

Strategic Project

Selection Methodology

Cross-border Cooperation Programme

Interreg (VI-A) IPA III CBC

“Greece - North Macedonia 2021-2027”

The Programme is co-funded by European Union and National Funds of the participating countries

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# Scope

The present methodology is applied for the evaluation, selection and approval of the Strategic Project Proposal submitted under the Targeted Call for Project Proposal of the (Interreg VI-A) IPA III CBC Greece – North Macedonia

# Institutional Framework

1. Regulation (EU) 2021/1060 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 24th of June 2021, "definition of the common provisions for the European Regional Development Fund, the European Social Fund+, the Cohesion Fund, the Just Transition Fund and the European Maritime, Fisheries and Aquaculture Fund, and fiscal rules for these Funds and for the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund, the Internal Security Fund and the Instrument for the Financial Support of Border Management and Visa Policy”.
2. Regulation (EU) 2021/1059 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 24th of June 2021, "on the specific provisions governing the 'European Territorial Cooperation' (Interreg) objective, which is supported by the European Regional Development Fund and the external financing mechanisms".
3. Delegated Regulation (EU) no. Commission Regulation 240/2014 of 7th of January 2014 on the European code of conduct for partnership under the European Structural and Investment Funds.
4. Regulation (EU) 2021/1529 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 15th of September 2021 establishing the Mechanism for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA III/IPA III).
5. Commission Implementing Decision (EU) 2022/74 setting out the list of Interreg programmes and indicating the global amount of the total support from the European Regional Development Fund and from each external financing instrument of the Union for each programme and the list of the amounts transferred between strands under the European territorial cooperation goal for the period 2021 to 2027;
6. Commission Implementing Decision (EU) 2022/75 setting out the list of Interreg programme areas to receive support from the European Regional Development Fund and external financing instruments of the Union, broken down by strand and Interreg programme under the European territorial cooperation goal;
7. The Financing Agreement, signed at 21-12-2023 between the European Commission, the Managing Authority and Republic of North Macedonia in accordance with Article 59 of Regulation (EU) No1059/2021.
8. Law 4914/2022 "Management, control and implementation of development interventions for the Programming Period 2021-2027, establishment of a Public Company "National Register of Startup Companies S.A." and other provisions" (Government Gazette 61/A/21.3.2022).
9. The Cooperation Programme "Interreg Greece – North Macedonia 2021-2027", as approved with the number C(2022) Decision no. 8646/ 23 Nov 2022 European Commission Implementing Decision for the approval of the support of the Cooperation Programme "Interreg VI-A IPA III CBC Greece – North Macedonia 2021-2027" from the European Regional Development Fund within the framework of the objective of European Territorial Cooperation (Interreg) in Greece and in North Macedonia.

# Description

The evaluation of the Strategic Project is conducted as follows:

Within a timeframe specified by the Call for the Strategic Project Proposal, the potential Lead Partners submit the proposal (Application Form with all necessary, as specified in the Call, documents attached) exclusively electronically via the Monitoring Information System (MIS).

If the Managing Authority/Joint Secretariat considers necessary, it may be requested from the Project Beneficiaries during the evaluation process, to submit specific documents in paper form. In addition, any attachments to the proposal that are not technically feasible to be submitted/attached electronically through the MIS, are sent to the MA/JS only in paper form within a deadline specified in the Call.

After the successful submission of the proposal, the Lead Beneficiary is respectively informed through the MIS.

The proposal [Application Form with all necessary documents attached] is archived/kept on the MIS.

Since Stage A’/Concept Note submission is not applicable in the case of Strategic Project, the evaluation of the Project Proposal begins directly with Stage B and more specifically:

**Stage B. Evaluation of the Strategic Proposal**

The evaluation of the proposal is completed in two (2) consecutive and distinct Phases and more specifically:

1. Phase B1΄: Administrative & Project Eligibility Assessment
2. Phase B2a΄: Quality Assessment
3. Phase B2b': Beneficiaries Eligibility Check & State Aid Compliance for the Project Proposal which have been positively evaluated in phases B1 and B2a

 During the evaluation the MA may request at any phase of the evaluation the submission of additional data and clarifications.

*Additional* data are those which, while foreseen in the Call, were not submitted due to an omission (or a set of permitted errors) by the potential beneficiary and have been issued before the submission of the proposal. *Clarifications* are items requested by the assessor(s), in order to clarify the submitted information and better understand the content of the proposal.

The potential beneficiary should send the requested additional data within a specific deadline set by the MA.

The non-submission of the requested clarifications by the beneficiary, within the deadline, is not an exclusive reason for rejecting the Project Proposal but, depending on the nature of the clarification, it may be taken into consideration during the evaluation of the proposal (e.g. in the grading of criteria related to completeness and clarity of the content of the proposal).

Communication with the Lead Beneficiary on the above matters (additional data, clarifications) is carried out through the MIS.

It is noted that during the selection and approval of the Strategic Project, the principles and rights of the Charter of Fundamental Rights are taken into account, in accordance with what is mentioned in the *"Instructions for the evaluation of proposals",* paying particular attention to the relevant rights/principles of the Charter: protection of personal data, entrepreneurial freedom, property, equality before the law, non-discrimination, equality between men and women, inclusion of people with disabilities, family and professional life, environmental protection, access to services of economic interest, consumer protection, good administration, access to documents.

 *Phase B1': Administrative and Project Eligibility Assessment*

During the electronic submission of the proposal, the system (MIS) carries out an initial check of the administrative compliance and eligibility of the proposal, with data such as the date of submission of the proposal, the adequate completion of the Application Form, etc. in order to allow or not the submission of the proposal.

The administrative compliance, eligibility and horizontal principals compliance of the proposal are then examined in terms of the criteria of Phase B1' based on the relevant *List of Criteria*.

The Strategic Project will be checked for its administrative compliance, eligibility criteria and compliance to horizontal principals, in order to ensure that it fulfil the administrative, eligibility and horizontal principals requirements of the Programme.

• Administrative compliance: It confirms that a proposal has been submitted within the deadline set; the Application Form has the official format specified by the MA, is complete and meets all the requirements set in the Call; all the required documents to be submitted along with the Application Form are properly completed, signed, stamped and attached to the Application Form;

• Eligibility criteria: These criteria examine whether the proposal fulfils the eligibility requirements under this Call. These requirements are, for instance, the structure of the cross-border partnership, the general compatibility with objectives and principles, the duration of the project, etc.

* Horizontal principles compliance: These criteria examine whether the proposal fulfils the horizontal principal requirements. Such requirements are for instance, compliance with the legislation of public contracts, sustainable development, fundamental rights e.t.c

The administrative compliance, eligibility and horizontal principles compliance of the proposal is carried out by the Joint Secretariats in collaboration with Unit A' of the Managing Authority.

For all criteria of Phase B1, the assessment must be positive 'YES' or ‘NA’. Otherwise, the MA/JS communicates, via MIS, to the potential beneficiaries the necessary corrective measures to be taken so that the proposal meets the criteria of Phase B1.

*Phase B2a΄: Quality Assessment*

The Project Proposal that qualifies for Phase B2 will be subject to Quality Assessment based on a scoring system using core selection criteria. This entail evaluating the nature of the proposed project, its relevance with and contribution to the achievement of the Specific Objectives, its viability, sustainability and expected results in the eligible territory, the cross border cooperation and capitalization, the quality of the cross-border partnership, as well as the maturity, the added value of the project, the structure of the budget e.t.c.

The core selection criteria in Phase B2a are divided into:

• Project Quality (Content related criteria) (relevance of the proposal, quality of the results, impact and sustainability, innovation, cross border cooperation and capitalization) and

• Implementation related criteria (quality of the partnership, quality of the methodological approach, Project maturity, budget and finance criteria).

The evaluation of the Project Proposal is performed by two (2) Assessors from the MA/JS and the evaluation procedure is under the control and responsibility of Unit A of the MA.

The selection criteria will be taken into account by the assessors to assess the Project Proposal. The purpose of the core selection criteria in Phase B2 is to assess the quality of the eligible Project Proposal. The maximum total score that a project may obtain is 100 points, in case special criteria apply to the Call, or else 90 points. A minimum threshold of 25/40 points is set as “admissible score” for the content-related criteria and a minimum threshold of 35/50 points is set as “admissible score” to the Implementation-related criteria.

In case, the Project Proposal obtains score less than the admissible, the MA/JS communicates, via MIS, to the potential beneficiaries the necessary corrective measures to be taken so that the proposal meets the criteria of Phase B2a.

The final results of the evaluation are checked and finalized by Unit A’ of the Managing Authority and submitted for approval to the Monitoring Committee after the completion of Phase B2b.

*Stage B': Phase B2b': Beneficiaries Eligibility Assessment & State Aid Compliance*

The Beneficiaries submit the necessary supporting documents as requested by the MA, in order to check their eligibility. State -aid assessment will be also carried out in this Phase.

The relevant check is carried out by the Joint Secretariat.

The results of the evaluation (Phases B1, B2a, B2b) are communicated to the National Authorities of both counties, before submitted for approval to the Monitoring Committee. After MC’s approval the results are communicated by the Managing Authority to the Lead Partner of the partnership, via MIS or e-mail.

In response to the above decision, complaints can be raised by the potential Lead Partner, which may be submitted within 7 working days from the next day after the communication of the Monitoring Committee's Decision.

Complaints are examined by the Joint Complaints Committee, based on its rules of procedure.

After the completion of the above procedure, a technical meeting is held between MA/JS and the partnership scheme, where the financial scope of the Strategic Project is finalized, if required, and the Subsidy Contract is signed.