

**INTERREG IPA III CROSS-BORDER COOPERATION  
PROGRAMME "GREECE – ALBANIA 2021-2027"**

**4<sup>th</sup> PROGRAMMING COMMITTEE  
ONLINE MEETING**

**25 October 2021**

**Brief Minutes & Decisions**

The Programming Committee (hereinafter referred to as PC) of the Interreg III IPA Cross-Border Cooperation Programme "Greece-Albania 2021-2027" convened for its 4<sup>th</sup> Meeting on October 25<sup>th</sup> 2021, via teleconference, following an invitation by the Hellenic Managing Authority of European Territorial Cooperation Programmes (hereinafter MA of ETCP).

Ms Katia Sagona, Head of Unit B2 of the Managing Authority (MA), after confirming that the essential quorum from both sides exists, passed the floor to Ms Anis Lamllari, Head of Operative Structure in the Ministry for European and Foreign Affairs of Albania (hereinafter referred to as MEFA) and Head of National Authority of Albania, who chaired the meeting with co-chair Ms Mathilde Konstantopoulou, Advisor to the Special Secretary of ERDF & CF, of the Ministry of Development & Investments, who represented Mr Georgios Zervos, Special Secretary for the ERDF & CF Programmes.

Ms Lamllari welcomed the participants, stating that the meeting will be held online due to the restrictions and added that from the side of Albania this new phase of the Programme is the most important. Special thanks were expressed to the external experts and the desk officer of the European Commission.

The floor was passed to Ms Konstantopoulou, who welcomed the participants on behalf of Mr Zervos. Ms Konstantopoulou added that even if the structures of the Programme are already in place, the 4<sup>th</sup> meeting still has to fine-tune some aspects, namely the financial allocations, the result and output indicators to be used and also to define ideas for Strategic Projects.

Ms Aggeliki Bouziani, Head of the MA of ETCP, stressed on the need for a step forward for the Programme and also welcomed the participants.

Ms Magali Lenoel, EC representative, recognised the progress that has been implemented on the design of the new Programme between the 3<sup>rd</sup> meeting in May and the current 4<sup>th</sup> one. In addition, Ms Lenoel mentioned the administrative steps regarding the implementing acts on the approval of the 2021-2027 Programme, stating that the inter-service consultation has been completed, and the consultation is now entering the comitology phase (i.e. it is communicated to the Member States) which will be followed by the launching of public consultation.

The Chair welcomed the presentation of the first bullet point of the agenda, namely the State of Play on the new Programme, presented by Mr Vassilis Charitantis, officer of Unit B2 of the MA.

Following the presentation, Ms Konstantopoulou verified that the work plan of the deliverables is in line with the time schedule set by the Special Secretariat.

Mr Rando Kote, representing the Albanian National Authority, expressed concerns about the adequate timing for approval of the Strategic Environmental Impact Assessment (SEIA). Ms Bouziani verified that the

responsible body is the Greek Ministry of Environment, and that justifies the time schedule for the approval. Mr Kote asked whether the Albanian side needs to perform a separate SEIA, to which Ms Bouziani responded that the SEIA is common for the entire eligible area.

Mr Kote suggested a special Joint Monitoring Committee (JMC) meeting specially focused on the SEIA on the programming, in order to produce an advisory opinion on the New Programme. Ms Sagona clarified that the JMC approval is not necessary for any aspect of the programming of the new 2020-2021 Programme. Mr George Papadopoulos, Coordinator of the Joint Secretariat (JS), further clarified that regarding the SEIA, National Authorities from Albania will be asked to contribute to its formulation by the external expert in charge.

Ms Lamllari proceeded to the second bullet point of the agenda, the presentation of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Deliverable: third draft (Draft 3) of the Chapters of the Interreg IPA III Cross-border Cooperation Programme "Greece-Albania 2021-2027", presented by Ms Sandra Soulioti, external expert.

Mr Kote, on behalf of the Chair MS Lamllari, thanked the expert and opened the floor for discussion. Ms Tesia, representing the Region of Epirus expressed her concerns on the point 3.2 Additional Specific Objective which featured no quantity figures. In addition, Ms Tesia, on behalf of the Region of Epirus, expressed her concerns about to what extent the phase of programming is mature enough for proposing certain Strategic Projects at this time, for instance the project proposal idea for circular economy parks does not seem to have any cross border character. Ms Tesia also asked if these were the only strategic project ideas that were submitted during the consultation phase. Ms Bouziani clarified that the Beneficiaries have already been consulted regarding the selection of strategic proposals. Ms Tesia requested the opinion of the EC on the Strategic Projects. Ms Konstantopoulou, conveyed the opinion of the Special Secretariat that a specific strategic project proposal (connection Kastoria – Pogradets) was not considered as priority by the respective Greek Ministry. Furthermore, Ms Konstantopoulou expressed her concern about the omission in the presentation of a reference to the proposed circular economy park.

Ms Lenoel stressed on the cross border dimension of the Strategic Projects that will be finally selected and asked for the anticipated timeline of the Strategic Projects approval. Ms Lenoel also mentioned the need for further references to small scale projects and the need for more detailed set of indicators. In addition, there is the need to present the SEIA to the DG Environment in a timely way in order to ensure their approval.

Ms Sagona responded that the MA is not able to finalise the set of indicators, given the final amount of the Programme budget is not available yet. Regarding the small scale projects, Ms Sagona assured that this will be the next exercise to be performed by the MA. Regarding the SEIA, Ms Sagona stated that more opinions from the involved parties are yet needed.

Ms Bouziani requested the timeline for the availability for the final budget. Ms Lenoel clarified that the administrative phase of the Programme is not ready yet to provide the exact number, given the current state of approval.

MS Bouziani re-opened the floor for opinions on the design of the Programme. Ms Tesia expressed the disagreement on the behalf of the Region of Epirus on the additional specific objective 3.2, on Health sector and insisted on the presentation of the rationale behind this selection. Ms Soulioti clarified that several sectors were assessed during the consultation phase, where health sector ended up second amongst the others. In addition, health sector is not even partially covered from a cross-sectoral perspective by the other objectives of the Programme.

Ms Tesia repeated the claim to remain with only one specific objective, namely 3.1. Mr Kote, as acting Chair, underlined the need for additional sectors in order to reinforce the cross-border character of the Programme.

Mr Charitantis, by describing the procedural steps taken so far, gave the rationale behind the addition of specific objective 3.2 in the Programme's final strategy. Mr Kote added that given the repercussions of the COVID-19 pandemic, the objective 3.2 should be included in order to assure the social awareness approach of the Programme. The objection raised by the Region of Epirus was echoed by Mr Kapodistrias, representing the Region of Ionian Islands. Ms Bouziani clarified that during the current phase of the design of the Programme, the PC is describing priorities and not defining certain quantitative aspects, such as budget lines for each objective.

Ms Tesia highlighted the constraints on the total budget of the Programme and stated that Region of Epirus could potentially support one pilot minor project with limited budget. Ms Konstantopoulou, on behalf of the Special Secretariat, sustained the approach of the Region of Epirus, recognising the need for a targeted call for a small project with limited budget under the 3.2 specific objective. Ms Sagona highlighted the need for specific budgets allocated to objectives in order to proceed with the decisions.

Ms Bouziani summarised that the majority wishes to maintain the 3.2 specific objective with limited budget and that the remaining open issue for discussion is the amount and size of projects, via a strategic call or a common call. Ms Tesia added that the addition of the SO 3.2 is also related with the number of strategic projects that will be approved and the inclusion or not of the strategic project proposal (connection Kastoria – Pogradets). Ms Bouziani suggested bilateral talks in order to define the anticipated nature of the deliverables of the Strategic Projects and availability of beneficiaries. Mr Kote verified that the Albanian NA wished to maintain the specific objective 3.2 and agreed to proceed with specific discussions. The request was accepted by Ms Konstantopoulou, who highlighted the need for the bilateral discussions to start the soonest. Ms Tesia suggested that the Regions should also submit their proposals for strategic projects before the initiation of the bilateral discussion in national level and ask until the 3<sup>rd</sup> of November 2021, in order to do so.

Ms Bouziani mentioned the need for a bilateral meeting between the two National Authorities in order to define each one's priorities, and then come back at PC members. In the meanwhile, Ms Bouziani welcomed suggestions on specific projects. Mr Kote responded that there has been enough time during the public consultation to gather a sufficient amount of project proposals. Ms Lenoel underlined the need for conformity between the policy objectives and Specific Objectives and that should be taken into account during the process of Specific Objectives selection.

The acting Chair summed up by listing the pending issues, namely:

- The scheduling for bilateral meeting between the two NAs for the following week of the one of the meeting, regarding the proposed Strategic Projects
- The regulation, setting under specific objectives and selection of anticipated small scale projects
- The final definition of Result and Output Indicators for all the specific objectives of the Programme
- The possibility for producing a draft of the SEIA  
The allocation percentages for each priority axis and specific objective

#### Decisions - Conclusions

- The addition of Specific Objective 3.2 – *'Ensuring equal access to health care and fostering resilience of health systems, including primary care, and promoting the transition from institutional to family and community-based care'* in the Programme's final strategy is approved.
- The Report on the results of the consultation activities of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Phase is approved.
- The revision of the Second draft (Draft 3) of the Chapters of the Interreg IPA III Cross-border Cooperation "Greece-Albania 2021-2027" Programming document is not approved in its entirety.

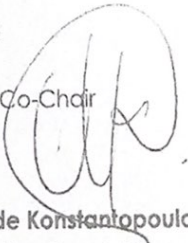
Ms Bouziani called for the next meeting in the middle of November.

#### The Co-Chairpersons of the Programming Committee

Chair

  
**Ms Anis Lamllari**  
Head of Operative Structure Albanian  
Ministry for Europe  
and Foreign Affairs

Co-Chair

  
**Ms Mathilde Konstantopoulou**  
Advisor to the Special Secretary  
for ERDF & CF  
Hellenic Ministry of Development &

## Investments

### Attachments:

1. Agenda of the 4<sup>th</sup> Programming Committee Meeting
2. List of participants