

# Citizen's Summary of the 2018 Greece - Bulgaria Annual Implementation Report

Interreg V-A Cooperation Programme Greece-  
Bulgaria 2014-2020

CCI 2014TC16RFCB022

14/06/2019

## What is the Interreg V-A Cooperation Programme Greece-Bulgaria 2014-2020 about?

The Programme supports territorial cooperation between two Greek and two Bulgarian regions in a cross-border area of around 40 thousand square km that is populated by approximately 2.7 million people.



The Programme area is predominantly rural, mountainous and sparsely populated. It includes 10 medium-large cities (>50.000 inhabitants) that accumulate for 38.2% of the total population and 25 small cities (10.000-50.000 inhabitants).

The Interreg V-A cooperation programme Greece-Bulgaria 2014-2020 is co-financed by the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) with 110,723,408.00 Euros. The total budget of the Programme, including national contribution, is 130,262,835.00 Euros.

The Programme aims to facilitate challenges of cross-border nature that cannot be addressed efficiently at national level by mainstream programmes. To this extent, it focuses on those thematic objectives of the EU2020 Strategy that have the greater importance for the cross-border area. Four Priority Axes define the scope of Programme interventions:

- **Priority Axis 1 - "A competitive and Innovative Cross-border area"**

Enhances the competitiveness of the local economy by promoting innovation and strengthening the ability of the local economic actors to expand their operations on national and international level.

- **Priority Axis 2 - "A sustainable and climate adjustable cross-border area"**

Supports the conservation, protection and promotion of the local natural and cultural heritage and integrated approach on crucial environmental issues such as the waste management and protection of the local biodiversity including preventive activities on natural hazards such as river floods and wildfires.

- **Priority Axis 3 – "A better interconnected Cross-border area"**

Enhances the regional mobility and accessibility by connecting secondary and tertiary nodes of the area with international highways and Transnational European Transport Networks.

- **Priority Axis 4 - "A socially inclusive Cross-border area"**

Invests in health and social infrastructure with the goal to reduce disparities in terms of health status and promote social entrepreneurship.

## **What activities were carried out in 2018?**

2018 was a crucial year for the 53 projects already under implementation. To improve the attractiveness of the area and increase the relevant tourist flows, the restoration of local monuments, the rehabilitation of selected landmarks, the renovation of museums and other cultural points of interest, the interconnection between archaeological sites, the development of ICT tools for the tourists, the organization of outdoor events and festivals, etc., started in 2018. Particular examples are the start of the construction of a Visitor Center at the biggest archaeological site in the region of Kardhali - Perperikon and the reconstruction of the Art Gallery "Constantin Xenakis" in Serres into a Contemporary Art Museum. The upgrade of sports facilities at the South-West University in Blagoevgrad started to provide for sports

and cultural events throughout the whole year. In the field of environmental protection and sustainability, activities started for the conservation of vulnerable species and habitats, the development of risk assessment models for Natura 2000 sites, the development of early warning systems for natural hazards and relevant Civil Protection volunteering structures, the implementation of environment awareness campaigns and the establishment of eco-labelling schemes. Namely, flying surveillance system was purchased to monitor the biodiversity of the cross-border region, field studies were performed on bats' habitats along Mesta/Nestos river and their genetic analysis started. In the field of resource efficiency, activities for the improvement of the water resources management, the upgrade of the relevant processing and sanitation systems, as well as the improvement of the drinking water quality started implementation. In this field, 2 more projects officially began in 2018.

In the field of healthcare, procurements started for the renovation of health care units in the cross-border area and the development of ICT tools (databases, applications) providing telemedicine services to vulnerable groups in remote villages in mountainous regions. Electronic portable appliances for the Department of emergency care and surgical medical equipment for the operating theatres were delivered to the general hospitals in Kavala and Komotini as well as a modern ambulance to the Center for Emergency Medical Care-Blagoevgrad already extensively used in cases of road and other emergency accidents in the cross-border region. Works for the construction and renovations of social care centres for disadvantaged people started in Strumyani, Topolovgrad and Krumovgrad. A sound demonstration of joint cross-border actions were the performed preventive medical checks of 847 children in Sandanski by means of the medical unit "IPPOKRATIS" of the Greek 'Smile of the Child' Association.

A social enterprise was created for food donations and distribution at the Central Market of Thessaloniki where 'Food Angels' Platform for matching food needs and donations was developed.

Almost 15 million euros were approved for risk prevention of potential natural hazards for the protection against floods across the river basins of Struma/Strymon, Maritsa/ Evros, Mesta/Nestos and Arda/Ardas river basins

Aiming at the improvement of roads accessibility, the construction of the new road Dimario-Greek/Bulgarian border started in 2018 as well as the upgrade of the road II-86 and bypass of Rudozem.

Finally, in December 2018 the Call for Proposals that concerns direct assistance for Small and Medium Enterprises was launched. With a total budget of 10 million euros it aims to foster growth by supporting existing and new business entities to expand their activities to new markets and products, through joint actions oriented towards innovation.

### **What about spending?**

Until the end of 2018, the total certified expenditure amounts to € 4,871,169.72 while the total eligible amount of expenditure paid by the project beneficiaries was €10,665,347.33.

### **Do you need further information?**

Should you need further information about Interreg V-A cooperation programme Greece-Bulgaria 2014-2020, please visit our websites:

<http://www.greece-bulgaria.eu> and <http://www.interreg.gr>