

Balkan-Mediterranean 2014-2020

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Introduction

The Transnational Cooperation Programme (TNCP) “Balkan-Mediterranean 2014-2020” supports the sharing of experiences, knowledge, and the improvement of public policies between national, regional and local authorities and other territorial actors of eligible regions of the Balkan-Mediterranean area.

It includes regions from three (3) different EU countries and two (2) candidate and potentially candidate countries.

The Programme is co-financed by the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and has a total budget ofmillion ERDF for the 2014-2020 period.

Its main purpose is to contribute to the long term development of the Balkan-Mediterranean area and strengthen transnational cooperation between regions and participating countries.

This first section of the cooperation Programme provides an overview of the context of the Programme with regard to the Regulations, territorial and policy needs and challenges, and lessons from previous cooperation Programmes. It presents the overall strategy and objectives of the Programme.

Geographic coverage

Following the European Commission decision drawing up the list of eligible regions and areas for the transnational strands of the European Territorial Cooperation (ETC) objective, the Transnational Cooperation Programme (TNCP) “Balkan-Mediterranean 2014-2020” covers the following areas:

a) The EU Member States:

- ✓ Bulgaria: the entire country
- ✓ Cyprus: the entire country
- ✓ Greece : the entire country

b) The Partner States:

The Programme has also invited candidates or potential candidate countries to the European Union to join. These countries participate with the European funds of the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA). The eligible area thus includes the following IPA countries with their entire territory:

- ✓ Albania
- ✓ The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia

Partners from the Balkan-Mediterranean area

The partners of the “Balkan-Mediterranean area” are located a) in the areas of the European Union and b) in the areas of the Balkan IPA countries (candidate or potential candidate to the EU) that participate with another financial instrument, **IPA funds (Instrument for Pre-accession assistance)** all of which are covered by the Balkan-Mediterranean Operational Programme.

Partners from the European Union area & IPA partners

The participation of Partners from other countries is possible under the 20% flexibility rule. These partners may participate under the condition of geographical coherence and integration and the acceptance of the thematic objectives of the Programme.

Moreover, according to Article 20 of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013, in the context of cooperation Programmes and in duly justified cases, the Managing Authority may accept that all or part of an operation is implemented outside the Union part of the Programme area, provided that the conditions of Article 20 of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013 are satisfied.

The total amount allocated under the cooperation Programme to operations located outside the Union part of the programme area shall not exceed 20 % of the support from the ERDF at programme level. The 20% threshold of ERDF at programme level will be brought down to the project level.

SECTION 1.STRATEGY

(Reference: Article 27(1) of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013 and point (a) of Article 8(2) of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013)

1.1 Strategy for the contribution of the “Balkan – Mediterranean 2014 – 2020” programme to the Union strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth and to the achievement of economic, social and territorial cohesion.

1.1.1 Description of the programme strategy

The Balkan – Mediterranean 2014 – 2020 transnational cooperation programme (TNCP) brings together five (5) yet quite diverse countries in many aspects. Diversity and geography include a strong cooperation potential that can bring into better focus important concerns shared by all five (5) participating countries: Albania, Bulgaria, Cyprus, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Greece.

Geography & Landscape

The overall programme area accounts for about 306,7 km² (6,8% of the EU 28 member states countries) with Greece and Bulgaria representing together *circa* 80% of the whole programme geographical coverage: Greece 43% and Bulgaria 36%. Cyprus is a small island state sharing maritime border with the EU and accounts for only 3% of the programme area. Albania, a new EU candidate country represents 9% of the programme area surface and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, the sole country with no seashores (mainland central Balkan country) accounts for 8% of the programme area surface.

Programme Area Surface		
Participating country	Km ²	% of programme area
Albania	28.748	9%
Bulgaria	110.994	36%
Cyprus	9.250	3%
The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia	25.713	8%
Greece	131.957	43%
Total programme area	306.662	100%
EU (28 countries)	4.509.921	
% from EU-28	6,8%	

The South-eastern Mediterranean Sea is the uniting element of the Balkan Peninsula and Cyprus. The maritime area of the programme serves as a common identification basis across the region and constitutes a joint environmental and economic asset. At the same time, it brings transnational challenges, in relation to environmental protection and competitiveness. The programme area includes mainland as well as coastal areas and numerous islands that constitute an attraction pole for tourism but are also vulnerable to environmental risks and climate change.

The programme can build on the experience of former cooperation programmes and promote further integration of the region as it addresses actors nationwide and not just border regions. After a long period of various cooperation forms in the area, the “Balkan – Mediterranean 2014 –

2020” transnational cooperation programme has been identified by all participating countries as a structured tool to strengthen cooperation through thematic focus, allowing capitalisation of experiences and results achieved so far. This approach has been jointly acknowledged by the European Commission and participating countries and forms the basis of the transnational cooperation added value of the programme.

In case the Managing Authority (MA) accepts that all or part of an operation is implemented outside the Union part of the programme area, it should ensure that the conditions of Article 20 of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013 are satisfied. The total amount allocated under the cooperation programme to operations located outside the Union part of the programme area shall not exceed 20 % of the support from the ERDF at programme level. The 20% threshold of ERDF at programme level will be brought down to the project level, in order to avoid the use of this possibility for only a small number of projects.

Analysis of needs and challenges for the programme

The main needs and challenges of the Balkan-Mediterranean 2014 – 2020 programme can be grouped in following headings: demography and socioeconomic development, connectivity, environment and climate change, natural and cultural heritage.

Transnational key challenges related to demography and economic development

Demography

The programme population summarises *circa* 24 million of people representing less than 5% of the EU 28 total population. Again Bulgaria and Greece account for the highest part (more than 75% of the total population) while Cyprus represents less than 4% of the programme population. The main demographic feature of the programme area is a serious population loss during the last decade due to significant outward migration. In the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia in particular from 1998 to 2011, some 230,000 people (more than 10% of the country’s population) left the country due to poverty and high unemployment. While in Greece, the economic crisis contributed further to the population decline with the “*brain drain*” phenomenon.

Programme Area Population		
Participating country	2013 (millions)	Population trend 2007-2013
Albania	2,9	– 3%
Bulgaria	7,3	– 4%
Cyprus	0,9	14%
The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia	2,0	1%
Greece	11,0	– 1%
Total Programme population	24,1	
EU-28	505,7	
% programme population as of EU-28	4,8%	

Yet there is a notable exception in this important demographic decline with Cyprus demonstrating 14% positive population trend from 2007 to 2013 due to immigration. Cyprus holds the second highest proportion (after Luxembourg) of both, foreigners (20% of its total population) and EU nationals (13% of its total population). If we consider Cyprus’ insularity and remoteness from the European continent these percentages are of quite importance demonstrating among other the country’s openness.

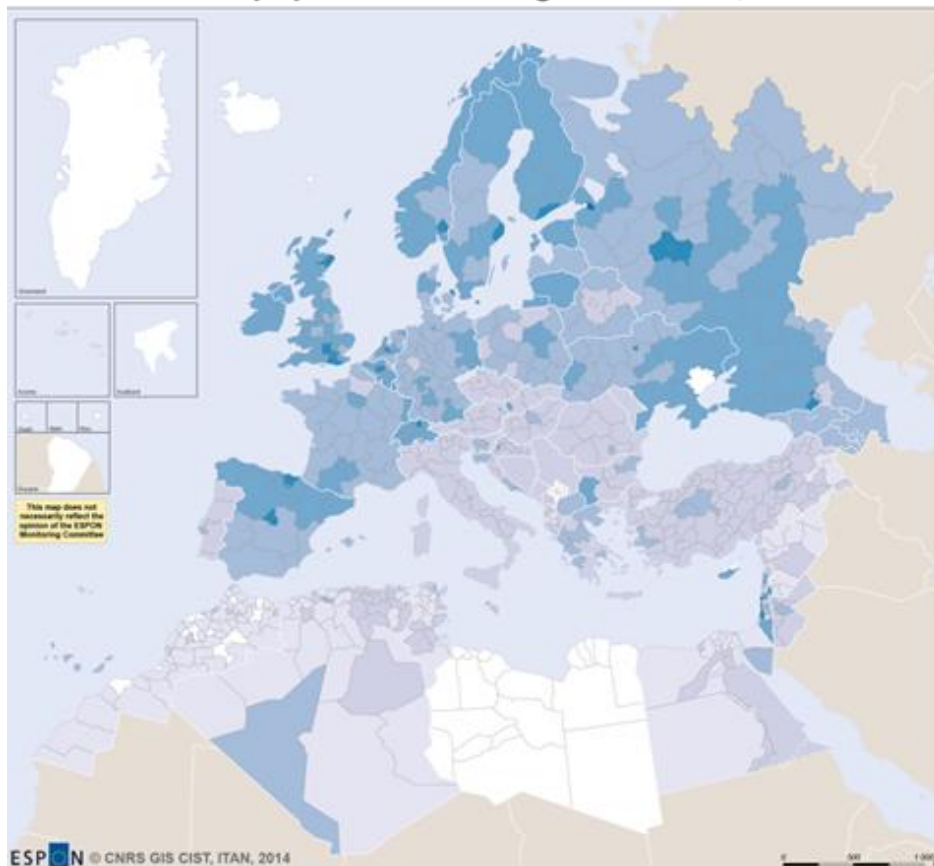
Ageing population is an overall trend due to both, low fertility rates and migration. Albania is an exception in this rule as it is ranked among the countries with the youngest population with only 9% of population age over 65, as compared to the EU-27: 17% (Eurostat 2011).

Furthermore, high **urbanisation trends** progressively leave mountains regions sparsely populated. In the three EU member states capital cities accounts for one third of the total population (BG 27,3%, CY 32,3%, GR 33,5%) while Skopje with more than 580,000 inhabitants gather already 29% of the country’s population. Only Albania seems to still resist urban appeal with Tirana accounting +/- 17% of the total population.

Active population profile

There are important disparities of the active population profile between the five (5) participating countries with Cyprus being far above the EU average with *circa* 40% of labour force holding high education credentials. Yet, this is not the case for the majority of the programme area where only 20% to maximum 30% can attest high qualification standards.

Active population with high education, 2010



Share of active population with high education (%), 2010*

0 10 20 30 40 50 60 61,1 no data

* Share of active population with tertiary education at the latest available year of 2010.
The collected data from the national institutions all over the countries covered by the project are quite disparate in terms of nature, definition, quality and time coverage. Because of this variability, data are harmonised against the national values provided by World Bank & UNESCO databases. A cross-multiplication is used to apply the observed ratio at the regional scale. These are computed at the SNUTS 3 or 2 level whenever possible, at the national level otherwise.

Source: ESPON www.espon.eu

High education attainment levels are close to the EU-28 average (28,4%) with Cyprus showing a record high of nearly 40% of the population aged between 25 and 64 years tertiary educated.

Also in the two (2) candidate countries of the programme, tertiary education is in permanent development: between 2001 and 2011 Albania has more than doubled the number of students attending tertiary education while the EU-27 increase was on average 2% per year over the same period.

Participating country	High education attainment: % of population aged 25 – 64
Albania (*)	10,7
Bulgaria	25,6
Cyprus	39,3
The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia	23,1
Greece	27,4
EU-28	28,4

(*) Data source: DG REGIO “Measuring performances – countries factsheets – 2013” for the EU member states and national statistics for the candidate countries. The percentage for Albania refers to the total population. However, bearing in mind that tertiary education curriculum cannot be accomplished before the age of 22 or 23 we consider this figure comparable with the ones provided for the rest.

On the other hand, **early school leavers rates for 2013** differ from country to country with Cyprus over performing comparing to the European average. Even if Albania contrast with high early school leavers rate we shall keep in mind the change in rate comparing to previous years; in the same line the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia the early school leavers rate was 8,5% lower in 2013 comparing to 2007.

Early school leavers – 2013	
Participating country	% of population aged 18 – 24
Albania (*)	35
Bulgaria	12,5
Cyprus	9,1
The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia	11,4
Greece	10,1
EU-28	11,9

(*) for Albania the data refers to 2011.

Data: DG REGIO “Measuring performances – countries factsheets – 2013” for the EU member states and national statistics for the two (2) EU candidate countries.

The unemployment challenge

High unemployment rates, both on total active population and on youths is the main common concern as it also generates negative side effects affecting social cohesion of the whole programme area.

Unemployment rate 2013		
Participating country	% of active population	% change 2003 – 2013
Albania (*)	13% (*)	NA
Bulgaria	13%	– 0,7 %
Cyprus	16%	12%
The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia	29%	NA
Greece	27,2%	17,6%
EU-28	10,8%	1,7%

(*) for Albania the data refers to 2012.

Data: DG REGIO “Measuring performances – countries factsheets – 2013” for the EU member states and national statistics for the candidate countries.

The unemployment picture is even more challenging if we consider a closer inspection of the participating countries’ labour market, with **long term and youth unemployment** rates in particular.

Long Term & Youth Unemployment rate 2013 (% of the active population)		
Participating country	Long Term Unemployment rate 2013	Youth Unemployment rate 2013
Albania (*)	12,5% (*)	27%
Bulgaria	7,4%	30%
Cyprus	16%	40,3%
The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia	24%	52%
Greece	27,3%	59%
EU-28	10,8%	23,4%

(*) the long term unemployment rate for Albania refers to the year 2012.

Data: Eurostat news release February 2014 for the EU member states and national statistics for the candidate countries.

The only country performing within all labour market segments is the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia which is slightly but steady reducing unemployment rates.

However, the overall picture remains problematic reflecting also the **structural bottlenecks of the Balkan – Mediterranean labour market**: early school leaving, lack of vocational education that attracts young people’s interest, few opportunities to combine work and study and the inability of the labour markets to create new and sustainable jobs even in periods of high seasonal growth.

Inclusive growth at stake

The economic crisis’ impact in the programme area has been disproportionate, with Albania, Bulgaria and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia maintaining a positive outlook during this difficult period in the neighbourhood. On the other hand, Cyprus and Greece are profoundly affected by the economic crisis, as depicted in the table below.

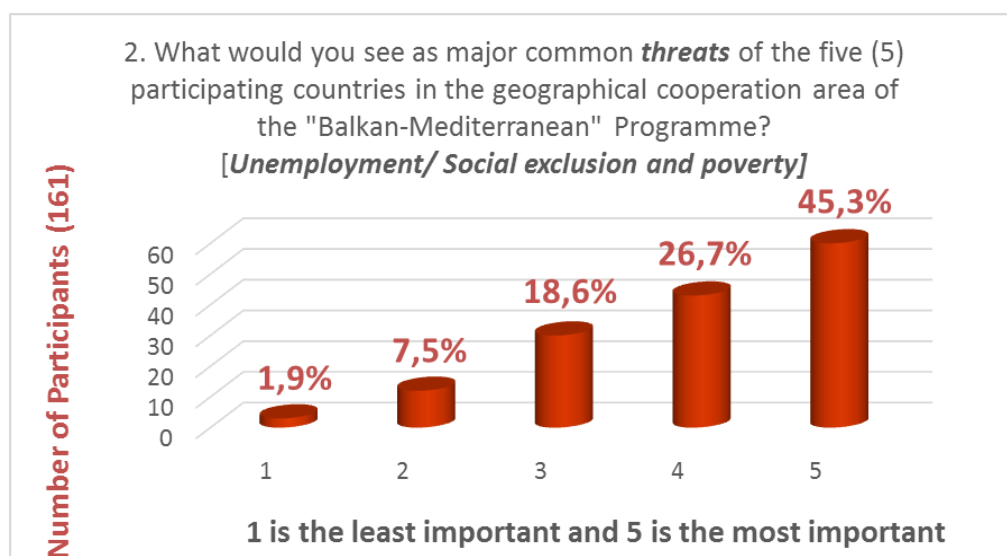
Participating country	Δ GDP Growth 2007 – 2012
Albania	1,6%
Bulgaria	8.82%
Cyprus	- 10.31%
Greece	- 20.11%
The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia	11.54%
EU-28	- 2.25%

Data: Eurostat 2013 and national statistics for Albania and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia

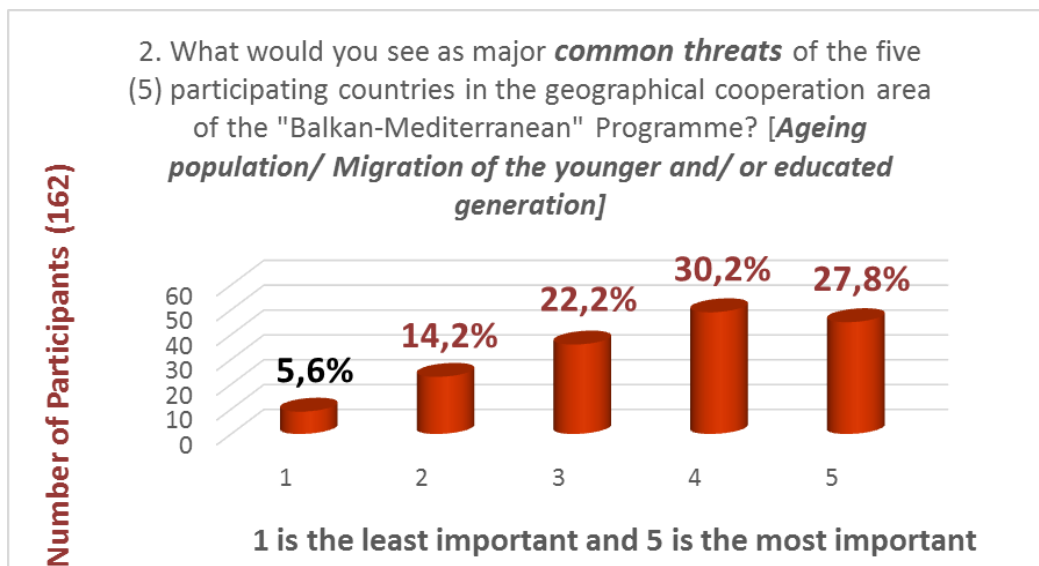
As a result of the economic crisis and deterioration of government budgets, fiscal measures were put in place with a significant impact in domestic demand. Overall economic activity shrunk and high jobless rates drove people to risk of poverty, material deprivation and social exclusion.

The programme area comprises two (2) of the EU countries most severely hit by the crisis, Greece and Cyprus, while the rest of the participating countries were not sheltered from the crisis negative impact. The labour market and overall social condition deteriorate considerably.

Serious concerns socially driven have been raised during the public consultation process. Unemployment and social exclusion are perceived as common threats by more 70% of the on-line questionnaire responders.



In the same line, migration of young and skilled people is identified as an additional threat as it diminishes the area's perspectives and genuine growth potential.



While the direct effect of the crisis would be mainly captured in GDP per capita and unemployment, the real challenge of the area is to motivate inclusive growth policies.

The role of the SMEs

SMEs represent the most important source of employment in the area and are important drivers for growth and jobs creation. However, many of them have not yet been able to bounce back to their pre-crisis levels, due also to structural weaknesses of the local markets.

Territorial imbalances and small market size prevent economies of scale. To deliver sustainable and inclusive growth “size matters” along with quality standards, as non-inclusive growth undermines sustainable development.

Within this framework, territorial disparities are a stimulus for cooperation, as opposite trends can create development dynamics. Transnational cooperation partnerships can provide a powerful platform for networking, technology transfer and exchange, not only focus on new technologies, but in a wider pool of topics featuring local expertise. Regional assets and comparative advantages represent a driving force for genuine cooperation partnerships that can foster competitiveness and lead to a better territorial balance.

Bearing also in mind that **SMEs and microenterprises in particular hold an important role** in all five (5) participating countries, transnational cooperation opportunities have to address on competitiveness’ policy gaps and contribute to quality growth perspectives.

According to the Eurostat classification SMEs are divided in three categories:

- ✓ micro-enterprises: 0 – 9 employees,
- ✓ small enterprises: 10 – 49 employees and
- ✓ medium sized enterprises: 50 – 249 employees

The table below reflects data on SMEs and micro-enterprises extracted from the Small Business Act (SBA) fact sheets 2013, published by DG Enterprise & Industry.

% share of SMEs & Microenterprises of the total number of enterprises		
Participating country	Share of total SMEs	of which % micro-enterprises
Albania	99,9%	95,%5
Bulgaria	99,8%	90%
Cyprus	99,8%	92,7%
The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia	99,9%	95,4%
Greece	99,9%	96,7%
EU-27	99,8%	92,3%
% share of SMEs & Microenterprises of the total number of Value Added		
Participating country	Share of total SMEs	of which % micro-enterprises
Albania	68,4%	27,2,%
Bulgaria	62,6%	16,9%
Cyprus	75%	27,7%
The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia	68,1%	26,8%
Greece	69%	34,6%
EU-27	58,4%	21,5%
% share of SMEs & Microenterprises of the total number of employees		
Participating country	Share of total SMEs	of which % micro-enterprises
Albania	81,4%	44,9,%
Bulgaria	75,5%	28,9%
Cyprus	81,1%	38,2%
The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia	81,2%	44,8%
Greece	84,8%	54,5%
EU-27	67,5%	29,7%

Dominant economic sectors

The service sector is the prominent economic sector of the whole programme area despite national disparities between the five (5) participating countries.

Albania is the only participating country that still registers important agriculture activity: agriculture provides around a fifth (20%) of the national Gross Value Added (GVA) just after the services sector, accounting for around 60% of GVA in 2012. Industry, comprising both extractive industries and manufacturing, follows with 11% of GVA. Albania's important agriculture activity can be a formidable testing bed through transnational cooperation, not just for sustainable growth but also for innovation.

The relative importance of economic sectors in Bulgaria shows dominance of services (64%) with industrial sector holding important secondary role (31%) with manufacturing of basic metals, food products, beverages and tobacco products. Bulgarian services sector is mainly composed by financial services and tourism.

As a small and island state, Cyprus traditionally suffers from small market size. Consequently Cyprus economy has been always outward, looking at promoting international trade, mainly through shipping. Cyprus' fleet is the 10th largest in the world making it a substantial contributor for the country's economy. The maritime industry is among the largest of the EU while Cyprus is the 3rd biggest ship management center in the EU. As shipping tradition strongly contributes to shape an open economy the openness of the Cypriot economy is of 90,9% comparing to the EU average of 80% (national statistics 2012).

The economic activity in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia is also predominantly services-based. Services account for 62,5% of GDP and employs 52,8% of the active population. Manufacturing and industry all together account for almost 26% of GDP and employ *circa* 30% of the population. In industry, the most significant sectors are the food and the tobacco industry, as well as the manufacture of iron and steel. Agriculture is also present and accounts for 11,5% of GDP employing 17.30% of the population.

The economy of Greece mainly revolves around the service sector (80.6%) and the industry (16%), while agriculture made up an estimated 3.4% of the national economic output in 2012. Greece is a significant agricultural producer within the EU. The most important Hellenic industries include tourism and shipping. The Hellenic Merchant Navy is the largest in the world, with Hellenic-owned vessels accounting for 15.17% of global deadweight tonnages of 1 January 2013. Tourism plays an important role in the country's economy. Greece was the 7th most visited country in the EU and 16th in the world in 2013, with 17.9 million international tourist arrivals.

Also it is worth noting that Greece is the largest economy in the Balkans, and an important regional investor: the 2nd foreign investor capital in Albania, the 3rd in Bulgaria, at the top-three foreign investors in Romania and Serbia and the most important trading partner and largest foreign investor of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.

[Transnational challenges related to accessibility&connectivity](#)

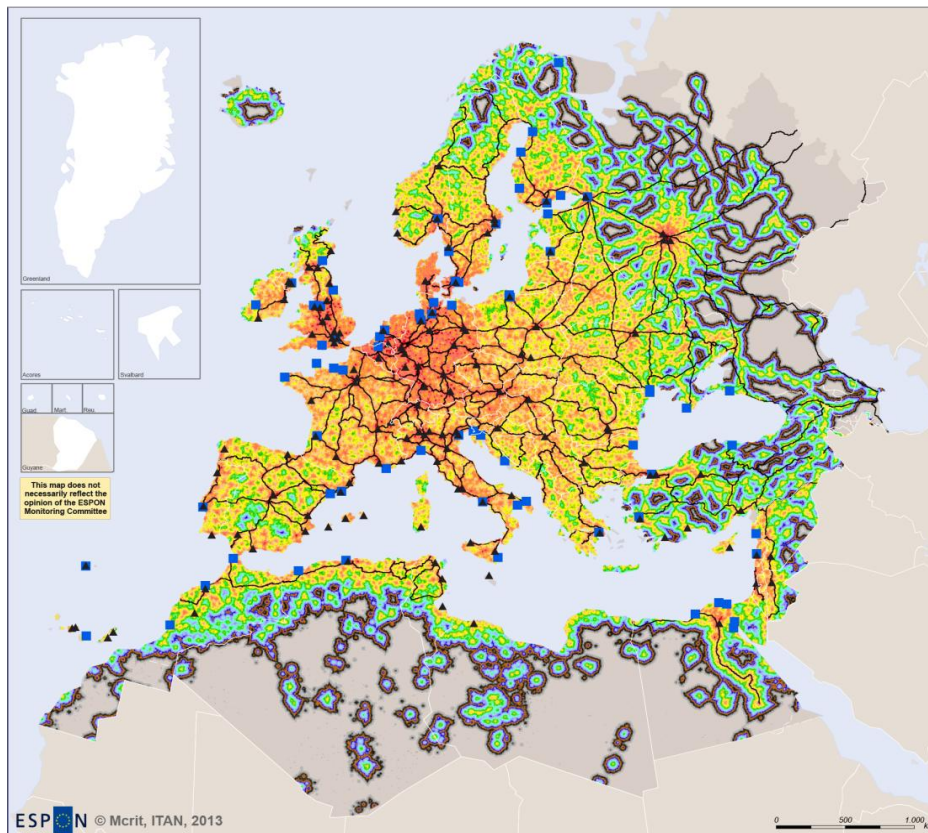
Transport links are of prominent importance for markets' integration. However, the programme area is among the least endowed on transport facilities in the EU, as shown by the ESPON map below.

While transport infrastructure is not eligible under transnational cooperation programmes accessibility can be also improved by speeding procedures at border crossing.

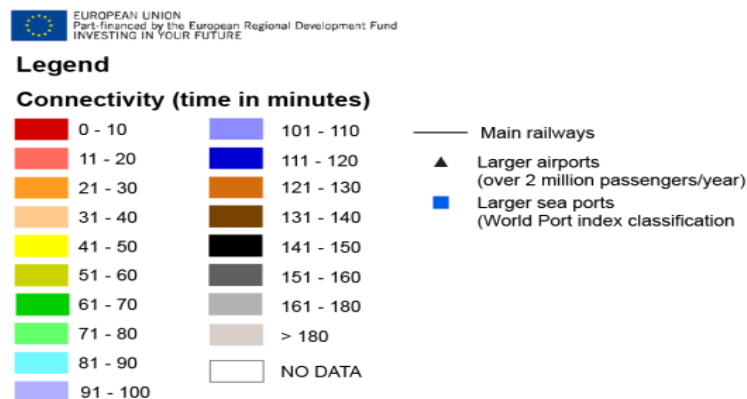
Bearing also in mind that poor quality of the transport network contributes to serious loss of traffic, trade opportunities can be boosted throughout suitable connectivity links.

Overcoming accessibility challenges and markets' fragmentation will be a key issue to address by means other than improving infrastructure.

Territorial connectivity to road, rail and airports 2010

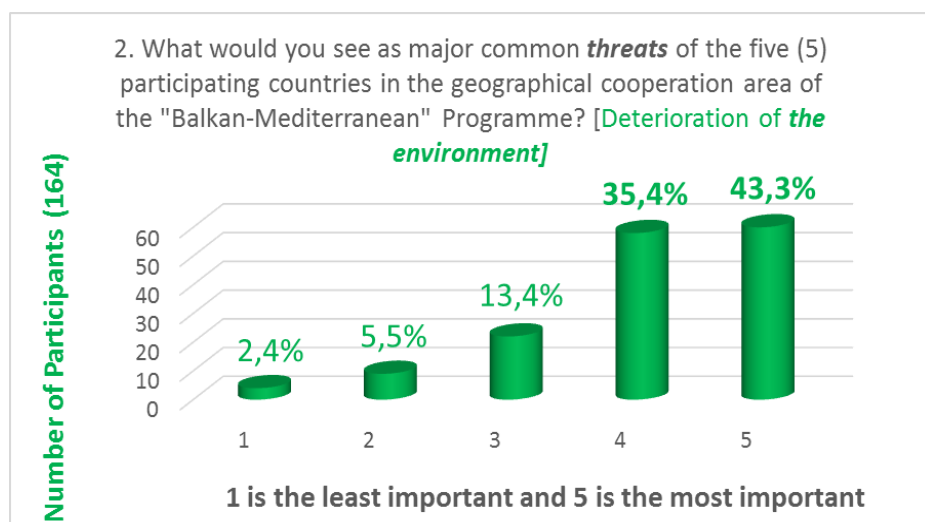
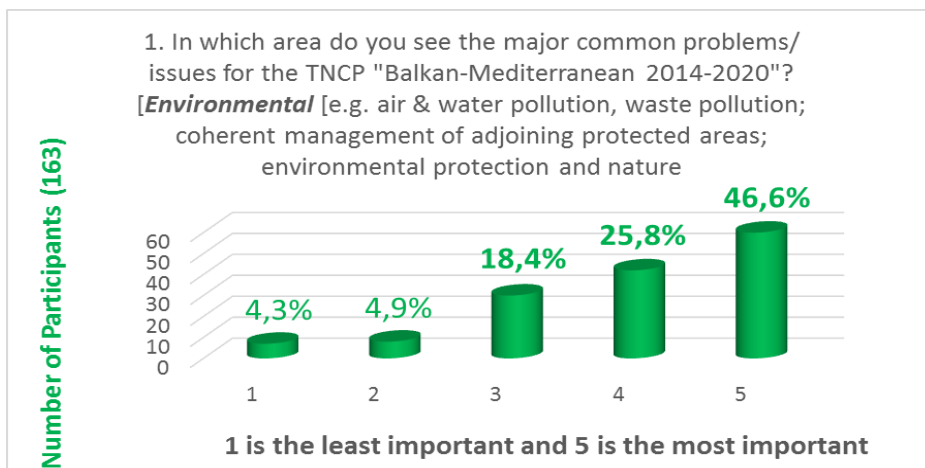


Source: ESPON www.espon.eu



Environment and climate change

While the programme area does not demonstrate significant adjustment capacity to climate change there is an increased awareness to properly address subsequent needs, both in the private and public sectors. The on-line questionnaire results clearly concluded that environment is a major issue to address: more than 70% of the responders identify environment as a “major common problem” while up to 78% perceive it as a “common threat”.



Important environmental concerns are shared throughout the territories and can create the driving force to link and enhance climate change reaction capacities. EU environmental norms are sparsely implemented or not implemented at all, if subsequent regulatory framework is simply missing.

Water and waste quality issues together with degraded areas' rehabilitation / regeneration are of key importance to meet corresponding EU standards.

Furthermore integrated marine and coastal management can boost "blue growth" opportunities anchoring a strong maritime pillar to the programme strategy.

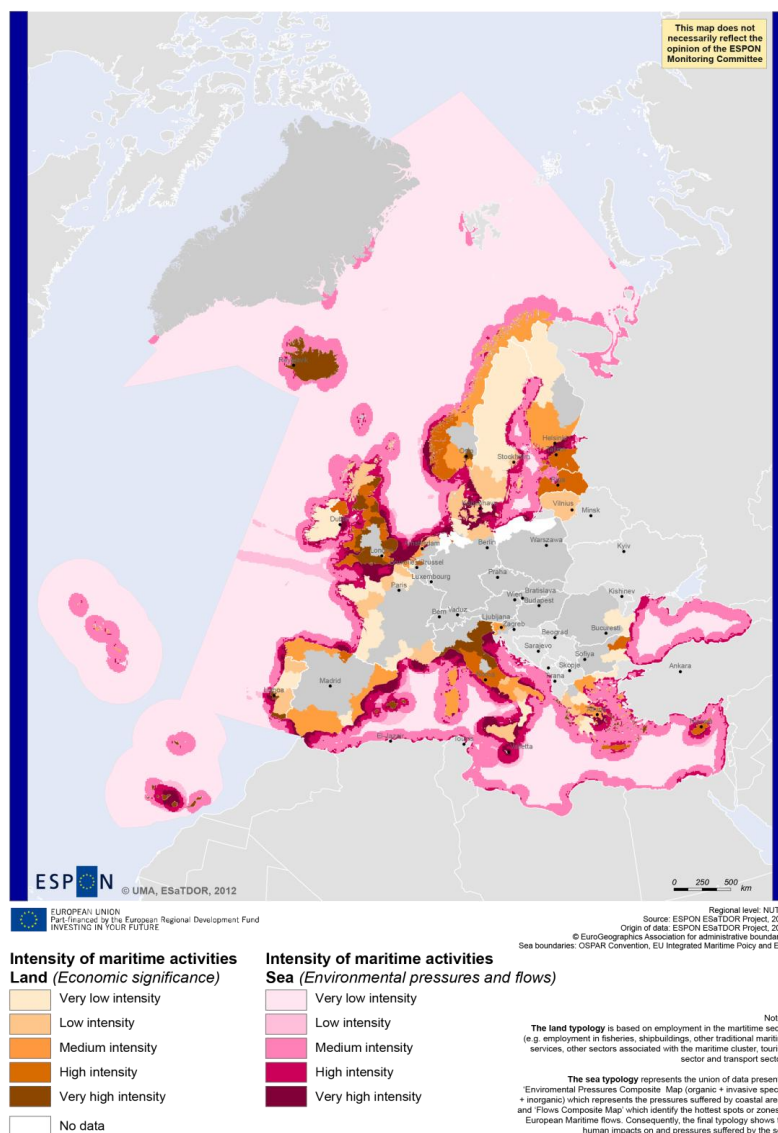
At the same time integrated approach for sustainable growth can mitigate the land – sea environmental pressures suffered throughout coastlines of the programme area as depicted in the ESPON map below.

Indeed, the programme area, more than doubles its population every year due to tourists' arrivals. Cyprus in particular almost triple its population every summer (+ 278%) followed by Greece and Albania who also multiply their population every summer by 1,4 and 1,2 respectively. While this annual flow of visitors represents an important source of revenue it also generates environmental pressures culminated both in time (summertime) and geography (coastal zones). Integrated coastal zones' management coupled with accessibility can provide a promising testing

bed for transnational cooperation potential to alleviate anthropogenic pressure in both, land and sea shores' areas.

Tourists' flow – 2012		
Participating country	Number of Tourists (millions)	% country population
Albania	3,5	121%
Bulgaria	6,5	89%
Cyprus	2,5	278%
The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia	0,35	18%
Greece	15,5	141%
Total of tourists in the programme area	28,35	118%

Source data: World Bank



Source: ESPON www.espon.eu

Natural and cultural heritage

The programme area includes a high quality potential on both, natural and cultural assets that goes from lakes, reserves, natural parks, to cultural sites, religious and historical.

Based on these assets, the Balkan – Mediterranean 2014 – 2020 programme provides a unique opportunity to strength and promotes the *“Balkan – Mediterranean”* cultural identity, both in Europe and internationally.

Albania has two (2) inscriptions in the World Heritage List, the city of Butrint and the two fortified historic centers of Berat and Gjirokastra, rare examples of a typical architectural character of the Ottoman period. Furthermore, the Albanian Folk Iso-Polyphony is part of the Intangible Heritage. The country also participates in EU programmes such as ‘Culture 2007-2013’ ‘Europe for Citizens’ and also in the Lisbon programme for the protection and promotion of cultural heritage. In the area of nature protection, the target to establish the Natura 2000 network represents a clear transnational cooperation learning opportunity from the three (3) EU member states participating in the programme.

The Bulgarian lands, have rich and most diverse cultural heritage: ancient Thracians, Greeks and Romans. There are two (2) elements inscribed on the List of Intangible Cultural Heritage and nine (9) sites on the World Heritage List, two (2) related to nature and the other seven (7) to cultural heritage: Ancient City of Nessebar (1983), Madara Rider (1979), Rila Monastery (1983), Rock-Hewn Churches of Ivanovo (1979), Thracian Tomb of Kazanlak (1979), Thracian Tomb of Sveshtari (1985), Pirin National Park (1983) and Srebarna Nature Reserve (1983).

Cyprus holds one of the oldest heritages recorded in the world, with about 10.000 years of history. The island fell prey to several conquerors and a mosaic of cultures is currently shaping modern society, particularly open to foreigners. The country has three (3) sites in the World Heritage List and three (3) in the Intangible Cultural Heritage List. Up to 40 areas are designated Natura 2000 sites and endowed of high biodiversity potential, yet under constant threat.

The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia is a country of nature and cradle of culture representing a geographical connection between Central Europe, Mediterranean and Eastern Europe. The cultural and natural heritage is characterized by a wealth of lakes, mountains. There are three (3) Natural Parks of Mavrovo, Galičica and Pelister, while the Ohrid region is classified “Natural and Cultural” World Heritage Site. There are also unique monuments and among them the megalithic observatory Kokino, ranked on the fourth place on the NASA’s list of the oldest observatory in the world. Cultural events as the Ohrid Summer, the Struga Poetry Evenings, the May Opera Evenings, the Wedding ceremony in Galicnik, Strumica and Vevchani’s Carnival, Tikvesh vintage are part of the country’s natural and cultural heritage. The Feast of the Holy Forty Martyrs in Stip is classified Intangible Cultural Heritage.

The protection of natural and cultural heritage in Greece is a key priority as well as the need to exploit opportunities for sustainable economic development. Seventeen (17) sites are included in the World Heritage List but there is still a need to set up a coherent and integrated system of protected areas at national level comprising three interconnected strands: the completion of the Natura 2000 network, the classification of Special Area Protection Zones and Sea Areas for

Community Importance and the completion of the network for the protection, restoration and management of ecosystems. A key priority for the 2014-2020 period is the implementation of the National Strategy for Biodiversity and related Action Plan. The “Mediterranean Diet” is included in the Intangible Cultural Heritage.

A total of 40 registrations are currently recorded in the World Heritage Lists, corresponding to a **“cultural baggage”** of “world importance”. This classification holds an important potential to further promote culture and biodiversity values of the programme area and foster the associated *“Balkan – Mediterranean”* identity.

Sites in the World Heritage List		
Participating country	Natural and Cultural Sites	Intangible Heritage
Albania	2	1
Bulgaria	9	2
Cyprus	3	3
The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia	1	1
Greece	17	1
Total of World Heritage’s registrations in the Balkan – Mediterranean programme area	32	8

Source: UNESCO – The World Heritage Convention <http://whc.unesco.org>

SWOT analysis

Competitiveness	
<p>STRENGTHS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Strong entrepreneurial spirit ✓ Diversification of economic activity in response to the crisis ✓ Relatively high skill levels in some regions able to contribute to competitiveness ✓ Increasing role and recognition of vocational education and training 	<p>WEAKNESSES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❑ Strong economic regional disparities & areas with low competitiveness' performances ❑ Weak culture of clustering ❑ Difficulties to access credit ❑ Limited green employment ❑ High unemployment rates, especially youth unemployment ❑ Rigidities and disparities of labour markets
<p>OPPORTUNITIES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➔ Relatively high levels of SMEs creation in some regions ➔ EU initiatives to promote employment creation (including self-employment) ➔ Mobility within and between countries ➔ Initiatives for linking research & innovation with the enterprise sector ➔ Blue Growth opportunities 	<p>THREATS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Economic recession & low growth levels ❖ Structural weaknesses with respect to both, market fragmentation and unemployment, together with other economic variables ❖ Brain drain, especially of skilled people ❖ Access to credit hampered by the crisis (contracting financial markets)
Environment and Climate Change	
<p>STRENGTHS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Rich natural resources, landscape & biodiversity ✓ Natural & cultural heritage important location factors ✓ Trends towards renewable energy sources in some countries ✓ Increasing awareness about climate change effects and counter measures 	<p>WEAKNESSES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❑ Slow implementation of the Water Framework Directive & the Birds and Habitats directives ❑ Limited data on environmental indicators ❑ Regional disparities in relation to capacity to adapt to climate change ❑ Low energy efficiency in most of the regions ❑ High water dependency in some regions
<p>OPPORTUNITIES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➔ Gradual improvement of the regulatory framework towards environment integration ➔ Increased cross-border and transnational awareness to mitigate environmental risks ➔ Strong potential for renewable energies, wind and solar energy in particular 	<p>THREATS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Risks of droughts in southern parts of the programme area and floods in the north ❖ Climate change consequences on higher winter temperatures and on-going desertification in some regions ❖ As a result of the crisis, investments in clean energy are less attractive

Employment and Social Cohesion	
<p>STRENGTHS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Relatively high trends on education ✓ Relatively low levels of early school leaving in some regions ✓ Recognition of diversity (ethnic and linguistic diversity) ✓ Increasing role and recognition of vocational education and training ✓ Relatively high quality of education and training offer in some regions 	<p>WEAKNESSES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❑ High unemployment rates, especially youth and long term unemployment, acute in regions and countries affected by the recent economic crisis ❑ High percentage of people at risk of poverty and social exclusion compared to the EU average ❑ High disparities in labour market and education indicators ❑ High incidence of employment in the informal sector ❑ Vulnerable regions towards the access to social services (health care, childcare, elderly care)
<p>OPPORTUNITIES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➔ EU initiatives to promote employment creation ➔ Active labour market policies pursued by national governments ➔ Workers mobility within and between countries in the area ➔ Green and blue economy opportunities 	<p>THREATS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Austerity policies in some regions may further shrink economic activity and employment ❖ Brain drain, especially of young and skilled people ❖ Ageing population
Accessibility	
<p>STRENGTHS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ High accessibility through maritime transport ✓ Some on-going activities to promote sustainable transport ✓ Relatively high availability of public transport in some regions 	<p>WEAKNESSES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❑ Weak transport infrastructure especially outside main hubs/urban regions ❑ Low quality of public transport in peripheral regions ❑ Low quality of regional roads and missing road connections in some peripheral regions ❑ Lack of integrated transport system/lack of multimodality in some regions ❑ Limited access to remote rural areas ❑ High speed road networks do not connect across borders and quite limited rail connections
<p>OPPORTUNITIES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➔ EU initiatives to promote sustainable transport and multi-modal systems ➔ Increasing investments in connections with long-distance transport TEN-T networks 	<p>THREATS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Increasing level of accessibility disparities ❖ Out-dated maritime transport infrastructure ❖ Lack of investment in regional infrastructures may increase disparities ❖ Disparities in multi-modal accessibility lower competitiveness

Strategy to address needs and challenges: the programme objective

In view of the above needs and challenges, the programme objective is to build on shared territorial assets and **promote integrated territorial development and cooperation for a more competitive and sustainable Balkan – Mediterranean area.**

To reach this objective the programme builds in local entrepreneurship potential and in natural assets, both supported by a training and capacity building scheme. It is a holistic approach clearly targeting the area's smart and sustainable growth potential, horizontally supported by a comprehensive training scheme to improve labour force skills and motivate inclusive growth. Therefore the programming framework totally embeds the EU 2020 strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth.

The programme is expected to have a significant impact on the area, enhancing regional cooperation through continued EU support as well as promoting further EU integration. Transnational cooperation may contribute to improve regional and territorial practices. Hence, the Balkan – Mediterranean 2014 – 2020 transnational cooperation programme (TNCP) will grant a specific attention to the coherence, complementarity and transfer of experiences and practices with **regional and national programmes** that can feed transnational actions and benefit of their results. For 2014-2020, the **transfer of experience** between actors, territories and programme is considered as a major goal for the Balkan-Mediterranean Programme.

This will be done taking into account the potential and challenges of specific sectors related to the **blue and green growth**. Moreover, the Programme shares large parts of its cooperation area (Greece & Albania) with the EU strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region (EUSAIR) and with the Danube macro-regional strategy (Bulgaria). Therefore, the Programme may contribute to the implementation of the Action Plan of the above-mentioned Strategies; synergies and coordination activities between Programmes are envisaged on the different priorities axes and investment priorities.

Taking into account the aim to mobilise the growth potential of the participating countries and the region as a whole, the following **added value** fields have been identified and confirmed through the public consultation process:

- ↳ **Geography:** as the programme addresses actors across from all over the participating countries' areas, transnational cooperation partnerships can be built from all over the five (5) participating countries and not just from a limited number of border regions.
- ↳ **Diversity:** the programme covers internal and external EU borders, both terrestrial and maritime. Consequently, the programme can unfold both strands of the EU 2020 strategy, terrestrial and maritime pillars, triggering green and blue growth accordingly.
- ↳ **Growth drivers' range:** as a result of its extended geography and diversity the programme addresses a wider pool of growth drivers sharing common challenges that can accordingly be addressed by a wider pool of methods and practices.
- ↳ **Critical mass:** transnational territorial cooperation is of particular value as transnational cooperation partnerships can secure economies of scale and critical mass, enhancing mobilisation capacity and innovation potential, both key competitiveness issues to overcome markets' fragmentation.
- ↳ **Policy learning and governance:** learning through cooperation is an effective mechanism for spreading know-how and enhance capacities and skills. Focused transnational cooperation can improve governance delivery in both public and corporate sectors.

- ↳ **Building structures for further cooperation:** structures (administrative, institutional, social and private) set up in cooperation programmes facilitate continuity and sustainability of lessons learned while at the same time they are setting the basis for further and more focused cooperation schemes.

Taking into account the programme's territorial dynamics as well as limited financial resources, a strong thematic focus has been promoted taking also advantage of the possibility to combine investment priorities from different thematic objectives in order to increase impact, effectiveness and coherence within each priority challenge tackled by the respective priority axis. Thus the programme develops a leverage effect on regional development by investing in the holistic capacity to boost entrepreneurship, to protect the environment and to promote the efficient use of resources.

Programme priorities

Two priority axes have been defined in response to the identified transnational key challenges and opportunities above. They are briefly introduced in the following section. A detailed description of the actions to be financed, their expected contribution to the corresponding specific objectives and the related result and output indicators are described in Section 2 below.

Priority Axis 1: 'Entrepreneurship& Innovation'

Priority Axis 1 is dedicated to actions that will build on the SMEs' capacity and improve their competitiveness, while promoting and supporting the emergence of new SMEs. The Priority will encourage SMEs' cooperation through networks, clusters and clusters policies, in particular that are outward looking and therefore promote their internationalisation.

A special focus of this Priority will be the enhancement of the capacity of SMEs through the implementation of actions related to education and training. The aim is to enable SMEs to acquire the necessary skills/tools to boost their competitiveness, to grow towards other markets and introduce innovation in all phases of their business cycle. By linking education and businesses, this Priority also target to transpose innovation into business practices and processes. Synergies will also be sought with opportunities provided by Cohesion Policy, in particular via regional innovation strategies involving SMEs and other territorial cooperation programmes.

Priority Axis 2: 'Environment'

Priority Axis 2 aims at strengthening integrated joint approaches to preserve and manage the rich natural and cultural heritage in the region as a prerequisite and a fundamental basis for sustainable development and inclusive growth. Among others, the priority will also support the development of the region as a tourist destination, fostering the "*Balkan – Mediterranean*" identity. Balance between tourism, environmental protection and economic growth will be sought. The programme will bring together different stakeholders dealing with the protection of natural and cultural heritage. The development and implementation of common strategies and approaches will foster for the protection and sustainable use of natural and cultural heritage. Development of common brands is also creating a favourable environment for sustainable tourism practices, which are based on the valorisation of natural and cultural heritage. The priority will encourage networking and partnerships among central, regional and local administrations, as well as non-governmental organisations, business support centres, tourist

agencies, other actors. The programme area has a potential to strengthen common approaches to foster green and blue growth opportunities, promote classified sites and areas of community importance (Natura 2000) develop theme paths and joint products, all guided by a shared policy framework.

In addition, implementation of innovative technologies to protect the environment and guarantee resource efficiency will also be in the focus of the priority.

The capacity of local actors to apply innovative approaches in developing the rich environmental potential of the region will be enhanced through joint education and training activities, sharing and implementing of best practices in the field.

Horizontal dimensions

Apart from thematic orientation, the Balkan – Mediterranean 2014 – 2020 transnational cooperation programme addresses horizontal thematic aspects highlighted in the EU regulations: sustainable development, equal opportunities and non-discrimination, equality between men and women.

Besides the thematic concentration and the choice of Thematic Objectives, specific issues will be addressed in a cross-cutting way in the different investment priorities of the programme contributing to the overall objectives of the Programme:

❖ Social cohesion

In different fields of intervention, a positive attention will be paid to projects involving partners or taking measures that have positive effects on social cohesion. This is especially the case when involving social enterprises or the implementing actions improving the conditions of target groups confronted with economic and social integration difficulties. Additionally, there should be a general effort on reducing unemployment and mitigating the risk of poverty and social exclusion in the Balkan-Mediterranean region and on promoting inclusive growth.

❖ Connectivity & Accessibility

The promotion of connectivity on the Programme area (including ICT products, services and applications) constitutes a relevant support for socioeconomic development, governance, networking, etc. In addition, accessibility can promote activities to improve access to and quality of transport and telecommunications services where these have a clear transnational dimension. Connectivity and accessibility should be considered as a goal which, in a transversal way, might help to reach the objectives of several investment priorities.

❖ Territorial cohesion

In each targeted territory (urban, coastal, islands and remote areas) projects will have to mobilise relevant stakeholders of sectors and institutions from the project intervention field. Approaches must be *'integrated'*, so that the result would not be isolated proposals working on limited aspects of tourism, energy or transports for example, but a coordination effort insisting on the contribution of these domains to the sustainable development of territories (taking into account available means, economic perspectives, on-going public policies, conflict of use, environmental constraints, etc.). Partners will

have to explore how to make relevant actors from environment protection, tourism, transport, etc. work together. With this approach, transnational cooperation will contribute to develop strategic planning aspects.

The **transnational dimension** of the operations is a **decisive aspect** of the Balkan-Mediterranean 2014-2020 transnational cooperation programme. It will be evaluated during the selection process of the applications and during the selected projects' implementation. Special attention will be given to **the scope of the applications**, to their **objectives** and to **the partnerships' synthesis** in order to make sure that they are not merely an aggregate of independent actions but represent genuine transnational cooperation partnerships of a real transnational added-value. The operations must allow carrying out complementary activities associating partners from different countries. They must bring solutions to identified common challenges which could not be solved without a transnational approach.

Overall, the projects **cannot be limited to studies or exchange of experience** which only aim to produce or to exchange information and knowledge without concrete applications. The projects **must have visible results or a measurable effect** on the socio economic sector, on public policies, in certain activities, institutions and management or cooperating methods. The **achievements and effects of the projects must be sustainable** in order not to be limited to the period of provision of the European funding. The main aim is to **promote synergies** and to **avoid the multiplication of isolated initiatives**.

1.1.2 Justification of the choice of Thematic Objectives and Investment Priorities

The justification of the choice of Thematic Objectives (TOs) and Investment Priorities (IPs) is directly related to both, the territorial analysis and the public consultation results as described above.

Active involvement of key actors and stakeholders constitutes an important component of the programme overarching priorities, *“entrepreneurship & innovation”* and *“environment”* both, supported by a horizontal training scheme fostering the inclusive dimension of the targeted smart and sustainable growth.

Table 1: Justification for the selection of Thematic Objectives and Investment Priorities

Selected Thematic Objective	Selected Investment Priority	Specific Objective (SO)	Justification for the selection
Priority Axis 1: Entrepreneurship & Innovation			
Thematic Objective 3: Enhancing the competitiveness of SMEs	3a: Promoting entrepreneurship, in particular by facilitating the economic exploitation of new ideas and fostering the creation of new	SO 1.1: Promote entrepreneurship and business creation on the basis on new ideas, innovation and new types of business	[+] Strong entrepreneurial spirit [+] Diversified local economies [+] Strong potential for green and blue growth

	firms, including through business incubators	models.	<p>[+] Relatively high skill levels in some regions to contribute to competitiveness potential by sharing and testing best practices</p> <p>[+] Building on the EU initiatives to promote employment creation (including self-employment)</p> <p>[-] Need to develop better policies for entrepreneurship and business support services</p> <p>[-] Need to overcome the strong economic regional disparities and low competitiveness</p> <p>[-] Need to develop and implement joint policies to support sustainable growth</p> <p>[-] Need to develop policies oriented towards new technology and new business models</p> <p>[-] Low level of innovation capacity</p>
Thematic Objective 3: Enhancing the competitiveness of SMEs	3d: Supporting the capacity of SMEs to grow in regional, national and international markets, and to engage in innovation processes	SO 1.2: Facilitate innovation in business models and allow a maximum number of SMEs to innovate and adjust their business models to the changing socioeconomic and policy/regulatory circumstances	<p>[+] Recent positive trends for SMEs support to adjust and innovate through national policies for smart growth and smart specialization</p> <p>[-] Need to encourage networking and clustering as competitive growth tool</p>

			<p>[-] Need to encourage enterprises to develop and promote innovative products/services</p> <p>[-] Need for integrated management support and governance to boost innovation and technology transfer strategies</p>
<p>Thematic Objective 10</p> <p>Investing in education, training and vocational training for skills and lifelong learning by developing education and training infrastructure</p>	<p>Additional</p> <p>Developing and implementing joint education and training systems</p>	<p>SO 1.3:Support entrepreneurial learning and knowledge transfer for more competitive SMEs</p>	<p>[+] Increased role and recognition of vocational education and training</p> <p>[-] Brain drain especially of skilled people</p> <p>[-] Need to improve the link between business and training</p> <p>[-] Need to improve innovation capacities through knowledge and new skills' promotion</p> <p>[-] Need to encourage cooperation and networking between businesses entities, policy makers and training and education institutions to develop innovative learning systems, increase skills and foster entrepreneurial learning</p> <p>[-] High disparities in labour market and education indicators</p> <p>[-] Need to improve entrepreneurial skills for long term unemployed young people</p>
Priority Axis 2: Environment			
<p>Thematic Objective 6</p> <p>Preserving and</p>	<p>6 c: Conserving, protecting, promoting and</p>	<p>SO 2.1:Maintain biodiversity and natural ecosystems</p>	<p>[+] Preserved rich natural and cultural heritage</p> <p>[+] Positive trends</p>

<p>protecting the environment and promoting resource efficiency</p>	<p>developing natural and cultural heritage</p>	<p>by strengthening networking and management of protected areas, including Natura 2000</p>	<p>towards recognition of biodiversity value</p> <p>[+] Strong potential for sustainable tourism development and increased attractiveness of the programme area</p> <p>[+] Potential for setting up a “Balkan-Mediterranean” cultural identity</p> <p>[-] Need to improve the governance of the rich cultural and natural heritage sites by upgrading their management and ensure their conservation</p> <p>[-] Need to coordinate policies to maximize the results of sustainable touristic exploitation of the regions’ cultural and natural heritage</p> <p>[-] Need to foster exchange of experience on nature conservation issues</p> <p>[-] Need to encourage partnerships and networking among all relevant actors: public institutions, business support organizations, NGOs, civil society, etc.</p> <p>[-] Implementation of the sectoral legislation, including the “Birds” and “Habitats” directives related to the Natura 2000 network is behind schedule</p>
<p>Thematic Objective 6 Preserving and protecting the</p>	<p>6 f: Promoting innovative technologies to improve environmental</p>	<p>SO 2.2: Promote cooperation and networking aiming to introduce innovative</p>	<p>[+] Potential for efficient and sustainable use of natural resources</p> <p>[+] Trends towards</p>

<p>environment and promoting resource efficiency</p>	<p>protection and resource efficiency in the waste sector, water sector and with regard to soil, or to reduce air pollution</p>	<p>technologies for efficient management of the waste sector, the soil and the water sector including adaptation to the Water Framework Directive (EC/60/2000)</p>	<p>sustainable use of renewable energy sources</p> <p>[+] The ecosystem approach promoted by EU environmental legislation</p> <p>[-] Need to share best practices and transfer of knowledge for innovative management of environment</p> <p>[-] Need to develop joint strategies for recourse efficiency</p> <p>[-] Need to increase the level of implementation of innovative technologies in the area</p> <p>[-] Need to foster the implementation of the sectoral legislation, such as Water Framework Directive</p>
<p>Thematic Objective 11</p> <p>Enhancing institutional capacity of public authorities and stakeholders and efficient public administration through actions to strengthen the institutional capacity and the efficiency of public administrations and public services related to the implementation of the ERDF, and in support of actions under the ESF to strengthen</p>		<p>SO 2.3:Develop skills for better environmental management and increase governance capacities</p>	<p>[-] Need to enhance governance capacity for better management of environmental resources through education and training</p> <p>[-] Need to support joint trainings for capacity building of public authorities to foster innovative environmental management approaches</p> <p>[-] Need to strengthen administrative capacity to fight against illegal activities in protected areas</p> <p>[-] Need to raise awareness for better utilization of environmental resources</p> <p>[-] Low efficiency of public</p>

the institutional capacity and the efficiency of public administration			administration regarding environmental monitoring
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1.2 Justification of the financial allocation

The total national funding amount forXXXXX.... Euros. The total ERDF budget matching the participating countries' resources isXXXXX..... Euros while the total IPA fund account for XXXXX Euros.

Based on both, the territorial analysis needs and vivid involvement of key stakeholders during the public consultation phase the programme focuses on the two most important challenges of the area:

- ✓ Entrepreneurship& Innovation and
- ✓ Environment

Bearing also in mind limited resources the aforementioned choice allows for a maximum thematic concentration in line with the EU 2020 strategy for smart and sustainable growth, while the inclusive dimension is secured by the establishment of priority axes covering two thematic objectives.

In particular, the Priority Axis 1 on “*entrepreneurship& innovation*” is implemented by a menu of Investment Priorities out of the Thematic Objective 3 and accompanied by one additional Thematic Objective, TO 10 in order to better tackle knowledge transfer and skills' development in an area particularly suffering by high unemployment levels and labour skills shortcomings. Overall investment in boosting entrepreneurship accounts for 36% of the total cooperation programme budget (amount in Euros).

Environment protection and sustainable use of natural resources is promoted by the Priority Axis 2 focusing on two Investment Priorities (6c and 6f) out of the Thematic Objective 6 “preserving and protecting the environment and promoting resources efficiency”. This choice has clearly emerged during the whole public consultation process as more than 75% of the actors' involved depicted environment degradation as a major common threat to be tackled by the programme.

Yet, to learn how to monitor environmental targets and develop common management techniques and approaches, it requires specific skills' development. Furthermore, to implement EU standards requires expertise aligned with the latest scientific knowledge on environmental policies' implementation procedures. To address joint challenges on environmental management and lack of specific knowledge, the Priority Axis covers one additional Thematic Objective, TO 11 aiming to develop training programmes for public authorities and stakeholders in order to improve delivery on environmental legislation monitoring and governance. Priority Axis 2 accounts for 57% of the total cooperation programme budget (amount in Euros).

Table 2–Overview of the investment strategy of the cooperation programme

Priority Axis	Thematic Objectives (TO)	Investment Priorities (IP)	Specific Objectives (SO) corresponding to the investment priorities	Result indicators corresponding to specific objectives	ERDF support (EUR)	Proportion (%) of the total Union support (by Fund)		
						ERDF	ENI	IPA
1	TO 3	3a	SO 1.1: Promote entrepreneurship and business creation on the basis on new ideas, innovation and new types of business models	<i>Increased capacity of SMEs to develop new business models (%)</i>		ERDF	ENI	IPA
		3d	SO 1.2: Facilitate innovation in business models and allow a maximum number of SMEs to innovate and adjust their business models to the changing socioeconomic and policy/regulatory circumstances	<i>Increased capacity of SMEs to innovate and adjust their business models to the changing economic, social and policy/regulatory circumstances (%)</i>				
	TO 10	Additional	SO 1.3: Support entrepreneurial learning and knowledge transfer for more competitive SMEs	<i>Entrepreneurs' business capacity increased through trainings, knowledge sharing practices and technology transfer schemes (%)</i>				
2	TO 6	6c	SO 2.1: Maintain biodiversity and natural ecosystems by strengthening networking and management of protected areas, including Natura 2000	<i>Level of sustainable use of natural and cultural heritage (scale to be established)</i>				

		6f	SO 2.2: Promote cooperation and networking aiming to introduce innovative technologies for efficient management of the waste sector, the soil and the water sector including adaptation to the Water Framework Directive (EC/60/2000)	<i>Efficient resources' management increased (scale to be established)</i>				
	TO 11		SO 2.3: Develop skills for better environmental management and increase governance capacities	<i>Increase in compliance with EU specific environmental legislation (%)</i>				

SECTION 2. PRIORITY AXES

(Reference: points (b) and (c) of Article 8(2) of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013)

2.A. Description of the priority axes other than technical assistance

(Reference: point (b) of Article 8(2) of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013)

2.A.1 Priority Axis 1: Entrepreneurship & Innovation

ID of the priority axis	1
Title of the priority axis	Entrepreneurship & Innovation

<input type="checkbox"/> The entire priority axis will be implemented solely through financial instruments	
<input type="checkbox"/> The entire priority axis will be implemented solely through financial instruments set up at Union level	
<input type="checkbox"/> The entire priority axis will be implemented through community-led local development	

2.A.2. Justification for the establishment of a priority axis covering more than one thematic objective

(Reference: Article 8(1) of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013)

Entrepreneurship is a powerful driver of economic growth. The programme area suffers from markets fragmentation and limited labour force skills. Under transnational cooperation opportunities, entrepreneurship can nurture new skills, foster innovation and open up new markets through networks and partnerships. The overarching aim of Priority Axis 1 is to unfold an integrated support to improve competitiveness of existing SMEs, while promoting and supporting the emergence of new SMEs. The Priority will encourage cooperation of SMEs through SMEs' thematic networks, clusters, etc. that are outward looking and promote internationalisation.

To reach a maximum territorial impact on competitiveness, training facility schemes have to be considered to fully support internal spill-over and leverage effects on knowledge and technology transfer.

According to the "Entrepreneurship 2020 Action Plan" of the EU, "investing in entrepreneurship education is one of the highest return investments Europe can make". Adults and young people, who benefit from entrepreneurial learning, develop business knowledge, new skills and attitudes including creativity, initiative, team work, risk assessment and sense of responsibility.

Against the background of the current economic crisis training support for entrepreneurship

was identified as crucial in order to maximise the impact and effectiveness of the investment.

A sole thematic focus on SMEs support with no investment in their respective human capital will jeopardize expected results, as monitoring and management are performed by the entrepreneurs. Transnational cooperation partnerships can provide a powerful platform to address entrepreneurship skills along with the SMEs' thematic support; the Priority Axis 1 is set to combine TO 3 and TO 10 securing long-lasting results. It is a holistic investment approach aiming to effectively foster the overall programme area competitiveness and unleash untapped cooperation potential.

2.A.3. Fund and calculation basis for Union support

Fund	Union funds (ERDF and IPA)
<i>Calculation basis (total eligible expenditure or eligible public expenditure)</i>	Total eligible expenditure

2.A.4.1 Investment priority 3a

(Reference: point (b)(i) of Article 8(2) of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013)

Investment Priority	Investment priority 3(a) Promoting entrepreneurship, in particular by facilitating the economic exploitation of new ideas and fostering the creation of new firms, including through business incubators
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2.A.5. Specific objectives corresponding to the investment priority and expected results

(Reference: point (b)(i) and (ii) of Article 8(2) of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013)

ID	Specific Objective (SO) 1.1
Specific Objective	SO 1.1: Promote entrepreneurship and business creation on the basis on new ideas, innovation and new types of business models
The result that Member States seek to achieve with Union support	The Balkan-Mediterranean region is characterized by strong entrepreneurial spirit and diverse economic activity. SMEs and microenterprises in particular, represent a substantial part of all economic sectors in participating countries and though they form more than 60% share of the total value added they suffer from recession and low growth levels, structural markets' weaknesses with respect to unemployment and limited access to financing. The enhancement of SMEs' capacity is crucial and can be achieved through a comprehensive set of actions linking overall business' support to education and training. The exploitation of new ideas,

	<p>innovation and new types of business models enables the differentiation of innovation patterns according to the potentials and needs of a specific territory. It is crucial to mobilise internal assets and resources in topics where a country or a region holds a comparative advantage. This covers areas characterised by advanced technologies as well as areas with a non-technological focus such as culture and creative industries, tourism and others.</p> <p>Therefore, the entrepreneurial challenge is to transpose knowledge and innovation into business practices and processes. This Specific Objective targets the lack of experience to involve the innovations and new business models in economic activity. In this regard, the Programme takes a transnational approach in supporting new business models, ideas and innovations and at the same time enhancing the SMEs' capacity of SMEs by implementing also actions related to education and training in order to enable SMEs acquire the necessary skills/tools to boost their competitiveness. Linking business' support and businesses' training helps to create new business models. Promoting entrepreneurship through clusters and cluster policies, by facilitating the economic exploitation of new ideas will help to overcome strong economic regional disparities prevailing in the region.</p> <p>The results sought will directly contribute to the establishment of favourable and competitive business environment as a prerequisite for sustainable development. The main result of the planned support activities is to enable local economic operators to contribute more to the national, transnational and EU GDP and create new and better jobs.</p> <p>The results will build on existing potential of the region and within the EU policies framework will help participating countries to implement working solutions to support new business models and encourage innovations.</p>
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Table 3: Programme specific result indicators (by specific objective)

(Reference: point (b)(ii) of Article 8(2) of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013)

ID	Indicator	Measurement unit	Baseline value	Baseline year	Target value (2023) ¹	Source of data	Frequency of reporting
IP 3.a SO 1.1	Increased capacity of SMEs to develop new business models (%)	%	0%	2014	10%	Projects progress reports	2018, 2023

¹ Target values may be qualitative or quantitative.

2.A.6. Actions to be supported under the Investment Priority

2.A.6.1. Description of the type and examples of actions to be supported and their expected contribution to the specific objectives, including, where appropriate, identification of the main target groups, specific territories targeted and types of beneficiaries

(Reference: point (b)(iii) of Article 8(2) of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013)

Investment Priority	Investment priority 3(a)
	Promoting entrepreneurship, in particular by facilitating the economic exploitation of new ideas and fostering the creation of new firms, including through business incubators
<p>The actions that are foreseen to be supported under this specific objective will strengthen entrepreneurship and clusters' culture and promote new business model expansion.</p> <p><i>Overall, the projects cannot be limited to studies or exchange of experience which only aim to produce or to exchange information and knowledge without concrete applications. The projects must have visible results or a measurable effect on the socioeconomic sector, on public policies, in certain activities, institutions and management or cooperating methods. The achievements and effects of the projects must be sustainable in order not to be limited to the period of provision of the European funding. The main aim is to promote synergies and to avoid the multiplication of isolated initiatives.</i></p> <p>Type of actions and expected contribution to the Specific Objective 1.1: <i>The following list of actions is only an indicative list and can be completed with other relevant actions contributing to the specific objective's goals</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Knowledge transfer activities, such as workshops and seminars to exchange best practices and ideas to support existing and newly established businesses, including online based; ✓ Identification and analysis of good practices, mapping the existing tools used for business model innovation, analysing the potential of transfer across sectors and Programme countries; ✓ Joint market analyses, researches and surveys on the business potential to develop, test and implement innovation products/services and new business models; ✓ Feasibility studies coupled with pilot applications and tests of practical tools to strengthen competences and encourage entrepreneurship for innovation including social innovation (as e.g. healthcare, social inclusion: minorities, disabled persons, elderly etc.); ✓ Joint actions to assist fast access to various financial and development instruments supporting SMEs; ✓ Enhancement and support of business information and centres, including virtual ones, to promote innovative and new business models' applications; joint organisation of promotional activities in identified target markets; <p>Beneficiaries (non-exhaustive list)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Umbrella organisations of SMEs ❖ Development and planning agencies 	

- ❖ Local, regional and national authorities involved in business' management
- ❖ Technology transfer centres
- ❖ Innovation support networks
- ❖ Non-governmental and Civil Society organisations

Targeted territory

The whole Balkan – Mediterranean territory

2.A.6.2. Guiding principles for the selection of operations

(Reference: point (b)(iii) of Article 8(2) of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013)

Investment Priority	Investment priority 3(a)
	Promoting entrepreneurship, in particular by facilitating the economic exploitation of new ideas and fostering the creation of new firms, including through business incubators
<p>The selection of project proposals will be carried out according to the requirements of Article 12 of the Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013 on the European Territorial Cooperation goal, following a standardized assessment procedure.</p> <p>The following guiding principles will be observed when selecting project applications:</p> <p>Strategic coherence: coherence and contribution of each project application to the relevant Programme's specific objective, while addressing in a coherent way the achievement of the Programme's specific results envisaged. Furthermore, the transnational added value of the operation, its territorial dimension and the relevance of the partnership will also be assessed in this context. The Programme will support projects with a clear focus on the implementation of joint transnational actions, which demonstrate the value added of the transnational approach and go far beyond regional, national, interregional or cross-border approaches.</p> <p>Operational quality: design of the project application in relation to clarity and coherence of the operational objectives, activities and means, feasibility, efficiency, communication of the project and its specific results, potential for uptake and embedment into operative procedures of the partners involved. The output and result-oriented approach that places much emphasis on the development of concrete, relevant and visible outputs and results will be a must.</p> <p>Compliance to horizontal principles: coherence and contribution of each project application to the Programme's horizontal principles and the demonstration of their integration and advancement within the project proposal intervention logic.</p> <p>The detailed assessment criteria will be adopted by the Monitoring Committee and will be made available to potential applicants in the calls for proposals' documentation, which will be prepared and disseminated by the Managing Authority and the Joint Secretariat. Applications for funding shall be ten submitted by Lead Applicants following calls for proposals that will be</p>	

organised and launched upon subsequent decision of the Monitoring Committee.

The “Programme Manual”, an information guide on the programme objectives together with a full application package displaying, among other, the selection criteria, shall be set up by the Joint Secretariat and approved by the Monitoring Committee before the first call for proposals.

2.A.6.3. Planned use of financial instruments (where appropriate)

(Reference: point (b)(iii) of Article 8(2) of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013)

Investment Priority	Investment priority 3(a) Promoting entrepreneurship, in particular by facilitating the economic exploitation of new ideas and fostering the creation of new firms, including through business incubators
Planned use of financial instruments	
<i>Not applicable</i>	

2.A.6.4. Planned use of major projects (where appropriate)

(Reference: point (b)(iii) of Article 8(2) of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013)

Investment Priority	Investment priority 3(a) Promoting entrepreneurship, in particular by facilitating the economic exploitation of new ideas and fostering the creation of new firms, including through business incubators
<i>Not applicable</i>	

2.A.6.5. Output indicators (by investment priority)

(Reference: point (b)(iv) of Article 8(2) of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013)

Table 4: Common and programme specific output indicators

ID	Indicator	Measurement unit	Target value (2023)	Source of data	Frequency of reporting
IP 3.a SO 1.1	Pilot initiatives to test the feasibility of instruments developed by supported projects	Number	15	Project progress reports	annually
	New business models tested and implemented	Number	12	Project progress reports	annually

2.A.4.1 Investment priority 3d

(Reference: point (b)(i) of Article 8(2) of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013)

Investment Priority	Investment priority 3(d) Supporting the capacity of SMEs to grow in regional, national and international markets, and to engage in innovation processes
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2.A.5. Specific objectives corresponding to the investment priority and expected results

(Reference: point (b)(i) and (ii) of Article 8(2) of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013)

ID	Specific Objective (SO) 1.2
Specific Objective	SO 1.2: Facilitate innovation in business models and allow a maximum number of SMEs to innovate and adjust their business models to the changing socioeconomic and policy/regulatory circumstances
The result that Member States seek to achieve with Union support	<p>“Innovation Union” flagship initiative pursues a broad concept of innovation that encompasses not only new or improved products and processes, but also services, new business models, marketing, branding and design methods and new forms of business organisation and collaborative arrangements.</p> <p>Technologies as such do not have a specific value. Their value is determined by the business models used to bring them to a market.</p> <p>However, many European enterprises, whether large or small, lack awareness and tools to innovate their business models and strengthen their presence internationally.</p> <p>The challenge will be to facilitate innovation in business models and allow a maximum number of SMEs to innovate and adjust their business models to the changing economic, social and policy/regulatory circumstances resulting from the implementation of the EU’s Europe 2020 Flagship Initiative – Innovation Union.</p> <p>Expected results will be to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ advance existing knowledge about business model innovation and create common understanding on business model with a focus on internationalisation; ✓ strategic re-orientation of cluster policies; ✓ foster a business friendly environment for growth and jobs; ✓ increase the attractiveness of the region for innovators;

Table 3: Programme specific result indicators (by specific objective)

(Reference: point (b)(ii) of Article 8(2) of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013)

ID	Indicator	Measurement unit	Baseline value	Baseline year	Target value (2023) ²	Source of data	Frequency of reporting
IP 3.d SO 1.2	Increased capacity of SMEs to innovate and adjust their business models to the changing economic, social and policy/regulatory circumstances	%	0%	2014	10%	Projects progress reports	2018, 2023

2.A.6. Actions to be supported under the Investment Priority

2.A.6.1. Description of the type and examples of actions to be supported and their expected contribution to the specific objectives, including, where appropriate, identification of the main target groups, specific territories targeted and types of beneficiaries

(Reference: point (b)(iii) of Article 8(2) of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013)

Investment Priority	Investment priority 3(d)
	Supporting the capacity of SMEs to grow in regional, national and international markets, and to engage in innovation processes
<p>Activities under this specific objective will produce & pilot knowledge on business model innovation which will enhance Balkan-Mediterranean and EU competitiveness in alignment with Europe 2020 addressing this societal challenge: Europe in a changing world - inclusive, innovative and reflective Societies. SMEs, will examine, evaluate and change their business models, adopting solutions that increase their competitiveness, accordingly.</p> <p><i>Overall, the projects cannot be limited to studies or exchange of experience which only aim to produce or to exchange information and knowledge without concrete applications. The projects must have visible results or a measurable effect on the socioeconomic sector, on public policies, in certain activities, institutions and management or cooperating methods. The achievements and effects of the projects must be sustainable in order not to be limited to the period of provision of the European funding. The main aim is to promote synergies and to avoid the multiplication of isolated initiatives.</i></p> <p>Type of actions and expected contribution to the Specific Objective 1.2: <i>The following list of actions is only an indicative list and can be completed with other relevant actions contributing to the specific objective's goals</i></p> <p>✓ Joint entrepreneurial activities;</p>	

² Target values may be qualitative or quantitative.

- ✓ Development and expansion of cluster activities;
- ✓ Joint framework development for joint business clusters both, in traditional and new products/services coupled with joint certification schemes' development;
- ✓ Advance existing knowledge on innovation processes e.g. by identifying patterns, exploring management structures, identification and analysis of good practices, mapping existing tools, analysing the transfer potential, etc.;
- ✓ Joint analyses at policy level of the barriers and opportunities/enabling factors for business adjustment and growth;
- ✓ Actions for raising awareness, transferring knowledge and creating common understanding about business model innovation in the Balkan-Mediterranean area;
- ✓ Development of joint mechanisms on how to adjust the knowledge to individual companies (or pilot existing tools and mechanisms taking into consideration the area's peculiarities & evaluate short-mid-term impact).
- ✓ Projects that make knowledge easily accessible in order to examine and change their business models, through the use of flexible and smart mechanisms created by the partnership, to achieve higher levels of performance and competitiveness, such as clusters, SME associations etc.

Beneficiaries (*non-exhaustive list*)

- ❖ Umbrella organisations of SMEs
- ❖ Development and planning agencies
- ❖ Local, regional and national authorities involved in business' management
- ❖ Technology transfer centres
- ❖ Innovation support networks
- ❖ Non-governmental and Civil Society organisations

Targeted territory

The whole Balkan – Mediterranean territory

2.A.6.2. Guiding principles for the selection of operations

(Reference: point (b)(iii) of Article 8(2) of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013)

Investment Priority	Investment priority 3(d)
	Supporting the capacity of SMEs to grow in regional, national and international markets, and to engage in innovation processes

The selection of project proposals will be carried out according to the requirements of Article 12 of the Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013 on the European Territorial Cooperation goal,

following a standardized assessment procedure.

The following guiding principles will be observed when selecting project applications:

Strategic coherence: coherence and contribution of each project application to the relevant Programme’s specific objective, while addressing in a coherent way the achievement of the Programme’s specific results envisaged. Furthermore, the transnational added value of the operation, its territorial dimension and the relevance of the partnership will also be assessed in this context. The Programme will support projects with a clear focus on the implementation of joint transnational actions, which demonstrate the value added of the transnational approach and go far beyond regional, national, interregional or cross-border approaches.

Operational quality: design of the project application in relation to clarity and coherence of the operational objectives, activities and means, feasibility, efficiency, communication of the project and its specific results, potential for uptake and embedment into operative procedures of the partners involved. The output and result-oriented approach that places much emphasis on the development of concrete, relevant and visible outputs and results will be a must.

Compliance to horizontal principles: coherence and contribution of each project application to the Programme’s horizontal principles and the demonstration of their integration and advancement within the project proposal intervention logic.

The detailed assessment criteria will be adopted by the Monitoring Committee and will be made available to potential applicants in the calls for proposals’ documentation, which will be prepared and disseminated by the Managing Authority and the Joint Secretariat. Applications for funding shall be then submitted by Lead Applicants following calls for proposals that will be organised and launched upon subsequent decision of the Monitoring Committee.

The “Programme Manual”, an information guide on the programme objectives together with a full application package displaying, among other, the selection criteria, shall be set up by the Joint Secretariat and approved by the Monitoring Committee before the first call for proposals.

2.A.6.3. Planned use of financial instruments (where appropriate)

(Reference: point (b)(iii) of Article 8(2) of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013)

Investment Priority	Investment priority 3(d) Supporting the capacity of SMEs to grow in regional, national and international markets, and to engage in innovation processes
Planned use of financial instruments	
<i>Not applicable</i>	

2.A.6.4. Planned use of major projects (where appropriate)

(Reference: point (b)(iii) of Article 8(2) of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013)

Investment	Investment priority 3(d)
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Priority	Supporting the capacity of SMEs to grow in regional, national and international markets, and to engage in innovation processes
<i>Not applicable</i>	

2.A.6.5. Output indicators (by investment priority)

(Reference: point (b)(iv) of Article 8(2) of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013)

Table 4: Common and programme specific output indicators

ID	Indicator	Measurement unit	Target value (2023)	Source of data	Frequency of reporting
IP 3.d SO 1.2	Joint entrepreneurial activities, networks, clusters and strategic business partnerships	Number	20	Project progress reports	annually
	SMEs engaged into internalisation activities	Number	7	Project progress reports	annually

2.A.4.1 Investment priority 10 Additional

(Reference: point (b)(i) of Article 8(2) of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013)

Investment Priority	Investment priority 10 – Additional Developing and implementing joint education and training systems
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2.A.5. Specific objectives corresponding to the investment priority and expected results

(Reference: point (b)(i) and (ii) of Article 8(2) of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013)

ID	Specific Objective (SO) 1.3
Specific Objective	SO 1.3: Support entrepreneurial learning and knowledge transfer for more competitive SMEs
The result that Member States seek to achieve with Union support	The Balkan-Mediterranean area is characterised by high unemployment rates, exacerbated by the crisis in certain regions, while long term and youth unemployment are far above the EU average. According to the “Entrepreneurship 2020 Action Plan” of the EU, “investing in entrepreneurship education is one of the highest return investments Europe can make”. Consequently vocational education and

	<p>training is needed to allow business' capacity adjustment and prepare new generations to the new labour market needs.</p> <p>Special attention will be granted to entrepreneurs who are running their own businesses with new technologies, education, training and competitive methods of developing and running their businesses. Cooperation among SMSs and education institutions will be enhanced, trainings will be provided, and sharing of experiences and know-how, and introduction of new methodologies to have sustainable businesses will be encouraged also. Investment in human capital will bring forging of partnerships and networks among young entrepreneurs across the programme area. This will increase number of entrepreneurs engaging in businesses being qualitative and sustainable. These efforts will also increase employment in the programme area and also reduce brain drain.</p> <p>Bearing also in mind that the Balkan – Mediterranean society involves poor and disadvantaged groups, the ones living in rural or remote areas, support actions to encourage social entrepreneurship, start-up businesses and coordination between public education institutions, employment offices, NGOs and Civil Society organisations will be promoted to provide opportunities to outreach young people and create skills for them to start-up businesses. Local governments and central governments will be encouraged to participate in order to establish a policy level tool/mechanism for long-term entrepreneurial support. Sharing of best practices will be promoted. Youth exchange programmes will be encouraged, university, centres, organisations, public and local institutions relevant to the field of action will be promoted in this direction within the programme area.</p> <p>Piloting and mentoring will be other types of intervention that will also be promoted.</p> <p>Expected results will be to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Establish efficient links between business and vocational training; ✓ Build the necessary skills that will enable SMEs to benefit from knowledge and technology transfer and become more competitive; ✓ Develop joint mechanisms that will allow exchange and transfer of knowledge between regions and countries in the Balkan-Mediterranean space. ✓ Reduce the brain – drain phenomena. <p>The results sought will directly contribute to the establishment of favourable and competitive business environment as a prerequisite for sustainable development. The main result of the SO is to provide the necessary education and training that will improve SMEs competitiveness and contribute to the national, transnational and EU GDP and create new and better jobs.</p> <p>The results will build on existing potential of the region in terms of entrepreneurship potential and will capitalise on the opportunities</p>
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	offered by existing and planned initiatives (that link research and innovation with the business sector.
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Table 3: Programme specific result indicators (by specific objective)

(Reference: point (b)(ii) of Article 8(2) of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013)

ID	Indicator	Measurement unit	Baseline value	Baseline year	Target value (2023) ³	Source of data	Frequency of reporting
IP 10 SO 1.3	Entrepreneurs' business capacity increased through trainings, knowledge sharing practices and technology transfer schemes	%	0%	2014	10%	Projects progress reports	2018, 2023

2.A.6. Actions to be supported under the Investment Priority

2.A.6.1. Description of the type and examples of actions to be supported and their expected contribution to the specific objectives, including, where appropriate, identification of the main target groups, specific territories targeted and types of beneficiaries

(Reference: point (b)(iii) of Article 8(2) of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013)

Investment Priority	Investment priority 10 – Additional
	Developing and implementing joint education and training systems
<p>Actions supported under this SO will enable SMEs to acquire the necessary skills/tools to boost their competitiveness, grow towards other markets and introduce innovation in all phases of their business cycle.</p> <p><i>Overall, the projects cannot be limited to studies or exchange of experience which only aim to produce or to exchange information and knowledge without concrete applications. The projects must have visible results or a measurable effect on the socioeconomic sector, on public policies, in certain activities, institutions and management or cooperating methods. The achievements and effects of the projects must be sustainable in order not to be limited to the period of provision of the European funding. The main aim is to promote synergies and to avoid the multiplication of isolated initiatives.</i></p> <p>Type of actions and expected contribution to the Specific Objective 1.3:</p>	

³ Target values may be qualitative or quantitative.

The following list of actions is only an indicative list and can be completed with other relevant actions contributing to the specific objective's goals

- ✓ Joint organisation of vocational training schemes that build capacities of entrepreneurs, social entrepreneurs and potential entrepreneurs, including the unemployed and other disadvantaged groups to transfer technology and knowledge;
- ✓ Support of strategic partnerships' establishment between education/training centres in order to develop joint programmes tailored to the SMEs' needs;
- ✓ Development of joint training curricula that focus on technology and knowledge transfer;
- ✓ Establishing long-term regional and transnational networks to exchange experiences with regards to education and training, vocational training and developing education and training programmes linking to labour needs and demands;
- ✓ Exploring new innovative education and training methods (e-learning and setting up e-learning programmes, lifelong learning, use of ICT) through R&D
- ✓ Creating strategic partnerships and networks in the programme area, capitalising on the identified competences and competitive advantages of the participating countries and strengthening the cooperation with existing relevant EU stakeholders and network creating complementarities and synergies;
- ✓ Encouraging the setting up or upgrading of social enterprises in less developed regions, urban, rural and remote areas with training and know-how support;
- ✓ Support training targeted in start-up businesses;
- ✓ Establish regional and national entrepreneurs networks to promote entrepreneurship and sharing best models;
- ✓ Promoting joint efforts among educational institutions and business community representatives in the programme area (including transfer of best practice and know how) to improve the quality of education (in particular vocational training) to better fit to the required skills of the labour market;
- ✓ Setting up a regional network of mentors (successful companies willing to participate in the development of newly established or young businesses from the region and developing training programmes)

Beneficiaries (*non-exhaustive list*)

- ❖ Vocational education and training institutes/centres
- ❖ Umbrella organisations of SMEs
- ❖ Development and planning agencies
- ❖ Local, regional and national authorities involved in business' management
- ❖ Technology transfer centres
- ❖ Innovation support networks
- ❖ Non-governmental and Civil Society organisations

Targeted territory

The whole Balkan – Mediterranean territory

2.A.6.2. Guiding principles for the selection of operations

(Reference: point (b)(iii) of Article 8(2) of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013)

Investment Priority	Investment priority 10 – Additional Developing and implementing joint education and training systems
<p>The selection of project proposals will be carried out according to the requirements of Article 12 of the Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013 on the European Territorial Cooperation goal, following a standardized assessment procedure.</p> <p>The following guiding principles will be observed when selecting project applications:</p> <p>Strategic coherence: coherence and contribution of each project application to the relevant Programme’s specific objective, while addressing in a coherent way the achievement of the Programme’s specific results envisaged. Furthermore, the transnational added value of the operation, its territorial dimension and the relevance of the partnership will also be assessed in this context. The Programme will support projects with a clear focus on the implementation of joint transnational actions, which demonstrate the value added of the transnational approach and go far beyond regional, national, interregional or cross-border approaches.</p> <p>Operational quality: design of the project application in relation to clarity and coherence of the operational objectives, activities and means, feasibility, efficiency, communication of the project and its specific results, potential for uptake and embedment into operative procedures of the partners involved. The output and result-oriented approach that places much emphasis on the development of concrete, relevant and visible outputs and results will be a must.</p> <p>Compliance to horizontal principles: coherence and contribution of each project application to the Programme’s horizontal principles and the demonstration of their integration and advancement within the project proposal intervention logic.</p> <p>The detailed assessment criteria will be adopted by the Monitoring Committee and will be made available to potential applicants in the calls for proposals’ documentation, which will be prepared and disseminated by the Managing Authority and the Joint Secretariat. Applications for funding shall be ten submitted by Lead Applicants following calls for proposals that will be organised and launched upon subsequent decision of the Monitoring Committee.</p> <p>The “Programme Manual”, an information guide on the programme objectives together with a full application package displaying, among other, the selection criteria, shall be set up by the Joint Secretariat and approved by the Monitoring Committee before the first call for proposals.</p>	

2.A.6.3. Planned use of financial instruments (where appropriate)

(Reference: point (b)(iii) of Article 8(2) of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013)

Investment Priority	Investment priority 10 – Additional Developing and implementing joint education and training systems
Planned use of financial instruments	

Not applicable

2.A.6.4. Planned use of major projects (where appropriate)

(Reference: point (b)(iii) of Article 8(2) of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013)

Investment Priority	Investment priority 10 – Additional Developing and implementing joint education and training systems
Not applicable	

2.A.6.5. Output indicators (by investment priority)

(Reference: point (b)(iv) of Article 8(2) of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013)

Table 4: Common and programme specific output indicators

ID	Indicator	Measurement unit	Target value (2023)	Source of data	Frequency of reporting
IP 10	Training schemes that link education and businesses	Number	10	Project progress reports	annually
SO 1.3	Entrepreneurs / SMEs engaged in training and knowledge transfer schemes	Number	50	Project progress reports	annually

2.1.2 Priority Axis 2: Environment

ID of the priority axis	2
Title of the priority axis	Environment

<input type="checkbox"/> The entire priority axis will be implemented solely through financial instruments	
<input type="checkbox"/> The entire priority axis will be implemented solely through financial instruments set up at Union level	
<input type="checkbox"/> The entire priority axis will be implemented through community-led local development	

2.A.2. Justification for the establishment of a priority axis covering more than one thematic objective

(Reference: Article 8(1) of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013)

During the public consultation process environment related issues emerged as the main challenge to address over the new programming period ahead. More than 70% consider the deterioration of the environment in the programme area as a major common threat, while over 60% perceive the natural resources' inefficient use as one of the main problems to tackle. Accordingly the programme's Priority Axis 2 is articulated around two Investment Priorities of Thematic Objective 6. By doing so the Balkan – Mediterranean 2014 – 2020 transnational cooperation programme is aligned with the EU environment action programme to 2020 and his own first priority ("Priority objective 1")aiming to protect, conserve and enhance natural capital.

The programme area includes landscape and natural capital of high biodiversity potential, yet under constant human pressure. Ecosystems restoration and green infrastructure development have important socio-economic benefits including for public health. Management & monitoring of designated areas can generate sustainable growth and sustainable employment, while studying, mapping, zoning and restoring degraded areas enhance both, scientific knowledge and the ecosystems' quality. At the same time it helps to resolve conflicts over land use and set the basis for ownership on shared sustainable growth goals. As the Natura 2000 network is behind schedule in the EU member states, IPA participating countries can benefit from both, good and bad conservation attempts experienced by participating EU member states. Furthermore, natural and cultural areas contribute to the region's attractiveness; an "ecosystem based" management approach can deliver improved growth patterns. In this respect, public information, awareness and education on environment policy have important socio-economic benefits and can stimulate competitiveness. According to Eurostat, the employment in environmental sectors in the EU is steadily growing around 3% annually over recent years.

A sustainable bioeconomy can also contribute to intelligent and green growth provided that

skills are developed accordingly. Developing training programmes geared to green jobs is clearly recommended in the EU Environment Action Programme to 2020 (PE-CONS 64/1/13, p. 38). Learn how to monitor environmental targets and developing common management techniques & approaches is important in order to reinforce peer review and best practice sharing (and even agreements on joint inspections) in all Balkan – Mediterranean participating countries.

Implementing EU standards requires skills aligned with the latest scientific knowledge. Therefore the Priority Axis 2 foresees to bridge the gap between available skills in the programme area and EU legislation enforcement by implementing the missing training facilities. The TO 6 is therefore combined to the TO 11 in order to improve environmental governance delivery and ensure a maximum impact of the overall investment.

The sole thematic intervention on the environment may secure the short term. While knowledge tools and training capacity improves delivery on legislation and governance. Furthermore, public awareness and education provide knowledge on how national and local administrations will give effect to the EU regulatory commitments. Consequently, Priority Axis 2 also proceeds with a holistic and integrated approach to secure sustainable results and maximise the investment impact.

2.A.3. Fund and calculation basis for Union support

Fund	Union funds (ERDF and IPA)
<i>Calculation basis (total eligible expenditure or eligible public expenditure)</i>	Total eligible expenditure

2.A.4.1 Investment priority 6c

(Reference: point (b)(i) of Article 8(2) of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013)

Investment Priority	Investment priority 6(c) Conserving, protecting, promoting and developing natural and cultural heritage
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2.A.5. Specific objectives corresponding to the investment priority and expected results

(Reference: point (b)(i) and (ii) of Article 8(2) of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013)

ID	Specific Objective (SO) 2.1
Specific Objective	SO 2.1: Maintain biodiversity and natural ecosystems by strengthening networking and management of protected areas, including Natura 2000
The result that Member States seek to achieve with	The Programme area includes sites of high biodiversity, natural and cultural sites. Among them, 32 are registered in the World Heritage Lists and constitute an important basis to boost green growth potential

<p>Union support</p>	<p>while increasing attractiveness of the region. Designated areas and the ones of the Natura 2000 network will be particularly targeted. Regions, and in particular coastal areas, are facing demographic, economic and urban pressure and are subject to a variety of pressures and usage conflicts (e.g. from industry, agriculture, climate change, transport as well as mismanaged tourism flows). Consequently, one of the main challenges ahead is to promote sustainable development practices and policies.</p> <p>An ecosystem basis approach is necessary to improve cultural and natural heritage management. Upgrading heritage management techniques will streamline coordination policies and maximize sustainable growth perspectives. The development of activities respectful of natural and cultural resources shall also take into account environmental changes that have direct interconnections with economic development and urbanisation and direct impact on natural and cultural heritage. The objective is to ensure that development of economic activities will be pursued with stronger attention paid to environmental changes and to the impact of these activities on natural and cultural heritage. Encouragement of partnerships and networking among relevant actors/stakeholders will also be supported, enabling a wide variety of actors to be involved in biodiversity protection and conservation activities, for both designated and non-designated areas. The specific aim is for people to be involved in ecosystems restoration and green infrastructure development, since wide participation creates common ownership of the areas targeted.</p> <p>Expected results will be to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Enhance the level of sustainable use of natural and cultural heritage. The main change sought is an improvement of strategies, development plans, policies and planning tools together with a better cooperation between stakeholders for a more efficient valorisation of natural resources and cultural heritage. ✓ Protect, conserve and enhance natural capital, and at the same time contribute to the environment action programme to 2020 of the EU. ✓ Improved growth patterns on resources' use and efficiency, generated by the ecosystem approach implemented to halt biodiversity losses. ✓ Ecosystems restoration and green infrastructure development have important socio-economic benefits including for public health. ✓ Management & monitoring of designated areas generates sustainable growth and sustainable employment. ✓ Contribute to implement the Natura 2000 network and respective legislation, as it is behind schedule in all
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	<p>participating EU member states.</p> <p>✓ Participating IPA countries can benefit from both, good and bad conservation attempts experienced by participating EU member states.</p>
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Table 3: Programme specific result indicators (by specific objective)

(Reference: point (b)(ii) of Article 8(2) of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013)

ID	Indicator	Measurement unit	Baseline value	Baseline year	Target value (2023) ⁴	Source of data	Frequency of reporting
IP 6.c SO 2.1	Level of sustainable use of natural and cultural heritage	Rating on a scale from 1 - 10	Established through survey	2014	To be established after baseline survey : increasing sustainability	Survey among selected key actors	2018, 2023

2.A.6. Actions to be supported under the Investment Priority

2.A.6.1. Description of the type and examples of actions to be supported and their expected contribution to the specific objectives, including, where appropriate, identification of the main target groups, specific territories targeted and types of beneficiaries

(Reference: point (b)(iii) of Article 8(2) of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013)

Investment Priority	Investment priority 6(c)
	Conserving, protecting, promoting and developing natural and cultural heritage
<p>The actions that are foreseen to be supported under this specific objective will strengthen the capacities of relevant actors for an ecosystem basis development approach promoting efficient use and valorization of the natural resources and cultural heritage. The main emphasis will be on the policies, strategies, plans, management, coordination and planning tools that ensure environmental pressure decrease and avoid future conflicts. The development of common tools and shared management policies will be particularly pursued for natural and cultural heritage areas affected either by local pressures either by climate change.</p> <p><i>Overall, the projects cannot be limited to studies or exchange of experience which only aim to produce or to exchange information and knowledge without concrete applications. The projects must have visible results or a measurable effect on the socioeconomic sector, on public policies, in certain activities, institutions and management or cooperating methods. The achievements and effects of the projects must be sustainable in order not to be limited to the</i></p>	

⁴ Target values may be qualitative or quantitative.

period of provision of the European funding. The main aim is to **promote synergies** and to **avoid the multiplication of isolated initiatives**.

Type of actions and expected contribution to the Specific Objective 2.1:

The following list of actions is only an indicative list and can be completed with other relevant actions contributing to the specific objective's goals

- ✓ Development of joint strategies and policies promoting, testing and implementing concrete applications, pilot projects and practices for sustainable sites' management, for the EU environmental targets' monitoring and implementation of the corresponding EU legislation, as well as for integrated planning policies in both, land and sea;
- ✓ Development of transnational action plans and transfer of concepts models for the protection, promotion and development of natural and cultural heritage sites, of designated areas and the Natura 2000 areas in particular;
- ✓ Establishment of transnational cooperation networks for knowledge and technology transfer on biodiversity and nature conservation issues:
 - Network of professionals working in environmental legislation enforcement including lawyers, inspectors, prosecutors, judges encouraging best and bad practices' share.
 - Implementing and animating sustainable cooperation systems between the authorities in charge of the management and the update of strategies and solutions;
 - Cooperation of public and private institutions in the fields of competence and capacity building;
 - Partnerships and networks of all relevant actors: public institutions, business support organisations, civil society organisations, NGOs, etc.
- ✓ Awareness raising campaigns coupled with pilot application projects, aiming to enhance public information, awareness and education on environment policy;
- ✓ Joint regional branding strategy to increase visibility and market uptake;
- ✓ Develop environmental friendly behaviours that can also lead to resolve conflicts on land use issues;
- ✓ Promotion of scientific knowledge (studies, maps, reports, surveys, etc.) coupled with practical application test of management techniques in order to achieve joint action and management plans over biodiversity and nature protection;
- ✓ Developing transnational tourist offers and packages linked to the natural and cultural heritage where also alternative types of tourism can be developed;
- ✓ Promotion of a sustainable cultural-tourism approach towards Balkan-Mediterranean cultural and natural heritage linked to corresponding monuments;
- ✓ Transferring systems for the labelling and funding of green and fair products respecting and promoting the programme area cultural and natural heritage;
- ✓ Transnational cooperation activities in the fields of multiculturalism, cultural exchange and the establishment of connections in the field of creative industries in order to increase cultural diversity;

Beneficiaries (*non-exhaustive list*)

- ❖ Local, regional and national authorities
- ❖ Environmental and development agencies
- ❖ Protected areas management organisations and bodies
- ❖ Non-governmental and Civil Society organisations

Targeted territory

Areas of high natural or cultural value, designated areas, Natura 2000 sites, areas that face significant threats/pressures and/or usage conflicts.

2.A.6.2. Guiding principles for the selection of operations

(Reference: point (b)(iii) of Article 8(2) of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013)

Investment Priority	Investment priority 6(c)
	Conserving, protecting, promoting and developing natural and cultural heritage
<p>The selection of project proposals will be carried out according to the requirements of Article 12 of the Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013 on the European Territorial Cooperation goal, following a standardized assessment procedure.</p> <p>The following guiding principles will be observed when selecting project applications:</p> <p>Strategic coherence: coherence and contribution of each project application to the relevant Programme’s specific objective, while addressing in a coherent way the achievement of the Programme’s specific results envisaged. Furthermore, the transnational added value of the operation, its territorial dimension and the relevance of the partnership will also be assessed in this context. The Programme will support projects with a clear focus on the implementation of joint transnational actions, which demonstrate the value added of the transnational approach and go far beyond regional, national, interregional or cross-border approaches.</p> <p>Operational quality: design of the project application in relation to clarity and coherence of the operational objectives, activities and means, feasibility, efficiency, communication of the project and its specific results, potential for uptake and embedment into operative procedures of the partners involved. The output and result-oriented approach that places much emphasis on the development of concrete, relevant and visible outputs and results will be a must.</p> <p>Compliance to horizontal principles: coherence and contribution of each project application to the Programme’s horizontal principles and the demonstration of their integration and advancement within the project proposal intervention logic.</p> <p>The detailed assessment criteria will be adopted by the Monitoring Committee and will be made available to potential applicants in the calls for proposals’ documentation, which will be prepared and disseminated by the Managing Authority and the Joint Secretariat. Applications</p>	

for funding shall be ten submitted by Lead Applicants following calls for proposals that will be organised and launched upon subsequent decision of the Monitoring Committee.

The “Programme Manual”, an information guide on the programme objectives together with a full application package displaying, among other, the selection criteria, shall be set up by the Joint Secretariat and approved by the Monitoring Committee before the first call for proposals.

2.A.6.3. Planned use of financial instruments (where appropriate)

(Reference: point (b)(iii) of Article 8(2) of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013)

Investment Priority	Investment priority 6(c) Conserving, protecting, promoting and developing natural and cultural heritage
Planned use of financial instruments	
Not applicable	

2.A.6.4. Planned use of major projects (where appropriate)

(Reference: point (b)(iii) of Article 8(2) of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013)

Investment Priority	Investment priority 6(c) Conserving, protecting, promoting and developing natural and cultural heritage
Not applicable	

2.A.6.5. Output indicators (by investment priority)

(Reference: point (b)(iv) of Article 8(2) of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013)

Table 4: Common and programme specific output indicators

ID	Indicator	Measurement unit	Target value (2023)	Source of data	Frequency of reporting
IP 6.c	Strategies/policies/plans/models and tools jointly developed and tested	Number	10	Project reports	annually
SO 2.1	Designated areas addressed (of which Natura 2000 sites)	Number	15(7)	Project reports	annually

Networks of transnational cooperation established for natural & cultural conservation	Number	8	Project reports	annually
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2.A.4. Investment priority 6f

(Reference: point (b)(i) of Article 8(2) of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013)

Investment Priority	Investment priority 6(f) Promoting innovative technologies to improve environmental protection and resource efficiency in the waste sector, water sector and with regard to soil, or to reduce air pollution
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2.A.5. Specific objectives corresponding to the investment priority and expected results

(Reference: point (b)(i) and (ii) of Article 8(2) of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013)

ID	Specific Objective (SO) 2.2
Specific Objective	SO 2.2: Promote cooperation and networking aiming to introduce innovative technologies for efficient management of the waste sector, the soil and the water sector including adaptation to the Water Framework Directive (EC/60/2000)
The result that Member States seek to achieve with Union support	Resource efficiency is a prominent topic in the current EU strategies (EU2020, Waste Directive, Water Framework Directive, etc.). EU environmental norms are sparsely implemented or not implemented at all, if subsequent regulatory framework simply missing. Water and waste quality issues together with degraded areas' rehabilitation / regeneration are of key importance to meet EU corresponding standards. The integrated approach for sustainable growth can mitigate the land – sea environmental pressures suffered throughout coastlines of the programme areas. Coastal zones' management coupled with accessibility can provide a promising testing bed for transnational cooperation potential in order to alleviate joint pressure from overall marine and maritime activities both, in land and sea. The programme area holds significant potential for efficient and sustainable use of natural resources and for innovation and research activities in particular to enhance, implement and disseminate technological innovation in the fields of resource efficiency management, such as waste sector, the water sector and the soil and air pollution as well as energy efficiency. Fostering implementation of the sectorial legislation, such as Water Framework Directive & the Birds and Habitats directives, increasing the level of implementation of innovative technologies in the area, share best practices and transfer of knowledge for innovative management of environment and development of joint strategies for resource efficiency will be supported by implementing this investment priority.

	<p>Transnational cooperation contributes to more efficient and better coordinated innovation activities, both in terms of research and implementation and also contributes to environmental awareness raising among political stakeholders and the general public by establishing knowledge platforms, capacity-building for local and regional administration and promoting best practice.</p> <p>Accordingly, the main result pursued by this Specific Objective is to increase the level of use of innovative technologies regarding resource efficiency management.</p>
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Table 3: Programme specific result indicators (by specific objective)

(Reference: point (b)(ii) of Article 8(2) of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013)

ID	Indicator	Measurement unit	Baseline value	Baseline year	Target value (2023) ⁵	Source of data	Frequency of reporting
IP 6.f SO 2.2	Efficient resources' management increased (scale to be established)	Rating on a scale from 1 - 10	Established through survey	2014	To be established after baseline survey : increasing sustainability	Survey among selected key actors	2018, 2023

2.A.6. Actions to be supported under the Investment Priority

2.A.6.1. Description of the type and examples of actions to be supported and their expected contribution to the specific objectives, including, where appropriate, identification of the main target groups, specific territories targeted and types of beneficiaries

(Reference: point (b)(iii) of Article 8(2) of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013)

Investment Priority	Investment priority 6(f)
	Promoting innovative technologies to improve environmental protection and resource efficiency in the waste sector, water sector and with regard to soil, or to reduce air pollution
<p>The actions that are foreseen to be supported under this specific objective will promote technology transfer and applications' tests to enhance resources' management efficiency.</p> <p><i>Overall, the projects cannot be limited to studies or exchange of experience which only aim to produce or to exchange information and knowledge without concrete applications. The projects must have visible results or a measurable effect on the socioeconomic sector, on public policies, in certain activities, institutions and management or cooperating methods. The achievements and effects of the projects must be sustainable in order not to be limited to the period of provision of the European funding. The main aim is to promote synergies and to</i></p>	

⁵ Target values may be qualitative or quantitative.

avoid the multiplication of isolated initiatives.

Type of actions and expected contribution to the Specific Objective 2.2:

The following list of actions is only an indicative list and can be completed with other relevant actions contributing to the specific objective's goals

- ✓ Development of integrated strategies and tools to reduce the use of resources, enhancing their efficiency and decoupling economic growth from resources consumption;
- ✓ Development of regional and inter-sectoral resource management plans to promote resource efficiency, innovative environmental management and green growth;
- ✓ Preparation of joint researches, studies, action plans and concrete management activities to promote innovative technologies in the field of resource efficiency;
- ✓ Shared actions' development for integrated marine and coastal management concerning resource efficiency providing also employment opportunities;
- ✓ Implementation of innovative pilot and demonstration projects in the field of energy efficiency, renewable energy, material life cycle, soil protection, air pollution, pollution of groundwater, considering also alternative and environment-friendly technologies.
- ✓ Joint pilot projects for promotion of innovative technologies to improve environmental protection and resource efficiency in the waste sector and water sector, including purification methods;
- ✓ Cooperation schemes and exchange of experience regarding the harmonization of environmental management concepts and tools at transnational level;
- ✓ Cooperation schemes and exchange of experience regarding the implementation of the sectorial legislation, such as Water Framework Directive;

Beneficiaries (non-exhaustive list)

- ❖ Local, regional and national authorities
- ❖ Environmental and development agencies
- ❖ Non-governmental and Civil Society organisations

Targeted territory

The whole Balkan – Mediterranean territory

2.A.6.2. Guiding principles for the selection of operations

(Reference: point (b)(iii) of Article 8(2) of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013)

Investment Priority	Investment priority 6(f) Promoting innovative technologies to improve environmental protection and resource efficiency in the waste sector, water sector and with regard to soil, or to reduce air pollution
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The selection of project proposals will be carried out according to the requirements of Article 12 of the Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013 on the European Territorial Cooperation goal,

following a standardized assessment procedure.

The following guiding principles will be observed when selecting project applications:

Strategic coherence: coherence and contribution of each project application to the relevant Programme’s specific objective, while addressing in a coherent way the achievement of the Programme’s specific results envisaged. Furthermore, the transnational added value of the operation, its territorial dimension and the relevance of the partnership will also be assessed in this context. The Programme will support projects with a clear focus on the implementation of joint transnational actions, which demonstrate the value added of the transnational approach and go far beyond regional, national, interregional or cross-border approaches.

Operational quality: design of the project application in relation to clarity and coherence of the operational objectives, activities and means, feasibility, efficiency, communication of the project and its specific results, potential for uptake and embedment into operative procedures of the partners involved. The output and result-oriented approach that places much emphasis on the development of concrete, relevant and visible outputs and results will be a must.

Compliance to horizontal principles: coherence and contribution of each project application to the Programme’s horizontal principles and the demonstration of their integration and advancement within the project proposal intervention logic.

The detailed assessment criteria will be adopted by the Monitoring Committee and will be made available to potential applicants in the calls for proposals’ documentation, which will be prepared and disseminated by the Managing Authority and the Joint Secretariat. Applications for funding shall be then submitted by Lead Applicants following calls for proposals that will be organised and launched upon subsequent decision of the Monitoring Committee.

The “Programme Manual”, an information guide on the programme objectives together with a full application package displaying, among other, the selection criteria, shall be set up by the Joint Secretariat and approved by the Monitoring Committee before the first call for proposals.

2.A.6.3. Planned use of financial instruments (where appropriate)

(Reference: point (b)(iii) of Article 8(2) of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013)

Investment Priority	Investment priority 6(f) Promoting innovative technologies to improve environmental protection and resource efficiency in the waste sector, water sector and with regard to soil, or to reduce air pollution
Planned use of financial instruments	
<i>Not applicable</i>	

2.A.6.4. Planned use of major projects (where appropriate)

(Reference: point (b)(iii) of Article 8(2) of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013)

Investment Priority	Investment priority 6(f) Promoting innovative technologies to improve environmental protection and resource efficiency in the waste sector, water sector and with regard to soil, or to reduce air pollution
Not applicable	

2.A.6.5. Output indicators (by investment priority)

(Reference: point (b)(iv) of Article 8(2) of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013)

Table 4: Common and programme specific output indicators

ID	Indicator	Measurement unit	Target value (2023)	Source of data	Frequency of reporting
IP 6.f	Strategies/policies/plans/models and tools jointly developed and tested	Number	8	Project reports	annually
SO 2.2	Technologies' implementation related to the water efficient management	Number	5	Project reports	annually
	Networks of transnational cooperation established to improve resource management efficiency	Number	3	Project reports	annually

2.A.4. Investment priority 11

(Reference: point (b)(i) of Article 8(2) of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013)

Investment Priority	Investment priority 11 Enhancing institutional capacity of public authorities and stakeholders and efficient public administration through actions to strengthen the institutional capacity and the efficiency of public administrations and public services related to the implementation of the ERDF, and in support of actions under the ESF to strengthen the institutional capacity and the efficiency of public administration
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2.A.5. Specific objectives corresponding to the investment priority and expected results

(Reference: point (b)(i) and (ii) of Article 8(2) of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013)

ID	Specific Objective (SO) 2.3
Specific Objective	SO 2.3: Develop skills for better environmental management and increase governance capacities
The result that Member States seek to achieve with Union support	<p>The inefficient use of resources, the unsustainable pressure on the environment, and climate change, pose challenges to long-term economic growth.</p> <p>The EU green growth model outlines a structural economic change which is mainly driven by scarcity of resources, technological change and innovation, new markets, and changes in industrial and consumer demand patterns. The Europe 2020 Strategy identifies the transition towards a green, low carbon, energy and resource-efficient economy as essential to achieve smart, sustainable and inclusive growth. A gradual shift towards an energy and resource-efficient circular economy will increase competitiveness and boost economic growth, while creating more and better jobs. Saving, re-using and recycling materials will support the future competitiveness of successful companies. The transition will bring about fundamental transformations across the entire economy and across a wide range of sectors.</p> <p>The public sector in particular is necessary to better anticipate and manage adjustments and challenges towards transition to a greener economy. Dealing with sustainable resources' management and monitoring EU environmental targets require skills aligned with the latest scientific knowledge. Learn how to monitor EU environmental targets and developing common management techniques is important in order to reinforce peer review and best practice sharing.</p> <p>Transnational cooperation can offer a suitable exchange and knowledge platform for training and capacity building of public authorities and stakeholders to strengthen the institutional capacity and improve delivery on legislation and governance. Furthermore, public awareness and education provide knowledge on how national and local administrations will give effect to the EU regulatory commitments.</p> <p>Accordingly, the main result pursued by this Specific Objective is to increase the governance capacity and corresponding delivery regarding environmental legislation.</p>

Table 3: Programme specific result indicators (by specific objective)

(Reference: point (b)(ii) of Article 8(2) of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013)

ID	Indicator	Measurement unit	Baseline value	Baseline year	Target value (2023) ⁶	Source of data	Frequency of reporting
IP 11 SO	Increase in compliance with EU	%	0%	2014	5%	Projects reports Program	2018, 2023

⁶ Target values may be qualitative or quantitative.

2.3	specific environmental legislation					me annual report	
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2.A.6. Actions to be supported under the Investment Priority

2.A.6.1. Description of the type and examples of actions to be supported and their expected contribution to the specific objectives, including, where appropriate, identification of the main target groups, specific territories targeted and types of beneficiaries

(Reference: point (b)(iii) of Article 8(2) of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013)

Investment Priority	Investment priority 11 Enhancing institutional capacity of public authorities and stakeholders and efficient public administration through actions to strengthen the institutional capacity and the efficiency of public administrations and public services related to the implementation of the ERDF, and in support of actions under the ESF to strengthen the institutional capacity and the efficiency of public administration
<p>The actions that are foreseen to be supported under this specific objective will strengthen the capacities of the public authorities and stakeholders to improve delivery related to environmental legislation.</p> <p><i>Overall, the projects cannot be limited to studies or exchange of experience which only aim to produce or to exchange information and knowledge without concrete applications. The projects must have visible results or a measurable effect on the socioeconomic sector, on public policies, in certain activities, institutions and management or cooperating methods. The achievements and effects of the projects must be sustainable in order not to be limited to the period of provision of the European funding. The main aim is to promote synergies and to avoid the multiplication of isolated initiatives.</i></p> <p>Type of actions and expected contribution to the Specific Objective 2.3: The following list of actions is only an indicative list and can be completed with other relevant actions contributing to the specific objective's goals</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Setting up education, training and vocational education schemes for raising environmental awareness and enhancing the capacities of relevant stakeholders in the field of environmental protection, monitoring and management. ✓ Establishing long-term regional and transnational networks to exchange experiences with regards to education and training, vocational training and developing education and training programs linking to skills' development for better environmental and resources' management. ✓ Exploring new innovative education and training methods considering cooperation networks among education institutions, centres, Universities, NGOs, research, academics, scholars to explore best practices and pilot tests' applications. ✓ Promoting joint efforts among educational institutions and public/business community representatives in the program area (including transfer of best practice and know how) to improve the quality of education to better fit to skills for better management of 	

environmental resources.

Beneficiaries (*non-exhaustive list*)

- ❖ Local, regional and national authorities
- ❖ Environmental and development agencies
- ❖ Protected areas management organisations and bodies
- ❖ Non-governmental and Civil Society organisations
- ❖ Stakeholders dealing with environmental legislation

Targeted territory

The whole Balkan – Mediterranean territory.

2.A.6.2. Guiding principles for the selection of operations

(Reference: point (b)(iii) of Article 8(2) of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013)

Investment Priority	Investment priority 11 Enhancing institutional capacity of public authorities and stakeholders and efficient public administration through actions to strengthen the institutional capacity and the efficiency of public administrations and public services related to the implementation of the ERDF, and in support of actions under the ESF to strengthen the institutional capacity and the efficiency of public administration
The selection of project proposals will be carried out according to the requirements of Article 12 of the Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013 on the European Territorial Cooperation goal, following a standardized assessment procedure.	
The following guiding principles will be observed when selecting project applications:	
Strategic coherence: coherence and contribution of each project application to the relevant Programme's specific objective, while addressing in a coherent way the achievement of the Programme's specific results envisaged. Furthermore, the transnational added value of the operation, its territorial dimension and the relevance of the partnership will also be assessed in this context. The Programme will support projects with a clear focus on the implementation of joint transnational actions, which demonstrate the value added of the transnational approach and go far beyond regional, national, interregional or cross-border approaches.	
Operational quality: design of the project application in relation to clarity and coherence of the operational objectives, activities and means, feasibility, efficiency, communication of the project and its specific results, potential for uptake and embedment into operative procedures of the partners involved. The output and result-oriented approach that places much emphasis on the development of concrete, relevant and visible outputs and results will be a must.	
Compliance to horizontal principles: coherence and contribution of each project application to	

the Programme’s horizontal principles and the demonstration of their integration and advancement within the project proposal intervention logic.

The detailed assessment criteria will be adopted by the Monitoring Committee and will be made available to potential applicants in the calls for proposals’ documentation, which will be prepared and disseminated by the Managing Authority and the Joint Secretariat. Applications for funding shall be ten submitted by Lead Applicants following calls for proposals that will be organised and launched upon subsequent decision of the Monitoring Committee.

The “Programme Manual”, an information guide on the programme objectives together with a full application package displaying, among other, the selection criteria, shall be set up by the Joint Secretariat and approved by the Monitoring Committee before the first call for proposals.

2.A.6.3. Planned use of financial instruments (where appropriate)

(Reference: point (b)(iii) of Article 8(2) of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013)

Investment Priority	Investment priority 11 Enhancing institutional capacity of public authorities and stakeholders and efficient public administration through actions to strengthen the institutional capacity and the efficiency of public administrations and public services related to the implementation of the ERDF, and in support of actions under the ESF to strengthen the institutional capacity and the efficiency of public administration
Planned use of financial instruments	
<i>Not applicable</i>	

2.A.6.4. Planned use of major projects (where appropriate)

(Reference: point (b)(iii) of Article 8(2) of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013)

Investment Priority	Investment priority 11 Enhancing institutional capacity of public authorities and stakeholders and efficient public administration through actions to strengthen the institutional capacity and the efficiency of public administrations and public services related to the implementation of the ERDF, and in support of actions under the ESF to strengthen the institutional capacity and the efficiency of public administration
<i>Not applicable</i>	

2.A.6.5. Output indicators (by investment priority)

(Reference: point (b)(iv) of Article 8(2) of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013)

Table 4: Common and programme specific output indicators

ID	Indicator	Measurement unit	Target value (2023)	Source of data	Frequency of reporting
IP 11	Trained stakeholders (<i>of which public servants</i>)	Number	100 (70)	Project reports	annually
SO 2.3	Training programmes' implemented	Number	12	Project reports	annually
	Networks of transnational cooperation established between public administrators dealing with environmental legislation enforcement	Number	4	Project reports	annually

2.1.4 Performance framework

(Pending)

Insert table as table 5 of Guidelines. It should include:

- ❖ Indicators must be a sub-set of indicators used for priority axes, possibly at an aggregate level (if the same indicator is used for multiple investment priorities within each axis).
- ❖ Key implementation steps are not part of the general indicator system and financial indicators. They indicate progress in the implementation processes, e.g. preparation of major projects, launch of tendering procedures or specific calls for proposals for key operations, progress in the implementation process, etc.

Priority axis	Indicator type (financial, output, result)	ID	Indicator of key implementation step	Measurement unit	Milestone 2018	Final target (2023)	Source of data	Explanation
1		1.1						
		1.2						
2		2.1						
		2.2						
3		3.1						
		3.2						

2.1.5 Categories of intervention per priority axis

Table 6: Dimension 1 Intervention field		
Priority Axis	Code	€ amount

Table 7: Dimension 2 Form of finance		
Priority Axis	Code	€ amount

Table 8: Dimension 3 Territory type		

Priority Axis	Code	€ amount

Table 9: Dimension 4 Territorial delivery mechanisms		
Priority Axis	Code	€ amount

2.1.6 Summary of planned use of Technical Assistance to support participation per priority axis

Section 2.2 Description of the priority axes for technical assistance

2.2.1 Priority Axis 3: Technical Assistance	
Specific objective 3.1	
Description (of the specific objective):	The Technical Assistance is aimed to implement the cooperation Programme in an efficient way, to support applicants and beneficiaries and to strengthen the involvement of relevant partners in the programme implementation.
Expected results	

Repeat as above chapters 2.1.1.1 to 2.1.1.5 (here numbered as 2.2.1.1 to 2.2.1.5)

2.2.2 Categories of intervention per priority axis

Table x: Dimension 1 Intervention field		
Priority Axis	Code	€ amount

Table x: Dimension 2 Form of finance

Priority Axis	Code	€ amount

Table x: Dimension 3 Territory type		
Priority Axis	Code	€ amount

Table x: Dimension 4 Territorial delivery mechanisms		
Priority Axis	Code	€ amount

SECTION 3. Financing Plan

(Reference: point (d) of Article 8(2) of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013)

3.1 Financial appropriation from the ERDF (in EUR)

(Reference: point (d)(i) of Article 8(2) of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013)

Table 15 Annual breakdown of financial appropriation

Fund	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	Total
ERDF								
IPA amounts								
Total								

3.2.A. Total financial appropriation from the ERDF and national co-financing (in EUR)

(Reference: point (d)(ii) of Article 8(2) of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013)

Table 16: Financing plan

Priority axis	Fund	Basis for calculation of Union support (Total eligible cost or public eligible cost)	Union support (a)	National counterpart (b)=(c)+(d)	Indicative breakdown of the national counterpart		Total funding (e)=(a)+(b)	Co-financing rate (f)=(a)/(e)	For information	
					National public funding (c)	National private funding (d)			Contribution from third countries	EIB contribution
1	ERDF									
	IPA									
2	ERDF									
	IPA									
3	ERDF									
	IPA									
Total										

3.2.B. Financial plan by priority axis and thematic objective

(Reference: point (d)(ii) of Article 8(2) of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013)

Table 17

Priority axis	Thematic objective	Union support	National counterpart	Total funding
1				
2				
3				
Total				

SECTION 4. Integrated Approach to Territorial Development

(Reference: Article 8(3) of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013)

The Balkan – Mediterranean 2014 – 2020 transnational cooperation programme (TNCP) will cover the whole geographical area of the five (5) participating countries with no specific focus in a particular type of territorial status, such as urban, rural or semi-rural areas. All type of areas can be tackled within implementation of the programme selected operations.

Following both, the territorial analysis and the public consultation process the programme will address essential territorial challenges emerging as the foremost and shared concerns across the whole cooperation programme territory. Bearing also in mind the limited financial resources, the programme strongly focuses on two outlined priorities, entrepreneurship & innovation and environment, while a training facility is considered as a horizontal support in order to secure maximum territorial impact of the overall investment.

Taking into consideration the weaknesses of the territorial labour market suffering fragmentation and limited capacity to adapt to the new corporate challenges it is of outmost importance to accompany transnational cooperation partnerships with an appropriate training scheme, provided by the additional investment priorities of Thematic Objectives 10 and 11. A strong leverage effect can then be established between the entrepreneurship and subsequent skills' enforcement, on the one hand, and the environment protection and institutional capacity enhancement, on the other hand.

By implementing this twofold approach targeting both, the thematic content and its capacity building basis, the transnational cooperation partnerships will trigger strong spill-over effects across the whole territorial society, as inactive or unemployed persons will also be given the opportunity to join the transnational cooperation experience. Aforementioned expectations are concretely measured within the “specific objectives” description (see section 2).

4.1. Community led local development

(Reference: point (a) of Article 8(3) of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013)

Not applicable

4.2. Sustainable urban development

(Reference: point (b) of Article 8(3) of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013)

Not applicable

4.3. Integrated Territorial Investment (ITI)

(Reference: point (c) of Article 8(3) of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013)

Not applicable

4.4. Contribution of planned interventions towards macro-regional and sea basin strategies, subject to the needs of the programme area as identified by the relevant Member States and taking into account, where applicable, strategically important projects identified in those strategies (where appropriate)

(Where Member States and regions participate in macro-regional and sea basin strategies)

(Reference: point (d) of Article 8(3) of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013)

As macro-regional strategies represent a new opportunity for comprehensive development of a larger territory, addressing common challenges and potential, they give a clear EU added value.

Macro-regional strategies are also perceived as a **qualitative leap** fostering synergies for better territorial governance.

There are two(2) macro-regional strategies falling partially under the same geographical area with the Balkan – Mediterranean 2014 – 2020 transnational cooperation programme (TNCP):

- ✓ The EU Strategy for the Danube Region (EUSDR) and
- ✓ The EU Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region (EUSAIR).

Consequently, they have to be taken into consideration as they cover several policies, which are targeted at a “macro-region” level.

Analysis of the EU Strategy for the Danube Region (EUSDR)

Out of the five (5) participating countries of the Balkan – Mediterranean 2014 – 2020 transnational cooperation programme (TNCP) only one, Bulgaria participates in the EU Strategy for the Danube Region (EUSDR). Yet, the priorities of programme took into consideration contribution to implementing the EUSDR, within the areas delineated by the EUSDR Action Plan to make the region environmentally sustainable, prosperous, accessible and attractive, as well as safe and secure. The Danube Region Strategy addresses a wide range of issues, distributed among four (4) pillars and eleven (11) priority areas.

Danube River is a key territorial feature as it represents the Northern country border of Bulgaria thus in the EU official documents for Bulgarian national authorities: “*Position of the Commission Services on the development of Partnership Agreement and programmes for the period 2014-2020*”, the Commission has underlined that the EUSDR objectives must be incorporated when defining priority areas for cooperation. The EUSDR focuses on the development of stronger synergic connections between the authorities on all levels aiming the optimization of the impact of both, activities and financing.

The Balkan-Mediterranean 2014 – 2020 transnational cooperation programme (TNCP) has taken into account the European Commission comments and the chosen thematic objectives are in line with the recommendations of the European Commission Position papers.

The programme strives to support the implementation of the EUSDR by contributing to two (2) of its pillars and to seven (7) of its eleven (11) Priority Areas:

Priority Axis 1 of the Balkan-Mediterranean 2014 – 2020 programme contributes to the EUSDR pillar “Building prosperity” and is connected with the:

- ▶▶ EUSDR Priority Area 07 "To develop the Knowledge Society (research, education and ICT)";
- ▶▶ EUSDR Priority Area Priority Area 08 "To support the competitiveness of enterprises";
- ▶▶ EUSDR Priority Area 09 "Investing in People and Skills".

It also contributes to EUSDR pillar “Strengthening the region” and is connected with the:

- ▶▶ EUSDR Priority Area Priority Area 10 “Stepping up institutional capacity and cooperation”.

Priority Axis 2 of the Balkan-Mediterranean 2014 – 2020 programme contributes to the EUSDR pillar “Protecting the environment” and is connected with the:

- ▶▶ EUSDR Priority Area 04 “To restore and maintain the quality of waters”;
- ▶▶ EUSDR Priority Area 05 “To manage environmental risks”
- ▶▶ EUSDR Priority Area 06 “To preserve biodiversity, landscapes and the quality of air and soil”.

The transnational cooperation dimension is extremely relevant, for the integrated and interdependent environmental systems both for the region as a whole, but also with reference to the Danube Basin as formulated in the EUSDR. Due to the financial capacity of the programme, the coordination of projects implemented in the cooperation area with those implemented in the Danube Region is particularly relevant.

The programme also envisages actions designed to achieve 2020 EU target for biodiversity, through Natura 2000 sites’ management, as well as other designated or protected areas’ management and raise awareness about soil protection, educate children and young people and build capacities of the local authorities in the environment-related matters.

In the process of programme implementation, specific mechanisms will be used to ensure effective synergies and complementarities with the EUSDR.

[Analysis of the EU Strategy for Adriatic – Ionian Region \(EUSAIR\)](#)

EUSAIR is relevant to the Balkan – Mediterranean 2014 – 2020 transnational cooperation programme (TNCP) as complementarities emerge in a variety of fields. In this respect it shall be taken into consideration that only two (2) countries, Albania and Greece, are covered by the EUSAR.

The EUSAIR Strategy aims at promoting sustainable economic and social prosperity of the Adriatic and Ionian region through growth and jobs creation, by improving its attractiveness, competitiveness and connectivity while at the same time preserving the environment and ensuring healthy and balanced marine and coastal ecosystems.

The strategy is focused on four (4) Pillars: Pillar 1 Blue growth, Pillar 2 Connecting the Region, Pillar 3 Environmental quality, and Pillar 4 Sustainable tourism.

The shared element of the Adriatic-Ionian participating regions is the common sea basin. Consequently, actions will be developed with needs and potentials of sea-related activities proving more emphasis on blue growth. Furthermore integrated marine and coastal management within the Balkan Mediterranean area can boost “blue growth” opportunities anchoring a strong maritime pillar to the programme strategy. At the same time integrated approach for sustainable growth can mitigate the land – sea environmental pressures suffered throughout the coastlines.

Regarding “research, innovation and SMEs development”, actions under the first topic “blue technology” and the second topic “fisheries and aquaculture” both have focus on research and innovation. At programme level, while Balkan – Mediterranean 2014 – 2020 transnational cooperation programme establish links between competitiveness and training, the programme of Adriatic – Ionian makes a thorough exploration of the priority providing potentials for complementarity and synergies. Both programmes would provide as well value added to the selected TO 6 tackling environment and resources efficiency.

Through TO3, targeting the competitiveness of the SMEs, the Adriatic-Ionian aims at sustainable economic growth and business opportunities out of the blue economy sector (aquaculture, fisheries, blue biotechnologies, marine and maritime services, etc.). While the Balkan – Mediterranean 2014 – 2020 transnational cooperation programme focus is free of any particular sector. Instead, competitiveness is tackled also by supporting SMEs capacities under training schemes.

Regarding sustainable growth, EUSAIR gives clear emphasis to the Maritime Spatial Planning, while inclusive growth is also promoted through blue growth and jobs opportunities of marine and maritime sectors.

While still under elaboration the Adriatic – Ionian Operational Programme targets five (5) TOs, and seven (7) IPs out of which TO 3 and TO 6 match with Balkan – Mediterranean 2014 – 2020 transnational cooperation programme. To optimise and maximise territorial impact both ETC programmes shall consider complementarities and synergies, both at programme and project levels.

SECTION 5. Implementing Provisions

(Reference: Article 8(4) of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013)

5.1 Relevant authorities and bodies

(Reference: Article 8(4) of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013)

Table 21: Programme authorities

(Reference: point (a)(i) of Article 8(4) of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013)

Authority/body	Name of the authority/body and department or unit	Head of the authority/body (position or post)
Managing Authority	Hellenic Republic Ministry of Development & Competitiveness Managing Authority of European Territorial Cooperation Programmes Leoforos Georgikis Scholis 65GR – 57001, ThessalonikiGreece	George EMMANUEL Head of the Managing Authority
Certifying Authority , where applicable	Hellenic Republic Ministry of Development and Competitiveness Paying Authority for the CSF, the Community Initiatives and the Cohesion Fund	Dimitris SOUSOUNIS Head of Single Paying Authority
Audit Authority	Hellenic Republic Ministry of Finance General Accounting Office /Financial Audit Committee	Vassilis KATRIVESIS President of the Financial Audit Committee

The body to which payments will be made by the European Commission is:

(Reference: point (b) of Article 8(4) of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013)

<input type="checkbox"/> the Managing Authority
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> the Certifying Authority

Body or bodies designated to carry out control tasks

(Reference: point (a)(ii) of Article 8(4) of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013)

If the Managing Authority will not carry out directly or indirectly verifications under Article 125(4)(a) of Regulation (EU) No 1303/12013 throughout the whole programme area, aforementioned verifications shall be carried out by the body or person (first level controllers) designated by each participating country in relation to beneficiaries on its territory according to Article 23(4) of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013.

Accordingly, each IPA country shall designate the body or person responsible for carrying out the verifications defined above.

The Managing Authority shall satisfy itself that the declared eligible expenditure of each beneficiary participating in an operation has been verified by an appointed first level controller.

The responsible body will be included in the agreement to be signed by each country after the adoption of the Programme.

Body or bodies designated to carry out audit tasks

(Reference: point (a)(iii) of Article 8(4) of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013)

Applying Article 25 of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013 audit functions provided for in Article 127 of Regulation (EU) No 1303/12013 shall be assisted by a Group of Auditors following subsequent decision of the participating countries.

As explicitly specified under Article 24(3) of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013 the designated body or bodies to carry out audit tasks shall be functionally independent of the designated controllers to carry out verification and control tasks under Article 23 of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013 and shall be set up within three months of the decision approving the cooperation programme [Article 24(3) of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013].

Table 22: Body or bodies carrying out control and audit tasks

(Reference: point (a)(ii) and (iii) of Article 8(4) of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013)

Authority/body	Name of the authority/body and department or unit	Head of the authority/body (position or post)
Control body of Albania		
Control body of Bulgaria	Decentralized FLC system established and coordinated by the Ministry of Regional Development	Minister of Regional development or authorised by him/her person
Control body of Cyprus		

Control body of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia		
Control body of Greece		

5.2 Procedure for setting up the Joint Secretariat

(Reference: point (a)(iv) of Article 8(4) of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013)

The implementation provisions related to the Joint Secretariat of the new Transnational Cooperation Programme (TNCP) Balkan – Mediterranean 2014 – 2020 were decided during the 2nd Task Force meeting, in Sofia Bulgaria, 23 June 2014.

Following the aforementioned decision the Joint Secretariat will be established in Thessaloniki, Greece and will be located in already existing premises hosting five (5) Cross-border Cooperation Programmes' Joint Technical Secretariats of the current Programming Period 2007 – 2013. As office equipment and required computerised and information technology systems are already in place, the Balkan – Mediterranean 2014 – 2020 Joint Secretariat related implementation arrangements can be initiated upon the European Commission's decision on the Programme approval.

The Managing Authority will accordingly initiate the selection procedure for the Joint Secretariat staff recruitment through an open competition, taking into consideration agreed Terms of Reference laying down individual job descriptions, which shall be consulted with the Monitoring Committee and/ or the representatives of the participating countries.

The Joint Secretariat shall opt for international staff, preferably from all the countries participating in the Balkan – Mediterranean 2014 – 2020 cooperation programme. Contracting procedures with the selected candidates will be implemented according to the related Hellenic law.

The Joint Secretariat will operate as one single functional unit headed by one coordinator and shall assist the Managing Authority and the Monitoring Committee in carrying out their respective functions. It will also provide information to all potential beneficiaries concerning the Balkan – Mediterranean 2014 – 2020 funding opportunities and assist beneficiaries in the implementation of selected operations.

The Joint Secretariat is funded by the Technical Assistance budget of the Programme.

5.3 Summary description of management and control arrangements

(Reference: point (a)(v) of Article 8(4) of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013)

5.3.1 Roles and tasks

❖ **Role and tasks of the Managing Authority (MA) and the Joint Secretariat (JS)**

The Managing Authority shall be responsible for managing and implementing the Operational Programme in accordance with the principle of sound financial management and carry out the functions set out in Article 72 and 125 of Regulation 1303/2014 and

article 23 of Regulation 1299/2014. Additionally the Managing Authority will comply with functions stipulated in Article 23 of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013.

According to article 125 of the Common Provisions Regulation, the **Managing Authority** is responsible for managing the cooperation programme in accordance with the principle of sound financial management. This includes the support of the work of the **Monitoring Committee** and the transmission of the information it requires to carry out its tasks, in particular data relating to the progress of the cooperation programme in achieving its objectives, financial data and data relating to indicators and milestones.

The **Joint Secretariat** will carry out overall support functions stipulated in Article 23(2) of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013 assisting the Managing Authority and the Monitoring Committee in carrying out their respective functions.

The Joint Secretariat facilitates, assesses and ensures that project selection is equitable and transparent. It collects financial, physical and statistical data that is needed for programme monitoring as well as for the interim and final appraisals. It verifies payment claims in sight of payment to Lead partners.

Additionally, the Joint Secretariat provides information to potential beneficiaries and assist beneficiaries in the implementation of selected operations it will carry out a comprehensive set of functions to be established upon the Joint Secretariat selection team.

More specifically, the Joint Secretariat ensures at transnational level coordination, follow-up and promotion activities and provides technical support for the preparation of meetings and events at the programme and projects level (Monitoring Committees, Transnational Conferences and transnational working groups, lead partners seminar, other specific thematic meetings).

The Joint Secretariat is also in charge of implementing the information system of the programme: schedule, progress, contacts, phone details and website.

The Joint Secretariat shall set up its own Internal Rules of Procedures, which shall be approved by the Managing Authority and/ or the Monitoring Committee.

❖ **Role and tasks of the Certifying Authority**

According to article 126 of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013, the **Certifying Authority** is responsible in particular for drawing up and submitting to the Commission payment applications and certifying that these result from reliable accounting systems, are based on verifiable supporting documents and have been subject to verifications by the Managing Authority.

The Certifying Authority is also responsible for drawing up the annual accounts, certifying the completeness, accuracy and veracity of the annual accounts and that the expenditure entered in the accounts complies with applicable Union and national rules and has been

incurred in respect of operations selected for funding in accordance with the criteria applicable to the cooperation programme and complying with Union and national rules.

❖ **Role and tasks of the Audit Authority and the Group of Auditors**

According to article 127 of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013, the **Audit Authority** ensures that audits are carried out on the management and control systems, on an appropriate sample of operations and on the annual accounts. It draws up an audit opinion on the annual accounts for the preceding accounting year and an annual control report setting out the findings of the audits carried out during the preceding accounting year. Aforementioned designation shall comply with Article 123(4) of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013 taking into consideration functionality independence in particular.

For the Balkan-Mediterranean 2014-2020 transnational cooperation programme, the Audit Authority is assisted by a Group of Auditors composed of a representative from each State participating in the programme.

The representatives of the participating states to the Group of Auditors shall not be involved in any other management or certification activity under the Balkan-Mediterranean 2014-2020 transnational cooperation programme. In this case and in application of Article 25(2) of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013 each participating country is responsible of the audits carried out on its territory.

The Group of Auditors shall be set up within three (3) months at the latest of the decision approving the Balkan – Mediterranean 2014 – 2020 transnational cooperation programme. Appointed representatives from the five (5) participating countries shall be entitled to take decisions on behalf of the respective participating country and within the scope of the Group of Auditors' functions.

The Group of Auditors shall be functionally independent of controllers designated to carry out verifications under Article 23 of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013 (first level controllers). An independence certificate is requested from each of them.

The Group of Auditors will be chaired by the Audit Authority and at its first meeting, shall draw up and approve its own rules of procedure ensuring, among other, suitable coordination between all members of the Group of Auditors.

❖ **Role and tasks of the Monitoring Committee**

In accordance with Article 47(3) of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013 a Monitoring Committee shall be set up within three months of the decision approving the cooperation programme. It shall be composed by representatives from the five (5) participating countries and in agreement with the Managing Authority.

The Monitoring Committee is the decision taking body of the programme and shall be chaired by a representative of the five (5) participating countries or by the Managing Authority. At its first meeting it shall draw up and adopt its own rules of procedure laying down, among other, annual meetings frequency as well as any appropriate organisational arrangements and rules on decision-making process securing provisions on the Monitoring Committee members' impartiality.

The European Commission shall participate in the Monitoring Committee work and proceedings in an advisory capacity.

In accordance with Articles 49 of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013 the Monitoring Committee will review the implementation and progress programme towards achieving the objectives set. It will also fulfil the functions stipulated in Article 110 of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013.

The selection of the operations will be performed by the Monitoring Committee who will also approve the Programme Manual. In that case the Monitoring Committee will carry out the functions stipulated in Articles 12 and 18 of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013.

❖ **National bodies in charge of the programme in the participating countries**

The national bodies must carry out a regulatory function related to the responsibility of each participating country as regards control, and reality of expenses. National coordinators especially conduct and coordinate the implementation of the Programme in relation with the MA and the JS. Partners can contact national coordinators in their country to obtain information on the Programme requirements, the process of implementation of the Programme and the process of generation, implementation, control and monitoring of the projects, as well as national co-funding schemes. The national coordinators can in particular bring the necessary information concerning the national systems of certification of expenditures.

❖ **Other bodies**

The Monitoring Committee may decide to set up advisory groups to cover specific needs that may arise throughout the programme life cycle. It may also decide on specific organisational arrangements or delegate to the Managing Authority certain decisions of technical or operational scope.

5.3.2 Other management and control arrangements

□ **Organisation of the assessment and selection of the operations**

Applications for funding shall be submitted by Lead Applicants following Calls for Proposals that will be organised and launched upon subsequent decision of the Monitoring Committee. The “Programme Manual”, an information guide on the programme objectives together with a full application package displaying, among other, the selection criteria, shall be drafted by the Joint Secretariat and approved by the Monitoring Committee before the first call for proposals.

The Monitoring Committee may decide to use different types of Calls, such as the classical ones, as well as Calls for Strategic Projects, thematically focused Calls etc.

Application files will be received and registered by the Joint Secretariat who will also perform the eligibility check and the applications’ assessment according to the approved selection criteria. As far as the eligibility of potential beneficiaries is concerned, the participating countries may be consulted either on a regular and formal basis, and/ or on specific cases. This procedure related to the status and eligibility of potential beneficiaries shall be set up and agreed beforehand by the Monitoring Committee. Overall, the Joint Secretariat will be responsible to organise and guarantee impartial and timely assessment of all application files submitted. The assessment results will be made available (in

standardised forms) to the Monitoring Committee together with all the applications submitted. The whole procedure shall be supervised by the Managing Authority.

Upon the completion of the technical assessment of the projects, the Monitoring Committee taking into consideration the quality of the operations and strategic relevance will establish funding decisions according to Article 12(1) of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013. Detailed rules of the decision making process related to the operations' selection will be established in the respective Rules of Procedure of the Monitoring Committee.

All Lead Applicants shall be formally informed (preferably by a standardised letter) on the outcome of the Monitoring Committee decision on whether the application is approved or not, explaining the reasons of rejection. Any further questions or clarifications requested by the rejected operations' Lead Beneficiaries shall be managed and answered by Managing Authority with the support of the Joint Secretariat. The Monitoring Committee shall be informed on all aforementioned requests.

Eventual formal complaints can be initiated only by a Lead Applicant. In this case, apart from the Joint Secretariat, the Managing Authority shall be supported by the Chair of the Monitoring Committee and the national delegation of the participating country from which the Lead Applicant comes from.

□ Procedure for the signature of the “subsidy contract”

A Subsidy Contract setting out the funding conditions and based on Article 12(5) of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013 shall be signed by the Lead Beneficiary of each selected operation and the Managing Authority following the respective Monitoring Committee decision.

A standardised model for the Subsidy Contract shall be elaborated and agreed at programme level. Guidelines and assistance on the Subsidy Contract signature will be performed by the Joint Secretariat according to specific procedure agreed beforehand by the Monitoring Committee. The contract shall also include eventual IPA funding allocated to the operation.

Non availability of IPA funds has no consequences on the approval of ERDF partners in the same operation; the operation would be implemented by ERDF partners without the IPA partners, if affected by the mentioned non availability of funds.

Responsibilities of the Lead Beneficiary and of other Beneficiaries

For each operation, a lead beneficiary shall be appointed by the beneficiaries among themselves (article 13 of Regulation 1299/2014). The Lead Beneficiary shall assume the following responsibilities:

- a) lay down the arrangements with other beneficiaries in an agreement comprising provisions that, inter alia, guarantee the sound financial management of the funds allocated to the operation, including the arrangements for recovering amounts unduly paid;
- (b) assume responsibility for ensuring implementation of the entire operation;

(c) ensure that expenditure presented by all beneficiaries has been incurred in implementing the operation and corresponds to the activities agreed between all the beneficiaries, and is in accordance with the document provided by the managing authority pursuant to Article 12(5) of Regulation 1299/2014;

(d) ensure that the expenditure presented by other beneficiaries has been verified by a controller or controllers where this verification is not carried out by the managing authority pursuant to Article 23(3) of Regulation 1299/2014.

The lead beneficiary shall ensure that the other beneficiaries receive the total amount of the contribution from the funds as quickly as possible and in full. No amount shall be deducted or withheld and no specific charge or other charge with equivalent effect shall be levied that would reduce that amount for the other beneficiaries.

In this framework, the programme shall ensure that all necessary provisions related to the reimbursement of IPA funds to partners are laid down.

Each beneficiary participating in the operation shall assume responsibility in the event of any irregularity in the expenditure which it has declared.

□ Arrangements for Verifications and Quality Control Management

Management verifications under Article 125(4)(a) of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013 will be carried by first level controllers according to Article 23(4) of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013 and the Managing Authority role is to verify that the claim from each beneficiary participating in an approved operation has been verified by a first level controller.

Each participating country shall choose the FLC system of its preference and designate accordingly the FLC controllers. Furthermore, a comprehensive description of the FLC system chosen by each participating country shall be made available to the potential beneficiaries, also through the "Programme Manual".

The FLC system chosen by each participating country shall also be communicated to the Managing Authority by the means of a common template elaborated and agreed beforehand in order to ensure the FLC system coherence at programme level.

Standardised procedures, tools and documents, such as control certificates and checklists are essential for quality control management, as they guarantee comparable standards, data coherence, transparency and assessment across the whole programme area. Such standardised tool and procedures shall be approved by the Monitoring Committee in order to ensure coordination at programme level and avoid discrepancies or deficiencies in the system.

Should any modification arise during the Programme's implementation period these have to be communicated to the Managing Authority without delay in order to update accordingly tools, procedures and system in place.

Designated FLC controllers in the participating countries shall:

- Fulfil the qualifications requested by both, the EU and the national regulatory framework of the respective participating country;
- Be completely independent from the beneficiary controlled;
- Ensure that the declared expenditure is verified within two (2) months from the documents submission by the partner – beneficiary in order to allow timely

submission of the operation progress report by the Lead Beneficiary and timely reimbursement of the declared eligible expenditure consequently.

Following these verifications, the **Joint Secretariat** receives from each project the regular progress report compiled by the Lead Partner including a payment claim.

For all payment claims, the Join Secretariat:

- ❖ verifies compliance between the output and the approved subsidy contract in terms of expenditure, resources and eligibility of expenditure;
- ❖ verifies the reality of expenditure declared by the beneficiaries with the reception of copies of certificates from each partner and a list of documents supporting expenditure
- ❖ ensures the physical outputs by certain elements annexed to the progress reports
- ❖ verifies publicity requirements for EU funding (photos, communication tools, press articles, etc.);

At Programme level, the **Managing Authority**:

- ❖ checks the accuracy of payment claims submitted and determines the amount of subsidy to be paid in relation to the provisions of the subsidy contract (co-financing rate and maximum amount of subsidy) and in relation to the total amount of verified and certified expenditure;
- ❖ validates and transmits, after verification, the payment claim to the Certifying Authority;
- ❖ checks follow-up actions in case of irregularities;
- ❖ ensures the sound financial management and undertakes on-the-spot checks on the basis of a sampling exercise;

When all checks and analysis have been carried out and claimed costs are found to be eligible for funding the ERDF and / or ERDF Equivalent payment shall be made to the Lead Beneficiary which shall allocate with no delay, respective funds to the operation beneficiaries in accordance with Article 13 of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013.

With regard to the Technical Assistance eligible expenditure, each organisation using and spending related funds is responsible for respective verification and certification according to the FLC system in force.

On-the-spot verifications by FLC

The on-the-spot verifications shall be performed on the national management and control systems and at the level of beneficiaries. The frequency and coverage of the on-the-spot verifications shall be proportionate to the amount of public support to an operation and the level of risk identified and audits by the Audit Authority for the management and

control system as a whole. The Managing Authority draws up and, once approved by the Monitoring Committee, applies the criteria to define the intensity of verifications.

□ Arrangements for the participation of partners outside the Programme area

As foreseen by Article 20 of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013 the Balkan – Mediterranean 2014 – 2020 transnational cooperation programme shall be open to the partners from outside the eligible Programme area provided that:

- ✓ partners from outside the Programme area shall accept in writing specific provisions for their participation such as the competence of Hellenic Courts of Justice etc.;
- ✓ partners from outside the Programme area shall provide an official declaration laying down the provisions for the national co-financing, as well as provisions for their liability and repayment of unduly paid amounts;
- ✓ their participation is of benefit of the programme area.

□ Computerised exchange of data

In accordance with Article 122(3) of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013 a computerised system for the programme management and monitoring will be set up. This system will allow electronic exchange of information and data between beneficiaries and the Managing Authority, the Certifying Authority, the Audit Authority and any intermediate body set by the programme in relation to management and monitoring issues.

The “Balkan – Mediterranean 2014 – 2020” computerised system will be developed taking into consideration the data base, on-line functions and information technology system already available and operational for 12 ETC programmes where the Managing Authority participates in.

5.4 Apportionment of liabilities among participating countries in case of financial corrections imposed by the managing authority or the Commission

(Reference: point (a)(vi) of Article 8(4) of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013)

Irregularities and apportionment of liabilities

According to Article 27(2) of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013 the Managing Authority shall ensure that any amount paid as a result of an irregularity is recovered from the lead or sole beneficiary. Beneficiaries shall repay to the lead beneficiary any amount unduly paid.

The Managing Authority is responsible for recovery and reimbursement of the amounts concerned to the general budget of the Union, in accordance with Article 27(3) of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013. Consequently, if the regular reporting exercise of an operation arises with doubtful results the Managing Authority shall immediately proceed with follow-up actions, corrective measures and if necessary suspend any reimbursement related to the operation concerned.

In case that the Managing Authority does not succeed in securing repayment from the lead beneficiary, the participating country on whose territory the beneficiary concerned is located (or registered) shall reimburse the Managing Authority any amounts unduly paid to the concerned beneficiary. Participating countries may decide not to recover an amount unduly

paid if the amount to be recovered from the beneficiary, not including interest, does not exceed EUR 250 in contribution from the Funds.

With regard to the Technical Assistance expenditure based on joint decisions by all participating countries (and not individual decision spending by each participating country) all participating countries will bear joint liability proportionally to their respective share in the overall Technical Assistance budget.

Whereas irregularities occur connected to the incorrect use or spending of Technical Assistance funds, solely by one organisation or implementing body of the programme, the liability will be with this organisation or body only.

Systemic errors and financial corrections

Detection of systemic or other errors may occur either during implementation of the programme, or at the end during the closure procedure. Such errors may lead to financial corrections or suspension of payments imposed by the European Commission according to Articles 85 and 144 to 147 of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013 and may also affect selected operations.

Consequently the participating countries shall elaborate and agreed on a methodology sharing financial corrections according to the type of error detected considering both the ERDF/IPA and national contribution to the programme.

With regard to the Technical Assistance expenditure based on joint decisions by all participating countries, the participating countries will bear joint liability proportionally to their respective share in the overall Technical Assistance budget.

Whereas systemic errors detected are connected to the Technical Assistance budget, liability will be with the participating country hosting the organisation spending the Technical Assistance budget.

5.5 Use of the euro

(Reference: Article 28 of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013)

The Euro will be used for all the transactions and payments of the programme. Expenditure incurred in a currency other than the Euro shall be converted into Euros by choosing a method in accordance with Article 28 Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013.

Expenditure incurred in a currency other than the euro shall be converted into euro by the beneficiaries using the monthly accounting exchange rate of the Commission in the month during which that expenditure was either:

- (a) incurred;
- (b) submitted for verification to the Managing Authority or the controller in accordance with Article 23 of Regulation 1299/2014; or
- (c) reported to the lead beneficiary.

The method chosen shall be set out in the cooperation programme and be applicable to all beneficiaries. The corresponding decision shall be taken by the Certifying Authority.

The conversion shall be verified by the Managing Authority or by the controller in the Member State or third country in which the beneficiary is located.

5.6 Involvement of partners

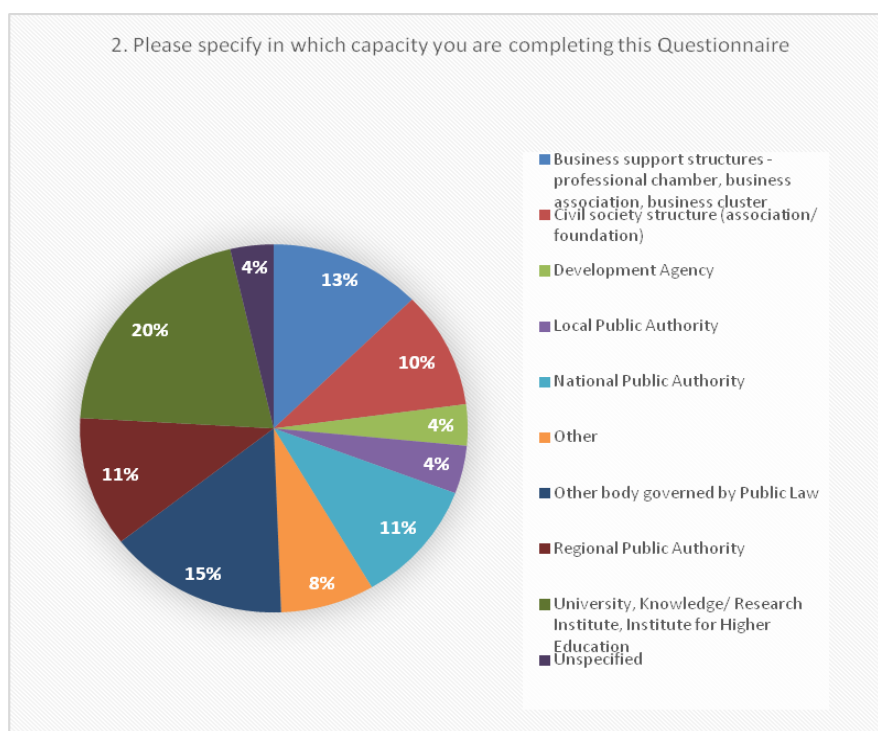
(Reference: point (c) Article 8(4) of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013)

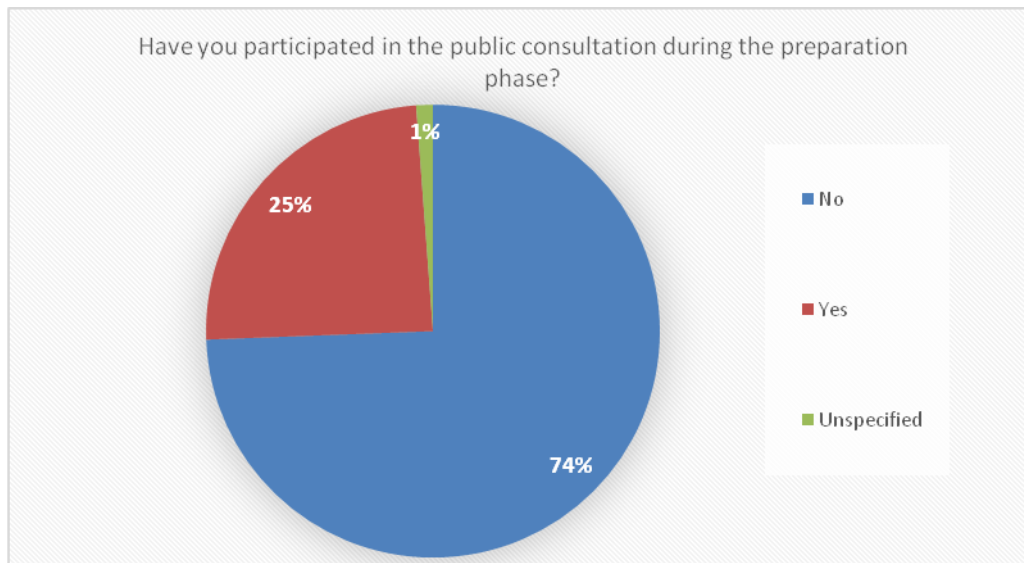
5.6.1 Involvement of partners in the preparation of the programme *(to be fully developed upon completion of the public consultation process)*

The drafting of the Balkan – Mediterranean 2014 – 2020 transnational cooperation programme started upon approval by the European Commission competent services (December 2013) of the deliberate request put forward by the participating countries to set up a third transnational cooperation programme aiming to cover cooperation inconsistencies following the initial split of the South East Europe 2007 – 2014 into two macro-regional cooperation areas, the Danube and Adriatic – Ionian.

The five (5) participating countries have established a Task Force to deal with the overall programme drafting exercise as foreseen by Article 5 of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013.

In accordance with the multi-level governance approach key partners and stakeholders throughout the whole programme area have been solicited to contribute to the programme preparation and priorities' set up. Bearing in mind the tight time schedule the Task Force members agreed to stimulate public consultation by targeted information events and policy development workshops in all five (5) participating countries. The first phase of the public consultation process was organised in the first half of June 2014 and a series of three information events took place in Sofia (5 June), Athens (11 June) and Skopje (12 June) aiming to present the Balkan – Mediterranean 2014 – 2020 transnational cooperation programme and explaining the on-line survey mechanism. Within a two weeks period, more than 70 core stakeholders' representatives attended the aforementioned information events, while 167 responded to the on-line questionnaire. Their status was very wide, while more than 70% declared that they have never been involved in a public consultation process during the preparation phase of a programme.

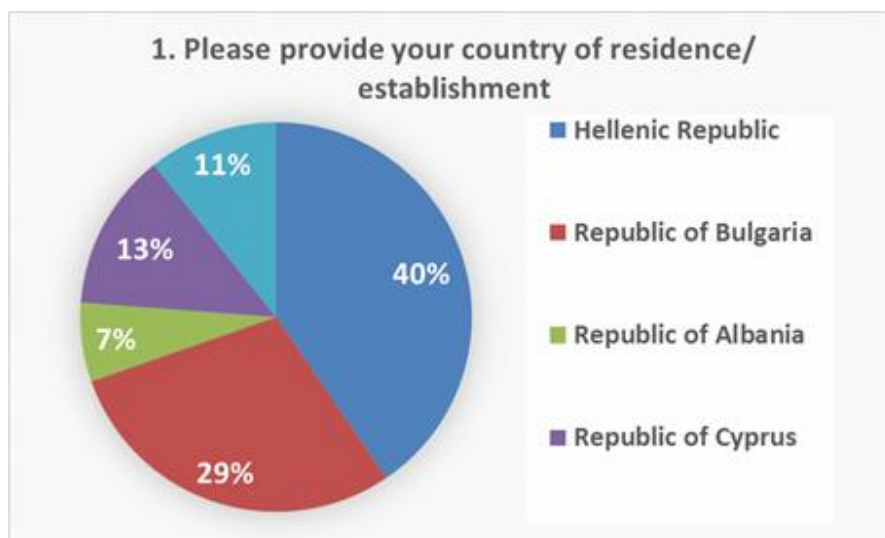




Consequently, in its early phase, the programme has already reached an **important ownership level**, fully integrating actors motivated to proceed with transnational cooperation partnerships. Also worth noting that more than 20% of the on-line questionnaire responders they haven't participated in an ETC project ever before! This statement clearly depicts the "Balkan – Mediterranean 2014 – 2020" **transnational cooperation programme added value since it will bring into the ETC goal 20% new actors** across the area.

As far as the country origin is concerned, the main entries of the on-line questionnaire come from Greece and Bulgaria.

Yet, the second phase of consultation has come up with mitigated participation from those two countries and therefore the overall public consultation input acquired a balance as far the country origin is concerned.



During the second phase of the public consultation process five (5) policy development workshops have been organised in the five (5) capital cities of the participating countries, as follow:

- ▶▶ Athens, 25 June 2014
- ▶▶ Skopje, 26 June 2014
- ▶▶ Sofia and Tirana, 27 June 2014
- ▶▶ Nicosia, 30 June 2014

More than 150 representatives actively participated in the aforementioned policy development workshops, with Nicosia and Tirana gathering up to 90 representatives. Furthermore, written input has been forwarded to the “drafting consultant team” and elaborated as to streamline the programme strategy and priority axes.

As in the first phase of the public consultation, stakeholders and actors’ involvement clearly designated competitiveness, environment and socially driven issues as the main challenges ahead. The programme strategy and priority axes’ set up fully integrates these concerns.

5.6.2. Involvement of partners in the implementation of the cooperation programme and involvement in the Monitoring Committee

(to be completed)

SECTION 6.Coordination between Funds

(Reference: point (a) of Article 8(5) of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013)

6.1 Coordination with other ESI Funds

For the elaboration of the Balkan – Mediterranean 2014 – 2020 cooperation programme, the choice of Thematic Objectives, Investment Priorities and Specific Objectives take into account the priorities highlighted in the Partnership Agreements of respective countries involved in the programme and the main challenges raised in regional and national programmes of Investment for Growth and Jobs Goal. The objective of the programme is to support complementary actions and avoid overlapping in the different priority axes.

Coordination between Balkan-Mediterranean and other ESI programmes

Coordination between the Balkan-Mediterranean 2014-2020 programme and ESI funded as well as other national programmes will be ensured during the operations' selection procedure. A strategic assessment will complement the quality assessment of applications carried out by the Joint Secretariat. In general, the risk of overlaps between national and transnational programmes is minimised due to their different strategic approach and types of interventions considered. Whereas transnational programmes support territorial integration and capacity-building in multi-national partnerships, national programmes focus on concrete implementation measures and investments. Thus they naturally complement one other. The aim is to create links between the transnational projects, serving as "think tanks" or testing grounds for innovative ideas.

Areas where the Balkan-Mediterranean 2014-2020 cooperation programme can achieve synergies with other ESI funds will be in particular:

- ↳ *Priority 1– Competitiveness& Innovation.* The competitiveness of SMEs is a prime concern of regional and national programmes in each participating country. The Balkan-Mediterranean programme proposes a strong focus on this issue but with a specific attention paid to the transnational dimension of SME support activities (transnational networks, clusters, joint capacity building, etc.).
- ↳ *Priority 2 – Environment.* The Balkan-Mediterranean area is subject to strong human pressures and to global environmental changes that necessitate adapting its development to a sustainable growth model. Regional and national programmes must concentrate a significant part of their budget on the promotion of low carbon economy and the reduction of GHG emission. To complement regional and national programmes, the Balkan-Mediterranean programme puts emphasis on the protection of the environment as a whole and promotes an ecosystem approach for the promotion of natural and cultural heritage, in particular.

Project applicants will be required to include information on the past, the current and the envisaged EU assistance and indicate how coordination and articulation with activities of other

programmes will be carried out, especially to avoid overlaps between Balkan-Mediterranean operations and similar operations in the other mainstream programmes.

Coordination with other ETC programmes

The Balkan-Mediterranean 2014 – 2020 Programme has geographic overlaps with the programme areas of five (5) cross-border programmes (of which 3 IPA CBC programmes) and the TNCP MED. The majority of cross-border programmes has a very limited programme area and supports projects of bilateral character. Projects funded by these programmes will substantially differ from the ones that are eligible in the Balkan-Mediterranean programme. Yet, thematically there might be similarities between transnational and cross-border programmes and projects will be encouraged to exploit synergies, e.g. by integrating cross-border partners into the wider transnational networks.

The INTERACT Programme will support the exchange between the programmes bodies and will gather information about funded projects from the entirety of Europe, which will allow applicants and decision makers to investigate previous and on-going cooperation on similar themes.

6.2 Coordination with other Union instruments

The coordination with other Union instruments addressing issues close to the Balkan – Mediterranean cooperation programme will be mainly carried out by checking carefully the coherence between them. It relates mainly to the EU programmes for Research and Innovation Horizon 2020, including the Intelligent Energy – Europe III (IEE III), for the Competitiveness of enterprises and SMEs (COSME) 2014-2020, for the environment LIFE 2014-2020 which supports in particular a low-carbon and climate-resilient economy, for education and training ERASMUS for all. The Connecting Europe Facility (CEF) presents also quite important connection with the objective of environmental protection. Coordination will be ensured through exchange of information between the Managing Authority assisted by the Programme Secretariat and the bodies in charge of the implementation of these programmes on applications, projects and, where relevant, results. This exchange of information will also include the potential redirection of project applicants towards a more suitable programme, where necessary.

The applicants will be asked to include information on the past, the current and the envisaged EU assistance and indicate how coordination and articulation with activities of other programmes will be carried out, especially to avoid overlaps between Balkan-Mediterranean projects and similar projects in the other EU-funded programmes.

Furthermore, the programme includes within its eligible territory candidates and potential candidates to the European Union. European funds are made available to these States to facilitate their political and economic reforms, while preparing to assume the rights and obligations related to the accession to the EU. Thus Albania and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia participate in the programme with the Instrument for Pre-Accession (IPA) assistance funds. The management of these funds is integrated into the system of management and control of the Balkan-Mediterranean programme and is under the responsibility of the Managing Authority. The table below shapes the links and potential

synergies of the 11 thematic objectives for 2014 and 2020 and the main thematic EU programmes. As the Balkan – Mediterranean 2014 – 2020 cooperation programme has a strong thematic and geographical focus, limited interactions are expected. However, all potential complementarities will be scrutinised during the selection procedure of the submitted applications for funding, in particular.

The programme includes within its eligible territory three EU countries and two with candidate country status for EU membership. European funds are made available to these countries to facilitate their political and economic reforms, while preparing to assume the rights and obligations related to the accession to the EU. Thus, Albania and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia participate to the Programme with the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance funds. The management of these funds is integrated into the system of management and control of the Balkan – Mediterranean cooperation programme and is under the responsibility of the Managing Authority.

Links between the EU 2020 11 Thematic Objectives and the main EU thematic programmes

EU 2020	11 Thematic Objectives (main topic targeted)	H2020	COSME	ERASMUS for all	EaSI	LIFE	Creative Europe	CEF
Smart Growth	1) RTD & innovation	✓	✓					
	2) ICT	✓	✓					✓
	3) SMEs competitiveness	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓
Sustainable Growth	4) Low-carbon economy					✓		
	5) Climate change					✓		
	6) Environment & resource efficiency	✓				✓		✓
	7) Sustainable transport							✓
Inclusive Growth	8) Employment & mobility							
	9) Social inclusion				✓			
	10) Education & training	✓		✓	✓	✓		
	11) Institutional capacity							

The main EU Thematic Programmes' goal:

Horizon 2020 (H2020) is the financial instrument implementing the “*Innovation Union*” a Europe 2020 flagship initiative aimed at securing Europe's global competitiveness.

COSME is the EU programme for the Competitiveness of Enterprises and Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs).

ERASMUS for all brings together existing EU programmes in the fields of Education, Training, Youth and Sport (Erasmus, Leonardo da Vinci, Comenius and Grundtvig; Erasmus Mundus, Tempus, Alfa, Edulink as well as Youth in Action).

EaSI is the EU programme for Employment and Social Innovation that integrates and extends existing programmes “Progress”, “EURES” and the “European Progress Microfinance Facility”. Together with the European Social Fund, the Fund for the European Aid for the most Deprived

and the European Globalisation Adjustment Fund, “EaSI” forms the fourth pillar of the EU Initiative for Employment and Social Inclusion 2014-2020.

LIFE is the EU's financial instrument supporting environmental, nature conservation and climate action projects.

Creative Europe: EU programme “Creative Europe” is the European Commission's framework programme for support to the culture and media sectors. Accordingly, the programme consists of two sub-programmes: the Culture sub-programme to promote the culture sector, and the MEDIA sub-programme to support the audiovisual sector.

CEF, the “Connecting Europe Facility” finances projects which fill the missing links in Europe's energy, transport and digital backbone. It will also make Europe's economy greener by promoting cleaner transport modes, high speed broadband connections and facilitating the use of renewable energy in line with the Europe 2020 Strategy. The CEF comprises three sectors: CEF-Transport, CEF-Energy and CEF-Telecom.

SECTION 7.Reduction of Administrative Burden for Beneficiaries

(Reference: point (b) of Article 8(5) of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013)

As the Balkan – Mediterranean 2014 – 2020” is a new transnational cooperation programme there is no predecessor programme to assess and report on specific shortcomings.

However, all five (5) participating countries have already experienced CBC and TNCP programmes and are aware of the issues to address in order to ensure smooth and efficient programme implementation.

Furthermore the new programming period regulatory context recognises the ETC specific implementation needs and a separate regulation (Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013) has been issued for the first time ever to address the multi-country implementation context of cooperation programmes. Requirements on simplification are streamlined at European level with specific focus on implementation, financial and control arrangements.

Consequently, the reduction of administrative burden for the beneficiaries shall be addressed, both, at programme and project level, with the aim to reduce the administrative burden for both, beneficiaries and programme bodies. This will not only ensure efficient programme implementation and management, but will also contribute to reduce administrative risks and errors to a minimum.

At programme level the following issues shall be considered:

1. The **number of authorities involved** in the programme implementation shall be limited and very well connected (networking) to ensure swift communication and common understanding. Within this framework it is important to keep the whole programme management structure as simple as possible. Smooth communication between the MA and the JS will considerably reduce both the length and the overall cost of management proceedings.
2. As the programme brings together EU member states and IPA countries:
 - The **different administration structure** shall be taken into consideration beforehand and duly reflect any different set of rules in the programme manual and in other implementation tools.
 - The **different sources of funding** shall be suitably streamlined for a **unique co-financing rate**. This will facilitate financial management at both, programme and project levels.
 - **Timely decision** shall be taken with regard to Article 20(2) of the Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013 for activities or operations implemented outside the Union part of the programme area (the **20% flexibility rule**).
3. For the **control and audit procedures** it is important to consider harmonised documents and tools (jointly agreed procedures, check lists, reports' templates etc.). This will not only simplify subsequent work but also guarantee data comparison and transparency as all bodies involved will face the same requirements at programme

level. Furthermore the ETC experience has clearly demonstrated that sound financial management requires that all the ***national First Level Control systems use common implementation templates*** (to be elaborated, agreed by the MC). Harmonised tools and procedures at programme level will also contribute to reduce irregularities, errors and systemic errors in particular.

4. ***Communication activities and events*** shall be implemented in regular basis in order to promote the programme cooperation opportunities together and corresponding eligibility rules.
5. Targeted ***training activities*** to specific groups shall be considered as the programme brings together authorities and bodies with asymmetric knowledge on ETC regulatory requirements. Within this framework the ***INTERACT training facility*** shall be fully exploit for all programme authorities and bodies involved.
6. The electronic exchange of information between beneficiaries and programme bodies shall be considered according to the ***e-Cohesion*** initiative for the structural funds. The dematerialisation of the documents and electronic data management can substantially reduce the overall administrative burden and at the same time ensure transparency and controllability of the expenditure. According to Article 112(3) of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013 programmes shall ensure that all data exchanges between beneficiaries and programme authorities will be carried out electronically by no later than the end of 2015. Consequently all concerned management structures shall comply with aforementioned requirements to enable beneficiaries and programme bodies to submit all information and data electronically. With regard to beneficiaries, this exchange covers the whole life cycle of their project, from the online application submission and Grand Contract signature to the online reporting exercise, online request for changes and online closure of the project.

At **project level** the whole project life-cycle shall be consider to ensure smooth projects' operation. The following issues shall be taken into account:

1. During the ***call for proposals phase*** a comprehensive programme manual and a simple application pack with reduced number of documents shall be considered together with communication events. This is important for the beneficiaries in order to understand rules and requirements and avoid or reduce formal mistakes leading to ineligibility of the applications.
2. During the ***applications' assessment phase***: adopt a clear set of eligibility and selection criteria and a simple assessment procedure. Simple and transparent ***appeal procedures*** shall also be considered. The use of simple and harmonised tools and procedures will reduce the time-span of assessment phase and keep potential beneficiaries motivated either for implementation, if the operation is selected for funding, or for further cooperation attempts.

3. For the selected operations' ***implementation and monitoring phase*** the use of *harmonised rules together with their respective definitions and harmonised application concepts* shall be promoted to ensure smooth implementation procedures.
- The harmonised rules based on the EC delegated act for ***expenditures' eligibility*** shall be taken into consideration. Five sections related to staff costs, office and administrative expenditure, travel and accommodation costs, external expertise and services costs, and equipment expenditure are set at European level. These five budget lines applicable to all ETC programmes are the ones within which all expenditure incurred during the implementation of a project shall be declared. Further guidance is provided in a set of fact sheets issued by the INTERACT programme. The adoption of a *flat rate for the overheads costs and introduction of simplified costs options* are essential for all beneficiaries. Article 18(2) of the ETC Regulation provides that the participating States in the Monitoring Committee shall establish additional rules on eligibility of expenditure for the cooperation programme as a whole. However, the use of simplified costs options shall be promoted to avoid misunderstanding and additional administrative burden.
 - As far as the operations' ***implementation tools*** are concerned the "Harmonised Implementation Tools" (HIT) developed by INTERACT programme shall be taken into consideration as they incorporate more than one programming period implementation experience. Harmonised implementation tools are of utmost importance to achieve reduced administrative burden for both, the programme bodies and beneficiaries. Reporting forms, monitoring checklists, request for changes together shall be kept as simple as possible. Within this framework a limited number of indicators to report by the beneficiaries (through reporting templates) shall be considered. Up to three "***lead indicators***" are sufficient at project level to clearly assess the impact of the operation to the cooperation programme objectives.

Special attention shall be given to the ***First Level Control (FLC) harmonisation*** that shall be considered at programme level (see above). As every participating country has its own FLC system non harmonised procedures at programme level result to significant certification and reimbursement delays. On the contrary streamlined monitoring contributes to the secure and timely assessment of progress reports and speeds up funds' reimbursement.

SECTION 8. Horizontal Principles

(Reference: Article 8(2) of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013)

8.1 Sustainable development

Sustainable development of the region will be an integrated part of the programme and will be covered by all programme Priorities. Priority 1 on “Entrepreneurship & Innovation” as well as Priority 2 on “Environment” tackle a wide range of topics related to economic, environmental and social sustainability. For example, Priority 1, among others, aims at supporting solutions to societal challenges, such as employment and social inclusion. Priority 2 focuses, inter alia, on challenges related to environmental protection, resource and energy efficiency, water protection, these also being core topics of sustainable development. More details on specific actions are described in the respective chapters of each Priority.

Furthermore, the specific objectives of Priority 2 will support transnational cooperation projects that have as their primary aim to improve the implementation of regional policies and programmes related to sustainable development issues. Projects will have to clearly demonstrate in their application that the activities they propose will make the implementation of those regional policies better, in order to eventually contribute to the sustainable development of their regions.

In application forms, a special section will be dedicated to sustainable development criteria. Special attention will be given to project proposals giving clear measurable output indicators on environmental issues (where applicable according to the objectives of the project). Whether projects are directly related to sustainable development issues or not, they will be invited to take specific measures to reduce the impact of project implementation on the environment.

8.2 Equal opportunities and non-discrimination

The European Union has developed a comprehensive legal and policy framework to address equality and non-discrimination, based on sex, racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation. In this framework, the Balkan-Mediterranean 2014-2020 programme intends to promote equal opportunities and to prevent discrimination through its funded projects where suitable.

Consequently, all projects funded by the programme will be assessed for their planned actions and impacts on fostering equal opportunities and on the prevention of discrimination. The promotion of equal opportunities and non-discrimination will be regarded, among other horizontal policies, as a positive factor in the project selection for funding. As a general approach, all projects will be requested to integrate these horizontal issues in their activities, or at least, to consider the project’s influence on these. In practical terms, the projects will have to describe in the application form what impact it will have towards equal opportunities and non-discrimination and to provide examples in case concrete activities/outputs are planned in that respect. This will be followed up during the monitoring of the project implementation, and reported upon in the programme’s annual implementation reports.

However, these actions and their positive impact would be a side effect of funded projects rather than a main focus of the programme as there is a wide range of other European programmes (e.g. ESF) dedicated and specifically targeting the issue of gender equality.

8.3 Equality between men and women

The specific objectives of the programme cover thematic areas that have no direct link to the horizontal principle of gender equality. This is in particular the case for the specific objectives linked to Priority 2 on environment. However, equality between men and women is a core issue cross-cutting all policies of the European Union. In addition, Priority 1 on entrepreneurship & innovation does not directly promote gender equality, while the promotion of entrepreneurship on equal grounds for men and women is an implicit objective. Consequently, the gender perspective, supporting equality between men and women, becomes an integral part of the Balkan-Mediterranean 2014-2020 programme and all its funded projects.

In general, project applicants are expected to take gender equality into consideration. As already described in chapter 8.2., the promotion of gender equality is regarded as a positive factor when projects are selected for funding. In the application form, the projects will have to indicate whether they will contribute to gender equality, and to provide examples in case concrete activities/outputs are planned. Projects proposals giving practical indications on measures that will be implemented to reduce gender differences in management, retribution, decision-making and job opportunities will be positively noted within the evaluation. Their implementation will be followed up during the project monitoring process, and reported upon in the programme's annual implementation reports.

However, these actions and their positive impact would be a side effect of funded projects rather than a main focus of the programme as there is a wide range of other European programmes (e.g. ESF) dedicated and specifically targeting the issue of gender equality.

SECTION 9. Separate Elements

9.1 Major projects to be implemented during the programming period

(Reference: point (e) of Article 8(2) of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013)

In accordance with Article 8(2) of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013 this information is not subject to the Commission decision approving the cooperation programme but remains under the responsibility of the participating Member States.

Table 23: List of major projects (not applicable)

Title	Planned time of notification/submission date (year, quarter)	Planned start of implementation (year, quarter)	Planned completion date (year quarter)	Priority axes / Investment priority
500 char. max.				

9.2 Performance framework (summary table)

The summary table is generated automatically by the SFC2014 based on the tables outlined by priority axis.

The performance framework of the cooperation programme

Priority axis	Indicator or key implementation step	Measurement unit, where appropriate	Milestone for 2018	Final target (2023)

9.3 List of relevant partners involved in the preparation of the programme

The table below is an indicative list of the partners' involvement outlined in Section 5.6 and will be finalised upon completion of the public consultation process.

National Authority/Line Ministries	37
Regional Authority	18
Local Authority	12
Development Agency	4
Chamber Of Commerce	9
Business Support Structure	8
University / Institute	8
Civil Society Organization	42

9.4 Applicable programme implementation conditions governing the financial management, programming, monitoring, evaluation and control of the participation of third countries in transnational programmes through a contribution of ENI and IPA resources

(Reference: Article 26 of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013)

Where a transnational or interregional programme benefits from ENI and/or IPA resources, this section should set out the respective implementation conditions for the financial management, programming, monitoring, evaluation and control. These implementation conditions have to be consistent with EU cohesion policy rules.

The applicable conditions should largely correspond to the rules applicable to the ERDF part of the programme, except where specific arrangements are necessary (for example concerning arrangements for public procurement or management verifications).

In a general way, rules applicable to ERDF partners are applied to IPA partners regarding the implementing conditions for the financial management, programming, monitoring, evaluation and control. However, the following issues will have to be considered:

- ✓ Financing Agreements between the European Commission, the Managing Authority and the Governments of Albania and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia are to be signed regarding the implementation of IPA assistance integrated in the TNCP “Balkan – Mediterranean 2014 – 2020”;
- ✓ These Financing Agreements will take into account the specific rules to be applied in accordance with the IPA II Regulation (No 231/2014), the Implementing Act and the provisions regarding the contractual procedures for the for EC External Actions;
- ✓ The IPA partners’ related participation provisions.

Annexes

- ↪ A map of the area covered by the cooperation programme
- ↪ Reference on the *ex-ante* evaluation
- ↪ Reference on the SEA
- ↪ A citizens' summary of the cooperation programme (not compulsory)