



D6.1.1 Sustainability Plan



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PROGRAMME	INTERREG V-A GREECE-BULGARIA 2014-2020
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Priority Axis	1 - A Competitive and Innovative Cross-Border Area
Investment Field	066. Advanced support services for SMEs and groups of SMEs (including management, marketing and design services)
Investment Priority	3a - Promoting entrepreneurship, in particular by facilitating the economic exploitation of new ideas and fostering the creation of new firms, including through business incubators
Specific Objective	1 – To improve entrepreneurship SME support systems.
Project Title	Promotion of Entrepreneurship and Innovation in the Rural Area of Kavala, Drama, Smolyan and Blagoevgrad
Project Acronym	PEIRA
Project Webpage	https://peira.ankavala.eu/
Project Beneficiary	<p>KAVALA DEVELOPMENT S.A. - DEVELOPMENT AGENCY OF MUNICIPAL AUTHORITIES S.A.</p> <p>DRAMA DEVELOPMENT S.A. - DEVELOPMENT AGENCY OF MUNICIPAL AUTHORITIES S.A.</p> <p>LOCAL ACTION GROUP – GOTSE DELCHEV - GARMEN - HADZHIDIMOVO</p> <p>REGIONAL CENTER FOR VOCATIONAL EDUCATION TRAINING TO CCI – BLAGOEVGRAD</p>
Project Budget	657.282,43 €
Beneficiary Budget	228.197,64 €
Project MIS Code	5073388
Deliverable	D6.1.1 Sustainability Plan
Version:	1_2 (update)



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PEIRA: Deliverable D6.1.1 Sustainability Plan

About the Deliverable D6.1.1 Sustainability Plan

The Deliverable D6.1.1 Sustainability Plan, is developed by the Project Lead Beneficiary (LB), with the contribution of all Project Beneficiaries, based on the Objectives of the Project, the Application Form and Justification of Budget.

The approach of the deliverable is to provide the necessary steps and actions that should be implemented by all project partners, to ensure the sustainability of the project's activities in cross-border area.

Main Contribution

Among all partners' contribution, the main is provided by Project beneficiary 3 (PB3), though its deliverable D6.3.1.



Abbreviations

BSU	Business Support Unit
CP	Cooperation Programme
MA	Managing Authority (INTERREG_GR)
JS	Joint Secretariat
ERDF	European Regional Development Fund
EU	European Union
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
LB	Lead Beneficiary
PA	Priority Axis
PB	Project Beneficiary



Introduction (the framework)

The Cooperation Programme “Greece-Bulgaria 2014-2020”

Greece and Bulgaria, two neighbour countries with rich past, at the end of ‘90s have entered a closed cooperation, also due to the implementation of the INTERREG PROGRAMMES. The basic idea on of INTERREG is that countries facing several issues which could be solved easier, if they would be cooperating with their neighbours instead of striving for solutions within the borders, they should have an instrument to support that. INTERREG brings the people of the different countries closer to each other¹.

Interreg is one of the key instruments of the European Union (EU) supporting cooperation across borders through project funding. Its aim is to jointly tackle common challenges and find shared solutions in fields such as health, environment, research, education, transport, sustainable energy and more².

Interreg is one of the two goals of the EU Cohesion Policy in the 2014-2020 period, and it is funded by the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF). It has a budget of EUR 10.1 billion invested in the several cooperation programmes responsible for managing project funding².

There are three types of INTERREG Programmes² among which are sixty (60) cross-border programmes, fifteen (15) transnational programmes and four (4) interregional programmes.

¹ Βλ. JS Greece-Bulgaria 2014-2020 (2017a). *Interreg Greece-Bulgaria*. [Online]. Available at: <http://www.greece-bulgaria.eu> [Accessed 3 March 2018].

² Βλ. INTERact (2018). *About Interreg*. [Online]. Available at: [interreg.eu: https://interreg.eu/about-interreg](https://interreg.eu/about-interreg) [Accessed 6 March 2018].



Figure 1 ETCPs (INTERREG)

2014-2020 is the fifth period of Interreg and is called Interreg V. In accordance with the new design of the EU Cohesion Policy and the targets set out in Europe 2020 Strategy, *Interreg has been significantly reshaped to achieve greater impact and an even more effective use of the investments*. Key elements of the reform are concentration, simplification and result orientation. Interreg V is based on 11 investment priorities (thematic objectives).

Greece - Bulgaria programme promotes activities that bring people of the two countries closer. Development, positive or negative, at one side of the borders, affects the other side, therefore there are needs for common actions. There is cooperation between public entities, semi-public entities, private entities (so far non-for-profit private entities) that can have positive impact for the eligible area of the programme, the inhabitants and the visitors, through funding of projects in the field of Health and Social



Affairs, Transportation, Culture and Tourism, Environment and Competitiveness.

The Cross Border Cooperation Programme “INTERREG V-A Greece-Bulgaria 2014-2020”¹ was approved by the European Commission on 13/12/2016 by Decision C(2016)8708³.

It carries the code CCI 2014TC16RFCB022



Figure 2 INTERREG V-A "Greece - Bulgaria 2014-2020"

The total budget (ERDF and National contribution) for the European Territorial Programme “Greece-Bulgaria 2014-2020” is €129,695,572.00 (85% ERDF funding and 15% national contribution)⁴.

The Programme intends to promote the harmonious, balanced and sustainable development of the cross-border area, while reducing the economic and social territorial disparities which have arisen in counties and regions lagging behind, and speeding-up their economic and social restructuring.

The eligible area of the Programme consists of the Region of Eastern

³ Βλ. JS Greece-Bulgaria 2014-2020 (2017b). *Interreg Greece-Bulgaria*. [Online]. Available at: http://www.greece-bulgaria.eu/com/4_A-few-words-about-our-Programme [Accessed 3 March 2018].

⁴ Βλ. JS Greece-Bulgaria 2014-2020 (2015). *2nd Call for Project Proposals INTERREG V-A GREECE – BULGARIA 2014-2020 COOPERATION PROGRAMME Co-Financed by the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF)*. Ministry of Economy, Development & Tourism: Thessaloniki.

Macedonia and Thrace (Prefectures of Evros, Kavala, Xanthi, Rhodopi and Drama) and the Region of Central Macedonia (Prefectures of Thessaloniki and Serres) in Greece and the South-Central Planning Region and South-West Planning Region (Districts of Blagoevgrad, Smolyan, Kardjali and Haskovo) in Bulgaria³.



Figure 3 Map of the eligible area of the INTERREG V-A "Greece - Bulgaria 2014-2020"

The Greece-Bulgaria cross-border cooperation area for the programming period 2014-2020 extends to 40.202 km² and has a total population of 2.7 million inhabitants. It covers four territorial units at NUTS II level (Regions), and 11 territorial units at NUTS III level (Districts). The eligible area extends across the entire Greek-Bulgarian border and is neighbouring with Turkey (east) and Republic of North Macedonia (west), both countries aspiring to access to the EU. It is part of the most south-eastern non-insular area of EU, and it is situated between three seas: The Black Sea, the Mediterranean Sea and the Ionian-Adriatic Sea. Finally, it sits at the crossroad of strategic fossil fuel pipelines supplying the EU market and TEN transport axes³.

The settlement structure of the area is characterized by the presence of 10 medium-large cities (>50.000 inhabitants) which accumulate 38,2% of total population, and 25 small cities (10.000-50.000 inhabitants)³.

There is a long history of cooperation in the eligible area, which started with Community initiative INTERREG I (1989-1993)³.



The priority axes of the programme are:

PA 1: A Competitive and Innovative Cross-Border Area

PA 2: A Sustainable and climate adaptable Cross-Border area

PA 3: A better interconnected Cross-Border Area

PA 4: A socially inclusive Cross-Border area

PA 5: Technical Assistance

The Project PEIRA

PEIRA project (full title “*Promotion of Entrepreneurship and Innovation in the Rural Area of Kavala, Drama, Smolyan and Blagoevgrad*”), is implemented in the interventional area of Kavala (GR), Drama (GR), Smolyan (BG), and Blagoevgrad (BG), with the aim to enhance new and existing entrepreneurship and innovation, by motivating, training and providing the necessary tools to rural entrepreneurs.

The Greek-Bulgarian cross-border area faces several challenges hindering economic growth, particularly for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and aspiring entrepreneurs. These challenges stem from the region's unique characteristics:

Predominantly rural and remote:

- Low urbanization and industrialization limits access to resources and expertise.
- SMEs and entrepreneurs struggle to find specialized support services like incubators, essential for business development.

Limited access to knowledge and resources:

- Lack of business skills and know-how impedes capitalizing on EU funding opportunities.



- Existing organizations like chambers of commerce lack ongoing support programs for entrepreneurs.
- Weak links between research institutions and businesses restrict innovation and technology transfer.

Rural-specific constraints:

- Entrepreneurs lack exposure to successful business models and best practices.
- The complex Greek legal framework adds burdens to new businesses.
- Finding specialized consultants and experts in rural areas proves difficult.

Difficulties accessing advanced support:

- High-value support services are less accessible, hindering competitiveness of products and services.
- SMEs are slow to adopt cost-saving technologies and initiatives.
- Shortage of skilled and experienced workforce with specialized skills further restricts growth.

Overall:

The rural nature of the Greek-Bulgarian cross-border area creates unique challenges for SMEs and entrepreneurs. Addressing these challenges, such as improving access to support services and knowledge, is crucial for unlocking the region's economic potential.

Summarised Approach:

Recognizing the challenges faced by rural entrepreneurs in the Kavala, Drama, Smolyan, and Blagoevgrad region, the Lead Beneficiary (LB) partnered with Participating Beneficiaries (PBs) to develop a unified strategy and project approach.



- The PBs (PB2, PB3) are Local Action Groups focused on rural development, particularly promoting local entrepreneurship.
- PB4 brings expertise in vocational training to the project.

The project's main objective is to boost entrepreneurship and innovation in these rural areas.

- This will be achieved by motivating, training, and equipping rural entrepreneurs with the necessary skills and tools.
- Four Rural Business Support Units (RBSUs)⁵ will be established, drawing on the experience and resources of the PBs.
- The RBSUs will offer integrated support through:
 - Consulting services
 - Training programs and workshops
 - An innovation lab
 - An online consulting tool
 - Access to experienced consultants' expertise.

This project's unique approach lies in its focus on providing practical and user-friendly knowledge directly addressing the real needs of micro-entrepreneurs.

The PEIRA project thrives on cross-border collaboration (CB). The four Rural Business Support Units (RBSUs) will share resources, develop standardized tools and services, and deliver consultations jointly. This ensures consistency and maximizes impact across the region.

The project outcomes go beyond individual businesses. By raising awareness of rural business opportunities and informing the public, the

⁵ We can find them also as Business Support Centres (BSCs)



project fosters a broader entrepreneurial ecosystem.

Even more impactful, the project aims to shape future policy. Local and regional policy instruments will be developed and communicated to stakeholders and policymakers. This could lead to their adoption in national legislation, creating lasting change for rural entrepreneurship.

Ultimately, the project envisions empowering rural entrepreneurs. By providing skills, knowledge, and a collaborative environment, the project aims to nurture self-sufficient, innovative entrepreneurs who can significantly contribute to their communities and enhance the value of their offerings.

The target groups

The target groups that benefit from the project are:

- Existing SMEs in all economic sectors;
- Local business support structures such as LAGs, Chambers of Commerce, the Local and Regional Government and other public authorities;
- New potential entrepreneurs who will start or thinking of starting a new business, including mainly young adults and women;
- Employees and managers working on SMEs;
- Graduates-young adults, of the Universities in the CB area;
- The local population, through the growth of small/very small entrepreneurship and employment generation;
- Consultants and other specialists who will provide services during or after the project implementation.

Objectives

The overall objective of the project is to enhance new and existing entrepreneurship and innovation in the rural area of Kavala, Drama, Smolyan and Blagoevgrad by motivating, training and providing the necessary tools to rural entrepreneurs.



This project aims to breathe new life into rural entrepreneurship by:

- Motivating and equipping rural residents: Training, tools, and encouragement will help unlock the entrepreneurial potential within communities.
- Building local resources: Four business support units will serve as permanent structures, offering ongoing support and fostering the development of micro-entrepreneurship.
- Tackling common challenges: The project specifically addresses issues like accessing finance, business know-how, and competitive development. It also promotes cost-saving technologies and skill development.
- Learning from experience: Leveraging the expertise of existing organizations, we'll provide practical tools, training, and consulting tailored to rural needs.
- Cross-border collaboration: A network connecting Greek and Bulgarian entrepreneurs will facilitate knowledge sharing and commercial agreements, strengthening regional businesses.
- Shaping the future: Project findings will inform future policies and legislation, ensuring long-term impact on rural development.

Key points:

- Focus on positive outcomes and rural empowerment.
- Simplify technical jargon and acronyms.
- Emphasize practical solutions and collaborative approach.
- Highlight the project's broader impact on policy and regional development.

Summarised Project Results

Project's main expected results are:



- The PBs' premises have been enhanced with permanent Business Support Centres with sustainability prospects. They maximize their role to improve the rural areas' economy as they will keep providing services and tools after the project's completion (i.e. on-line consultation tool, toolkit books, consulting sessions, innovation lab, CB Rural Business Network etc.);
- New and existing enterprises in rural areas in all sectors of the economy have realized better conditions to grow and increase competitiveness as a result of the project;
- New and existing entrepreneurs have improved their skills and know-how managing and developing their business as result of training sessions, workshops and other project actions;
- New people have been inspired to consider entering into entrepreneurship and existing entrepreneurs have been inspired to adopt a new approach and perceptions on managing their businesses (i.e. long-term business planning, importance of marketing, branding, personal and personnel development etc.);
- The competitiveness of products and services have increased their competitiveness and added value, and subsequently are expected to have improved sales and profit margins;
- New products and services in the fields of industry and services are expected to be developed as a result of the consulting sessions and the PEIRA innovation lab;
- An increased exports' volume is expected as a result of consulting, training and other supporting project activities;
- The intervention area has become more attractive to live and therefore a higher percentage of young and economically active people are expected to stay and not migrate;

Project indicators



The project indicators are⁶:

Indicator Type & Code	Title	Target Value
Output CO01	Productive investment: Number of enterprises receiving support	102
Output CO05	Productive investment: Number of new enterprises receiving support	26
Result R0201	Entrepreneurial business support environment	5.9

Table 1 Project Indicators. Source: Application Form

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The approach of the deliverable is to provide the necessary steps and actions that should be implemented by all project partners, to ensure the sustainability of the project's activities in cross-border area.

Among all partners' contribution, the main is provided by Project beneficiary 3 (PB3), though its deliverable D6.3.1.

⁶ They have been achieved.



Sustainability Plan – Summary of the approach

The project results are valuable and will be exploited even after the project's lifetime and have a lasting impact on rural communities of the intervention area.

The PEIRA project stands out for its strong commitment to long-term sustainability, for the following reasons:

- Partners pledge ongoing support: Even after the project ends, key outputs like the online consultation tool and toolkits will remain accessible to all businesses. Consulting, training, and the innovation lab will continue on a regular basis;
- Why it is possible: This commitment is achievable because these activities are already part of the continuous LEADER approach applied in the two sides of the borders. PEIRA will simply enhance their existing operations, maximizing their value for rural areas;
- LEADER funding calls: Project outputs will be promoted as resources for businesses applying for LEADER funding in the intervention area, helping them make the most of their investments. This is particularly valuable in rural areas where access to information and resources is limited;
- Sustainability Plan: A dedicated plan (this document) guides partners in maintaining project structures after completion, ensuring the continued benefits for the cross-border area;
- Long-term effects: the impact of the PEIRA project doesn't end with the project. It is expected to create a ripple effect, leading to:
 - Higher sales and exports;
 - Reduced production costs;
 - New, innovative products;
 - Increased and more effective absorption of EU funding.



- Practicality and transferability: PEIRA's focus on delivering practical, business-friendly consulting materials and training ensures easy uptake by participants. This makes it easier to replicate and share project outputs with other organizations (e.g. chambers of commerce), further amplifying its reach.

In short, the PEIRA project goes beyond project delivery, aiming to create a self-sustaining ecosystem that empowers rural entrepreneurs and fosters long-term economic growth.

Furthermore, other important factor of sustainability is the fact that it builds a lasting legacy, through a shaping policy_ and fostering cross-border collaboration;

The PEIRA project doesn't just support individual businesses; it aims to shape the future of rural entrepreneurship, as:

- Policy influence: Developed policy instruments are actively presented to relevant stakeholders and policymakers, with the goal of integrating them into legislation and operational programs focused on rural entrepreneurship. This ensures long-term impact beyond the project's lifetime;
- Wider applicability: If adopted, these policy changes can make the project's approach and resources valuable to many other organizations (e.g. chambers of commerce and business unions), multiplying the project's impact;
- Cross-border network: A dedicated network can connect Greek and Bulgarian entrepreneurs, making them easily identifiable and fostering collaboration. This network can support participants in utilizing project outputs and even develop cross-border supply chains through commercial agreements;
- Sustainable collaboration: The network won't disappear after the end of the project. All partners are committed to maintaining it beyond the project timeframe, using their own resources to ensure its continued operation.

In essence, PEIRA seeks to create a ripple effect - empowering rural



entrepreneurs, influencing policy, and fostering strong cross-border collaboration for long-term economic growth.

Business support units: Cost of operation

PEIRA has created four (4) business support units, within the premises of the 4 beneficiaries, in Kavala, Drama, Gotse Delchev, and Blagevgrad.

The main costs necessary for the functioning of the business support units include operating expenses (e.g. *costs for materials and consumables; overheads; costs for the promotion of the activity (advertising and information materials, publications, etc.); costs for external services and other incidental costs*).

Premises and Equipment costs have been covered by the PEIRA project.

1. Local Action Group Kavala (LB)

Premises: rent 350€/month, 4.200€ per annum. Covered by the organization through its activities (implementation of other contracts). The calculation is based on the space percentage of the premises of the organization.

Office Equipment: covered by PEIRA during the project implementation period.

ICT Equipment and software: covered by PEIRA during the project implementation period.

Diagnostic tools and training material: Available and covered by PEIRA during the project implementation period.

Materials and Consumables: 200€ per year. Covered by the organization through its activities (implementation of other contracts).

Promotion costs: 400€ per annum. Covered by the organization through its activities (implementation of other contracts).



Personnel (part time): 5.000€ per annum. Covered by the organization through its activities (implementation of other contracts). The personnel is from the existing staff of beneficiary and part of its working time will be dedicated to the support unit.

External Expertise and Services: 4.000€ per annum. Covered by the organization through its activities (implementation of other contracts). Specialists to be contracted to provide support and consultation in certain periods of the year.

Other overheads (electricity, telephone, internet): 50€ per month, 600€ per annum. Covered by the organization through its activities (implementation of other contracts).

Contingency Reserve: 300€ per annum. If needed, covered by the organization through its activities (implementation of other contracts).

Total Cost per annum: 14.700€ per annum. Covered by the organization through its activities (implementation of other contracts).

2. Local Action Group Drama (PB2)

Premises: rent 300€/month, 3.600€ per annum. Covered by the organization through its activities (implementation of other contracts). The calculation is based on the space percentage of the premises of the organization.

Office Equipment: covered by PEIRA during the project implementation period.

ICT Equipment and software: covered by PEIRA during the project implementation period.

Diagnostic tools and training material: Available and covered by PEIRA during the project implementation period.

Materials and Consumables: 150€ per year. Covered by the organization through its activities (implementation of other contracts).

Promotion costs: 300€ per annum. Covered by the organization through its activities (implementation of other contracts).



Personnel (part time): 4.000€ per annum. Covered by the organization through its activities (implementation of other contracts). The personnel is from the existing staff of beneficiary and part of its working time will be dedicated to the support unit.

External Expertise and Services: 3.700€ per annum. Covered by the organization through its activities (implementation of other contracts). Specialists to be contracted to provide support and consultation in certain periods of the year.

Other overheads (electricity, telephone, internet): 40€ per month, 480€ per annum. Covered by the organization through its activities (implementation of other contracts).

Contingency Reserve: 250€ per annum. If needed, covered by the organization through its activities (implementation of other contracts).

Total Cost per annum: 12.480€ per annum. Covered by the organization through its activities (implementation of other contracts).

3. Local Action Group - Gotse Delchev - Garmen - Hadzhidimovo⁷

The planned operational costs for the Business Support Unit are:

- Expenses for materials and consumables (paper and toner) - 200 BGN/year;
- Overheads (electricity, water, telephone) - up to 50 BGN/month or 600 BGN/year;
- Costs for the promotion of the unit's activities (maintenance of the project's micro-site domain, development and printing of promotional materials, publications, etc.) - 120,00 BGN/year;
- Costs for external services (if external experts are needed to complement competences that cannot be provided by internal experts) - 500 BGN/year;

⁷ Extract from the contribution of the deliverable D6.3.1 of the PB3.



- Contingency - 300BGN/year.

The costs mentioned above are indicative.

LAG - Gotse Delchev - Garmen - Hadzhidimovo has an equipped office and highly qualified experts with knowledge, skills and competences in the field of entrepreneurship and innovation, project development and management, consulting on funding opportunities from various sources, etc. The services to be provided by the Unit will be mainly carried out by the LAG staff, applying the tools developed within the project for initial competitiveness diagnosis of start-up and existing entrepreneurs, as well as training materials for trainings in different thematic areas of entrepreneurship. The initial diagnostic toolkits and the training materials are available on the project platform. The services provided by the LAG team will be provided free of charge. External experts will only be hired in case it is necessary to provide advice and/or training on a topic(s) that cannot be provided by the Unit's experts.

4. Regional Centre for Vocational Training at CCI - Blagoevgrad⁷

The main costs necessary for the functioning of the Business Support Unit, operating within the CCI - Blagoevgrad, are as follows:

- Rental costs - 165 BGN/month or 1980 BGN/year;
- Overheads (electricity, water, telephone, lift) - 60 BGN/month or 720 BGN/year;
- Consumables (toner, paper)- 300 BGN/year;
- Costs for external services (if external experts need to be hired to complement competencies that cannot be provided by internal experts) - 500 BGN/year;
- Promotion costs (advertising and information materials, publications, etc.) - 120BGN/year;
- Contingency - 300BGN/year.

The costs mentioned above are indicative.

Consultants and trainers will be mainly the members/staff of the CCI -

Blagoevgrad team. They have many years of experience as consultants and trainers in the Career Centre, Centre for Entrepreneurship, Vocational Training Centre at the National Centre for Vocational Training in the system of CCI(K) in Bulgaria, Centre for Youth Initiatives and Entrepreneurship and will contribute with their expertise and experience free of charge. The persons have the necessary competences to carry out the activities of the Unit. In case of need for additional expertise in a specific field, external experts will be involved.

5. Summarised cost

No	Partner / District	Total Annual Cost	Coverage
1	LB (Kavala)	14.700€	Covered by the organization through its activities (implementation of other contracts).
2	PB2 (Drama)	12.480€	Covered by the organization through its activities (implementation of other contracts).
3	PB3 (Gotse Delchev)	880€ (1720BGN)	Covered by the organization through its regular activities.
4	PB4 (Blagoevgrad)	2.040€ (3920BGN)	Covered by the organization through its regular activities.
TOTAL		30.100€	

Table 2 Business Support Units - Annual Cost



Summarised Communication plan of the business support units, after the end of the lifetime of the PEIRA project

A primary factor of success is the design and implementation of a communication plan. In the case of the PEIRA partners, it is beneficial that all have large experience in communicating services to entrepreneurs and potential entrepreneurs.

The Project partners will do the following with regards to communication and promotion of the business support units and the results of the PEIRA projects:

- Continue the use of the PEIRA webpage;
- Continue the use of the PEIRA social media;
- Promote the PEIRA project tools and business support units, through their webpages and social media;
- Present the project achievements and the business support units, through other activities, events, and projects they operate (e.g. LEADER);
- Continuously update their shareholders, and the stakeholders for the achievements and the importance of the business support units;
- Re-products the PEIRA leaflets (digital and/or printed) with updated information, and promote their through their existing channels;
- Design a capitalised project (a new project in the programming period 2021-2027), based on PEIRA achievements.

Indirect financial benefit from the operation of the business support units

The operation of the business support units in the intervention area does not provide direct income to the beneficiary organization. This makes complicated the calculation of the financial benefit of operating and using the new structures.



To proceed with the calculations and manage thereafter to conclude about its feasibility, we make the following assumptions:

- The business support units are promoted sufficiently;
- The business support units are acceptable by the target groups;
- The Administration of each project beneficiary itself is keen of further promotion and development of the business support units and integration in their daily activities;
- The business support units manage to promote new and existing businesses as provisioned, and improve their turnover (through increase of sales to customers and set of new cooperation between different SMEs, through the networking);
- The increase of turnover leads to increase of the employment;
- The salaries of the employees are spent for family expenditure, against receipts;
- The average salary (payment after social insurance is deducted) is 750.00€ per employee per month in Greece, for 14months (12months + bonus for Christmas (1/1), Eastern (1/2) and Vacations (1/2)) and 400.00€ per employee per month in Bulgaria, for 12 months;
- The average cost social insurance per employee per month is 280.00€ in Greece and 110.00€ in Bulgaria;
- The VAT in Greece is 24% for services and most of the products⁸, and 20% in Bulgaria⁹;
- The SMEs and new entrepreneurs benefiting from the use of the business support units would make an average +20% to +40%

⁸ Basic needs products (e.g. food) are in lower VAT percentages (6%; 13%).

⁹ Reduced to lower rates for certain products (e.g. 9% on baby foods and hygiene products, or books, etc.).

additional turnover of the additional cost for recruited staff¹⁰ (average 30%);

- The additional profit on the additional turnover to be on average 20%;
- The taxation on dividends is not calculated.

With the above assumptions different scenarios are presented below, at regional level (Region of Eastern Macedonia and Thrace for Kavala and Drama; Province of Blagoevgrad for Gotse Delchev and Blagoevgrad):

Scenario	Increase in employment	Increase in turnover and profit of the SMEs in relation to the increase in employment
Scenario 1	0.002%	30% of the additional staff cost (staff cost + 30%) 20% additional profit on the additional turnover
Scenario 2	0.004%	
Scenario 3	0.008%	
Scenario 4	0.015%	
Scenario 5	0.025%	
Scenario 6	0.050%	
Scenario 7	0.075%	

Table 3 Feasibility Scenarios

¹⁰ Additional turnover = Average cost of newly recruited staff + 20% to 40% of that cost, in comparison to non-use of the business support units.



Data:

- The employees in the District of Blagoevgrad¹¹ in 2022 were 240,186 people¹².
- The employees in the Regional Unit of Drama and the Regional Unit of Kavala¹³ are 131,083 people¹⁴.
- The Gross Domestic Product (GPD) in the District of Blagoevgrad¹⁵, in 2021, was approximately 2.2bn€
- The Gross Domestic Product (GPD) in the Regional Unit of Drama and the Regional Unit of Kavala¹³ was approximately 2,4bn€ in 2021.
- The Local Authorities in Bulgaria are entitled to receive annualy tax revenues, grants and subsidies, and other revenues, counting in total 8,3% of GDP.
- The Local Authorities in Greece are entitled to receive annually the so-called Central Independent Resources (ΚΑΠ)¹⁶. Those include among others:
 - 19.5% of the Income taxation of Natural and Legal persons; and

¹¹ Gotse Delchev is part of the District of Blagoevgrad.

¹² National Statistical Institute – Republic of Bulgaria (2022) and Eurostat (2022). Employment percentage rate as per the residents of the area (annual mean). Analysed by the author.

¹³ Including the Regional Unit of Thassos (the island).

¹⁴ ELSTAT (2022) and Eurostat (2022). Employment percentage rate as per the residents of the area (annual mean).. Analysed by the author.

¹⁵ National Statistical Institute – Republic of Bulgaria (2023) and Eurostat (2023). Analysed by the author.

¹⁶ ΚΑΠ: Κεντρικοί Αυτοτελείς Πόροι

- 12% of the collected VAT¹⁷.
- The income taxation is 22%.

Based on the above, in case of actual operation of e-EMS knowledge center as provisioned:

- (i) we calculate the following for the employment increase in the area of intervention:

Scenario (GR)	New jobs	Cumulative sum of (new) salaries (net)	Cumulative sum of social insurance	Cumulative Gross cost	Cumulative VAT of the net amount spend (consuming)
Sc1: 0,002%	3	31.500,00 €	11.760,00 €	43.260,00 €	6.405,00 €
Sc2: 0,004%	6	63.000,00 €	23.520,00 €	86.520,00 €	12.810,00 €
Sc3: 0,008%	11	115.500,00 €	43.120,00 €	158.620,00 €	23.485,00 €
Sc4: 0,015%	20	210.000,00 €	78.400,00 €	288.400,00 €	42.700,00 €
Sc5: 0,025%	33	346.500,00 €	129.360,00 €	475.860,00 €	70.455,00 €
Sc6: 0,050%	66	693.000,00 €	258.720,00 €	951.720,00 €	140.910,00 €

¹⁷ GR: Law 3852/2010, par.1 article 259; Law 4223/2013, par.6 article 13; Presidential decree (Π.Δ.) 170/2014.

Sc7: 0,075%	99	1.039.500,00 €	388.080,00 €	1.427.580,00 €	211.365,00 €
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Table 4 New salaries in the community, new social insurance, total cost and related average VAT on the consumption of the revenues of the new employees (Regional Unites of Kavala, Drama, Thassos).

Scenario (BG)	New jobs	Cumulative sum of (new) salaries (net)	Cumulative sum of social insurance	Cumulative Gross cost	Cumulative VAT of the net amount spend (consuming)
Sc1: 0,002%	3	14.400,00 €	3.960,00 €	18.360,00 €	2.352,00 €
Sc2: 0,004%	6	28.800,00 €	7.920,00 €	36.720,00 €	4.704,00 €
Sc3: 0,008%	11	52.800,00 €	14.520,00 €	67.320,00 €	8.624,00 €
Sc4: 0,015%	20	96.000,00 €	26.400,00 €	122.400,00 €	15.680,00 €
Sc5: 0,025%	33	158.400,00 €	43.560,00 €	201.960,00 €	25.872,00 €
Sc6: 0,050%	66	316.800,00 €	87.120,00 €	403.920,00 €	51.744,00 €
Sc7: 0,075%	99	475.200,00 €	130.680,00 €	605.880,00 €	77.616,00 €

Table 5 New salaries in the community, new social insurance, total cost and related average VAT on the consumption of the revenues of the new employees (District of Blagoevgrad).

Scenario (GR-BG)	New jobs	Cumulative sum of (new) salaries (net)	Cumulative sum of social insurance	Cumulative Gross cost	Cumulative VAT of the net amount spend (consuming)
Sc1: 0,002%	6	45.900,00 €	15.720,00 €	61.620,00 €	8.757,00 €
Sc2: 0,004%	12	91.800,00 €	31.440,00 €	123.240,00 €	17.514,00 €
Sc3: 0,008%	22	168.300,00 €	57.640,00 €	225.940,00 €	32.109,00 €
Sc4: 0,015%	40	306.000,00 €	104.800,00 €	410.800,00 €	58.380,00 €
Sc5: 0,025%	66	504.900,00 €	172.920,00 €	677.820,00 €	96.327,00 €
Sc6: 0,050%	132	1.009.800,00 €	345.840,00 €	1.355.640,00 €	192.654,00 €
Sc7: 0,075%	198	1.514.700,00 €	518.760,00 €	2.033.460,00 €	288.981,00 €

Table 6 New salaries in the community, new social insurance, total cost and related average VAT on the consumption of the revenues of the new employees (GR and BG intervention area).

Thus, the operation of the business support units, have a positive impact for the local societies; improved social insurance fund (approximately up to **518,000€**); collected VAT from the additional consuming (up to **289,000€**), and more amounts for consumption in the markets (up to **1,515,000€**), while the respective cost of the operation of the business support units, is extremely low.

- (ii) we calculate for the additional turnover of the SMEs, their additional profit and the respective taxation:

Scenario (GR)	Cumulative sum additional turnover	Cumulative sum of additional profit	Cumulative sum of additional income taxation
Sc1: 0,002%	56.238,00 €	11.247,60 €	3.149,33 €
Sc2: 0,004%	112.476,00 €	22.495,20 €	6.298,66 €
Sc3: 0,008%	206.206,00 €	41.241,20 €	11.547,54 €
Sc4: 0,015%	374.920,00 €	74.984,00 €	20.995,52 €
Sc5: 0,025%	618.618,00 €	123.723,60 €	34.642,61 €
Sc6: 0,050%	1.237.236,00 €	247.447,20 €	69.285,22 €
Sc7: 0,075%	1.855.854,00 €	371.170,80 €	103.927,82 €

Table 7 Contribution in turnover, profit and income taxation (Regional Units of Drama, Kavala, Thassos)

Scenario (BG)	Cumulative sum additional turnover	Cumulative sum of additional profit	Cumulative sum of additional income taxation
Sc1: 0,002%	23.868,00 €	4.773,60 €	1.336,61 €
Sc2: 0,004%	47.736,00 €	9.547,20 €	2.673,22 €
Sc3: 0,008%	87.516,00 €	17.503,20 €	4.900,90 €
Sc4: 0,015%	159.120,00 €	31.824,00 €	8.910,72 €
Sc5: 0,025%	262.548,00 €	52.509,60 €	14.702,69 €
Sc6: 0,050%	525.096,00 €	105.019,20 €	29.405,38 €
Sc7: 0,075%	787.644,00 €	157.528,80 €	44.108,06 €

Table 8 Contribution in turnover, profit and income taxation (District of Blagoevgrad).

Scenario (GR-BG)	Cumulative sum additional turnover	Cumulative sum of additional profit	Cumulative sum of additional income taxation
Sc1: 0,002%	80.106,00 €	16.021,20 €	4.485,94 €
Sc2: 0,004%	160.212,00 €	32.042,40 €	8.971,87 €

Sc3: 0,008%	293.722,00 €	58.744,40 €	16.448,43 €
Sc4: 0,015%	534.040,00 €	106.808,00 €	29.906,24 €
Sc5: 0,025%	881.166,00 €	176.233,20 €	49.345,30 €
Sc6: 0,050%	1.762.332,00 €	352.466,40 €	98.690,59 €
Sc7: 0,075%	2.643.498,00 €	528.699,60 €	148.035,89 €

Table 9 Contribution in turnover, profit and income taxation (Intervention area in Greece and Bulgaria).

Thus, the operation of the business support units, have a positive impact for the local businesses (extra turnover, **up to approximately 2,644,000€** with additional profit **up to approximately 529,000€**), and more tax revenues for the state, and subsequently for the local authorities, (**up to 148,000€**).

- (iii) we calculate the cumulative sum of the additional income taxation the additional VAT and the additional social insurance for the intervention area in both sides of the borders.

Scenario	Additional income taxation the additional VAT and the additional social insurance for the intervention area (GR-BG)
Sc1: 0,002%	28.962,94 €
Sc2: 0,004%	57.925,87 €

Sc3: 0,008%	106.197,43 €
Sc4: 0,015%	193.086,24 €
Sc5: 0,025%	318.592,30 €
Sc6: 0,050%	637.184,59 €
Sc7: 0,075%	955.776,89 €

Table 10 Additional income taxation the additional VAT and the additional social insurance for the intervention area (GR-BG)

The analysis clearly shows that business support units deliver significant value in multiple areas, including finances, taxes, entrepreneurship, and job creation. Remarkably, they achieve this at a minimal operational cost.

Business support units: Target Groups

The target groups that will benefit from the operation of the business support units, are:

- Existing SMEs in all economic sectors;
- Local business support structures such as LAGs, Chambers of Commerce, the Local and Regional Government and other public authorities;
- New potential entrepreneurs who will start or thinking of starting a new business, including mainly young adults and women;
- Employees and managers working on SMEs;



- Graduates-young adults, of the Universities in the CB area;
- The local population, through the growth of small/very small entrepreneurship and employment generation;
- Consultants and other specialists who will provide services during or after the project implementation.

Business support units: Future Capacity to attract enterprises

The project prioritizes long-term sustainability by embedding the Business Support Units (BSUs) within the existing structures of the project beneficiaries. These beneficiaries directly assist potential, new, and existing companies, ensuring the units remain relevant and responsive to local needs. This strategic integration leverages the inherent strengths of all four partners, guaranteeing their capacity to attract businesses even after the project concludes.

Furthermore, the low operational cost of the BSUs presents a significant advantage. By carefully designing cost-efficient approaches and utilizing existing resources, the beneficiaries can readily cover the expenses using their own means. This financial independence eliminates reliance on external funding, securing the units' viability beyond the project timeframe.

In essence, the project creates a self-sustaining ecosystem for supporting entrepreneurship. By integrating BSUs into existing structures, leveraging partner expertise, and minimizing operational costs, the project lays the groundwork for continued impact even after its formal completion.

Business support units: SWOT Analysis

A SWOT analysis is a powerful tool for assessing an organization's internal strengths and weaknesses, as well as the external opportunities and threats it faces. This four-pronged approach helps individuals and companies make informed decisions, navigate challenges, and capitalize on potential.

- **Strengths:** What are the internal advantages you possess? This could include skilled personnel, unique technology, brand recognition, or robust financial resources. Identifying these strengths allows you to leverage them for a competitive edge.
- **Weaknesses:** What internal limitations hinder your progress? Consider areas like lack of expertise, outdated technology, limited access to resources, or inefficient processes. Recognizing weaknesses helps you address them and avoid potential pitfalls.
- **Opportunities:** What external trends or circumstances can you benefit from? Emerging markets, changing consumer preferences, favorable government policies, or new technologies can present exciting opportunities for growth. Recognizing these opportunities helps you adapt and capitalize on them.
- **Threats:** What external factors pose a risk to your success? Consider competitors, economic downturns, regulatory changes, or technological disruptions. Identifying these threats helps you mitigate their impact and develop contingency plans.

By analysing these four categories, a comprehensive understanding of the current position and future prospects, can be gained. This empowers the decision making body to:

- **Develop effective strategies:** Align strengths with opportunities to capitalize on potential. Address weaknesses to minimize threats.
- **Make informed decisions:** Evaluate options based on your internal capabilities and external environment.
- **Prioritize actions:** Focus resources on maximizing strengths and opportunities while mitigating weaknesses and threats.
- **Prepare for the future:** Develop proactive plans to anticipate and navigate external changes.

Whether a business is launched, a project is managed, or personal decisions are to be made, a SWOT analysis provides valuable insights for

navigating the journey towards success.

We will have the SWOT analysis for the District of Blagevgrad (prepared by PB3 in the deliverable D6.3.1) and for the Regional units Drama, Kavala, Thassos (one SWOT analysis).

1. Business Support Units: SWOT analysis Greece

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good knowledge and contacts with enterprises in the intervention area and established channels of communication; • LB and PB2 are Intermediate Managing Authorities for the Rural Development Programme (RDP); • Availability of a competent and motivated team; • Availability of premises and facilities for the implementation of the activities of the Business Support Units; • Availability of a developed diagnostic toolkit/self-diagnosis of existing and potential entrepreneurs, toolkit for trainings in different thematic areas of entrepreneurship, platform with provided opportunities for access to the developed toolkits for the representatives of the target 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Newly established, without pro-existing related professional culture; • Heavy load of work to be implemented on a daily basis, that prevents the smooth development; • Staff involved ins not full time for the specific activity; • The shareholders of the Kavala and Drama development agencies (LB; PB2) are not fully aware of the opportunities and the significance of the business support units.

groups;	
OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Availability of different sources of funding and co-financing for the activities to be developed by the Business Support Units; • Events of other activities (e.g. LEADER) that attract potential, new and older entrepreneurs, are opportunities for promotion of the Business Support Units; • Cooperation with organisations in the territory, in the country and abroad, in order to exchange experiences and good practices; • A well-developed network of partners, including organisations representing businesses in the cross-border area; • Promotion of the PEIRA approach to other Development agencies - synergies and cooperation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Delay in the start of the new programming period; • Low interest of the target groups in improving knowledge and skills; • Non-constantly the same staff involvement in the daily management of the Business Support Unit; • Organisational / administrative changes; • Changes in the legislative framework in Greece; • Global economic and financial crisis.

Based on the SWOT analysis it can be concluded that:

- In the intervention area in Greece, there is a need to increase the knowledge and skills of the entrepreneurs, their employees and managers, and potential entrepreneurs;
- There is availability of professional teams in the Business Support Units, whose experience and knowledge will contribute to the development of entrepreneurship in the territory;



- There is availability of highly qualified experts, material and technical base for providing quality consulting services and trainings on topics in the field of entrepreneurship and innovation.
- Representatives of the target groups are not sufficiently familiar with digital technologies and innovation;
- There is a need to increase the economic and managerial knowledge and skills of existing and future entrepreneurs;
- There is a need to motivate existing and potential entrepreneurs on the need to increase their knowledge and skills in various topics related to entrepreneurship (e.g. operational management, human resource management, technological upgrading, development of new products and services, development and implementation of marketing strategies, implementation of innovations, digitalization of processes, etc.).

Based on the SWOT analysis, it can be summarised that the work of the Business Support Units can contribute to the improvement of business in the cross-border region by providing services necessary for the representatives of the target groups, their future sustainable development and improving their competitiveness. The activities to be carried out in the Business Support Units have been selected to fully address the identified needs of current and potential entrepreneurs, minimizing their weaknesses and threats, and contributing to the development of their strengths and opportunities¹⁸.

Through their active work in the region, the Business Support Units will provide the necessary support to all representatives of the target groups willing to use their services¹⁸.

¹⁸ Common conclusions with the contributed ones of the PB3.

2. Business Support Units: SWOT analysis Bulgaria¹⁹

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good knowledge and contacts with businesses in the region and established channels of communication; • Availability of a competent and motivated team; • Availability of facilities for the implementation of the activities of the Business Support Units; • Availability of a developed diagnostic toolkit/self-diagnosis of existing and potential entrepreneurs, toolkit for trainings in different thematic areas of entrepreneurship, platform with provided opportunities for access to the developed toolkits for the representatives of the target groups; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited financial resources to attract additional experts; • Restriction of the work priority on the territory of the founded activity of the organizations - rural areas of Blagoevgrad district for TPPP - Blagoevgrad; • The municipalities of Gotse Delchev, Garmen and Hadzhidimovo - for Local Initiative Group - Gotse Delchev - Garmen - Hadzhidimovo.
OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Availability of different sources of funding and co-financing for the activities to be developed by the Units; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Low interest of the target groups in improving knowledge and skills; • Delay in the start of the

¹⁹ Contributed by PB3 (D6.3.1).

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cooperation with organizations in the territory, in the country and abroad, in order to exchange experiences and good practices; • A well-developed network of partners, including organizations representing businesses in the cross-border area; • Extension of the area of action in the cross-border area in the district of Smolyan and other municipalities of the district of Blagoevgrad. 	<p>new programming period;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Changes in the management of the Business Support Unit organizations and changes in the expert teams; • Change in the legislative framework in the country; • Global economic and financial crisis.
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Table 11 SWOT Analysis for the Business Structure Units in the District of Blagoevgrad.

Based on the SWOT analysis it can be concluded that:

- In the rural areas of the Blagoevgrad region there is a need to increase the knowledge and skills of the representatives of entrepreneurs, their employees and managers and potential entrepreneurs;
- Availability of professional teams in the Support Units, whose experience and knowledge will contribute to the development of business in the territory;
- Availability of highly qualified experts, material and technical base for providing quality consulting services and trainings on topics in the field of entrepreneurship and innovation.
- Representatives of the target groups are not sufficiently familiar with digital technologies and innovation;
- Need to increase the economic and managerial knowledge and skills of existing and future entrepreneurs;
- The need to motivate existing and potential entrepreneurs on the need to increase their knowledge and skills in various areas of



entrepreneurship such as: *operational management, human resource management, technological upgrading, development of new products and services, development and implementation of marketing strategies, implementation of innovations, digitalization of processes, etc.*, in order to achieve economic growth and development of the entrepreneurs' enterprises.

Based on the SWOT analysis, it can be summarized that the work of the Support Units will contribute to the improvement of business in the cross-border region by providing services necessary for the representatives of the target groups, their future sustainable development and improving their competitiveness. The activities to be carried out in the Business Support Units have been selected to fully address the identified needs of current and potential entrepreneurs, minimizing their weaknesses and threats, and contributing to the development of their strengths and opportunities.

Through their active work in the region, the Business Support Units will provide the necessary support to all representatives of the target groups willing to use their services.

Business support units: PEST Analysis

In the ever-changing world of business, understanding the broader environment is crucial for making sound decisions. This is where PEST analysis comes in, offering a framework to examine Political, Economic, Social, and Technological²⁰ factors influencing your organization.

- **Political**: This encompasses government policies, regulations, trade agreements, and political stability. Analyzing these factors helps you anticipate changes that could impact your operations, pricing, or target markets.

²⁰ Many make advanced use through the PESTLE/PESTEL, where the last E refers to the Environmental, and L refers to the Legal.

- **Economic**: Factors like economic growth, interest rates, inflation, and consumer spending power all fall under this category. Understanding these forces allows you to adjust your strategies based on economic trends and opportunities.
- **Social**: Demography, cultural shifts, changing consumer preferences, and environmental attitudes are among the social factors to consider. Analyzing these trends helps you stay relevant, appeal to your target audience, and identify emerging market opportunities.
- **Technological**: Rapid advancements in technology can disrupt industries, create new products and services, and alter communication channels. Analyzing the technological landscape helps you leverage innovation, adapt to changes, and maintain a competitive edge.

By examining these four interconnected elements, a valuable understanding of the external forces shaping the related environment, is gained. This empowers the decision-making body to:

- **Identify future challenges and opportunities**: Anticipate how PEST factors might impact the organization and proactively create contingency plans or capitalize on emerging trends.
- **Inform strategic decision-making**: Evaluate investment options, product launches, and business expansion plans based on the broader environmental context.
- **Develop risk management strategies**: Mitigate potential threats arising from political, economic, social, or technological shifts.
- **Stay agile and responsive**: Adapt your business model and operations to navigate changes in the macro environment.

Whether it is a multinational corporation or a local startup, or another entity, conducting a PEST analysis assists to navigate the external landscape, make informed decisions, and adapt to achieve the goals that



were set.

We will have the PEST analysis for the District of Blagevgrad (prepared by PB3 in the deliverable D6.3.1) and for the Regional units Drama, Kavala, Thassos (one PEST analysis).

1. Business Support Units: PEST analysis Greece

Political factors

The most significant impact on the activities of the Business Support Units may be the change in legislation or the change in local and state government and their political priorities. LB (Kavala) and PB2 (Drama) are stable and operating for over 30 years by providing funding tools to entrepreneurs, which ensures the continuation of the action.

Economic factors

Economic factors can have an impact on the development of business in the intervention area and the participation of the representatives in the various initiatives of the Business Support Units. The main funding tools are accompanied by other awarded contracts, which ensures the financial support on the new structures in Drama and Kavala.

Social factors

The services to be provided by the Business Support Units are tailored to the needs of the end beneficiaries, taking into account the different approaches of the different entrepreneurs and generations, their habits and values, including the characteristics of the migrant-entrepreneur. Various social factors will be considered in the process, such as educational level, generational differences, social mobility and socio-cultural aspects of the business environment, as well and special requirements for migrants being potential entrepreneurs.

Technological factors

Currently, the Business Support Units are equipped with the necessary office and ICT equipment, operating in the the project beneficiariess' premises, and are open to the introduction of new technologies, such as Artificial Intelligence, process digitalization and innovation. In the process,



the Business Support Units will use all the possibilities of modern technology to make the services offered more accessible to entrepreneurs while the cost of the provided services will remain low.

2. Business Support Units: PEST analysis Bulgaria¹⁹

Political factors

The most significant impact on the activities of the Business Support Units may be the change in legislation or the change in local and state government. Changes in the Non-profit Legal Entities Act as well as national and European legislation in the field of EU funding are important for both units, given the basis on which they were established, the objectives of the organizations and their functioning (mainly on a project basis). Also, with regard to the LAG - Gotse Delchev - Garmen - Hadzhidimovo, as an organization, the stability of the local governance and the sustainable partnership between the three municipalities participating in the organization are particularly important, as one of the main guarantees for the organizational stability of the Association.

Economic factors

Economic factors can have an impact on the development of business in the region and the participation of its representatives in the various initiatives of the Business Support Units. The main funding for both units is on a project basis and it is essential that potential funding opportunities are available at national and international level for the activities of the organisations in which the Business Support Units are structured in order to be sustainable in the future.

Social factors

The services to be provided by the Business Support Units are tailored to the needs of their users, taking into account the specificities of the different generations, their habits and values, including the characteristics of the ethnic groups. Various social factors will be taken into account in the process, such as educational level, generational differences, social mobility and socio-cultural aspects of the business environment.

Technological factors



Currently, the Business Support Units are equipped with the necessary technological resources and are open to the introduction of new technologies, process digitalization and innovation. In the process, the Units will use all the possibilities of modern technology so as to make the services offered more accessible to entrepreneurs on the one hand and to minimize the costs of providing them on the other hand.

Business support units: Potential reduction of operation costs

The cost is reasonable, and the resources were optimised at the final stage of the preparation of this document and are secured. There is no reasons to attempt to minimise the estimated cost.

Business support units: description of procedures and framework of operation

1. Framework of operation

The PEIRA project beneficiaries, will dedicate one constant person of the organisation to carry the administrative work of the Business Support Units that are established during the implementation of the project.

They will also appoint a team of in-house experts for the Business Support Units.

The Business Support Units will be under the rule of the General Director or the Executive Director or the Manager of the Organisation.

It will be support occasionally by external experts, who will be cooperating with the administration staff and the in-house experts.

The organogram is suggested to be as follows:

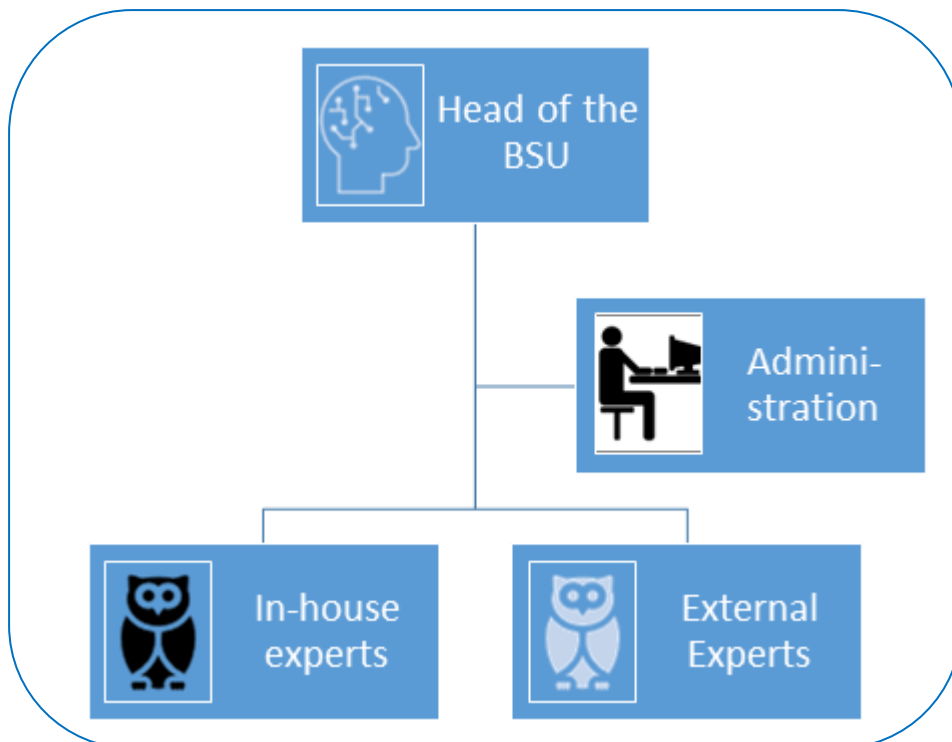


Figure 4 Business Support Unit - suggested organisational structure

The Business Support Units will continue the cooperation and exchange experience and new knowledge.

The scheme of cooperation is proposed to be as follows:

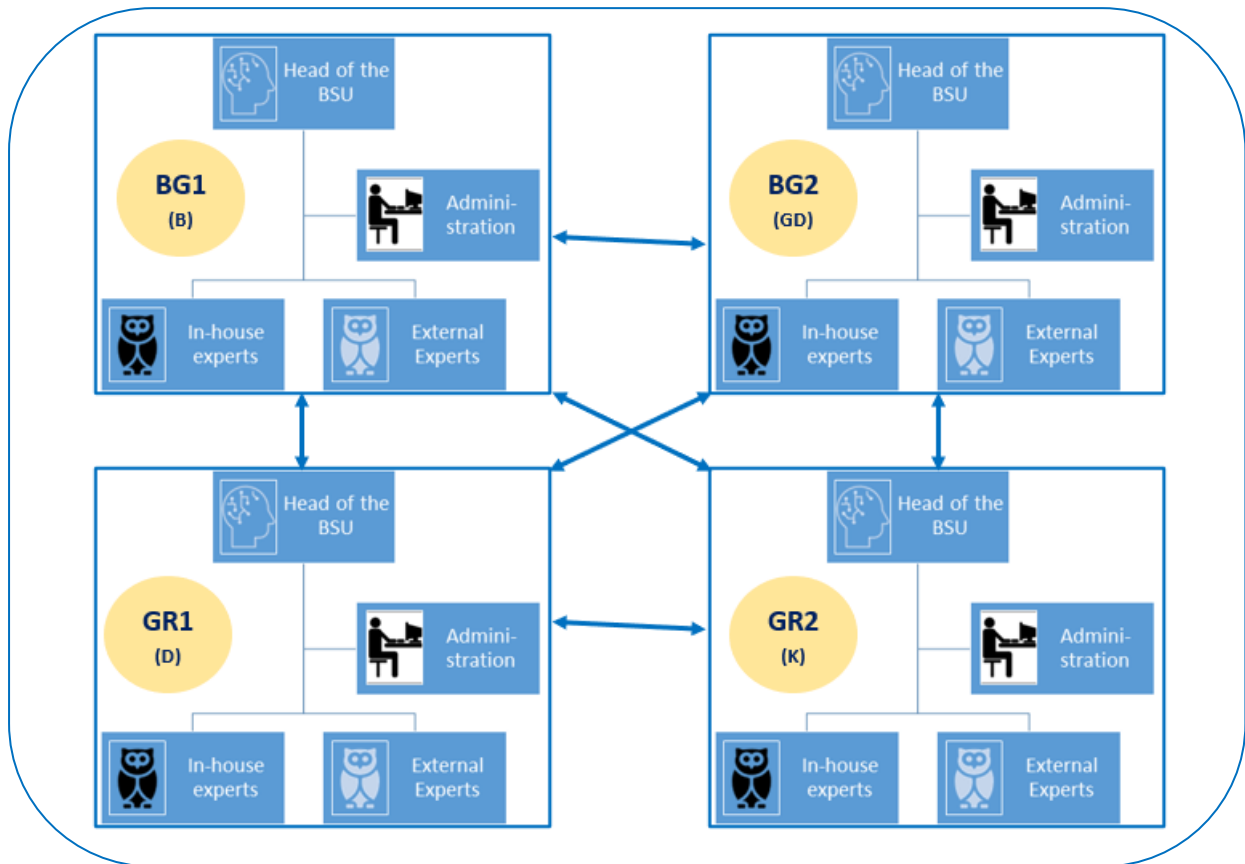


Figure 5 Diagramme of the Cooperation of the Business Support Units

2. Procedures²¹

- **Initial stakeholder information procedure:**

The procedure will clearly outline all the various activities and services available through the Business Support Units (BSUs). This transparency will include:

Comprehensive List: A detailed enumeration of the specific tasks and support functions offered by each BSU. This could encompass administrative support, financial assistance, IT troubleshooting, marketing guidance, and more.

Delivery Methods: Specifying how each service is provided,

²¹ Same structure of sub-titles of the contribution of PB3 (D6.3.1).



whether through in-person consultations, online portals, telephone support, or a combination of these methods.

Accessibility: Clarifying eligibility criteria and any access restrictions for specific services.

Support Channels: Highlighting the preferred contact methods for each BSU, including designated personnel, email addresses, and phone numbers.

Service Level Agreements: If applicable, outlining response times, turnaround periods, and other performance benchmarks for specific services.

By following this approach, the procedure ensures comprehensive disclosure, empowering users to navigate BSU offerings efficiently and utilize their support effectively. Remember, the word count is around 90, and you can adjust the details based on your specific needs.

- **Stakeholder registration and initial meeting planning procedure:**

This process allows stakeholders to actively engage with the Business Support Units. It starts with stakeholders proactively indicating their desire to learn more about the available services and how they can benefit. This expression of interest can occur through various channels, such as online forms, dedicated email addresses, or direct contact with BSU representatives.

Following this initial expression, interested parties are offered the opportunity to schedule an introductory meeting with relevant BSU experts. This meeting serves as a platform for personalized information sharing tailored to the stakeholder's specific needs and challenges. BSU experts can provide in-depth explanations of relevant services, discuss eligibility criteria, and outline potential support plans. This initial meeting fosters open communication and ensures a smooth onboarding process for stakeholders seeking BSU assistance.

- **Initial meeting with current/potential entrepreneurs and experts of the Business Support Units:**

Ignition of the entrepreneurial spark of the interested stakeholders (end beneficiaries), with the Business Support Unit!



“Expressed interest in the BSU services? Join the BSU for an immersive workshop designed to equip current and aspiring entrepreneurs with the tools and knowledge to excel. During this interactive session, the BSU experts will be the guides, unveiling the vast potential of the Business Support Unit”:

Unveiling the Competitive Edge: Examination of the intuitive online tools that provide invaluable initial competitiveness diagnoses. These insights, coupled with comprehensive training materials, empower the stakeholder (end beneficiary) to enhance his/her skills and build a solid foundation for success.

Forge Powerful Connections: The utilisation of the BSU’s thriving networking hub, can guide to mingling with like-minded individuals, fostering valuable connections and collaborations that can catapult the stakeholder’s (end beneficiary) venture to new heights.

Chart the Personalized Course: The stakeholder (end beneficiary) will unlock his/her full potential. He/She and the BSU experts will work collaboratively to craft a bespoke action plan. This roadmap may include in-depth consultations with BSU experts, targeted training in areas specific to the needs, participation in cutting-edge seminars, and seamless integration into BSU’s supportive network.

This workshop will be the launchpad to entrepreneurial success. It will lead to gaining knowledge, connections, and resources required to transform ideas into reality.

- **Planning entrepreneurship advisory sessions/training/innovation workshops**

Drawing up a timetable for involvement in other activities, based on action plans that are set up. The end beneficiary will transform plans into action. After crafting his/her personalised action plans, it's time to transform them into a strategic timetable. This schedule will map out his/her involvement in various activities, ensuring each step aligns with his/her goals. By leveraging the insights from his/her action plans, he/she can:



Prioritize effectively: Allocate time strategically based on activity importance and urgency.

Optimize resource allocation: Schedule activities that require similar resources efficiently.

Maintain momentum: Integrate deadlines and milestones to stay on track.

Ensure work-life balance: Factor in personal commitments for a sustainable pace.

Conducting entrepreneurship advisory sessions/training/innovation workshops

According to a prepared schedule.

Entrepreneurship thrives on guidance and collaboration. BSU fosters such an environment through a spectrum of support initiatives:

Advisory Sessions: BSU experienced mentors offer personalized consultations, addressing end beneficiary's specific challenges and opportunities. Gain valuable insights on everything from market validation to funding strategies.

Targeted Training: Equip the end beneficiary with essential skills. BSU offers a diverse range of workshops and training programs covering crucial topics like business plan development, financial management, and digital marketing.

Innovation Workshops: Unleash end beneficiary's creative spark! Participate in interactive workshops designed to encourage innovative thinking and problem-solving. Collaborate with fellow entrepreneurs and explore cutting-edge solutions for his/her venture.

The above initiatives offer a comprehensive support system, tailored to nurture end beneficiary's entrepreneurial journey. Whether he/she just starts out or seeks to refine his/her strategy, BSU will assist the end-beneficiaries to turn their vision into reality.



Preparation of an annual report on the activities of the Business Support Units.

The BSUs will be credible and transparent in their operation. Every year, after the first year of operation, they will be preparing a report on their activities and achievements. Such report will be available freely to all, through the webpage of the project and/or the webpages of the PEIRA project beneficiaries.

Social and environmental impacts of project implementation

The concept of "sustainable development" transcends mere green initiatives. It embodies a profound commitment to meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own. This translates to a delicate balancing act - ensuring economic prosperity, minimizing environmental impact, and upholding social well-being. Fortunately, Business Support Units (BSUs) can play a pivotal role in achieving this societal objective.

By integrating environmentally and socially responsible practices into their core operations, BSUs contribute to a sustainable future. This goes beyond simply offering "green" services. It's about harmonizing environmental, social, and economic aspects in everything they do.

Environmentally: BSUs can empower entrepreneurs to adopt sustainable practices through workshops on eco-friendly business models, resource efficiency, and responsible waste management. Additionally, supporting the development of green technologies and promoting circular economy principles can foster environmental responsibility within the local business ecosystem.

Socially: BSUs can champion fair labour practices, promote diversity and inclusion in the entrepreneurial space, and provide guidance on ethical sourcing and community engagement. Moreover, offering financial literacy training and mentorship programs can empower marginalized communities to participate in the economy, fostering social equity.

Economically: By supporting the creation and growth of



sustainable businesses, BSUs contribute to long-term economic prosperity. By encouraging responsible business practices that prioritize employee well-being and ethical production, they build trust and customer loyalty, promoting sustainable economic growth.

In conclusion, Business Support Units have the potential to be powerful drivers of sustainable development. By embracing environmentally and socially responsible practices, they can empower entrepreneurs, build resilient communities, and pave the way for a more sustainable future for all²².

²² According to PB3's contribution (D6.3.1),

(A) Social Impact

The social impact can be defined as positive on the people and communities in the regions where the Business Support Units established within the PEIRA project will operate. The project will thus ensure the sustainability of the social impact in the long term.

The provision of advice and training in entrepreneurship and innovation by the Business Support Units will contribute to increasing the knowledge and skills of potential and current entrepreneurs in different areas of entrepreneurship, and consequently improve their competitiveness. The activities also have relevant social impacts by creating the conditions for:

- *Reducing unemployment by creating new jobs and minimizing the loss of existing jobs.*
- *Provide rural businesses with easy access to advice and training by providing highly qualified experts, modern technological solutions and training materials;*
- *Improving the knowledge and skills of management teams;*
- *Improve access to the labour market for the target groups;*
- *Positive social change in the work and actions of businesses.*

(B) Environmental Impact

All activities implemented within the PEIRA project, as well as the functioning of the Business Support Units, during the period of sustainability of the results, are in line with the EU environmental standards as well as the European principles for environmental protection.

During the stakeholder consultation and training process, special attention was paid to the need to take environmental and social factors into account in all activities and future activities. The themes of the consultations and trainings correspond directly to the environmental and social dimensions of sustainable business development. During the training and consultation, attention is paid to environmental and social impacts, their relationship to business, and the commitment of entrepreneurs to address these impacts and issues and their role in achieving compliance with the European Principles.

Through their activities, the Business Support Units will contribute directly or indirectly to the protection of the environment and natural resources by having a positive impact in several aspects:

Business Support Units: Necessity to continue their operation (Bridging the Gap)

The ongoing mission of Business Support Units (BSUs) is critical for revitalizing rural communities and addressing key challenges in the intervention area. These challenges include limited access to opportunities, services, and resources, particularly in the areas of digital technologies, telecommunications, innovation, and knowledge transfer. Fortunately, BSUs can leverage these very technologies to improve quality of life, standard of living, public service delivery, resource utilization, and environmental sustainability.

In the intervention area in both sides of the borders, where micro-enterprises dominate (over 90% of the total number of enterprises), BSUs become even more crucial. These small businesses often lack the financial and human resources to invest in training, management practices, and expert consultations (risking not just their growth, but their survival also). To that, BSUs step in, providing professional and targeted support to both aspiring and established entrepreneurs.

The vital role of BSUs in the intervention area of the District of Blagoevgrad (includes Gotse Delchev), Regional Units of Kavala, Drama, and Thassos, can be summarised in several key areas:

Knowledge Hub: Offering training materials and technologies (including eight thematic areas of entrepreneurship and a competitiveness diagnostic toolkit) for effective stakeholder training.

Capacity Building: Enhancing the knowledge and skills of existing and potential entrepreneurs, along with their teams and employees.

-
- *Reducing the materials and consumables used in the work process;*
 - *Encourage reduction of materials and consumables used by potential/existing entrepreneurs;*
 - *Improve resource efficiency in the operation of Business Support Units;*
 - *Improve resource efficiency in the operation of entrepreneurs and their enterprises using the services of the Business Support Units.*



Job Creation: Reducing unemployment rates by fostering entrepreneurial ventures.

Digital Transformation: Supporting businesses in adopting modern digital technologies and innovative solutions.

Competitive Advantage: Boosting business competitiveness through tailored guidance and resources.

Accessibility: Ensuring quality support for business development and growth within the region.

Sustainable Development: Ultimately contributing to improved quality of life for residents by promoting a thriving and sustainable local economy.

By focusing on these areas, BSUs in both sides of the Greece-Bulgaria borders, can **bridge the gap between rural communities and the opportunities offered by technology, innovation, and knowledge transfer**. This, in turn, leads to a stronger, more vibrant, and more sustainable future for the region.

Business Support Units: Potential synergies – cooperation

The cooperation with other entities, is critical. Particularly that the actors in the field are many. The BSUs will establish cooperation with the following types of entities²³:

- Chambers of Commerce;
- Universities;
- Municipal Authorities;
- Unions of Municipal Authorities;

²³The list is indicative and not exhausted.



- Regional Authorities;
- Ministerial Authorities (particularly, Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs; Ministry of Development; Ministry of Digital Governance, Ministry of Agricultural Development);
- Business Associations;
- Associations and Unions of Farmers, Livestock, Fisheries;
- Unemployment Agencies;
- Secondary Schools (> 9th grade);
- Vocational Training Centres;
- Incubators;
- Associations of Social Enterprises and Cooperatives;
- Scientific Associations;
- Local Action Groups.
- Civil Society Entities;
- Other NGOs;

The cooperation between the above organizations will contribute to the sustainability of the Business Support Units in the cross-border area:

Synergetic Strength: By collaborating, BSUs and different organisations gain access to a wider pool of resources, expertise, and best practices. This allows them to offer a more diverse and comprehensive range of services to entrepreneurs, making them more attractive and valuable. Sharing knowledge and expertise also minimizes duplication of effort, leading to greater cost-efficiency and sustainability.

Enhanced Reach and Impact: Collaboration enables BSUs to expand their reach beyond their individual borders, serving a larger and more diverse pool of entrepreneurs. This can attract more funding, investments, and partnerships, further solidifying their



sustainability. Joint outreach initiatives can also amplify the impact of their work, leading to wider economic development and societal benefits across the cross-border area.

Innovation and Knowledge Exchange: Collaborating organisations can foster an environment of innovation by sharing ideas, methodologies, and success stories. This cross-pollination of knowledge can lead to the development of new and improved services, better equipping BSUs to respond to evolving needs and market trends.

Joint Advocacy and Funding Opportunities: By presenting a united front, collaborating BSUs can more effectively advocate for policies and funding that support their missions. This can involve joint proposals for grants, joint lobbying efforts for favourable regulations, and collaboration on research and development projects.

New projects: Design and preparation of new projects between the holders of the BSUs (PEIRA project beneficiaries) and the cooperation organisations.

Long-Term Sustainability: By diversifying their funding sources, expanding their reach, and fostering innovation, collaboration can help BSUs achieve long-term financial and operational sustainability. This ensures the continued availability of their vital services for entrepreneurs in the cross-border area, contributing to economic growth and regional development.

Business Support Units: proposed partnerships that may develop

The partnerships that may be developed between the four BSUs, that were established during the implementation of the PEIRA project, with entities described in the previous sub-chapter *Business Support Units: Potential synergies – cooperation*, include²³:

- Informal cooperation;
- Participation in joint projects as co-partners;



- Contribution of one to the other during the implementation of their activities;
- Participation in activities of other cooperating parties;
- Exchange of know-how;
- Introduction of end-beneficiaries.

The variety of forms of cooperation provides a wide range of options and opportunities for further development of the BSUs.

Business Support Units: Synergies with other actions and programs implemented by the PEIRA project partners

According to the contribution of PB3 (Deliverable D6.3.1), Local Action Group - Gotse Delchev - Garmen - Hadzhidimovo is a partner with Kavala Development Agency in the project "Culture and Authenticity through Joint Events in Southeast Europe" (*COME AND SEE*).

The project was funded under sub-measure 19.3 "Preparation and implementation of cooperation activities of local initiative groups" of measure 19 "Community-led local development" of the Rural Development Programme 2014-2020 (LEADER). The project was for transnational cooperation and was implemented by LAG Gotse Delchev - Garmen - Hadzhidimovo and partners from (LAG Lunca Joasă a Siretului and LAG Lider Bistrița Năsăud), Greece (LAG Kavala Development Agency SA) and Turkey (LAG Çameli).

That project connected local initiative groups across borders, fostering collaboration between those already implementing local development strategies. By joining forces, they undertook joint activities that promoted the sustainable development of their communities. A crucial outcome was the creation and implementation of a framework specifically designed to enhance the development of creative tourism in the participating regions. This framework empowers these groups to continue driving positive change in their communities.

The specific objectives of the project were related to:



- Exchange of good practices to improve the prospects for implementing local development strategies in the territories of the partners;
- Strengthening the innovative character of local development actions;
- Increasing the competitiveness of territories through: culture, tradition, art and digital innovation;
- Initiating creative tourism activities.

The PEIRA project beneficiaries are keen and have the opportunity to cooperate in the programming period 2021-2027 in the programmes Rural Development Programmes, INTERREG, and ERASMUS+. Their expressed preferences are related to enhancement of and promotion of entrepreneurship.

Business Support Units: Potential sources of funding

Own funds of the four entities, where the structures of the Business Support Units are set. Namely the Kavala Development Agency, the Drama Development Agency, the Local Initiative Group - Gotse Delchev - Garmen - Hadzhidimovo, and the Regional Centre for Vocational Training at CCI - Blagoevgrad.

1. Additional funding sources:

CBC Programme INTERREG VI-A Greece-Bulgaria 2021-2027, aimed at the implementation of activities to achieve smart, sustainable and inclusive growth and achieve economic, social and territorial cohesion in the Republic of Bulgaria and the Hellenic Republic, in particular for the regions of Haskovo, Smolyan, Kardzhali and Blagoevgrad on the territory of the Republic of Bulgaria and the regions of Evros, Xanthi, Rhodope, Drama, Kavala, Thessaloniki and Serres on the territory of the Hellenic Republic.



CBC Programme INTERREG VII-A IPA Bulgaria and North Macedonia 2021-2027 - CBC Programme funded by the European Union under the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA III);

CBC Next INTERREG Black Sea Basin 2021-2027 Programme. Neighbourhood Programme of EU, funding joint transnational projects.

Euro-Mediterranean Basin (Euro-MED) 2021-2027 Territorial Cooperation Programme, established as a continuation of the Interreg Euro-Mediterranean Basin 2014-2020 (Interreg MED) programme. The programme is new for the territory of the Republic of Bulgaria and will be implemented for the first time;

Next MED 2021-2027. The successor of the ENI CBC MED programme.

The Strategic Plan for Agricultural and Rural Development 2023-2027, co-financed by the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD). The EAFRD provides funding to support rural areas and strengthen the EU's food and forestry sector. The implementation of the LEADER approach in the new local programmes can contribute significantly, while the outputs and results of the PEIRA project can be proven to be precious for the new investments through the Local Programmes of LEADER.

LIFE Programme 2021-2027 - focusing on environment and climate action to achieve the transition to a sustainable, circular and resilient economy, protect and restore the environment, halt and reverse biodiversity loss.

INTERREG EUROPE. European Union Programme aiming to improve addressed policy instruments.

NSRF 2021-2027 (Structural Funds). At National Level in Bulgaria and Greece.

Through these funding sources, the activities of the Business Support Units can be supported and built upon, which will contribute to the development of rural areas in the intervention area as a modern, European, socially responsible, environmentally friendly and attractive region for social and economic life. That will manage to achieve the common European



objectives and priorities in regional development and at the same time focus on the identified priority needs for intensive, quality growth and overcoming existing imbalances at regional and local level.

Business Support Units: Proposed options for utilisation of the resources of the PEIRA project beneficiaries

The PEIRA project beneficiaries are old organisations with sufficient resources (staff; premises; equipment; ongoing contracts).

Premises: the BSUs will continue their operation at the same premises, after the end of the project lifetime.

Office Equipment: The office equipment is installed.

ICT Equipment: The ICT equipment is installed.

Human Resources: The PEIRA project beneficiaries, will provide an executive, an administrative, and a team of in-house experts. That will be accompanied with specialists as external experts for specific activities.

Finance: The PEIRA project beneficiaries, will cover the cost of operation of the BSUs.

Business Support Units: Monitoring framework and KPI²⁴

The good implementation and development of a project and specific activities, requires a well-prepared monitoring framework, with clear roles of the involved people and hierarchy, clear and measurable indicators of achievement, milestones and targets. That will be accompanied with a set of Key Performance Indicators (sub-set of the overall indicators), which will be allowing flaws to be highlighted, early, and even ringing alerts

²⁴ KPI: Key Performance Indicators.



when needed.

1. People involved

All project beneficiaries, have staff and executive with very good background in the implementation of projects. Their capacity can ensure the sustainability of the Business Support Units.

Development Agency of Kavala has over ten (10) employees with extensive experience in the management and administration of activities in the field of consulting entrepreneurs, promotion, and development of entrepreneurship, as well as training. The organisation itself, has an over 30 years of experience in consultation of enterprises.

Development Agency of Drama has ten (10) employees with extensive experience in the management and administration of activities in the field of consulting entrepreneurs, promotion, and development of entrepreneurship, as well as training. The organisation itself, has an over 30 years of experience in consultation of enterprises.

Local Action Group - Gotse Delchev - Garmen - Hadzhidimovo has 3 employees with extensive experience in the management and administration of activities in the field of consulting entrepreneurs, promotion, and development of entrepreneurship, as well as training. Also, the members of the Board of Directors and the General Assembly of the Association are highly qualified experts who can provide expert and organizational support when needed²⁵.

The Regional Centre for Vocational Training at the CCI - Blagoevgrad has employees with experience in the management and administration of activities in the field of training, consulting, promotion, and development of entrepreneurship. The employees of CCI - Blagoevgrad are also consultants and trainers at the Career

²⁵ As contributed by PB3 (Deliverable D6.3.1).



Centre, Centre for Entrepreneurship, Vocational Training Centre at the National Centre for Vocational Training in the CCI/C system in Bulgaria, Centre for Youth Initiatives and Entrepreneurship and will contribute with their expertise and experience. The experts of the CCI - Blagoevgrad, as well as the technical staff in terms of administrative and organizational work, are also at the disposal of the Unit in case of need. The Regional Centre for Vocational Training at CCI Blagoevgrad is a structure operating within the Chamber of Commerce and Industry Blagoevgrad. It is part of the national network of the Bulgarian Chamber of Commerce and Industry - Blagoevgrad, which has offices in all regional cities. This network employs dozens of different experts who could participate in the development of the capacity of the Support Unit²⁵.

2. Hierarchy

The Business Support Units will operation as per the diagramme provided in Figure 4 Business Support Unit - suggested organisatinal **structure**.

Among all BSUs, they will be equal, with the initial coordination role to be with the Development Agency of Kavala.

3. Indicators of Implementation

The list of indicators²⁶ of implementation below is not exhausted and can be updated during the operation of the BSUs, subject to realizing either difficulties or minimum usefulness of some indicators or identifying other important indicators.

Indicator	Target value 31.12.2028	Reporting frequency	Source of information
Number of events at which the activities of the BSUs were presented	20	Annually	Event information, Presentations, Photos

²⁶ Part of the list was proposed by PB3 (Deliverable D6.3.1).

Indicator	Target value 31.12.2028	Reporting frequency	Source of information
Number of publications made through the communication channels of the BSUs	90	Annually	Screenshots from relevant websites, social media pages
Number of people requesting training/consultation	200	Annually	Register of people willing to participate in the activities of the Business Support Units
Number of people successfully trained in innovation consultations/trainings/seminars	180	Annually	Personal files
Number of enterprises involved in the activities of the BSUs	60	Annually	Register of people willing to participate in the activities of the Business Support Units
Number of new co-funded project proposals, submitted in which at least one PEIRA beneficiary participates.	8	Annually	Application Forms / Report by the Heads of the BSUs
Number of new approved co-funded project, submitted in which at least one PEIRA beneficiary participates.	4	Annually	Application Forms / Report by the Heads of the BSUs

Table 12 List of Indicators



This list is accompanied by the KPI list below.

4. Milestones

The Milestones of the establishment of the BSUs are:

Phase 1: Planning and Development (*Completed*)

- **Milestone 1: *Define Objectives and Scope*:** Clearly outline the BSU's purpose, target audience, and services offered. Consider conducting a needs assessment to identify relevant needs and gaps in the local business ecosystem.
- **Milestone 2: *Develop Operational Plan*:** Create a detailed roadmap outlining key activities, personnel requirements, budget, timeline, and success metrics.
- **Milestone 3: *Secure Funding and Resources*:** Identify funding sources (grants, government support, private donors) and secure necessary resources like technology, equipment, and office space.
- **Milestone 4: *Recruit and Train Staff*:** Hire qualified personnel with relevant skills and experience. Provide them with comprehensive training on the BSU's services and operational procedures.

Phase 2: Implementation and Launch (*Completed*)

- **Milestone 5: *Establish Infrastructure*:** Set up the BSU's physical and technological infrastructure, including communication channels, website, and data management systems.
- **Milestone 6: *Develop Service Portfolio*:** Finalize the specific services offered by the BSU and create marketing materials to promote them.
- **Milestone 7: *Build Partnerships*:** Establish collaborations with relevant stakeholders like government agencies, business associations, and educational institutions.
- **Milestone 8: *Launch Operations*:** Officially open the BSU to the public and begin delivering services.

Phase 3: Growth and Sustainability (*In progress and future activities*)

- **Milestone 9:** *Achieve Entrepreneur Acquisition Target:* Reach the desired number of clients (entrepreneurs) served within a specific timeframe.
- **Milestone 10:** *Demonstrate Entrepreneur Satisfaction:* Gather feedback and measure client satisfaction levels to ensure the BSU is meeting their needs.
- **Milestone 11:** *Achieve Financial Sustainability:* Secure ongoing funding through client fees, grants, or other revenue streams.
- **Milestone 12:** *Expand Services and Reach:* Continuously improve existing services and consider adding new ones based on identified needs. Expand outreach to reach a wider audience and maximize impact.

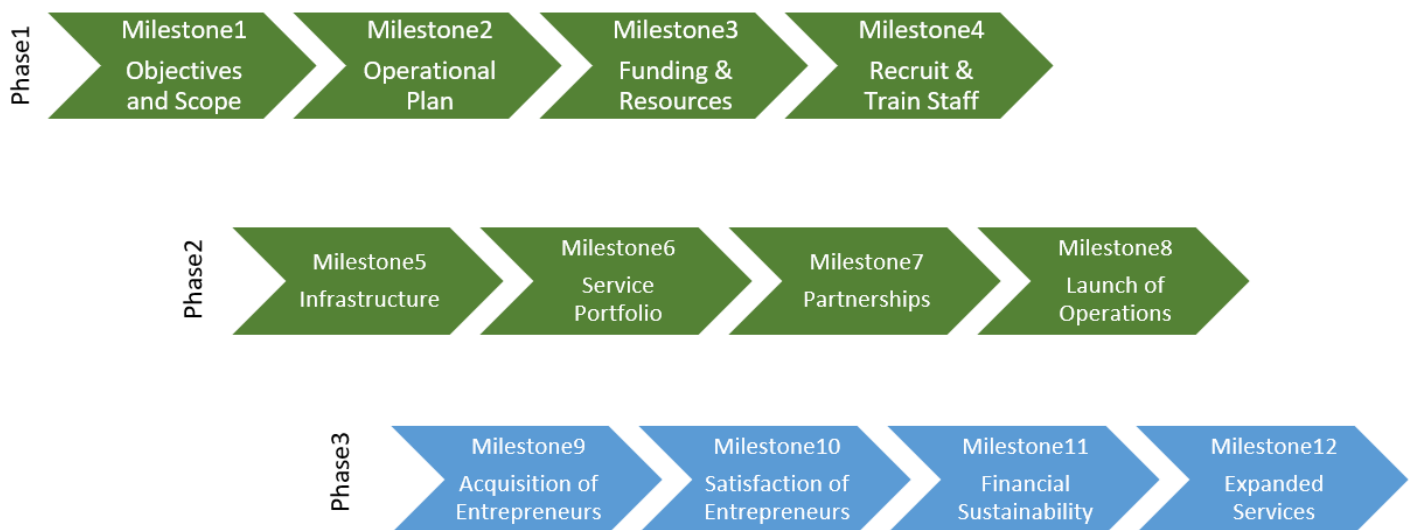


Figure 6 Milestones of the BSUs

5. Monitoring and control procedure

The monitoring and control of the activities of the Business Support Units is a process of systematic and continuous collection and analysis of information on the objectives set and the results achieved²⁵.

The heart of monitoring and control lies in *closely observing and evaluating how well-defined objectives are achieved during their execution*. This continuous assessment serves two key purposes:

Quality Assurance and Effectiveness Enhancement: By gathering information on progress and outcomes, we can identify areas where the work meets, exceeds, or falls short of expectations. This valuable data allows us to refine processes, adjust approaches, and ultimately deliver results that consistently meet or surpass quality standards.

Informed Decision-Making and Change Management: The insights gained through monitoring and control empower us to make timely and effective decisions. If progress deviates from the intended path, we can identify potential roadblocks, assess alternative courses of action, and implement necessary changes to get back on track.

To ensure its effectiveness, monitoring and control draws guidance from a comprehensive service development and implementation model (represented by **Figure 7 Implementation model**). By integrating seamlessly with this model, monitoring and control becomes an inherent component of the larger decision-making and management structure within the BSU's service delivery cycle.

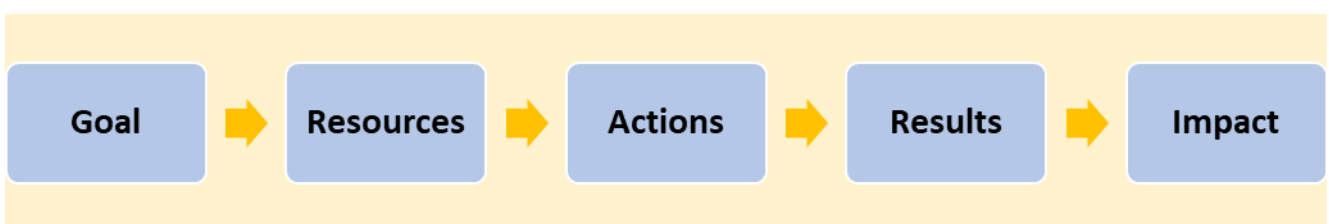


Figure 7 Implementation model²⁷

The purpose of the monitoring procedure is:

- Improvement of the activities of the Business Support Units in the intervention area of the PEIRA project, including partnership and

²⁷ Contributed by PB3 (Deliverable D6.3.1)



coordination with all stakeholders;

- Ensuring transparency and accountability of the activities of the Business Support Units;
- Improvement of the quality of implementation of the activities in the Business Support Units;
- Ensuring of effectiveness and efficiency of the services provided;
- Establishment of mechanisms for stakeholder participation.

The resources for the implementation of the monitoring are the collected data, as provided by the staff and executives of the BSUs and the end-beneficiaries (through specific questionnaires) of all four Business Support Units.

The BSUs will closely track the progress of the indicators listed in the matrix below. This monitoring will serve two main purposes:

- **Reporting on Progress:** By tracking changes in these indicators, we can clearly and accurately report on the specific actions taken by the BSUs and the measurable results they have achieved. This transparency ensures everyone understands the ongoing efforts and their impacts.
- **Measuring Success:** Achieving 90% or more of the indicators signifies that the BSUs have effectively performed their duties within the region. This milestone demonstrates their success in fulfilling their objectives, which are:
 - **Boosting the knowledge and skills of entrepreneurs:** Equipping them with the tools and expertise they need to thrive.
 - **Enhancing the competitiveness of businesses in the region:** Fostering an environment where businesses can flourish and contribute to the region's overall economic growth.



6. Key Success factors (KSF)

Key Success factors are those characteristics, that when really achieved and managed properly, can have a huge impact on performance and success of a project. Thus, KSFs represent the "critical areas" in which the organisation must pay special attention to maximize the chances of success of its objectives. The method includes:

- (i) determining the factors that the BSUs must achieve in order to be able to meet the new demands created by the modern socio-economic environment;
- (ii) the measurement of these factors for future performance control compared to past;
- (iii) the combination (matching) of these factors with the services provided by the BSUs, in order to determine how much the development of each service "depends" on the "degree achievement" of each factor;
- (iv) the specialisation of the above and the determination of the interaction of various indicators regarding the administration-management system.

7. Key Performance Indicators (KPI)

BSUs can have a wide range of goals and functions, so the specific KPIs tracked will depend on the individual center's priorities and objectives. Below are some general categories of KPIs that are often relevant to BSUs:

Below it is provided a series of KPI in categorised sub-sets for better use. The accurate measurement of those KPIs and comparison to the past, can ensure continues improved and upgrade of the operating BSUs.

Category	KPI	Question
Efficiency and productivity	First response time	How quickly does BSU respond to inquiries from enterprises?
	Average resolution time	How long does it take to resolve issues or complete tasks?
	Number of tickets resolved per agent	How productive are the BSU people?
	Cost per resolution	How much does it cost to resolve each issue?
	Self-service usage	How many enterprises are using the BSU resources (e.g., knowledge base, FAQs, PEIRA digital toolkit)?
Customer satisfaction	Customer satisfaction score	How satisfied are the enterprises with the services provided by the BSUs?
	Net Promoter Score	How likely are the benefiting enterprises to recommend the BSU services to others?
	First contact resolution rate	How often are issues resolved on the first contact?
	Number of escalations	How many issues require escalation to a supervisor or manager?
Effectiveness	Number of enterprises	How many enterprises have been helped

and impact	assisted	by the BSU?
	Increase in business knowledge and skills	How much have enterprises improved their knowledge and skills as a result of the BSU services?
	Increase in business revenue or productivity	How have the BSU services helped enterprises to grow?
	Job creation	How many jobs have been created by enterprises that have been assisted by the BSU?
	Investment attracted	How much investment has the BSU attracted to the area of intervention?
Other important KPIs	Staff satisfaction	How satisfied are the BSU people with their jobs?
	Employee turnover rate	How many employees are leaving the BSU (or do not wish to stay)?
	Number of training hours delivered	How much training is the BSU providing to enterprises?
	Number of partnerships formed	How is the BSU collaborating with other organisations?

Table 13 List of KPIs for the BSUs



It's important to select a small number of **meaningful KPIs** that align with the overall goals and objectives. BSUs should also set **specific targets** for each KPI and track the progress over time. That will help them to measure their effectiveness and make improvements where necessary.

Hints for choosing and tracking KPIs:

- **Keep it simple:** Tracking too many KPIs can be overwhelming and counterproductive.
- **Use relevant data:** Make sure that the KPIs are based on data that is readily available and accurate.
- **Communicate the BSU KPIs:** Share the BSU KPIs with the staff and stakeholders so that everyone is on the same page.
- **Review and adjust the BSU KPIs regularly:** Make sure that the BSU KPIs are still relevant to the changing goals and objectives.

Good Practice – Example of Business Support Center

Below is presented an example of successful implementation of Business Support Center

Small Business Development Center (SBDC) network in the U.S.A.

The Small Business Development Center (SBDC) network in the United States of America (<https://www.sba.gov/>), is a successful example of centres that support small businesses.



Español





Figure 8 Front page of the website of SBA.GOV



Figure 9 Indicative printscreen of SBA.GOV

The Small Business Development Center (SBDC) network in the United States of America, is a nationwide network of non-profit organizations that provide counseling, training, and resources to small businesses. The SBDCs are funded by a partnership between the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) and state and local governments.

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The SBA Salutes the Resilient Small Business Community this National Entrepreneurship Week

By [U.S. Small Business Administration](#) on February 11, 2022

America’s business owners have the determination to succeed — they just need the tools to help along the way This National Entrepreneurship Week, the SBA is excited to share those resources.

The SBA Celebrates and Empowers Black-Owned Businesses this Black History Month

By [U.S. Small Business Administration](#) on February 11, 2022

Figure 10 Indicative extract of the SBA.GOV blog

The SBDC network has been very successful in helping small businesses grow and succeed. According to the SBA, SBDC clients²⁸ are:

- 67% more likely to survive after five years than businesses that do not receive SBDC assistance.

²⁸ Small businesses.



- 59% more likely to create jobs than businesses that do not receive SBDC assistance.
- 70% more likely to increase their revenue than businesses that do not receive SBDC assistance.

The success of the SBDC network can be attributed to a number of factors, including:

- **A strong focus on the needs of the enterprises (clients):** The SBDCs tailor their services to the specific needs of each enterprise asks for support.
- **A qualified staff:** The SBDCs are staffed by experienced business professionals who can provide expert advice and counselling.
- **A wide range of services:** The SBDCs offer a wide range of services, including business plan development, marketing assistance, financial counselling, and access to capital.
- **Strong partnerships:** The SBDCs partner with other organisations, such as banks, chambers of commerce, and universities, to provide even more resources to their clients.

Conclusions

Specific actions has been proposed for the durability and operation of the business support units, so that their small cost will be covered by the actual regular daily operations of the four PEIRA project beneficiaries, so that they (the Business Support Units) can promote entrepreneurship and innovation of enterprises of the area of intervention, through continues information and promotion of the businesses of the area.

The calculations of the contribution of the operation of the Business Support Units (Centres) that were setup during the implementation of the PEIRA project, lead to the following conclusions:

- The cost of operation of the Business Support Units, is relatively very low;
- The operation of the Business Support Units can contribute significantly to the income of the social insurance agencies;
- The operation of the Business Support Units can contribute to the increase of employment;
- The operation of the Business Support Units can contribute to the increase of the SMEs turnover and profit;
- The operation of the Business Support Units can contribute to the increase of the income taxation and the VAT, and subsequently the income of the local authorities;
- The of the Business Support Units have to be sufficiently promoted, in order to achieve good results for the area of intervention;
- The percentage of increase of the turnover and employment to match the cost of operation, in pure accounting terms, is relatively small (covered by the most pessimistic scenario - No1).

Based on the above, it is concluded that the operation of the Business Support Units is viable and could improve significantly the local economy and employment in the area of intervention.



Disclaimer

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