

**Press release-2<sup>nd</sup> Finch Partner Action Plan to be approved by the Interreg Europe JS developed by the Region of Thessaly (Greece)**

**Issued by: Region of Thessaly, FINCH Partner**

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The approved ERDF Regional Operational Programme for Thessaly 2014-2020 includes a specific financial instrument, entitled Integrated Territorial Investment (ITI) concerning a Culture-Tourism Route in Thessaly. The purpose of the Route is to utilize and promote the Region's cultural and natural heritage so that it becomes a vehicle for growth both in the areas directly implicated and the Region as a whole. The Route will cover important and renowned monuments of Thessaly. Geographically, it extends from the region of Western Thessaly (Trikala-Meteora) all the way to Eastern Thessaly (Magnesia) via Larissa. It includes all of the ancient theatres of Thessaly (Ancient Theatre of Pthiotidai Thebes, Ancient Theatre of Demetrias, Ancient Theatre of Larissa I, Ancient Theater of Larissa II) as well as the most remarkable monuments from other historical periods, principally the Neolithic settlements of Sesklo and Dimini, the Theopetra Cave and the Meteora monastic complex. Based on the aforementioned policy instrument two main activities/sub actions have been identified and are to be included in the Action Plan. The reason why both activities are included in one Action is because they are complementary to each other, the same funding resources and key players are involved and they both fit under more than one Specific Objectives, which makes it insufficient to distinguish.

Sub Action A - Calls for public and private investments specifically focused on the Route

The collaboration of both public and private sector is foreseen to succeed through calls for proposals for funding, addressed specifically to entities operating in specific geographical areas, based on the Integrated Spatial Investment Route for Tourism and Culture of Thessaly that has been designed in a manner that will fund actions carried out from both public and private sector that operate within the Region. So far, two calls for a total of 20 million euros have been published and addressed to Ministry of Culture and its relevant Ephorates of Antiquities. These calls referred to infrastructure works with regards to the points of interest. In addition, a series of calls are expected to be published that will address exclusively to private entities, so the two sectors will work complementary to each other, under the same route. In addition to this activity, it is foreseen the creation of a local pact of cooperation/cluster that will include public entities, SMEs and relevant associations and can gradually lead to a Local Quality Pact.

Sub Action B – Establishment and operation of a Destination Marketing Organisation (DMO)

Additionally, and in order to support and assess all these activities, a DMO is planned to be established, which will consist of representatives from both sectors. This organisation will be responsible for the design of the route's Master Plan by a relevant entity and its funding will consist of both ERDF and private funding (eg from funds, crowd funding etc). The Master Plan will also include a relevant and unified Marketing Plan, possibility for knowledge exchange, adoption of a series of virtual tools (360 tours etc), and a study of special marking of the route points. The DMO will be funded by the ROP of Thessaly 2021-2027 and will be able to draw

additional funds from other resources such as memberships, donations and provision of consulting and educational services to both public and private entities.

Timeframe: both sub-actions will be feasible in the forthcoming programming period 2021-2027, also under the relevant policy instrument (Regional Operational Programme of Thessaly)