

**INTERREG VI-A IPA GREECE-ALBANIA**

**2<sup>nd</sup> MONITORING COMMITTEE MEETING**

**16 January 2024**

**Venue: online**

**Brief Minutes & Decisions**

The Monitoring Committee (hereinafter referred to as MC) of the Interreg VI-A IPA Greece-Albania (hereinafter referred to as the Programme) convened for its 2<sup>nd</sup> Monitoring Committee meeting on 16 January 2024, following an invitation by the Hellenic Managing Authority Interreg 2021-2027 (hereinafter the “MA”) in agreement with the co-chairs. The meeting took place online via Zoom.

The topics that were discussed according to the agenda were:

- The 1<sup>st</sup> Call for Projects Proposals of the Programme and its relevant documentation
- The updated timetable of the Calls for Projects Proposals of the Programme

After the attendance reached the quorum as stipulated in the Rules of Procedure, Ms Maria Nezeriti, the Head of the Managing Authority of the “Interreg 2021-2027”, passed the floor to the Chair of the meeting, Mr Altin Zeqo, Director of the Directorate of Convergence and Cohesion with EU in the Agency for Strategic Programming and Aid Coordination (the Albanian National Authority, hereinafter “SASPAC”) who welcomed the participants.

Ms Nezeriti (MA) informed the participants that by their presence they are automatically declaring their Impartiality & Confidentiality and that the meeting will be recorded.

The floor was subsequently passed to the co-chair Ms Mathilde Konstantopoulou, Advisor to Mr Georgios Zervos the Special Secretary of ERDF & CF of the Greek Ministry of Economy and Finance (Greek National Authority), who conveyed Mr Zervos’ greetings and best wishes for the year 2024 and the beginning of the Programme, as well as the congratulations of the political leadership for the Programme 2014-2020 which achieved its goal in 2023.

The chair informed the participants that the agenda was unanimously adopted and passed the floor to Ms Gaby Hagmüller, representing the European Commission (DG REGIO). Ms Hagmüller congratulated all involved parties for signing the Financing Agreement and encouraged the Programme bodies to involve more representatives of Civil Society organisations in the decision-making and in the Monitoring Committee. In addition, the European Commission representative highlighted the importance of the correct implementation of horizontal principles (incl. EU Charter of Fundamental Rights) and selection criteria that are non-discriminatory and transparent. Furthermore, the EU representative stressed that beneficiaries should pay attention to the proper communication and information of citizens about the effects and impact of activities and reminded that the EU regulation specifies that recovery up to 3% of co-financing is possible if communication and visibility rules are not respected.

Ms Nezeriti confirmed that horizontal principles and the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights are all taken into account in the selection criteria of Stage B of the assessment process. Regarding the communication rules, the MA announced that a communication guide will be finalised and disseminated to beneficiaries. In addition, MA explained that in the Applicant’s package it is foreseen that an important part of the project’s budget is dedicated to communication activities. About the participation of more representatives of Non-profit organizations in the MC, the MA pointed out that it is an issue for NA’s to decide on this participation.

#### 1. The 1<sup>st</sup> Call for Projects Proposals

Following the presentation by Ms Martha Vafeidou, Unit A of the MA (Programming and Evaluation) on the 1<sup>st</sup> Call for project proposals, applicants package for both Stages A and B

of the selection procedure as well as the Programme and project Implementation Manual, Ms Nezeriti estimated the launch of the first Call by end of January/early February 2024 and the first projects' approvals in November 2024 and invited the Albanian NA to undertake publicity measures on the dissemination of the call for setting up the joint registry of assessors. The pool of assessors is estimated to be concluded in April 2024.

Ms Kaliopi Tesia, representing the Region of Epirus, made a remark concerning the decrease of the budget of strategic projects in favour of the common call budget as it was approved in the previous Timetable and asked when exactly the 1<sup>st</sup> call is expected to be published. Ms Nezeriti replied that the 1<sup>st</sup> call will be published at the beginning of February at the latest and shall remain open for 45 days until the end of March. As far as the rescheduling of the budget is concerned, she explained that the budget was updated taking into consideration that projects have not been activated in 2023 but should start in 2024.

Ms Tesia (Region of Epirus) proposed a solution to be found concerning the allocation of budgets between calls for strategic and common projects, as the budget for strategic projects has been decreased and the budget for common projects has been increased. Region's Epirus suggestion is to increase the budget for strategic projects.

In response, Ms Eva Karagianni, Head of Unit A of the MA, explained that budgets allocated to the strategic call have been specified, according to the maximum amounts of respective intervention fields, per specific objectives and in compliance with the programme document. In particular, regarding the 4<sup>th</sup> strategic project under the specific objective 4.6, in which all types of projects, strategic, common and small-scale projects will contribute, there is a need for a budget fragment to allocate sufficient funds for common and small-scale projects as well.

Ms Tesia (Region of Epirus) stated that although S.O. 4.6 attracts the majority of project proposals, it seems that the allocation to 4.6 is not adequate and therefore suggested a modification of the strategic projects budget and Programme's budget later. Ms Nezeriti responded that the allocation of budget of the call for the strategic projects and small-scale projects can be revised by the MC, after the finalisation of strategic project proposals budget; yet the allocation to the common proposals will remain as such.

Ms Konstantopoulou (Greek NA) highlighted that the drafting of the Programme was based on lessons learnt from the previous programming period and underlined the importance of the frontloaded aspect of the Programme in achieving the goals. She agreed with MA that the budgets of the 2 strategic projects under S.O 2.6 and 2.7 have been defined and that the budget for small-scale projects may be updated later. Regarding 1<sup>st</sup> Call's budget, Greek NA pointed out the importance of the increase in the budget for a variety and quality in projects, as well as for the timely and successful implementation of the actions of the Programme. In case of remaining funds, budgets may be readjusted in the future.

Ms Paraskevi Christopoulou, representing the Region of Western Macedonia, conveyed the greetings by the new Regional Governor and presented herself as newly appointed Member of the Monitoring Committee.

Ms Kaliopi Tesia (Region of Epirus) asked to be clarified if the allocated budgets are subject to approval by the MC.

Ms Nezeriti (MA) confirmed that MC approves the budgets and clarified that at this point budgets are indicative and flexible. They will be modified based on the final results of 1<sup>st</sup> Call and the fixed budget of strategic projects. As indicated by Ms Karagianni (Unit A of MA), the maximum indicative amounts are referred to the timetable.

Ms Kaliopi Tesia (Region of Epirus) insisted on her suggestion to not include the allocations of these budgets and to have a more general description without a specific budget allocation.

Ms Nezeriti (MA) repeated that the phrase used in the timetable is “up to”, which means that the amounts are the ceilings of the budget and they are non-binding. MA suggested that the same phrase to be included regarding the budget of small-scale projects.

Ms Kaliopi Tesia (Region of Epirus) agreed with the proposal the phrase “up to” be added concerning the small-scale projects.

Mr Altin Zeqo (Albanian NA) agreed that it is too early for changes in the budgets and suggested modifications on budgets, if necessary, to be discussed at a later stage after the calls and applications.

The Terms of Reference, Implementation Manual and Applicant’s Package for both Stages A and B of the selection procedure, of the 1<sup>st</sup> Call for Projects Proposals were unanimously approved.

## 2. Timetable of Planned Calls for Projects Proposals of the Programme

Following the presentation by Ms Karagianni on the timetable of the calls for Project proposals of the Programme, the chair wrapped up and outlined the planning of the scheduled calls.

Before closing the meeting, the MA summarised the approval of the timetable with an amendment of the budget for the small-scale projects for Specific *Objective 4.6- Enhancing the role of culture and sustainable tourism in economic development, social inclusion and social innovation* as “up to 2 million EUR”.

The timetable of calls was unanimously approved with the aforementioned amendment.

Mr Altin Zeqo (Albanian NA) passed the floor to Ms Hagmüller (EU) for comments.

Following Ms Hagmüller’s concern on the need to safeguard the quality control of the approved projects and the chair’s assurance that the two National Authorities will respect both the quality assurance and the non-discrimination clauses, Mr Zeqo highlighted the importance of the quality selection of the beneficiaries. In response, Ms Nezeriti and Ms Karagianni (MA) explained that the evaluation system in place is able to safeguard the operational capacity of the beneficiaries. The same applies to the quality assurance of the projects, guaranteed by the two-phase assessment. Mr Zeqo also referred to a set of directives and a special mechanism to ensure the quality of the project proposals from the Albanian side.

Following the last discussion, the Chair terminated the meeting by thanking the participants.

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

- The Terms of Reference of the 1st Call for Projects Proposals, the Applicant's Package for both Stages A and B of the selection procedure and the Programme and Project Implementation Manual
- Timetable of the planned Calls

**The Co-Chairpersons  
of the Monitoring Committee**

Chair

Co-Chair

**Mr Altin Zeqo**

State Agency for Strategic Programming  
and Aid Coordination (SASPAC)

**Ms Mathilde Konstantopoulou**

Special Secretariat  
for ERDF & CF  
Hellenic Ministry of Economy and Finance

Attachments:

1. Agenda of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Monitoring Committee Meeting
2. Participant's list of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Monitoring Committee Meeting
3. Timetable of planned Calls amended