

Public Consultation for the Interreg Europe 2021-2027 Programme in Greece

Results

The Point of Contact (PoC) in Greece (i.e. *Hellenic Ministry of Development and Investments, Special Secretariat for ERDF & CF Programmes, Managing Authority of ETC Programmes*) launched a Public Consultation for the Interreg Europe Programme 2021-2027. The Public Consultation was announced on April 14th and addressed all Greek National Authorities, Ministries, Regions, Municipalities, Chambers of Commerce, NGOs and other bodies via email. The Public Consultation was closed on May 10th 2021.

The Programme Document and a Form, with contact details and space for comments per section, were provided on the website. In addition, the Programme Document had been numbered by line, in order to allow a specific programme text (line/paragraph, etc.) to be linked with specific comments (please, find attached the pdf file for your reference).

Overall, we consider the results of the Consultation very interesting. They show that the Programme has been formulated in the right direction and with adequate flexibility to allow interregional cooperation in Europe (which may explain the small response number). We also received few phone calls, aiming to emphasize and confirm, as it was stated, the “open” and “concise” character of the new Programme.

Therefore, and although the programme document may be still enriched from the views submitted in the consultation, the Programme strategy is well received and it may only positively be affected. In addition, most of ideas presented shall be very useful for elaborating manuals and procedures for the new Programme implementation.

Please, find **a summary of the comments per programme section in the Table given below**, (please take into consideration that no comments were provided for section 8):

Section 1	Section 2	Section 3	Section 4	Section 5	Section 6	Section 7
<p>Only one comment was received in this section. We consider it to be interesting and important.</p> <p>Because of the size of the text, please read it below (*).</p>	<p>Interregional Cooperation Projects (pp.19-20):</p> <p>1. The projects are proposed to be implemented in two periods. The first phase has a maximum duration of 3 years but the second phase has a been limited to 1 year. It is suggested to keep the same duration of projects to 4 years but balance two phases duration so each one lasts for 2 year.</p>	<p>Lines 828-832:</p> <p>After 5 calls of the previous programming period the stakeholders and ESPECIALLY the SMEs would like to have concrete results. Phase 2 should be 2 years monitoring of the Action Plan where 2 maximum actions will be implemented. One would be an action for the Partner in order to be benefited by the program and the other one a Pilot for one SME of the stakeholders with the collaboration of the Science Society of the LSG.</p>	<p>Line 134:</p> <p>The needs of the SMEs in the countries of Europe are very different. Some of them are high tech and need more funding and some of them need information in order to change their mindset. The first one would like to influence the Policy instrument to lunch a Call for equipment etc. and the second one would like to influence the Policy Instrument to launch a Call for a campaign. For example, it is not possible to have SMEs from south and north Europe with the same needs in Circular Economy. First you have to inform (invest) and then they will invest on something new funded by the Policy Instrument.</p>	<p>Lines 675-696:</p> <p>Exchange of experience should be mandatory for public authorities in order to be engaged to make improvements.</p>	<p>Letter of Support:</p> <p>A limit of signing them or a commitment for receiving officially the Action Plan in the end of Phase 1 and informing the Partner for their intentions and plans.</p> <p>If there is not any commitment to influence the Policy Instrument or lunch a Call, then it is very difficult for the Partner to monitor the Action Plan for 2 years.</p>	<p>Line 134:</p> <p>In the Local Stakeholder Group, the Authority of the Policy Instrument should participate. It could be an evaluation criterion by the submission of the proposal and the submission of all the Progress Reports.</p>
	<p>2. One Region has stated the following “The problem we face in Greece is that we usually try to implement action plans under our ROP. Since the ROP is already formed at the same time as Interreg Europe it is difficult to integrate actions identified during good practices exchange unless the midterm modification period arrives. Due to the changes of the Public Investments Account Management and the introduction of National Development Program (NDP), identified actions may be identified by NDP as well, especially projects on Green and Connected Europe.”</p>					

	<p>Lines 414-432:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The Policy Instrument selected was not always easy to be effected by partners in the Region because there wasn't any obligation for the Authorities that issued the Policy Instrument. The Letter of Support that was given mentioned "that we will consider possibilities for implementation of the action plan through our policy instrument" In other words 2 years of phase 1 and 2 of phase 2 (monitoring) COULD end up in good ideas and the stakeholders (LSG) of the project feel like that they wasted their time. 2. More information concerning the ways of coordinating and cooperating with other funding instruments is needed. 3. Further information and detailed procedures especially for the implementation of financial instruments since these actions create opportunities to capitalise on project outputs and results. 					

***Comment on Section 1:**

"In general the overall rationale of the Interreg Europe for 2021-2027 remains very similar to the current programme. After all, the overarching objective of European Territorial Cooperation (ETC) is to promote a harmonious economic, social and territorial development of the Union as a whole. Yet during this period the objective is to improve regional development policies through capacity building and exchange of experience in order to become smarter, greener and better connected together. That means that the new Interreg Europe has been reshaped to achieve greater impact and an even more effective use of the investments. The Interreg Europe programme for 2021-2027 supports cooperation projects and a policy learning platform.

During this period policy responsible organisations are the core target group. 1. Comments on «Programme Strategy: main development challenges and policy responses» The challenges that we are facing as a society include among others economic transition processes, climate change, demographic changes, digital transition and the long-term socioeconomic consequences of the Covid-19 pandemic. Especially for the tourism sector the consequences during 2020 were very severe and are expected to have aftermaths during 2021 and 2022, on top of the consequences brought upon Greece by the economic crisis. According to OECD while Greece has contained the COVID-19 pandemic effectively, the negative impact on tourism, investment and public finances is a setback to Greece's longer-term recovery. The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the tourism sector is unprecedented. Tourism has been hard hit, especially in places where the sector supports many jobs and businesses. OECD estimates on the COVID-19 impact point to a severe decline in international tourism – Domestic tourism will recoup more quickly but will not be able to fully compensate for the decline in international tourism. Empowering regional policy makers is essential given the focus on the Interreg-specific objective for 'a better cooperation governance'..... The programme priorities and specific objectives below form the backbone of the Interreg Europe funding strategy in 2021-27. In line with the mentioned thematic fields, transnational cooperation actions are expected to address the development and implementation of strategies, action plans, tools, training, pilot actions and related solutions. All actions will have to respect the environmental sustainability by design principle and also the horizontal principles of equality and non-discrimination.

Priority axis 1: 'Strengthening research, technological development and innovation' Specific objective 1.1: Improve the implementation of regional development policies and programmes, in particular programmes for Investment for Growth and Jobs and, where relevant, European Territorial Cooperation programmes, in the field of research and innovation infrastructure and capacities. Potential fields to be addressed in transnational actions: Tourism, cultural and creative industries, Technology and innovation transfer to SMEs, Skills for sectors of relevance for smart specialization like sustainable tourism, smart big data as a prerequisite for evidence-based policy making.

Priority axis 2: 'Competitiveness of SMEs' Specific objective 2.1: Improve the implementation of regional development policies and programmes, in particular programmes for Investment for Growth and Jobs and, where relevant, European Territorial Cooperation programmes, supporting SMEs in all stages of their life cycle to develop, achieve growth and engage in innovation.

Priority axis 3: 'Low-carbon economy' Specific objective 3.1: Improve the implementation of regional development policies and programmes, in particular programmes for Investment for Growth and Jobs and, where relevant, European Territorial Cooperation programmes, addressing the transition to a low-carbon economy. Potential fields to be addressed in transnational actions: Smart integration of carbon-neutral solutions across sectors

Priority axis 4: 'Environment and resource efficiency' Specific objective 4.1: Improve the implementation of regional development policies and programmes, in particular Investment for Growth and Jobs and, where relevant, European Territorial Cooperation programmes, in the field of the protection and development of natural and cultural heritage. Potential fields to be addressed in transnational actions: Renewable energy sources, Climate-proof landscape and urban planning, Resilience to weather extremes and related hazards (rainfall events, floods, landslides, heat, draughts, water scarcity, wildfires etc.), Risk awareness, prevention and management, Circular economy value chains, Protection of natural heritage, ecosystems and valuable areas, Sustainable land management and landscape planning, Sustainable tourism and the valorisation of natural heritage Based on the above and on the fact that European regions have different characteristics situation, and prospects we encourage tailor made policies to meet their specific needs.

Encourage cross-regional and cross-sector cooperation; develop tools that can be effectively adapted by each region, improve transferring and mainstreaming of project outputs.”

ORGANISATIONS contributed to consultation (in writing):

1. Region of Western Macedonia
2. Regional Development Fund of Central Macedonia
3. Executive Structure NSRF Tourism Sector, Ministry of Tourism