

Cooperation Programme Interreg "Greece-Bulgaria 2021-2027" 1st Programming Committee meeting, 28th September 2020

The **Programming Committee** (PC) of the **Cooperation Programme (CP) Interreg "Greece-Bulgaria 2021-2027"** convened for its 1st meeting on Monday, the 28th of September 2020, via teleconference, following an invitation by the Hellenic Managing Authority (MA) of European Territorial Cooperation Programmes.

The meeting was attended by the majority of the designated member of the PC, with and without voting right, as they were appointed upon a political decision of the two countries.

Opening speeches were delivered by:

- The Chairperson of the Committee, Mr Georgios Zervos Special Secretary for the European Regional Development Fund and Cohesion Fund Programmes (ERDF & CF Programmes);
- ii. The Co-Chairperson of the Committee, Ms Denitsa Nikolova Deputy Minister of Regional Development and Public Works of Bulgaria and
- iii. Mr Ivan Fecenko, the Desk Officer from the European Commission (EC) DG Regional and Urban Policy.

According to the agenda of the meeting, the following topics were presented by the MA and were discussed by the PC:

- 1. The *Rules of Procedure (RoP) of the Programming Committee*, which defines the rules, the rights and the obligations of the PC. The aim of the PC is the effective planning and drafting of the new CP INTERREG "Greece-Bulgaria 2021-2027".
- 2. The *Concept Paper* of the new Programme document, which summarizes the key points of the new Programme:
 - a. A more strategic development orientation. A greater number of strategic and/or restricted Calls is foreseen for the new programming period, with nominated beneficiaries, so that the launch of the calls is performed earlier in the Programme. The strategic projects will focus on specific sectors, such as: cross-border connectivity, Health, Civil protection, Environment.



- b. Direct assistance to boost economic development, providing further direct support to SMEs with the aim to stimulate the growth of SMEs in the cross-border area and expand their economic activities to new markets, products and services, including innovation. This will be achieved using *restricted calls* for targeted actions towards SMEs for specific NACE codes and the *Small Project Fund* instrument with simplified and faster procedures tailor made for SMEs.
- 3. The *Methodology* for drafting the new Programme, including the consultation phases and the proposed time-plan in order to have the draft document submitted to the European Commission for approval in the beginning of summer 2021. The new Operational Programme is expected to be approved by the EC and fully functional in September 2021.

During the meeting, the participants had the opportunity to express their opinion on the presented topics, and add their suggestions in the Programme's key features, according to their territory's fields of interest and identified needs. All comments will be examined and will be taken into consideration while drafting the new Programme.

Following the discussions, the Programming Committee approved the Rules of Procedure of the PC and agreed with the future actions within the framework of the programming procedure, as presented by the MA.