondents stated such an answer. There are 9 out of the 24 respondents that declared that the progress is excellent or above average, while 2 respondents consider the existing progress as below average.

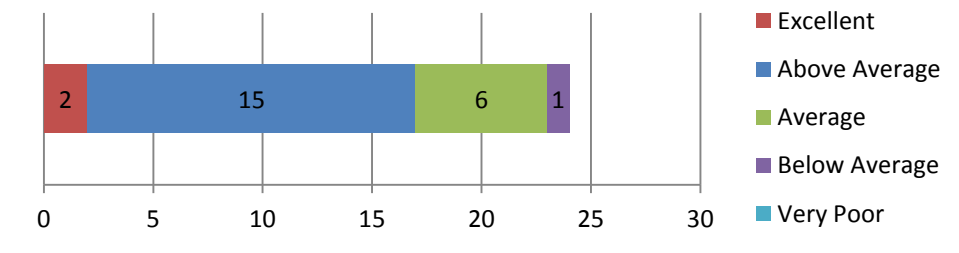
Figure 8.6 – Progress towards S.O. 1.4 based on selected projects



S.O. 2.1 Preserve cultural and natural resources as a prerequisite for tourism development of the cross-border area

According to Figure 8.7, almost 71% of the respondents stated that existing progress of S.O. 2.1. is above average or excellent, while there is 1 respondent stating that the existing progress is below average.

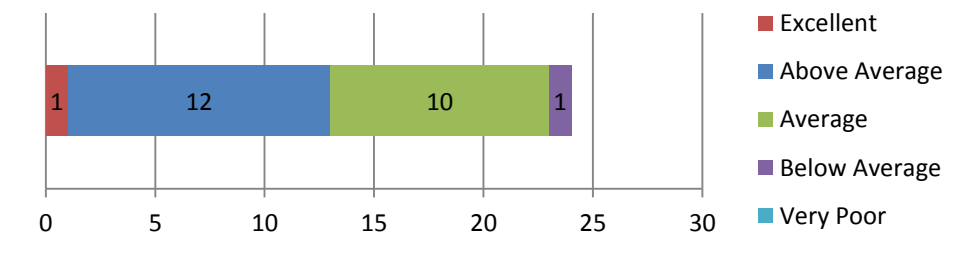
Figure 8.7 – Progress towards S.O. 2.1 based on selected projects



S.O. 2.2 Improve cross-border capacity to support entrepreneurship, business survival and competitiveness

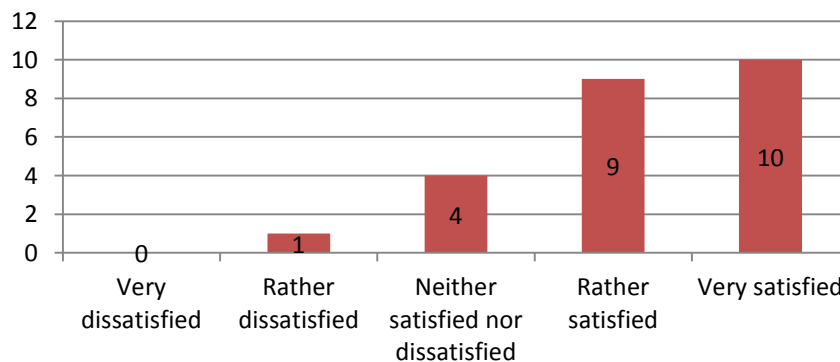
According to Figure 8.8, opinions among respondents referring to the progress towards the S.O. 2.2 are separated to above average (12) and average (10), while there are 2 respondents answering that the existing progress is either excellent or below average.

Figure 8.8 – Progress towards S.O. 2.2 based on selected projects



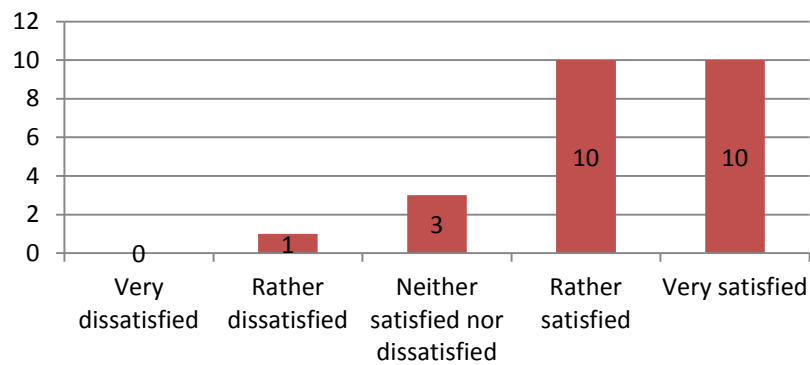
The **JMC members** rated the following questions on the Monitoring and Management of Programme implementation with a degree from 1 to 5, with 5 being the best score. Regarding the satisfaction of JMC members on the progress in the CP-implementation presented in the annual implementation report, it seems that the 79% of JMC members are rather or very satisfied, while only 1 of them seems to be rather dissatisfied (Figure 8.9).

Figure 8.9 – Progress in the CP-implementation presented in the annual implementation report



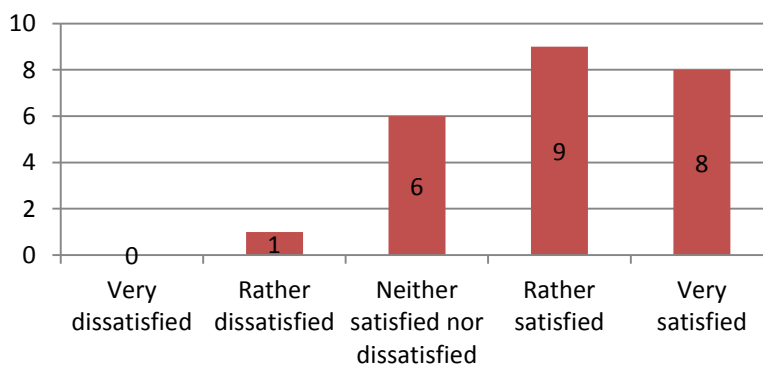
According to Figure 8.10, 20 of the JMC members declared that they have an adequate information basis to plan calls for different target groups in a strategic manner. Only one member seems to be rather dissatisfied with the level of information basis that they have received.

Figure 8.10 – Adequate information basis to plan calls for the different target groups in a strategic manner



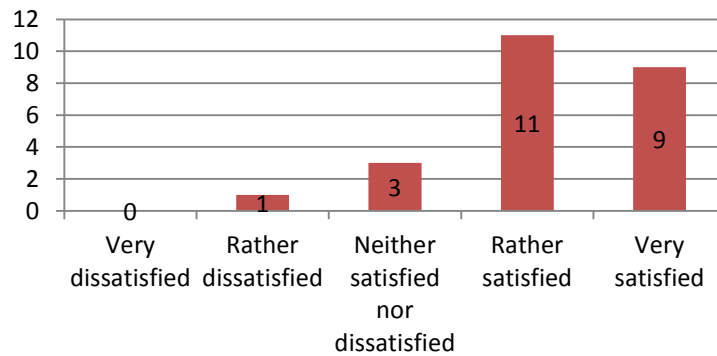
The majority of the respondents from the JMC members (71%) stated that they receive regular and user-friendly information on the Programme’s implementation progress (Figure 8.11). Only one member seems to need further information on the Programme’s implementation progress.

Figure 8.11 – Evaluation of information, about the Programme’s implementation progress



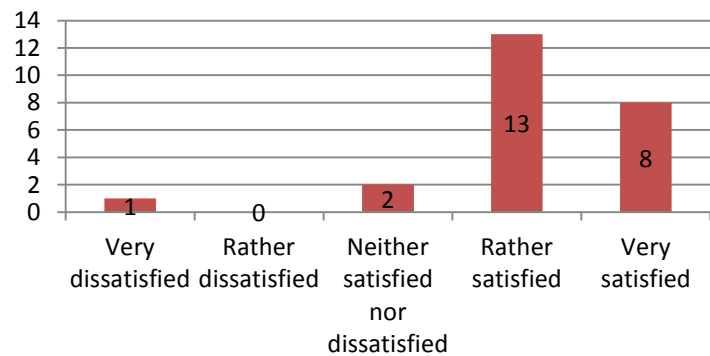
Also, 83% of the respondents from the JMC members stated that they receive regular and user-friendly information on the implications to meet the n+3 rule and achieve the performance framework targets for the end of 2020 (Figure 8.12), while only 1 respondent seems to be require further information.

Figure 8.12 – Evaluation of information, about the implications to fulfill the n+3 rule and meet the performance framework targets for the end of 2020



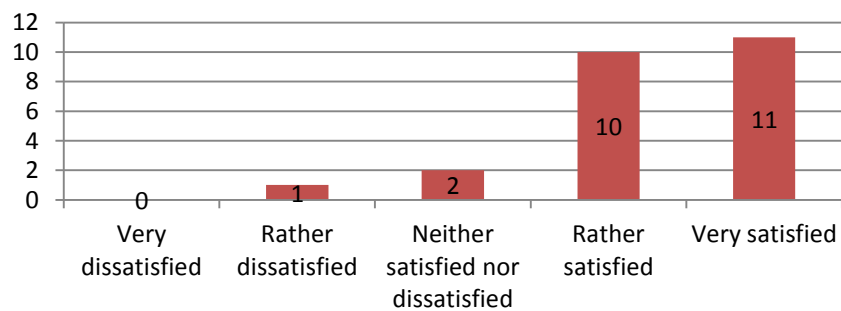
According to Figure 8.13, 21 out of 24 respondents from the JMC members, declared that they are rather or very satisfied with the information provided to them about the financial progress of the Programme, while only 1 respondent seems to be require further information.

Figure 8.13 – Evaluation of information, about the financial progress of the Programme



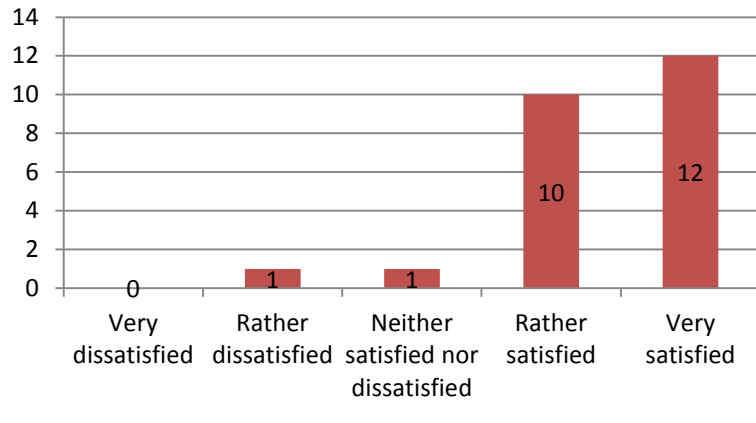
According to Figure 8.14, the majority of the respondents (21 out of 24) see to be rather or very satisfied with the degree that planned expenditures for Technical Assistance projects are explained in the TA budget.

Figure 8.14 – Evaluation of clearance on explanation for the TA expenditures



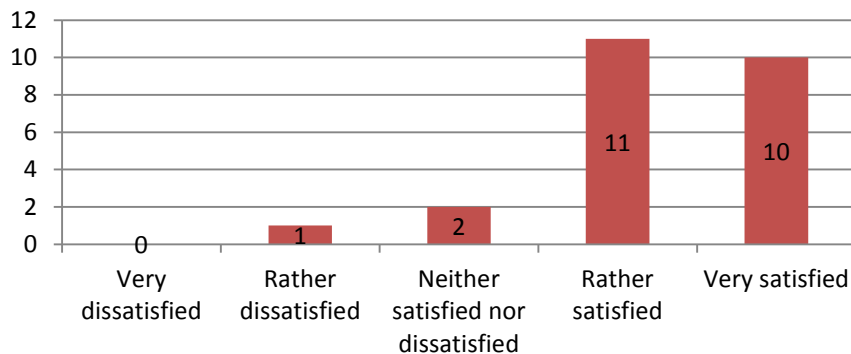
Also, 22 out of 24 respondents from the JMC members, mentioned that the progress in spending the TA budget is clearly presented to them by the beneficiaries (Figure 8.15). However, one respondent seems to be either satisfied nor dissatisfied with the information provided to them related to this issue and one respondent stated that is very dissatisfied.

Figure 8.15 – Progress in spending the TA budget is clearly presented to the JMC



Regarding the information provided as a basis for decision making in the JMC, the majority of the respondents (21 out of 24) seems to be rather or very satisfied and only seems to be rather dissatisfied (Figure 8.16).

Figure 8.16 – Evaluation on Information for decision making in the JMC



At the following pages the results of the online survey are presented, regarding the **existence of changes in socio-economic level** that could affect the S.O.s, as well as the need to revise the Programme's priorities, according to the **respondents**.

Figure 8.17 shows that 16 respondents declared that there are major changes having an impact on policies and activities under S.O. 1.1, while 8 of them stated that there are no changes with an impact on policies and activities related to cross-border infrastructure in transport, water and waste management.

Figure 8.17 – Major changes having an impact on policies and activities under S.O. 1.1

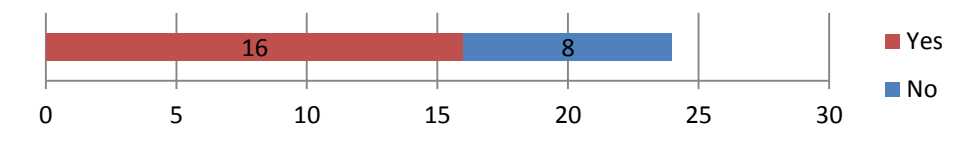


Figure 8.18 presents the results on the question if there is a need to review the Programme in order to address new / increased needs or priorities, provided that there are changes having an impact on the policies and activities of S.O. 1.1. 12 of the respondents argued that probably there is a need for revision, while 3 stated that there is no need.

Figure 8.18 – Need to review the Programme in order to address new / increased needs or priorities

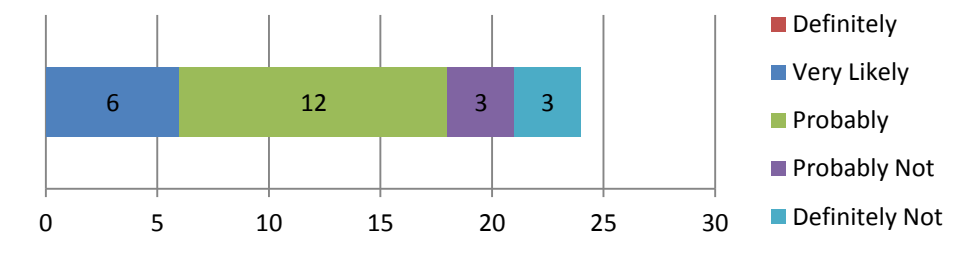
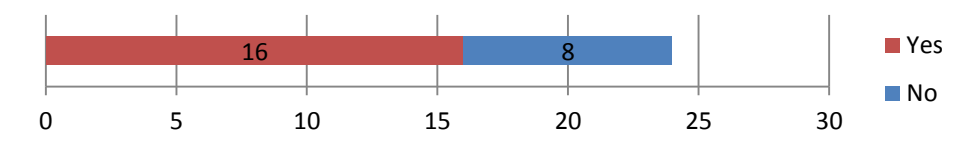


Figure 8.19 shows that 16 of the respondents declared that there are major changes in progress having an impact on policies and activities under S.O. 1.2, while 8 of them stated that there are no changes having an impact on policies and activities related to environmental protection and sustainable use of natural resources.

Figure 8.19 – Major changes having an impact on policies and activities under S.O. 1.2



On the question if there is a need to revise the Programme to address new / increased needs or priorities, provided that there are changes having an impact on the policies and activities of S.O. 1.2., the positive and negative responses are **almost equally distributed** (Figure 8.20).

Figure 8.20 – Need to revise the Programme to address new / increased needs or priorities

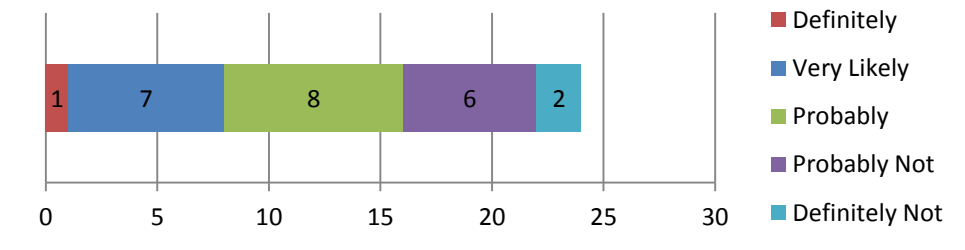
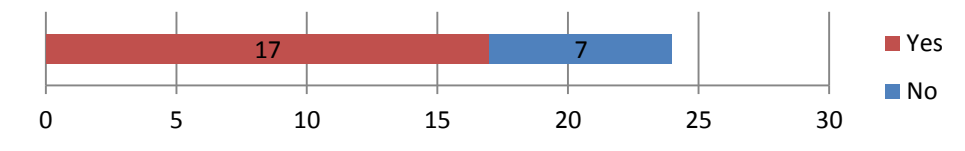


Figure 8.21, shows that 17 Respondents declared that there are major changes having an impact on policies and activities under S.O. 1.3, while 7 of them stated that there are no changes with an impact on policies and activities related to energy efficiency and the use of RES issues.

Figure 8.21 – Major changes having an impact on policies and activities under S.O. 1.3



Concerning the need to review the Programme to address new / increased needs or priorities, provided that there are changes having an impact on the policies and activities of this S.O., 10 respondents argued that probably there is a need for revision (Figure 8.22).

Figure 8.22 – Need to revise the Programme to address new / increased needs or priorities

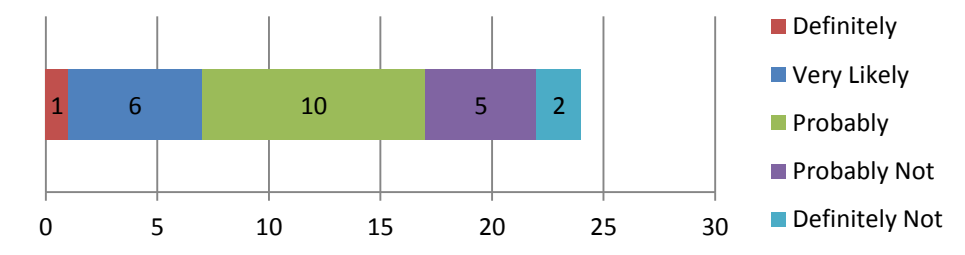
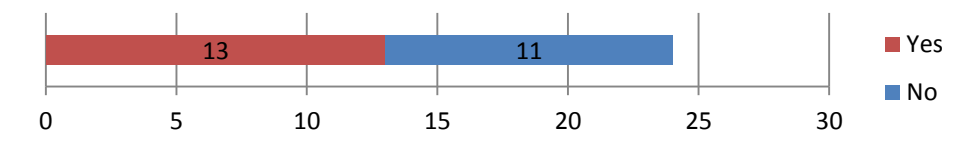


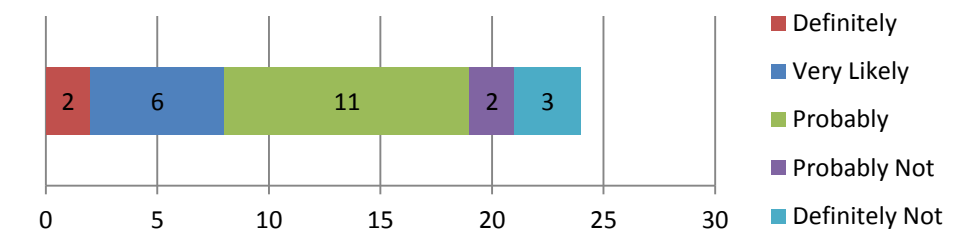
Figure 8.23 shows that 13 Respondents declared that there are major changes having an impact on policies and activities under the S.O. 1.4, while 11 stated that there are no changes with an impact on policies and activities related to prevention and disaster management with a focus on forest fires.

Figure 8.23 – Major changes having an impact on policies and activities under S.O. 1.4



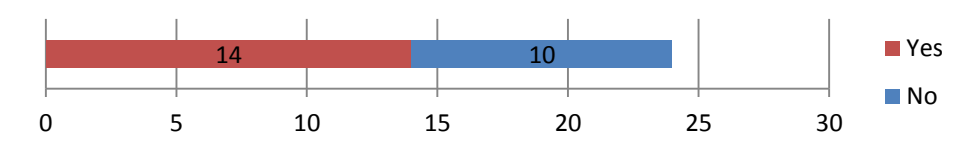
At Figure 8.24, the answers on the question if there is a need to review the Program to address new / increased needs or priorities are presented, provided that there are changes having an impact on the policies and activities of this S.O. 11 recipients argued that maybe there is a need for revision, while 8 of them declared that there is need for revision and 5 of them stated that there is no need.

Figure 8.24 – Need to revise the Programme to address new / increased needs or priorities



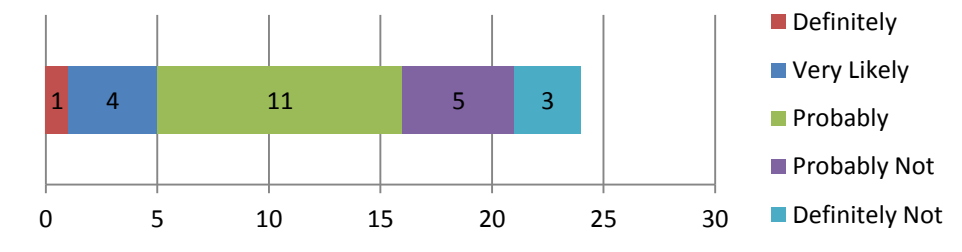
14 of the respondents stated that there are major changes having an impact on policies and activities under S.O. 2.1 , while 10 of them stated that there are no changes with an impact on policies and activities related to preserving cultural and natural resources, as a prerequisite for tourism development of the cross-border area (Figure 8.25).

Figure 8.25 – Major changes having an impact on policies and activities under S.O. 2.1



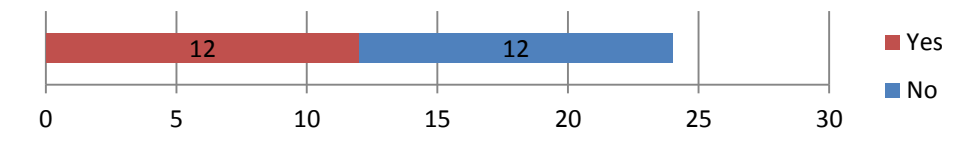
In addition, taking into consideration that there are changes having an impact on the policies and activities of this S.O., 11 Respondents argued that maybe there is a need for revision, while 8 stated that there is no need (Figure 8.26).

Figure 8.26 – Need to revise the Programme to address new / increased needs or priorities



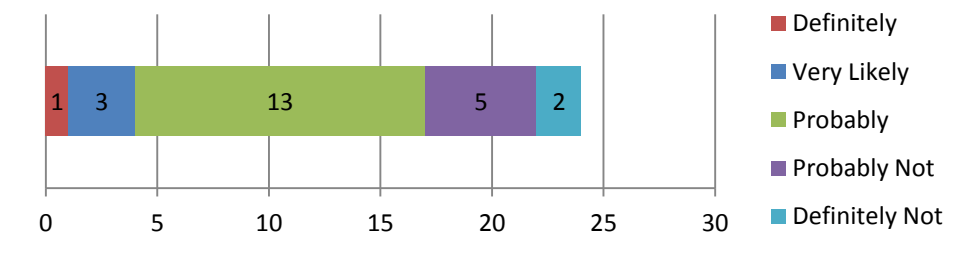
On the question if there is a need to revise the Programme to address new / increased needs or priorities, provided that there are changes having an impact on the policies and activities of S.O. 1.2. related to the support of entrepreneurship, business survival and competitiveness., positive and negative responses are **equally distributed** (Figure 8.27).

Figure 8.27 – Major changes having an impact on policies and activities under S.O. 2.2



Moreover, 13 respondents stated that maybe there is a need for revision, while 7 believe that there is no need (Figure 8.28).

Figure 8.28 – Need to revise the Programme to address new / increased needs or priorities



9. Conclusions – Recommendations – Lessons learnt

Summarizing the findings of the previous analysis, the following conclusions are drawn per evaluation objective:

Objective A. Effectiveness of the Cooperation Program (CBCP)

The Evaluator, taking into account the results of the polls, concludes that the high level of cooperation of the beneficiaries with the management structures of the program (MA / JS, CA, AA) is evident. However, there is some room for optimizing the tools and procedures of the Programme, as well as the communication tools and those that can ensure a continuous and consistent workflow. It is interesting that the info-days emerge as the most useful tools in the preparation of the proposals, followed by the answers through the website in the FAQs section, as well as via e-mails.

In addition, it is clear that selection procedures are considered transparent and meritocratic.

Objective B. Analysis of the effectiveness and efficiency of the management of the entire project cycle (project generation, assessment, selection, monitoring, reporting, reimbursement)

From the evaluation work in relation to the submission procedures, results the high satisfaction of the beneficiaries from the clarity of the invitation and its annexes, the submission procedures and the functionality of the submission forms. Moreover, a high level of satisfaction was expressed in relation to the support provided by MA / JS during the preparation of the proposals. The use of transparent and meritocratic selection criteria and procedures did not leave much room for sound complaints, a fact that justifies the small number of complaints submitted.

In relation to the project support procedures, the Evaluator taking into account the results of the surveys, concludes that on the one hand, projects that met the required conditions were selected, as the application selection procedures and the information provided to the JMC members were appropriate.

On the other hand, there were problems mainly due to bureaucratic procedures and also delays due to the fact that the Albanian beneficiaries had to pay part of the pre-financing with their own resources, while another important reason for delays in the timely implementation of some of the planned actions is due to the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic effects.

However, by the end of 2020, the majority of beneficiaries had submitted progress reports on time, as well as a request for verification of expenditures, while on-the-spot verification checks were carried out by the competent verifiers according to the verification program of CA. The beneficiaries throughout the implementation and administration of the projects express high satisfaction with their cooperation with JS, even expressing satisfaction with the adequacy of the guidelines for the submission of the progress report. In order to submit verification requests, there appears a need to improve the procedures provided, even

though the MA has already established specific flexibility rules for verifications while through a COVID-19 pandemic.

Moreover, the findings of the research on the beneficiaries show the increased use of manuals and guides during the implementation of the projects, as well as the information provided through the info-days, while there is a significantly lower percentage regarding the satisfaction from the use of social media.

Objective C. Monitoring System: analysis of the functionality and effectiveness of the programme monitoring system

Regarding the use of MIS, the high satisfaction of the beneficiaries is evident both in terms of its functionality, the simplicity of its structure, the possibilities provided and the training material for its use.

Objective D. Analysis of the implementation of the Communication Strategy

As it is seen from the findings, the Programme on the one hand has clearly identified the issues of Communication Strategy through the relevant programme text, but also by the Implementation & Publicity Guide and the Capitalization Strategy, and on the other hand it has succeeded through the use of various communication methods to achieve the objectives of 2 out of the 3 planned stages, i.e., the 1st stage concerning the provision of general information about the Programme and the 2nd stage concerning the formation of an opinion on the Programme from different common - objectives. In particular, 2 Launching Events, 18 Info-days, one Communication Seminar and EC-DAY during 2017, 2018 and 2019 were organized. Regarding the 3rd phase of the dissemination of results, the publicity measures have been implemented to a small extent due to the fact that the projects have not been completed, as well as due to the restrictions imposed by the spread of the pandemic on the organization of live events and publicity foreseen actions such as Single-Day Conferences/ Conferences/ Fairs, Press Conferences, Outdoor Advertising, Newsletters, Informational Guide, etc.

In addition, it is worth noting that the members of JMC state that they are very satisfied with the implementation of the Communication Strategy of the Program, as its goals are largely achieved. The project website is the most important information tool for JMC members, followed by info-days.

Finally, the project beneficiaries seem very satisfied with the Communication Plan and Communication Toolkit provided by MA / JS, while it seems that the support provided by MA / JS to address the publicity issues caused by the COVID-19 pandemic was also significant.

Objective E. Analysis of progress in achieving the results of each specific objective, including potential bottlenecks and capacity of each Specific Objective to generate projects

Taking into account the findings of the survey of JMC members, it seems that the 66 selected projects serve the objectives of the programme to a very large extent. In fact, a significant portion of JMC members say they have had enough information to design invitations to different target groups in a strategic way.

It is worth noting that there are a number of changes that have an impact on the majority of S.O. of the programme, which raises the need for reform of the Program in order to serve new needs and priorities.

In terms of the progress of the indicators, there is a satisfactory upward change in the Programme's result indicators, which is considered encouraging given that the projects are still in the implementation phase. The only exception is indicator 3 (% of cross-border vertical axes to Egnatia motorway either constructed or with sufficient maturity to be constructed) which has not yet received a price as the COMOBILION project should be completed.

In particular, the result indicator 1 (Volume of urban effluents under secondary treatment) and result indicator 2 (Percentage of solid waste managed sustainably) approach the achievement value for 2023 (fall far by 4.4% and 5.6%, respectively), while progress was presented by the indicators 5 (Level of preservation of the protected natural CB areas) and 6 (Energy Efficiency Awareness Barometer) during the period 2018-2020, but also by the indicator 7 (Area damaged by forest fires 5yr rolling annual average), especially for the Albanian eligible area. Indicator 9 (Annual overnight tourist stays of the cross border area) also showed an increase, but due to the COVID-19 pandemic, it is expected to see what the course of its development will be, since tourism is a major affected sector.

Regarding the output indicators, on the other hand, the majority has a low or even zero value, which is due to the delays in the implementation of the projects.

The above findings as a result of the secondary review and the primary surveys of the JMC members, the beneficiaries and the FLC bodies, lead the Evaluator to formulate the following **conclusions per sub-evaluation module**:

A. Effectiveness of the Cooperation Programme (CBCP)

The effectiveness of the program has been greatly achieved, which is reflected in the selection of projects that serve the goals of the individual S.O. as set. The effectiveness of the program is also documented by the high degree of efficient cooperation between the authorities (JMC, MA / JS, AA, CA) but also the beneficiaries with the authorities and the minor problems during the implementation of the projects, which were partly due to delays attributed to the exogenous factor of the COVID-19 pandemic.

In addition, it is worth mentioning that the approval of additional funding of € 10 million was a corrective action, in order to cover the over-financing of the 1st and 2nd call and to strengthen the S.O. 1.3 and 2.1.

A negative point in terms of the effectiveness of the program is the delays that occurred during the start and the implementation of the projects, especially by the beneficiaries of the Albanian region, and therefore the lag of the output indicators and the absorption of the available budget.

B. Performance Framework of the Cooperation Programme

Given that the projects are in the implementation stage, it is considered reasonable and expected that the outcome indicators have not been achieved to the desired degree.

However, the goal of outflow indicators is expected to be achieved by the completion of projects by 2023. In addition, due to delays in project start-ups and problems caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, outflow indicators often show low values of achievement degree.

Finally, it should be noted that the above delays should be taken into account with the changes that have taken place in the general economic environment and in the labor market that have arisen as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic that has particularly affected specific sectors of the economy, such as tourism.

C. Efficiency of the Cooperation Programme

The efficiency of the programme until 31/12/2020 is low since only 22% of the expenditures of the approved budget have been verified. However, no problems are identified with budget overruns, efficiency and differentiation of the unit cost of implementation of the interventions in relation to the estimated costs during the design of the Programme.

D. Update of Intervention Logic in the framework of the Programme Strategy

The rapidly changing socio-economic conditions, as well as the new data set in all areas by the COVID-19 pandemic, raise the need to review the rational intervention in the framework of the strategic plan.

E. Review of the Cooperation Programme

Given that the third revision of the Programme is already expected, which mainly concerned a more streamlined redistribution of available resources, no further revision is needed.

F. Preparation for the Impact Evaluation

Outcome indicators are the main source of information on the impact of the Programme's projects on the wider macroeconomic, social and environmental level. However, care should be taken to monitor and document the indicators reported to MIS by the beneficiaries, so that they can be documented by the primary audit, by the JS executives when approving the progress reports, but also during the program evaluation process.

G. Evaluation of the Communication Strategy

Although the 3rd stage of the Communication Strategy has not progressed much from the beginning of the implementation of the Programme until 31/12/2020, so far a large percentage has been achieved and despite any difficulties due to COVID-19, the goals for general information in relation to the programme but also the formation of targeted perception and knowledge about the programme in specific target audiences. In particular, the Evaluator considers that the information on the Programme, its role, objectives, results and impact, as well as the contribution of the European Union and the ERDF to stakeholders are sufficient. In addition, comprehensive and timely information was provided on the participation of potential beneficiaries in the Programme, the terms and criteria that must be met, while it seems that the stakeholders were very satisfactorily informed about their role in communicating the Programme. The project website and info-days are the main information and communication tools of all involved, in contrast to the social media related to the Programme.

Evaluation Findings

Taking account the above-mentioned evaluation findings, the first conclusions and lessons learnt from the implementation of the Programme can be summed up at the following:

1. The experience and organizational capacity of the Albanian partners seems that it was not at the required level resulting in problems and delays in the implementation of the projects. So, the organizational capacity and experiences of beneficiaries has to be furtherly taken into account during the evaluation process.

2. Regarding the issue of delays observed in the beginning of projects, it has to be noted that the majority of projects don't seem to have the required level of maturity, in order to implement soon after the signing of the subsidy contracts. The maturity issues concern the lack of approved studies (preliminary studies, environmental assessment studies, feasibility studies, etc.), the preparation of tender documents, the preapproval of certain administrative actions. In the next Programming Period, the completion of certain maturity actions could be assessed more strictly during the evaluation procedure of project proposals. Also, during the first milestone period of projects, the achievement of certain milestones (e.g. regarding the conclusion of tender procedures) could be set as a prerequisite in the subsidy contracts.

3. Although the pre-financing process was introduced as an innovative and positive element, it turned out that for the Albanian partners it created many obstacles during the implementation of their projects. In particular, a number of procedures are foreseen and decided for the receipt of pre-financing grants, resulting in serious delays in the start of the projects' implementation for the Albanian partners. In particular, many difficulties are recorded in the opening of the second level bank accounts for Albanian Beneficiaries, and additional delays in transferring the pre-financing from the Bank of Albania to the Second Level Bank Account for Albanian Beneficiaries. Therefore, funding should either be done in a smoother way, ensuring e.g. national resources and VAT reimbursement to start the projects or to ensure that the partners have the financial capacity to start their projects and then receive EU funding. In addition, the framework of procedures decided can be considered as quite bureaucratic and time consuming.

4. Taking into account the delay in pre-financing combined with the fact that national funding and VAT (which can be calculated at about 35% of the partner's budget) are required to be covered by own funds of the Albanian partner. This is the case, even when the partners do not have sufficient resources to begin. This results in making the majority of partners incapable of starting implementing and carrying out their projects. The exceptions of this phenomenon include a few NGOs and some Ministries, which have the financial capacity to finance their first activities before the receipt of any grants.

Recommendations

In view of the above, a key recommendation is to set stricter and more effective criteria to ensure the required managerial and administrative capacity of the beneficiaries, in addition to those currently assessed during the quality evaluation phase of funding applications,

which may contribute in part in the better administration and implementation of projects. Thus, for example, the previous successful implementation of Interreg projects during the previous programming period could be an element of evaluation, setting as evidence the budget absorption rate, timely contracting and compliance with contractual obligations, any financial corrections, etc.

In addition, it is recommended the continuous training of the beneficiaries through material that will be provided both by the website and the info-days that are already very useful tools but also through the social media of the Programme which should become more attractive and provide more essential information regarding the beneficiaries of the projects. The training could be enriched with webinars, which will then be available via Youtube for beneficiaries and other stakeholders.

The possibility of finding resources to support disadvantaged beneficiaries so that they can carry out the work they undertook could also be explored.

Moreover, the new programming period should facilitate capitalisation on the 2014-2020 experience by expediting the set-up of the Programme bodies.

Finally, with regard to the issue of indicators, it is appropriate to set a methodological framework for determining the prices declared in the MIS, in order to allow their objective control by the primary control, during the administrative and on-the-spot verifications, by the JS executives during approval of progress reports but also during the program evaluation process.

10. Findings per Evaluation Question

A. Effectiveness of the Programme

1. What is the evaluation of the implementation course of the CBCP in terms of efficiency per Priority Axis and investment priority with reference on 31/12/2020?

Taking into account the course of the result indicators until 31/12/2020, the course of implementation of PA2 is very satisfactory as both the result indicators of SO2.1 and SO2.2 have exceeded the target value for 2023. But the same does not happen for PA1 which although a satisfactory result of the result index for SO1.2 and SO1.3 is recorded, the result index for SO1.4 has been achieved a little more than half, while for SO1.1 only one of the three indicators has been achieved at a satisfactory level, one is covered to a small extent and the third shows zero value.

2. To what extent have the objectives set at the level of CBCP output indicators been achieved? Where are significant delays in the implementation of the CBCP identified? What are the reasons for these delays?

Output indicators in most cases of S.O.1.1. show zero value, while in the rest of S.O. prices are low. This fact is justified as the projects are still in the main phase of their implementation, while the low degree of achievement of the indicators was expected from the late start of the projects but also the problems that arose due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

3. Based on the above findings, is it expected that the targets set at the level of outflow indicators for 2023 will be achieved or not?

As any delays in the implementation of the projects have been overcome and their implementation is proceeding smoothly, it is expected the output indicators CO21b, CO25, CO34b, CO34, CO11, CO04 to be achieved by 2023, with the sole reservation for the indicators CO20, CO21c, CO21d, CO23d, whose values are zero.

4. What are the conclusions and suggestions from the analysis of effectiveness?

Taking into account the above data, we conclude that the effectiveness of the Programme is above average. However, it requires further effort from the beneficiaries to accelerate the full implementation of their projects, in order to maximize the overall effectiveness of the program.

B. Programme Performance Framework

1. Is the progress in achieving the objectives of the Performance Framework indicators by Priority Axis satisfactory until 31/12/2020 (output indicators, economic indicators and Basic Implementation Stages, if any)? Are there any delays and what are the reasons for

these delays? Are the working hypotheses used per indicator in the design of the Performance Framework during the design still relevant? If not, where are the changes found and where are these changes due?

Although the implementation of the Program has progressed considerably and through the 5 Calls for Proposals and the 66 projects which are being implemented, both the output and result indicators and the economic indicators do not have the corresponding satisfactory course. Also, only P.A.3 has verified expenditure of about half of the approved budget, while P.A.1 and PA.2 have only 18% and 23% respectively. As a result, the share of verified expenditure in the total approved budget is only 22%. This can be explained as the main reason for the initial delay (more than one year) was the fact that on the part of the Albanian beneficiaries who had finance their initial expenditures from their own resources, while they also faced a problem with opening accounts in the Albanian Central Bank. In addition, the COVID-19 pandemic affected all productive sectors and especially tourism, while work suspension and the other restrictive measures imposed set new data to which project partners had to adapt.

2. Based on the above findings and what was mentioned in the Efficiency Section, it is predicted that the objectives of the Performance Framework indicators for 2023 will be achieved or not?

Every effort should be made to increase the share of the verified expenditure and to strengthen the Performance Framework indicators, in order to approach the targets for the economic indicators for 2023. In any case, the prediction is that the objectives of the Performance Framework indicators for 2023 will be achieved.

3. What are the conclusions and suggestions from the analysis of the Performance Framework?

Most likely, if there were no delays and consequences from the suspension of works due to COVID-19, the implementation of the projects would have contributed to a greater extent to the Performance Framework. In any case, the prediction is that the objectives of the Performance Framework indicators for 2023 will be achieved.

C. Efficiency of the Programme

1. Evaluation of the implementation course of the CBCP in terms of profitability per Priority Axis and Specific Objective. Is it considered satisfactory or not with a reference point on 31/12/2020?

As already mentioned, until 31/12/2020, only P.A.3 has verified expenditures of about half of the approved budget, while P.A.1 and RA.2 have only 18% and 23% respectively. Therefore, the percentage of verified expenditure in the total approved budget is only 22%, a percentage that is not considered unsatisfactory in terms of programme efficiency.

2. Is the available budget sufficient for the implementation of the interventions of the CBCP?

After the 3rd revision of the Programme the available budget is considered sufficient for each of the three P.A.

3. What are the conclusions and suggestions from the efficiency analysis?

The efficiency of the programme is above average and efforts should be intensified to facilitate the beneficiaries to implement the maximum possible financial object of the projects, in terms of verified expenditures. It is pointed out, however, that no problems of budget exceedances, efficiency and differentiation of the unit cost of implementation of the interventions in relation to the foreseen costs during the design of the Programme, are identified.

D. Timeliness of the intervention logic in the context of the Programme Strategy

1. To what extent the logic of the intervention and the specific objectives of the CBCP are they still relevant? Do they affect the intervention logic of the CBCP possible changes in the allocation of existing resources? Have new needs been formed that affect the rationale for the intervention of the Programme, taking into account the wider macroeconomic, social and environmental context?

The logic of the intervention, although it remains relevant, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, there are a number of changes in economic, social and less environmental level that have an impact on the majority of the S.O. of the Programme, which raises the need to reform it in order to serve new needs and priorities.

2. To what extent do the specific objectives of the CBCP remain relevant and their relationship to the output and result indicators? Is there a need to create new specific objectives and / or new indicators of outcome or outflow?

The specific objectives of the Programme remain relevant and their link to the output and result indicators is functional and therefore there is no need to create new specific objectives or new output and result indicators.

3. How is the course of achieving the result indicators estimated according to what is mentioned in the relevant Indicator Identity Cards of the CBCP? Based on these findings, is the target of the outcome indicators for 2023 expected to be achieved or not?

Taking into account the course of the result indicators until 31/12/2020, the implementation course of P.A.2 is very satisfactory while the picture is different for P.A.1, which in some indicators is a satisfactory course. Overall, however, it appears that the result indicators have made significant progress in relation to the baseline values set out in the Programme Document. Given that any delays in the implementation of the projects have been overcome

and all the projects are in the main phase of their implementation, the coverage of the result indicators for 2023 is expected to be achieved.

4. Do the output and result indicators contribute to the intervention logic of the Programme?

The existing output and result indicators are considered to be in line with the specific objectives of the Programme, contributing to the clear depiction of the expected results of the Programme based on the intervention logic. Therefore, they are suitable and do not need replacement. However, it is pointed out that it is appropriate to follow the methodological framework for determining the values declared in the MIS, in order to allow their objective control during the administrative and on-the-spot verifications by the JS when approving the progress reports, but also during the evaluations of the Programme.

5. What are the conclusions and suggestions from the analysis of the topicality of the logic of the intervention?

Taking into account the results of the evaluation, the logic of the intervention is considered to be largely relevant and the indicators to be used have been aptly set for the consistent and clear recording of the expected results. However, the rapidly changing socio-economic conditions, as well as the new data set in all areas by the COVID-19 pandemic, raise the need to review the rational intervention in the framework of the strategic plan.

E. Revision of the CBCP

Taking into account the findings of the evaluation project as well as the fact that the 3rd revision of the Program is already expected, which mainly concerned a more rational redistribution of the available resources, no other revision is considered appropriate.

F. Preparing for impact assessment

At this stage it is not possible to provide the data required for the preparation of the Impact Assessment, as the projects are still in the main phase of their implementation and therefore their impact on the programme's eligible area cannot be assessed. The impact assessment report will include a description of the environmental, social and economic impacts and an explicit statement if any of these are not considered significant. In particular the impact assessment should analyze the progress on the values of the result indicators and who was affected by the initiative and how.

Taking into account that the examined projects have not yet finalised their implementation, it can be concluded that current performance levels and thus also the projects' final contributions to all SOs will considerably increase further.

For example, indicator 3 concerning the Cross-Border vertical axes to Egnatia motorway either constructed or with sufficient maturity to be constructed, will be calculated after the completion of the COMOBILION project that is under implementation.

In every case the 66 examined projects have a considerable impact on policy change at local/regional or national levels. However, it is still difficult to conceive the overall impact exactly. The analysis shows that a multidimensional approach is still lacking and there is an imbalance among the different impact dimensions: the economic component is most frequently addressed, whereas the social and environmental dimensions are often left out.

It is worth to mention that projects will indeed contribute to the smart, sustainable and inclusive growth priorities of the Europe 2020 Strategy as well as to existing national or regional RIS3. The sum of their indirect contributions will also help reducing territorial disparities between regions in Europe and thereby support the EU’s territorial cohesion objective. Moreover the improved policies will trigger knock-on effects of different kinds, which then lead to positive changes in the socio-economic situation or environmental conditions of the territories covered by project partners. These positive short or medium term changes will then also positively support other development goals

On the other side some negative effects may also be produced, as in the case of increased tourism that can result into increase of traffic, pollution etc.

G. Communication Strategy

1. How effective are the publicity / communication actions of the Programme towards the beneficiary bodies?

The evaluation project shows that the complete and timely information on the participation of potential beneficiaries in the Programme is ensured, and the terms and criteria that must be met.

2. How effective and adequate are the publicity actions for the beneficiaries?

So far, to a large extent and despite any difficulties due to COVID-19, the objectives for general information in relation to the programme, but also the formation of targeted perception and knowledge about the programme in specific target audiences, such as project beneficiaries, have been achieved.

3. How effective is the information so far through the program website?

The findings of the research show that the project website is one of the main tools for information and communication of all involved.

4. Actions have been taken to promote the participation of partners and in general all stakeholders?

Taking into account the findings of the surveys, it seems that both the partners and the stakeholders were informed to a very satisfactory degree, about their role in the communication of the Programme.