

Research Report - December 2017



GREECE AND THE FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA

**The Experience of Cooperation in the Fields of EU-
Funded Cross-Border Projects and Higher Education
and What Does it Mean for the Future**

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ABOUT THE SOUTH EAST EUROPE PROGRAMME

The South-East Europe Programme of the Hellenic Foundation for European & Foreign Policy (ELIAMEP) was set up in October 2011. Research and policy analysis on Balkan affairs has a long tradition in ELIAMEP going back to its founding in 1988. The Programme intends to follow that legacy of high quality scholarly and policy work. More specifically, the Programme aspires to:

- Provide structure to ELIAMEP's diverse work on South-East Europe and to systematise its approach.
- Enrich ELIAMEP's work on regional international relations with a thorough investigation of the domestic context of Southeast European states.
- Combine policy analysis skills with theoretical knowledge and rigorous methodology to achieve research excellence.
- Promulgate policy recommendations for the promotion of security, democracy and economic development in South-East Europe.
- Publish policy reports, briefing notes, background guides, academic articles and other relevant publications.
- Communicate research findings to wider audiences and raise awareness about ELIAMEP's research on Balkan affairs.
- Build collaborations with important organizations and think tanks.

The South-East Europe Programme promotes the debate on key Southeast European issues by frequently organizing and participating in high profile events. In the context of the forum 'Debating South-East Europe' the Programme organizes closed sessions under Chatham House Rule in which diplomats and policy makers, academics and journalists brainstorm on important regional problems. The Programme also organizes international conferences in Greece, while its members frequently give lectures and speeches in conferences held in South-East Europe and beyond.

The South-East Europe Programme publishes policy analyses and research findings through the standard publishing outlets of ELIAMEP. It also reaches wider audiences by publishing short articles and op-eds in prominent Greek and international media and its news are communicated to 15,000 subscribers through the mailing lists of ELIAMEP and the South-East Europe Programme itself.

For more information, including recent and forthcoming reports and analyses, on the Programme, please click [here](#).

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PREFACE

Dr. Ioannis Armakolas

“Stavros Costopoulos” Research fellow & Head of ELIAMEP’s South-east Europe Programme

This report is the output of the project focusing on relations between Greece and FYROM, funded by the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Sweden, and implemented by Analytika (Skopje) and ELIAMEP. The two teams from Athens/Thessaloniki and Skopje had a joint planning and methods workshop in Thessaloniki in December 2016. During that workshop the scope of the investigation was agreed upon, the data to be collected and the method of analysis were initially discussed and the preliminary list of projects to be studied was made. After this planning workshop, however, each side was alone in deciding the details of the data collection and analysis and in conducting the actual analysis itself. The partners did not also have the opportunity to discuss project results.

With regards to case selection, the reader can familiarise herself with the various EU cross border projects by perusing the list to be found in the Appendices. Needless to say, the team had to be eclectic when deciding what to study. The selection was made together with our partner institution Analytika. When selecting the cases to be investigated we had three criteria in mind: firstly, geographical dispersion; secondly, variety in project themes so that both potentially more and less politically sensitive projects were identified; and, thirdly, ability to collect meaningful data. Especially the latter point was crucial and made us change course after the start of the project and drop an earlier selected case in favour of a project that was more ‘promising’ in terms of available material.

With regards to the Greek side of the project, a methodological note is due here. We have tried to emphasise more data collection from the stakeholders themselves. This was necessary because very little secondary literature existed. But it was also a conscious decision, acknowledging the reality that in most cases the best evaluators of cooperation are the grassroots actors involved in it themselves. That said, we have used standard research and analysis tools and techniques for cross-checking data, evaluate claims and perspectives. What we present is a view from below (from the stakeholders) as much as our expert opinion based on our scientific analysis and own Balkan experience.

Last but not least, we should mention here the different parts of the analysis and the report, which corresponds to the main avenues of our research design. In what follows, the reader will first familiarise herself with the general political relations between Greece and FYROM and the institutional/EU context of cooperation. Subsequently the reader will have access to extensive information about the EU projects that we have examined. The analysis will then enter the

investigation of nine thematic strands that form the basis of our analysis of the selected projects. The following section focuses on higher education; we first provide an overview of cooperation on educational issues and then present four thematic areas that form the basis of our analysis. Subsequently, we present extensive verbatim sections of interviews with stakeholders so that the reader can have a close understanding of the discourse and ideas of the project partners. We finalise the report with a series of appendices which offer useful info about our analysis and the projects that were selected.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This report would not have been made possible without the generous financial support and the encouragement of the staff of the Embassies of Sweden in Athens and Skopje. The Head of ELIAMEP's South-East Europe Programme and the authors are particularly grateful to Ambassadors Charlotte Wrangberg and Charlette Sammelin as well as Counsellor Patrik Svensson for their support, patience and good will. We certainly feel that we did not only engage in a very interesting research exercise, but also that we made good friends in our Swedish partners.

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PART I

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND TO THE ANALYSIS

Section 1: The state of relations between Greece and FYROM

Despite their geographical and cultural proximity, bilateral relations between Greece and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYROM), since the latter declared its independence in September 1991, have never been fully normalized or reached their full potential, as they have been dominated by disagreements around identity and history, centered around the so-called “name dispute”. As it is well known, when the ex-Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia became independent Athens’ diplomatic response was hostile as the great majority of Greeks were more than certain that the new state had irredentist pretensions towards Greece’s northern part of territory; that the state’s irredentism was expressed via the name *Macedonia*, articles in the Constitution as well as symbols; and finally that the name *Macedonia* belonged to Greek historical and cultural heritage and that the Slavs living in that state had no right in using it. For the following years Athens will use its diplomatic might and its privileged position, as a member of the EU and NATO, in order to block the international recognition of the new state until it had effected a change upon its constitutional name.

The signing of the so-called Interim Agreement of New York in September 1995 signifies a major step towards normalizing bilateral relations.¹ Economic sanctions were abandoned, diplomatic relations were re-established, while bilateral economic relations took off (with the growth of Greek investments and bilateral trade being nothing less than impressive).² After September 1995, the controversial issue of the “name dispute”, was in effect sidelined, although a number of attempts took place to find a solution, with Athens modifying its

¹ The one contracting part (Greece) agreed to recognize the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, to lift the trade embargo against it, and to allow FYROM to join international organizations under its provisional name. The other (the Republic of Macedonia) made a binding interpretation concerning all the “controversial clauses” of its Constitution (the preamble, article 3 and article 49) and agreed to remove the *star of Vergina* from its flag. Both sides recognized the territorial integrity and sovereignty of the other, agreed to take measures in order to forbid hostile or propaganda activities, while there is a number of clauses concerning bilateral co-operation. The controversial issue of the name was not dealt with in the agreement. For an analysis of the Interim Agreement see Χρήστος Ροζάκης, *Πολιτικές και Νομικές Διαστάσεις της Μεταβατικής Συμφωνίας της Νέας Υόρκης*, (Σιδέρης: Αθήνα, 1996).

² For a Greek analysis of the course of bilateral relations between Greece and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia since 1995 see Ευάγγελος Κωφός, Βλάχης Βλασίδης (edit.), *Αθήνα-Σκόπια. Η Επτάχρονη Συμβίωση (1995-2002)* (Παπαζήσης: Αθήνα, 2003).

position, abandoning the so-called maximalist position it had officially adopted in April 1992, that was excluding any use of the term *Macedonia*, and seeking instead a compromise solution, that would allow for an inclusion in any agreement of the term *Macedonia*.³

VMRO-DPMNE's dominance of the political scene in FYROM, since the elections of June 2006, and the formation of various governments under Nikola Gruevski, signified a clear deterioration of bilateral relations. Gruevski's policy agenda on identity issues, with a series of initiatives (such as the renaming of airports and highways, the erection of statues, etc) antagonized Greek public opinion, strengthening even further public perceptions in Greece about an "aggressive SlavMacedonian nationalism" that is challenging parts of the Greek identity. In addition, FYROM diplomacy under Gruevski toughened its position vis-à-vis Greece, raising issues, such as recognizing a "Macedonian minority and language" in Greece and seeking to include them in the negotiations about the name dispute.⁴ In April 2008 during NATO's summit meeting in Bucharest, FYROM failed to get an invitation to join the alliance, due to Athens opposition, while a few months later, in November 2008, FYROM lodged an appeal against Greece at the International Court of Justice in The Hague, accusing Greece of violating the Interim Agreement of 1995. The deadlock in bilateral political relations was confirmed by the failure of the negotiations held under the aegis of the UN for a solution of the "name dispute", or high-level meetings, like the one held in Brussels in October 2009 between Prime Ministers G. Papandreou and N. Gruevski, when the former underlined that without a previous solution to the "name-dispute" FYROM could not aspire to join the EU.

It was only in June 2015 that a new diplomatic initiative appeared to bring something new, moving bilateral relations ahead. During the visit of the Greek Foreign Minister Nikos Kotzias in Skopje (24 June), a list of cooperation measures were agreed, with his FYROM counterpart, Nikola Popovski "aimed at strengthening mutual confidence and advancing overall bilateral relations, thereby contributing to creating a favorable climate for settling the name difference in the spirit of European values and our common interests".⁵ The so-

³ Since 1995 there have been a few, unsuccessful attempts to reach an agreement on the issue of the name. In the beginning of 2001, for example, there were frequent media reports that Athens and Skopje were "close" in reaching an agreement on the issue. According to the media reports, Athens was offering a package of "substantial" economic and diplomatic incentives to the government of Liupjo Georgievski, in order to accept a compromise on the name issue. Surprisingly, the Greek government of Kostas Simitis was ready to accept a compromise on the name-issue. "Gornamakedonja" (Uppermacedonia), was one such possible compromise. The outbreak of hostilities however, in FYROM, in the spring of 2001, put an end to all speculation of a possible compromise. See Νίκος Μαράκης, «Στην τελική ευθεία η ονομασία», *Το Βήμα*, 21 Ιανουαρίου 2001, Τάκη Διαμαντή, «Πρόταση με προσφορές και όνομα», *Ελευθεροτυπία*, 9 Φεβρουαρίου 2001, Νίκος Μαράκης, «Το παρασκήνιο του ονόματος της FYROM», *Το Βήμα*, 18 Φεβρουαρίου 2001, Αθανάσιος Έλις, «Και το όνομα αυτής 'Gornamakedonia' (Άνωμακεδονία)», *Καθημερινή*, 13 Μαΐου 2001.

⁴ See Μαριλένα Κοππά, «ΠΓΔ Μακεδονίας: οι δυσκολίες δεν τελείωσαν ακόμη...», in I. Αρμακόλας, Θ. Ντόκος (ed.), *Από τα Βαλκάνια στη Νοτιοανατολική Ευρώπη: Προκλήσεις και προοπτικές στον 21ο Αιώνα* (I. Σιδέρη: Αθήνα, 2010), σ. 124-25.

⁵ "Strengthening Mutual Confidence and Bilateral Relations. Athens-Skopje", Skopje, 24 June 2015.

called Confidence Building Measures (CBM's) include 11 measures for practical cooperation in areas of mutual interest: *A. Political & EU Affairs* (including 1. Political consultations of the Foreign Ministries on international, multilateral, regional, horizontal, security and consular issues, as well as on regional cooperation initiatives; 2. Bilateral cooperation on EU Affairs and strengthening bilateral cooperation in the IPA II Programs, cooperation in cross-border programs, twinning and TAIEX; 3. Cooperation between the National Center for Public Administration in Athens and the Agency for Administration in Skopje). *B. Education & Culture* (including 4. Cooperation between Universities, Research Centers and Institutes; 5. Exchange university students' scholarships; 6. Encourage measures for cultural cooperation and exchange). *C. Trade & Economic cooperation* (7. Strengthen economic, trade and commercial ties – Business Forums). *D. Connectivity* (including 8. Improve Energy connectivity/gas – line; 9. Improve Bitola – Florina railway connection). *E. Justice and Home Affairs* (10. Consultations between representatives of the competent Ministries on internal affairs, border police and customs administration with a view to exchanging information and enhancing the fight against organized crime, corruption, terrorism, illegal migration and drug trafficking). *F. Miscellaneous* (11. Cooperation in Health sector).⁶

The recent political developments in FYROM, with the formation in May 2017 of the new coalition government in Skopje, led by SDSM with Zoran Zaev as Prime Minister, has fed a new optimism about the future of Greek-FYROM relations. The new reform-minded government is strongly committed to the Euroatlantic integration of FYROM, and has shown that it realizes that in order to achieve this, it has to deal with difficult and controversial issues in FYROM's bilateral relations: a first significant step was the rapprochement achieved in relations with Bulgaria, centered around the signing of the Treaty of Friendship, Good neighborhood and Cooperation on 1 August 2017.⁷ Thus, when on 31 August 2017, Kotzias visited Skopje and met with Prime Minister Zaev, the two sides expressed their "satisfaction about the course of the Confidence Building Measures, that have been proved a particularly useful instrument for promoting cooperation and establishing confidence (while they also expressed) their will for cooperation and for creating conditions that would facilitate the solution of problems..."⁸ Thus, diplomatic sources talk about a new *window of opportunity* in bilateral relations and, especially, in solving the "name-dispute".

⁶ *Ibid*

⁷ For more on that see Yorgos Christidis, "A new Balkan rapprochement. Skopje accepts Sofia's positions allowing for bilateral relations to move ahead", *ELIAMEP Briefing Notes* 55/2017, November 2017

⁸ «Η διάθεση υπάρχει, ο δρόμος όμως είναι μακρύς», *Efsyn.gr*, 31 Αυγούστου 2017, <http://www.efsyn.gr/arthro/i-diathesi-yparhei-o-dromos-omos-einai-makrys> (last accessed 31/8/2017)

Section 2: The background of cross-border cooperation between Greece and FYROM

I. Co-operation in the context of EU programs

Cross-border cooperation witnessed a significant development in Western Europe, initially in the 1980s, thanks to the role played by organizations like the Council of Europe and the European Community. After 1989, the European Union (EU), with programs like *PHARE* (Poland and Hungary: Assistance for Restructuring their Economies), *Tacis* (Technical Assistance to the Commonwealth of Independent States) and in particular *Interreg* (Interreg Community Initiative) provided the necessary financial instruments for the development of cross-border cooperation throughout Europe. Interreg in principle financed local cross-border programs that involve public authorities and other entities that are situated in neighboring border areas. Interreg's initial phase was in 1990-1994, continued as Interreg II (1995-1999) and as Interreg III (2000-2006)

The violent disintegration of the SFR of Yugoslavia (1991-1995), in combination with the “diplomatic confrontation” between Greece and FYROM, did not allow for the development of any cross-border cooperation programs between the latter two countries until 1995. However, even after the normalization of bilateral relations, under the Interim Agreement of New York (September 1995), participation in cross-border cooperation programs, like Interreg II, was rather meagre, numbering a limited number of initiatives (for example in the area of entrepreneurship).

Interreg III A “Greece-FYROM (2000-2006)”

It was only after 2000 under Interreg III that cross-border cooperation between Greece and FYROM witnessed, what could be described as a “substantial development”. The Interreg III A “Greece-FYROM (2000-2006)” was approved by the European Commission in 2002, with a total budget of EUR 103,3 million. The program included 4 so-called “Action Priorities”: Priority 1: *Cross-border infrastructure*. Key actions included upgrading connections of the border areas with FYROM, creating and modernising border crossing installations, customs facilities and border control, and security installations. Priority 2: *Economic development and employment*. Key actions included encouraging co-operation between firms, promoting cultural and tourist resources and new employment

opportunities. Priority 3: *Quality of life, environment and culture*. Key actions included measures to protect and improve the natural environment and improve the quality of public health services. Priority 4: *Technical assistance*".⁹ Territories eligible to participate to the program were the prefectures of Thessaloniki, Pella, Florina and Kilkis in Greece and 23 municipalities in FYROM, from the regions of Pelagonia, Vardar, Southeast, Southwest.

The New Neighborhood Instruments

On 1 July 2003 the European Community announced a new policy instrument, under the title *New Neighborhood Instrument*, which build "on the experience of promoting cross-border co-operation within the PHARE, Tacis and INTERREG programmes", and aimed "to develop a zone of prosperity and a friendly neighbourhood ... with whom the European Union enjoys close, peaceful and co-operative relations." (European Commission 1.07.2003). It was envisaged that the new policy instrument would be introduced during two phases: an initial phase from 2004-2006 while various financing instruments, like the Interreg III, would continue to operate, and the second phase from 2007 and after, when it would be supported by two new programs, the *European Neighborhood Instrument* and the *Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance* (IPA).

IPA "Greece - former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia 2007-2013"

On 5 September 2008 the European Commission approved the cross-border Co-operation program IPA "Greece - former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia 2007-2013", with a total budget of EUR 31,549 million. The program had three so-called "Priority Axes". "Priority axis 1: *Enhancement of Cross-border Economic Development*. Priority Axis 1 aimed at promoting sustainable economic development through common interventions, in addition to facilitating cross-border relations, and was implemented through four measures: promotion of entrepreneurship, the enhancement of Human Resources, the development of sustainable tourism and protection of public health through cross-border activities. Priority axis 2: *Enhancement of environmental resources and the cultural heritage of the program area*. The aim under Priority Axis 2 was to promote common actions for protecting the natural and cultural environment and the mobilisation of natural and cultural resources. Priority Axis 2 was implemented through two measures focusing on the promotion and protection of environmental resources and the natural and cultural heritage of the area.

⁹ (http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/hr/atlas/programmes/2000-2006/european/interreg-iii-a-greece-fyrom).

Priority axis 3: *Technical Assistance*".¹⁰ Territories eligible to participate to the program were the regional units of Florina Pella, Kilikis and Serres (Greece) and the regions of Pelagonia, Vardar and Southeast (FYROM). The Greek regional unit of Thessaloniki and the Southeast region from FYROM could take part in projects as an adjacent area, i.e. receiving a maximum 20% of the funding allocated to the program.

Interreg IPA CBC "Greece-FYROM 2014-2020"

The current program of cross-border cooperation is the Interreg IPA CBC "Greece-FYROM 2014-2020" with a total budget of EURO 45,470 million. Eligible to participate are the regional units of Florina, Pella, Kilikis, Serres and Thessaloniki (Greece) and the regions of Pelagonia, Vardar, Southeast, Southwest (FYROM). The program has two Priority Axes: "Priority 1: "Enhancement of cross-border economic development", aiming at the promotion sustainable economic development through common interventions and facilitate cross-border relations. Priority 1 will be implemented by four Measures focusing on the promotion of entrepreneurship, the enhancement of Human Resources, the development of sustainable tourism and protection of public health through cross-border activities. Priority 2: "Enhancement of the environmental resources and cultural heritage of the Programme area" aiming to promote common actions for the protection of the natural and cultural environment and the mobilisation of the natural and cultural resources: Priority 2 will be implemented by two Measures focusing on the promotion and protection the environmental resources and natural and cultural heritage of the area". (Interreg IPA CBC "Greece-FYROM 2014-2020")

II. Cross-border synergies beyond the EU cross-border cooperation programs: the example of the Prespa Transboundary Park (PTP)

The *Prespa Park*, the first transboundary protected area in the Balkans, was established on 2 February 2000, with a joint declaration by the Prime Ministers of Greece, Albania and FYROM, following a proposal from the *Society for the Protection of Prespa* and the *World Wildlife Fund*. In 2003 a project, entitled "Support for institutional collaboration between the states of Greece, Albania and FYROM in the context of the Prespa Park", was initiated seeking, among others, to strengthening trans-national cooperation between the local governments and fire authorities of the three countries (Society for the Protection of Prespa 2016).

¹⁰ http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/en/atlas/programmes/2007-2013/crossborder/greece-the-former-yugoslav-republic-of-macedonia-ipa-cross-border-co-operation-programme-2007-2013.

On 27 November 2009, the Prime Ministers of the three countries met in Prespa and agreed on the signing of a binding agreement for the protection and the sustainable development of the Prespa Park. In the declaration, among others, it was underlined the “common responsibility for the conservation of the Prespa ecosystem, its services and functions, as a basis for the sustainable development of the area, including its environmental conservation and viability, economic development and sustainable livelihoods of its inhabitants, constituting a catalyst for stability and prosperity of the area” (Joint Statement 2009). While on the tenth anniversary of the Prespa Park, 2 February 2010, the three states and the European Union signed an *international agreement*, laying “the ground for an effective conservation of the Prespa ecosystem as a basis for the sustainable development of the Area” (Joint Statement 2010).

PART II

CROSS – BORDER COOPERATION

Section 1: Key information about the projects

i. PEEBRE (Promotion of Energy Efficiency in Buildings and Protection of the Environment)

Name of the Project	<u>Promotion of Energy Efficiency in Buildings and Protection of the Environment - PEEBRE</u>		
Priority Axis 2	Enhancement of the Environmental Resources and Cultural Heritage.	Priority Measures 2.1	Promote and Protect the Environmental Resources of the Area – "Greece-the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, IPA Cross-Border Programme 2007-2013.
Project's Partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Technological Educational Institute of Western Macedonia (TEIWM) – Lead Partner 1, Greece. ▪ The Municipality of Resen – Lead Partner 2, FYROM ▪ The Municipality of Prespa – Greece ▪ Association for Sustainable Architecture and Urban Development Atmosphere (ARCHAM) – FYROM. 		
Project Duration	Start Date: 22 February 2013 End Date: 21 February 2015		
Total Budget	Total: 674,999 €		
Budget Distribution to all Partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 225,965 - Technological Educational Institute of Western Macedonia (TEIWM) ▪ 115,060.5 - The Municipality of Resen ▪ 230,795 - The Municipality of Prespa ▪ 103,178.5 - Association for Sustainable Architecture and Urban Development Atmosphere (ARCHAM) 		
Website	http://peebpe.eu/?lang=en		
Scientific Responsible	Dimitrios Stimoniariis		
Distinctions/Awards	One of the best INTERREG Programs Run in Greece – Received from the Managing Authority in Thessaloniki in the second half of 2015.		

PROJECT DISCRIPTION

As it was set out in its internet page: "The municipalities of Prespes and Resen belong to the Region of Western Macedonia, Greece and Region of Pelagonia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia respectively and are situated in an area of very cold climate where winters can last for up to nine months. Thus, there is a huge consumption of energy to cover mainly heating requirements. However, the only available fuels for heating are diesel and wood and in lesser degree the locally extracted lignite, which contribute to the pollution of the area significantly. Additionally, due to economical crisis in Greece, the tax over fuel prices increased considerably, turning heating expenses an extremely heavy economical burden for the local population. It is worth mentioning that in winter 2011/12, 50% of the households in the region of Western Macedonia stopped purchasing diesel as heating fuel and adopted cheaper alternative heating methods..."¹¹ The general objective of this project is to inform local societies and authorities on the great potential that public, corporation and residential buildings have in decreasing energy consumption and consequently on the environmental benefit of such a reduction. Therefore, this project focuses on proposing possible interventions in these buildings in order to cover a significant part of their consumption with environmentally-friendly or renewable energy technologies. Additionally, PEEBPE facilitates the inclusion of bioclimatic studies as part of the improvement of existing buildings or the construction of new ones. The main project activities include: - Energy Audits... of twenty-five public buildings in each country, delivery of technical studies with the exact CO₂ footprint and energy consumption for each building and issuance of Energy Efficiency Certificate - Study and implementation of energy efficiency and renewable energy technologies in three buildings (the elementary school and the kindergarten in Municipality of Prespes, as well as a high-school in Resen)."¹²

The project had 4 technical objectives: "Objective#1: Inform local societies and authorities on the great potential that public, corporation and residential buildings have in decreasing energy consumption and consequently on the environmental benefit of such a reduction. Objective#2: Energy Audit with detailed in-situ measurements of 50 public buildings (25 at each country) that will be pointed out by the two municipalities. A well-established technical study with the exact CO₂ footprint and energy consumption of each building will be prepared. Objective#3: The study and implementation of energy efficiency and renewable energy technologies at three of the above buildings (2 in Greece and 1 in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia). The aim is to make this building almost zero-emission buildings. Objective#4: The inclusion of bioclimatic studies and implementation of energy efficiency measures as parts of the improvement of existing buildings and in the design and construction of future buildings."¹³

While among the expected results, three specific ones are being pointed out: "Result#1: International cooperation between scientific organizations, local private and the public sector will be established, as well as exchange of best practices and experiences in the field of buildings energy efficiency from both cross-border regions and from abroad. Result#2: The derivation of Energy Efficiency Certificates for the 50 buildings is considered very important, since these buildings can be exploited by the municipalities' authorities, directly after obtaining the Certificates. Result#3: Two public building in Prespes (the Elementary School and the Kindergarten) and one in Resen (High School) will become energy efficient".¹⁴

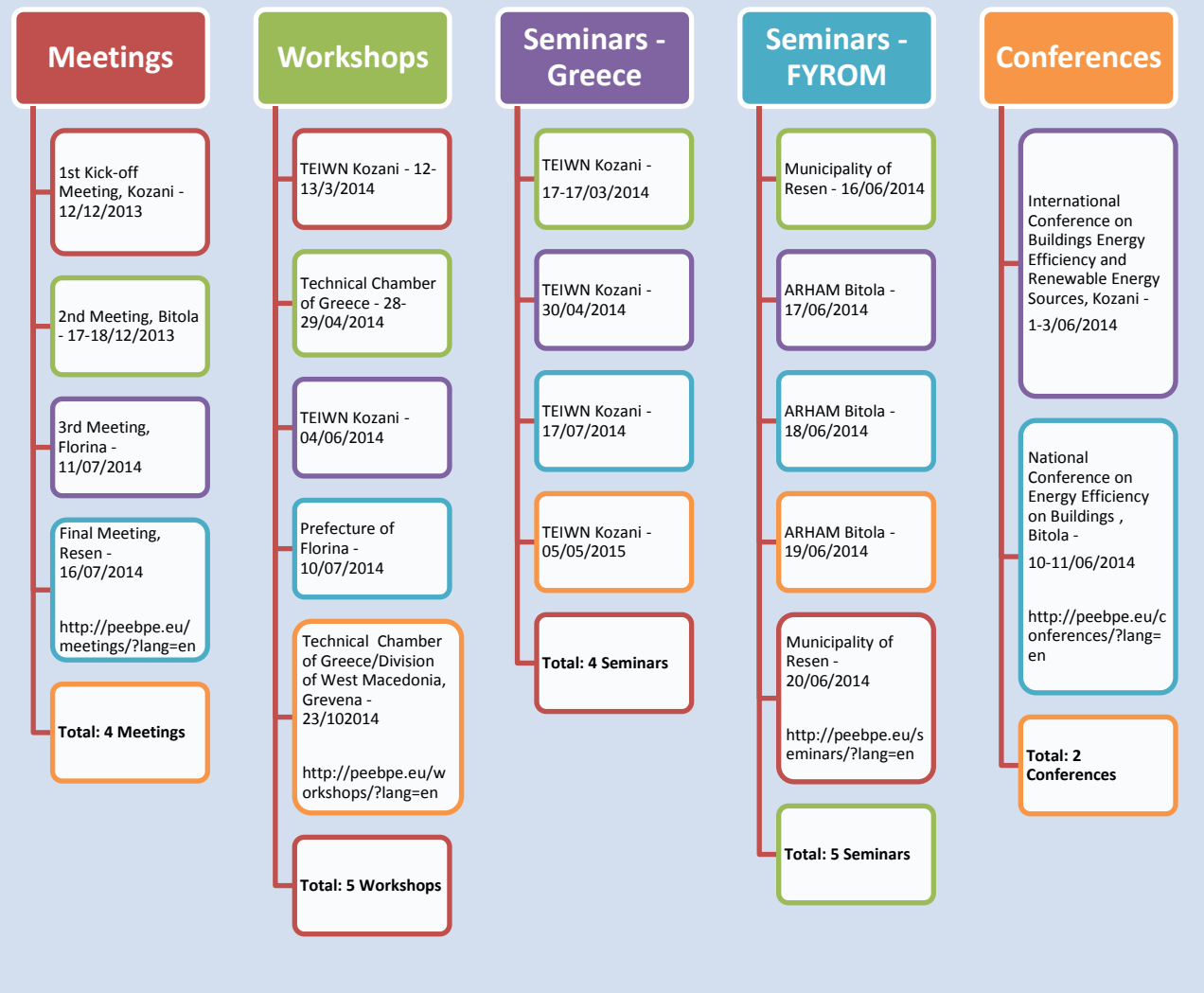
¹¹ Peebre Home Page, <http://peebpe.eu/?lang=en> (last accessed 28/4/2017)

¹² PEEBPE / Promotion of Energy Efficiency in Buildings and Protection of the Environment <http://www.ipa-cbc-programme.eu/index.php/projects?view=item&id=33> (last accessed 28/4/2017)

¹³ http://peebpe.eu/?page_id=48&lang=en (last accessed 28/4/2017)

¹⁴ http://peebpe.eu/?page_id=61&lang=en (last accessed 28/4/2017)

During the implementation course of the project the following meetings, workshops, seminars and conferences took place:



ii. DECIDE (Decision Support System for Disaster Emergency Management)

Name of the Project	<u>Decision Support System for Disaster Emergency Management - DECIDE</u>		
Priority Axis 2	Enhancement of the Environmental Resources and Cultural Heritage.	Priority Measures 2.1	Promote and Protect the Environmental Resources of the Area – "Greece-the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, IPA Cross-Border Programme 2007-2013.
Project's Partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Municipality of Amyntaio - lead partner 1, Greece ▪ Centre for Development of the Vardar Planning Region, Veles – lead partner 2, FYROM ▪ Centre for Research and Technology Hellas - Hellenic Institute of Transport (CERTH-HIT), Thessaloniki, Greece ▪ Center for Sustainability and Advanced Education, Bitola, FYROM <p>The two partners from FYROM who had fully participated at the preparatory stage of the program, failed following the approval of the program to get the necessary finance from the central government and thus could not fully participate in the execution of the program: there was only what could be described as minimal participation by them, that was made possible thanks to financial support from the Greek partners.¹⁵</p>		
Project Duration	Start Date: 1 April 2015 End Date: 30 September 2016		
Total Budget	507.930,00 €		
Budget Distribution to all Partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 210,620 € - Municipality of Amyntaio ▪ 296,310 € - Centre for Research and Technology Hellas - Hellenic Institute of Transport (CERTH-HIT) 		
Website	http://www.decide-project.eu		
Scientific Responsible	Evangelos Mitsakis		

¹⁵ Interview with an official of CERTH

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

As it was set out in its internet page: "Due to the dangers and emergency situations as a result of natural and manmade hazards in the cross-border area, there is an evident need to develop and deploy powerful tools and advanced processes, to facilitate the optimal management of such events by the responsible local entities, as well as to enhance cooperation mechanisms in both countries. This project contributes to the managerial capacity of local authorities for civil protection towards the effective response to natural and manmade disasters... Specific targets of DECIDE include: 1. (reinforcing) local authorities' capabilities for effective and efficient coordination of prevention and response processes against natural and manmade hazards, using innovative, state-of-the art technologies; 2. (strengthening) the capabilities of local societies, in order to act immediately and effectively during the first critical hours after an emergency event, so as to avoid its turning to a disaster. Towards this direction, all local data, knowledge and entities that can contribute to avoiding the disaster will be exploited (public authorities, non-governmental and voluntary organisations, private companies, media, etc.); 3. (achieving) active participation of both the local authorities and the local societies members into the process of planning and response of disasters through effective information sharing and training; 4. (contributing) to economic and social development of local societies in a reliable, effective and affordable way, through the creation of synergies, multiplying actions and benefits derived from the use of technologies and the assimilation of both national and international experience in the civil protection fields".¹⁶

The main objective of the project was "to develop and deploy an Intelligent Decision Support System (iDSS) that enhances the efficiency and managerial abilities of local civil protection authorities to effectively respond to natural and manmade disasters".¹⁷

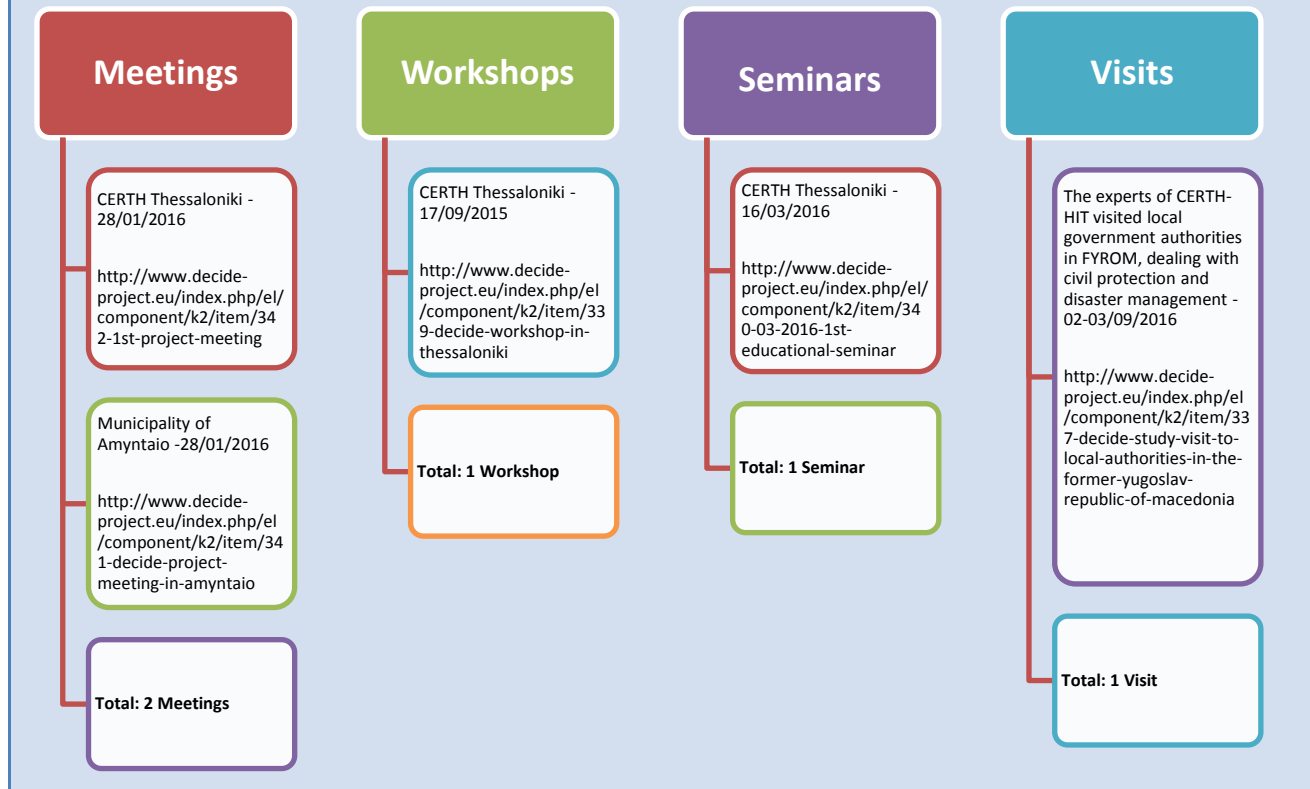
Among the expected results it was specified that "The main outcome of the DECIDE project is an Intelligent Decision Support System (iDSS) that will enhance related authorities' and bodies' capabilities in the effective prevention, preparedness and response to catastrophic events and thus in effective civil protection. The pilot area for DECIDE was the Municipality of Amyntaio".¹⁸

¹⁶ "DECIDE / Decision Support System for Disaster Emergency Management", Transport Research and Innovation Portal, <http://www.transport-research.info/project/decision-support-system-disaster-emergency-management> (last accessed 9/4/2017)

¹⁷ Ibid

¹⁸ <http://www.transport-research.info/project/decision-support-system-disaster-emergency-management> (last accesses 9/4/2017)

During the implementation course of the project the following meetings, workshops and seminars took place:



iii. Lhi-Lna (Living History, Living Nature)

Name of the Project	<u>Living History, Living Nature – Lhi-Lna</u>		
Priority Axis 2	Enhancement of the Environmental Resources and Cultural Heritage.	Priority Measures 2.1	Promote and Protect the Environmental Resources of the Area – “Greece-the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, IPA Cross-Border Programme 2007-2013.
Project’s Partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ The municipality of Novaci - overall lead partner-LP1, FYROM▪ The municipality of Almopia - lead partner 2-LP2, Greece		
Project Duration	Start Date: 01 January 2013 End Date: 25 September 2015		
Total Budget	545.321,97 €		
Budget Distribution to all Partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ 267,214.50 € - The municipality of Novaci▪ 278,107.47 € - The municipality of Almopia		
Website	http://www.lhilna.eu/?page_id=22957&lang=el		
PROJECT DISCRIPTION			
<p>The internet page of the project contains abundant information on various aspects of the project such as its <i>background</i>, its <i>objectives</i>, its <i>expected outputs</i> and <i>results</i>, its <i>structure</i> as well as its <i>progress</i>. One detects two core ideas in the description of the project's background: firstly, the acknowledgement that both the municipalities of Novaci and Almopia need to better document and restore an important part of their natural and cultural heritage and secondly, the idea that such an effort will strengthen the touristic appeal of both regions. As it is noted: “The two border Municipalities of Almopia and Novaci are characterized by rich landscapes and plenty of cultural and historical monuments, which can be enhanced and act as a key driver for the socio-economic development of the whole area. However, a great number of these places are not sufficiently documented and stay unexploited even though they have been characterized as particularly important by local and government authorities. Additionally, there is an apparent lack in the adoption of master plans and actions towards a coordinated and joint promotion of cultural and natural places and an even greater need for the restoration of places of historical interest. Thus, the main problem that the project tries to face is the exploration of the dynamics that natural and historical heritage concentrates and the promotion of them as a whole...”¹⁹</p> <p>When it comes to the main objectives of the project, one finds a more clear and direct correlation between the cultural and historical heritage and the notion of development: “The main objective of the project is the realization of common interventions by the partners in order to jointly raise the awareness on the historical</p>			

¹⁹ Lhi-Lna Homepage: <http://www.lhilna.eu/?lang=el> (last accessed 30/08/2017)

and natural resources of the cross border area and present them in a form that can re-enforce local-driven sustainable development. This will be mainly achieved through the documentation and exploration of the connection between the historical monuments, and between the natural sites of each area and the revealing of their dynamics as valuable attraction sites"²⁰. More specifically, the project's objectives include :the need for coordinated actions that will valorize the monuments and natural places (...) through the involvement of artists and the creation of relative work of art, the creation of electronic databases and the use of applications for the documentation and presentation of the monuments, the presentation of new tourism products, the enhancement of socio-economic development on the basis of the already existent flows of cultural, religious and eco- tourism and also the enhancement of the cross border cooperation of the two regions "in an attempt to promote the diversities and similarities of the areas".²¹

The expected outputs of the project, as stated in the documents available on the Homepage of Lhi-Lna, are numerous (17 in total) and they imply a wide range of different activities and fields. They are as follows: 1.one communication package for the promotion of the project and its objectives. Development of brochures, cds, banners, newsletters, press releases and videos, 2. Four project meetings, 3. A project portal, 4. One communication plan, 5. Two open to the public conferences, 6. Two field researches for the documentation of the historical monuments (one per country), 7. Two field researches for the documentation of the natural heritage places (once per country), 8. Four electronic data bases recording the information gathered through the field researches (uploaded to the portal), 9. Two residential programs and two group of artists for the artistic representation of the defined places of interest, 10. Twenty eight works of art produced during the two residential programs, 11. Three historical monuments restored in the Municipality of Novaci, 12. Signs for the paths, 13. Two digital exhibitions for the art pieces (one per country), 14. One electronic 3D application for the presentation of the most attractive places included in the paths, 15. Two multilingual tourist guides, 16. One project fulfilling the criteria of joint development/implementation/staffing and financing, 17. One project contributing to the enhancement of environment and natural and cultural resources.²²

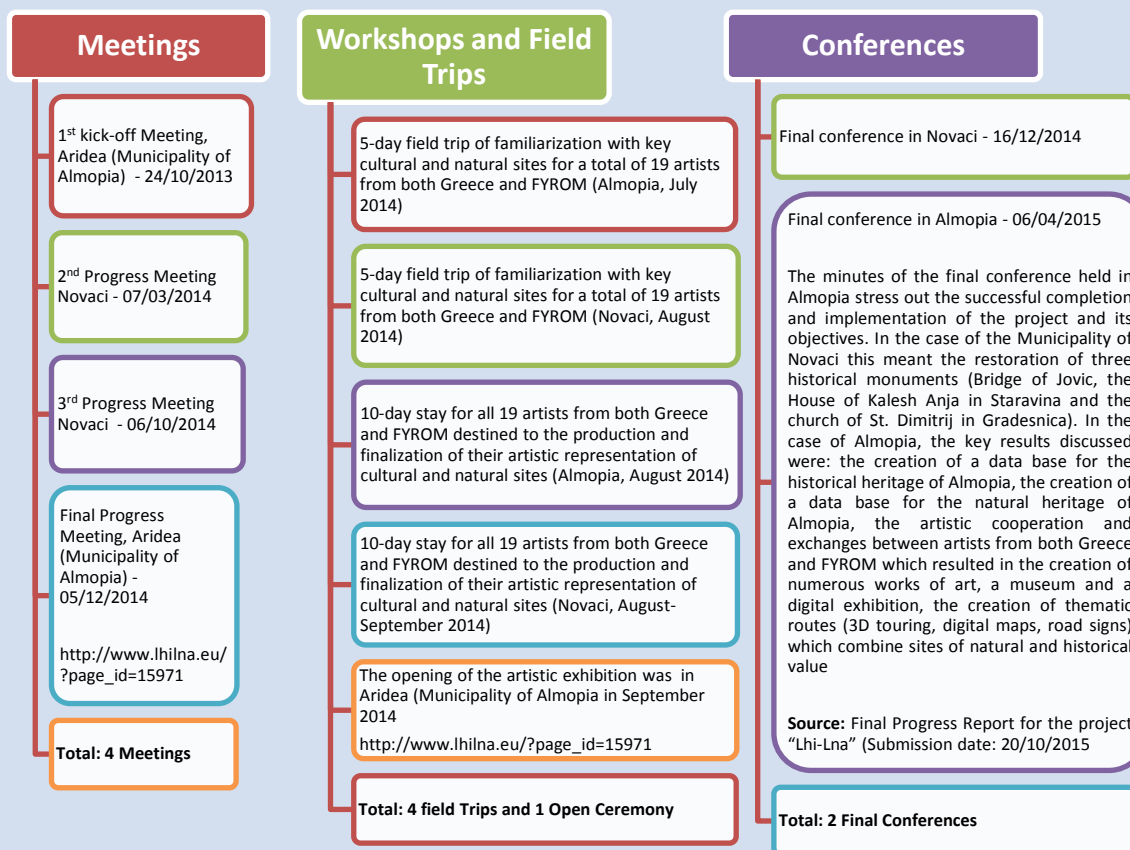
The section of the *expected results* restates the key goal of the project, the documentation of sites of significant cultural and natural value and the economic development which will follow the project's successful conclusion.

²⁰ *Ibid*

²¹ *Ibid*

²² *Ibid*

According to the final progress report of the project (date of submission 10/2015) as well as the information provided by the project's Homepage the following meetings, workshops, fieldtrips and conferences took place:



iv. KAIMAK (Kaimaktsalan Gastronomy Routes)

Name of the Project	Kaimaktsalan Gastronomy Routes – KAIMAK		
Priority Axis 1	Enhancement of cross-border economic development	Priority Measures 1.3	Promote Sustainable Tourism of “Greece – the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia IPA Cross-Border Programme 2007-2013”
Project’s Partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ The municipality of Edessa - overall lead partner-LP1, Greece▪ The municipality of Kavadarci - lead partner 2-LP2, FYROM)		
Project Duration	Start Date: 22 March 2012 End Date: 22 September 2013		
Total Budget	248.928,00 €		
Budget Distribution to all Partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ 180.000,00 - The municipality of Edessa▪ 69.000,00 - The municipality of Kavadarci		
Website	www.visitkaimak.com ²³		
PROJECT DISCRIPTION			
<p>The internet page of the Municipality of Edessa (http://edessacity.gr) provides sufficient information on the KAIMAK project, particularly when it comes to its <i>background</i>, its <i>objectives</i> and its <i>results</i>. The core idea of the project regards the cross-border cooperation between Edessa and Kavadarci on the issue of gastronomy and its capacity to enhance tourism: “The main objective of the project is to enhance convergence in the cross-border area, by promoting sustainable local development and by assisting co-operation on addressing common challenges in food and tourism sector. The target group of the project includes a large number of institutions, affiliated organizations, SMEs) in agro-food and tourism sector), entrepreneurs and other stakeholders”²⁴. Among the many objectives mentioned in the conception of the project, one may refer to the following: “1. the promotion, development and adoption of agreed interventions in order to support sustainable economic development in rural areas; 2. the reinforcement of the political efforts to promote agro-tourism image of the region, through the creation of House of Taste and bilateral expositions; 3. the stimulation of entrepreneurship, and especially the reinforcement and upgrade of the food and tourism sector; 4. the development of clusters among the stakeholders of the food and tourism sector, to create a pool of knowledge and streams of knowledge between the actors, resulting in an increasing innovation competence of the region, leading to competitive advantage on the international market; 5. the establishment of permanent cooperation between Greece and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia in</p>			

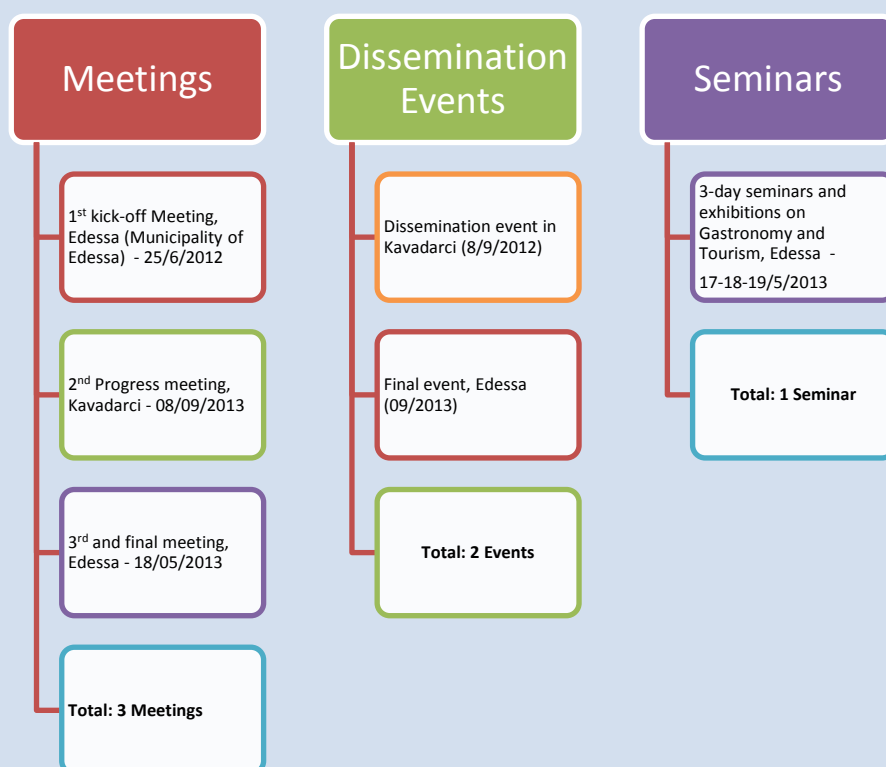
²³ The Homepage of KAIMAK project is no longer accessible online. In the course of our research (late 2016-late 2017) it was never accessible. The date marking the end of its availability is unknown.

²⁴ EU Homepage of the KAIMAK project: <https://www.keep.eu/keep/project-ext/27974/Kaimaktsalan%20Gastronomy%20Routes>

the field of gastronomy tourism sector, 6. the experience and know-how exchange".²⁵

According to information provided in the Homepage of the Municipality of Edessa and also the last progress report submitted with regard to the implementation of the project (9/2013), numerous goals were successfully satisfied: "During the implementation of the project, a number of actions were fulfilled such as the creation of The "Mill of taste" in Edessa and the "House of Taste" in Kavadarci, which provide the possibility of presentation for local products, the creation of "Gastronomy Information Centers", which provide information on local products and also on numerous restaurants in every village, the publication of a common "Gastronomy Guide" with many references to God Dionysus, tastes related to the mountain and the festivities that combine traditional music, drinks and wine. The Guide also contains information aiming at the encouragement of cross-border cooperation in the food and tourism sector. Moreover, two exhibitions were organized for the promotion of the products of the two areas. A Homepage (www.visitkamak.com) aims at the promotion of local gastronomy. The educational material which was created will aim at introducing the students to the ecology and gastronomy in an effort to enhance health nutrition. Lastly, the program ended with the inauguration of a photograph exhibition".²⁶

According to the latest progress report of the project (date of submission 9/2013) as well as the information provided by the project's Homepage, the following meetings, dissemination events and seminars took place:



²⁵ Homepage of the Municipality of Edessa, <http://edessacity.gr> (last accessed 1/9/2017), and information indicated in the KAIMAK application form.

²⁶ *Ibid*

Section 2: Analysis

For the analysis section we relied on publically available project material and documents (see bibliography) and, especially, on interviews we conducted with project stakeholders. A total of 16 interviews were conducted during the fieldwork of the project (end of June – September 2017, see relevant Appendix).²⁷

We structure the analysis around 9 thematic issues are as follows:

- 1. The overall experience of cooperation in projects and the work method adopted**
- 2. Obstacles and facilitating factors in project implementation**
- 3. Experience of trouble shooting during project implementation**
- 4. The ‘name issue’ as challenge in cooperation and project implementation – The ‘problem’ and the ‘solutions’ reached**
- 5. Public visibility of the project and public reactions**
- 6. The role of agency/individuals and the extent of institutionalization**
- 7. Overall impact and assessment of importance and usefulness**
- 8. Assessing the progress from Interreg III to IPA**
- 9. Beyond existing cooperation – Assessing the need for follow up actions and the prospects of future cooperation**

For each of the thematic issue areas we present the experience of the four projects that we have investigated. The experience relies heavily on the self-assessments of the stakeholders themselves. But our analysis attempted also to draw conclusions based on crosschecked information and print material. These insights are juxtaposed to or engaged with the views of stakeholders, while more general conclusions about the implementation of the projects are offered in the final section of this part of the report. Throughout the analysis, verbatim quotes from interviews are provided in order to make the points of stakeholders and the analysis more vivid. Extensive parts of the interviews, but highlighting different themes and issues, are presented in Part IV of this report.

²⁷ It should be noted that a number of additional interviews that were initially scheduled did not materialize as the interviewees themselves proved unavailable.

THEME 1

The overall experience of cooperation in projects and the work method adopted

Rationale

In this theme we examine two separate but inter-connected issues: a) the stakeholders' and project partners' general assessment of the projects implemented, and b) their perception about whether the actual implementation of the work was done 'together', i.e. with active cross-border cooperation and co-organisation of activities by partners in the two countries, or work was done 'in parallel', i.e. that both sides implemented a set of project actions without much involvement of partners from the other side of the boarder. This theme is important for understanding the overall satisfaction of stakeholders with the projects that were implemented, but also for discerning whether the implementation entailed and necessitated intensive joint work and the development of a work 'ethos' of active coordination and cooperation 'every step of the way'.

PEEBRE: Both Greek partners that participated in PEEBRE expressed their satisfaction with the whole experience of working together with the two partners from FYROM. One interviewee, with no previous experience of working with partners from FYROM, pointed out how they "overcame their fears" and their "bias", enjoying an exceedingly good level of cooperation, and even submitting new proposals to the Interreg Managing Authority following the completion of PEEBRE: "We fell in love with the project. To tell you the truth it was the first time I was going there. We had initially a fear. What should we expect, what would happen... However we had a really good cooperation. We have already submitted new proposals".

The element of trust existing between the two municipalities participating in the project was underlined by another interviewee: trust built on the strength of working together previously and on the knowledge that the Greek partner-municipality has the professional capacity to put forward and run proposals to the Managing Authority of the Interreg. As it was pointed out, "I can tell you that they trust us... When we go to discuss about the Interreg they tell us: "what would like to do together"... Of course they know that we are ahead at the level of planning and that we have the instruments and the knowledge to succeed. And I as I told you they really trust us".

DECIDE: As it was pointed out in Section 1 (see profile of DECIDE), the two partners from FYROM who had fully participated at the preparatory stage

(cooperating in preparing and submitting the application) did not participate during the implementation phase of the program – with the speculation from the Greek partners being that the FYROM partners failed to secure the necessary financing from the central government (FYROM). Thus, following the initiation of the program, the Greek partners had a limited experience of working together with their two partners from FYROM: during the one and a half year of implementing the project, from 1/4/2015 until 30/9/2016, there were no more than four meetings with partners from FYROM. Still, the interviewees had experience from other projects and related that experience. All rated cooperation with partners from FYROM as being “particularly positive” even “excellent”.

Lhi-Lna: Greek project partners expressed their satisfaction with the experience of cooperating with their partners from FYROM - describing it, for example, as “good experience”, “positive”, or “very good”. Moreover, three of the five interviewees emphasized the fortunate opportunity that they had to familiarize themselves with the neighboring country's people and its culture, underlying in particular the fact that “cooperation on cultural issues could open the way for improved bilateral relations on other fields”. On the other hand, one detects rather divergent views when it comes to the question of the character of this cooperation (“together” or “in parallel”). In fact, only one of the interviewees considered that the cooperation between Almopia and Novaci was not simply a work in parallel but a very close and effective cooperation throughout all the phases of the project, starting with the initial conception and until the successful conclusion of various actions. The majority of the interviewees stressed the “autonomy” that each municipality enjoyed when it came to the implementation of various actions.

KAIMAK: The project participants’ assessment of cooperation with their colleagues from FYROM has been quite positive, with remarks describing the cooperation “productive”, “problem-free”, “very satisfactory”. Furthermore, two of the interviewees emphasized not only the very good relations that they enjoyed with their counterparts from the Municipality of Kavadarci, but mainly the long-term experience of the Municipality of Edessa when it comes to the implementation of Interreg programs, which began at late 1990’s and has continued ever since. As it was noted, the Municipality of Edessa has collaborated on numerous occasions with the Municipality of Kavadarci.

With reference to the character of this cooperation (“together” or “in parallel”), most of the interviewees were of the opinion that it combines both elements; it was much more a joint activity during the initial conception of the project and also during activities such as progress meetings and dissemination events; but also rather in “parallel” in the case of actions and measures that each Municipality had to implement separately.

It is worth noting that one of the interviewees emphasized the very productive cooperation between the Municipality of Edessa and municipalities in FYROM and in particular the assistance, the transfer of know-how, and the “training” that the Municipality of Edessa provided to municipalities in FYROM already in the early 2000's and the initial phase of Interreg programs. In the view of this

stakeholder, during the late 1990s and early 2000s, municipalities in FYROM - due to the long-lasting aim of FYROM to integrate the EU and their little or non-existent experience in Interreg programs - regarded Greek municipalities perhaps as their most important and crucial partners in this effort.

THEME 2

Obstacles and facilitating factors in project implementation

Rationale

This theme attempted to identify as many as possible of the problems and challenges that manifested themselves as obstacles and potential 'blockages' to project work. This theme also points to the factors that made project work easier or elements that prevented obstacles and 'blockages'. Given that cross-border cooperation had to develop between areas that were in the distant and recent past, burdened by political and security problems, it was important for us to understand the types of problems, but also facilitating factors that project partners encountered and identified.

PEEBRE: Cross-border cooperation involving the Municipality of Prespes is a particular case as that specific municipality has a record of cooperating with neighboring municipalities from FYROM and Albania in the context of the so-called Prespa Park; the latter was the first transboundary protected area in the Balkans, established in February 2000 by Albania, Greece and FYROM, an initiative that has been widely recognized as quite successful.²⁸ The necessity to protect the fragile ecosystem of the two lakes, the small and the large Prespa, have encouraged contacts and cultivated a mentality of cooperation between the Municipalities of Prespes and Resen, thus creating a favorable environment for cross-border cooperation that was further promoted through the Interreg programs. A specific issue that was mentioned as a factor that could facilitate even further cross-border cooperation is the opening of a border-crossing in the area, a permanent request of the local inhabitants towards the central government in Athens. As it was underlined "we don't ask for a customs. (We want) a border crossing... We don't want to trade goods. (We want) people to be able to communicate".

²⁸ For more information on the establishment of the so-called Prespa Park see "Prespa Park", *Society for the Protection of Prespa*, http://www.spp.gr/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=10&Itemid=15&lang=el?&lang=en

DECIDE: Bureaucracy and the inefficient public administration in Greece were seen as the prime problems affecting cross-border cooperation. It is remarkable that public administration in Greece, at all levels - central government, regional authorities, municipalities – was criticized by stakeholders as not having acquired yet, 36 years after Greece joined the European Community, the technical abilities to take full advantage of the opportunities offered by EU programs, including those concerning cross-border cooperation. The limited technical capacities of local authorities in northwestern Greece, were also singled out for criticism, as “the technical capabilities of the Greek public authorities, and in particular those in small Greek cities, here in regions of northwestern Greece that have the right to participate at the program, i.e. the Interreg, are really limited”. The fact that partners from FYROM have less experience in running EU programs was not seen as an obstacle to the cooperation, but rather as an “advantage”, in the sense that it was making them even more prone to cooperation with the Greek partners, seen by and large as more experienced and technically advanced.

Lhi-Lna: None of the stakeholders interviewed identified major obstacles in the experience of previous cooperation in the context of Interreg programs. According to most of stakeholders, the cooperation was so effective that they could not single out any major problem. However, most of them referred to seemingly minor problems, such as the “distance”, the “limitations and problems linked to the Greek economic crisis” and the “differences in legislation and bureaucracy”. When it comes to the question of distance, one of the interviewees mentioned that the factor of distance, or in other words the “difficulty to meet in person” in order to resolve various issues, created at some points a difficult context. One of the interviewees advanced the idea that the Greek economic crisis did not permit a much more effective cooperation between the two municipalities, since the lack of a more specialized staff rendered the Greek side unable to fully profit from the project and the cooperation with Novaci. Three out of five interviewees referred to the “differences in legislation and bureaucracy” that complicated at some points the cooperation. More specifically, due to these differences the two Municipalities had trouble in implementing a similar action in a comparable time frame, with the Greek municipality quite frequently taking more time. When it comes to the facilitators of the cooperation, all of the interviewees referred to the very effective communication and coordination of the two sides whenever there was a need to overcome a difficulty.

KAIMAK: Most stakeholders referred to the previous experience that their municipality has had in the implementation of Interreg projects with various municipalities in FYROM. As some interviewees explained, the Municipality of Edessa has taken full advantage of this experience by establishing long-term contacts with municipalities in FYROM when it comes to the design and the implementation of Interreg projects). From this perspective, all of the interviewees were of the opinion that the most important facilitator during the implementation of the project was the very satisfactory and pre-existing networks of cooperation, particularly at staff-level. On the other hand, one of the interviewees did refer to certain obstacles such as the difficulties that municipalities in FYROM face in their effort to adjust to European legislation and

procedures, the differences in legislation between Greece and FYROM, the frequent changes in legislation in FYROM and also the impact of the Greek economic crisis.

THEME 3

Experience of trouble shooting during project implementation

Rationale

This theme can be seen as a logical continuation of the previous one. If project partners encountered more or less problems and challenges it is worth examining the nature and types of solutions they developed in response to them. Trouble shooting or problem solving instruments are crucial parameter in every project implementation, and, of course, even more significant in projects that had the potential to generate politically sensitive issues and questions.

PEEBRE: No major problems during the implementation of the projects were reported by the stakeholders. The only issue that was alluded to by one stakeholder concerned the behavior of mayors of a certain political party in FYROM that had the tendency to accompany the presence of their Greek colleagues with cultural symbols seen as “nationalist” in Greece: “At times they would create some minor issues, like those I mentioned you. With the ‘names’, with some events accompanied by certain songs that you were forced to listen to... They would play it... We would leave... Or (in other times) we would enter a hall and would come across specific photos...”.

DECIDE: The one serious problem that arose concerned the non-participation of the FYROM partners during the implementation stage of DECIDE, that forced the Greek partners to alter part of the activities (seminars, workshops etc.), envisaged in the initial scheduling of the program, as well as their budget. Seeking to alleviate the negative consequences of that development, the Managing Authority of Interreg in Thessaloniki, asked the Greek partners of the project to cover the travel expenses of experts from Skopje to Greece for a limited number of meetings.

Lhi-Lna: All stakeholders interviewed regarded the very effective co-ordination and communication as the most important means of overcoming various problems of difficulties. In fact, all of stakeholders referred to the problems and the issues that arose as “easy to manage and resolve” while none of them referred to a particular problem that caused a dysfunction of some sort. Two of the interviewees elaborated a bit further on the issue of the “effective and constant co-ordination and communication”. They indicated that this could be

attributed to two factors, namely the “very good relationship” that was developed between the project managers of the two municipalities and also the capacity of both municipalities to “stick to the timeline and the agreed agenda of actions and measures to implement”.

KAIMAK: All stakeholders interviewed noted that the single most important means of resolving pending issues and problems during the implementation of the project was the intensive co-ordination and the constant contacts between the two municipalities. One of the stakeholders specified that such co-ordination was enhanced by the very good level of inter-personal relations which often surpassed the formal context of cooperation, both at staff-level and at political level. As it was characteristically stated, “We live in the Balkans. Here problems are being solved not only through formal means. We also need interpersonal relations and contacts. This is why it’s particularly important to have good relations not only between the administrative personnel but also between Mayors”.

THEME 4

The ‘name issue’ as challenge in cooperation and project implementation – The ‘problem’ and the ‘solutions’ reached

Rationale

Among the various existing of potential issues that could trouble cooperation between partners, the ‘elephant in the room’ could not but be the major political dispute between the two countries. We sought to clarify to what extent this obvious potential problem was actually omnipresent or not as a ‘problematic’ parameter in project work. Was it really a problem? Was it a small or a bigger issue? We were also interested to know what were the solutions devised or adopted by project partners in order to ensure that this major political problem will not hinder project work.

PEEBRE: Although very much omnipresent, for no one of the interviewees the dispute between the two states over the constitutional name of FYROM created any practical problems to cooperation, on issues like official correspondence or the organization of seminars and conferences. The partners have found a *modus operandi* on how to call each other in written and oral communication, based on the experience accumulated for more than two decades, since FYROM joined the UN, the instructions of the Managing Authority of the Interreg in Thessaloniki, as well as the relative guidelines of the Greek Ministry of Foreign Affairs. As it was pointed out “even with the problem of the name-dispute cooperation has continued... We never put it on the table of cooperation”. A stakeholder also

underlined the positive effect that a potential solution of the name dispute would have upon bilateral cooperation between the two countries, “as it would create a much better framework among the people of the two countries”.

DECIDE: None of the Greek stakeholders thought that the so-called name-dispute between the two states caused any essential problems in the bilateral cooperation. Although everyone was conscious of its existence, no one wished to obstruct cooperation with the other side. The same approach - i.e. “to deal with the situation practically” and to concentrate on cross-border cooperation itself - the Greek interviewees generally witnessed from their FYROM interlocutors. As it was put by one stakeholder, “I think that for people who are professional in their field these problems, i.e. the “name-dispute”, do not affect them. I mean that as I am trying to do my job, so they are also trying to do theirs. For some politicians, whose job is to get elected, they feel that they have to say certain things in their audience...”. The regional Managing Authority of Interreg, in Thessaloniki, has also assisted in dealing with the issue, having specific guidelines on how to address FYROM in documents and official correspondence. Thus, as far as the Greek side was concerned, “high-politics” did not obstruct in any meaningful way the development and execution of cross-border cooperation programs.

Lhi-Lna: All stakeholders interviewed were of the opinion that this dispute did not in any case affect or put in jeopardy the effective implementation of the program and particularly its joint activities. A common observation was that this was achieved mainly due to the respect of both sides for the protocol put in place by the Managing Authority of the Interreg. Some stakeholders did refer to problems linked with the name dispute but stressed that at the level of “official meetings and events”, problems “were dealt with discretion”, while the Municipality of Novaci was praised for making a particular effort of being discreet on the issue. Another interviewee confirmed the impression of a “measured attitude” shown by the Municipality of Novaci with regard to the name dispute and emphasized the legacy of friendship that the project Lhi-Lna left behind, since “we developed a particularly good relationship based on a good understanding free of any communication problems. I am convinced that they will look for us (again) as partners in future programs”.

KAIMAK: None of the stakeholders referred to any complications caused by the dispute between Greece and FYROM. As they noted, the norms and the procedures established by the Managing Authority were fully respected by both sides and this left little space for eventual tensions. From their different perspectives, most of the interviewees were of the opinion that the Interreg programs constitute a very effective means of bridging differences and establishing better relations even in the context of unresolved and pending disputes, “as we followed all the rules and procedures set by the Managing Authority of the Interreg”. Furthermore, one of the interviewees referred to the very good record that the Municipality of Edessa presents when it comes to international relations. Another interviewee emphasized the very friendly relations between municipalities in FYROM and the Municipality of Edessa since the early 2000's and the complete absence of political tensions, as “they always

viewed Greece as a friend, and supporter and not as a competitor in their European ambitions”.

THEME 5

Public visibility of the project and public reactions

Rationale

Given the political sensitivity of cross-border contacts and collaboration in the geographical areas under investigation it is important to know how project partners managed the question of project visibility. Were they open about project work and project outputs? Did they publicise enough and unhindered, as they would if the project was taking place in an area (or with partners) less “politically burdened”? And what were the public reactions to project work and project activities?

PEEBRE: Publicity is an integral and necessary part of any Interreg program and in that sense, PEEBRE had the publicity expected according to the technical requirements of the program. One interviewee described the publicity campaign of the project as “quite successful” thanks also to the support of the local community. While, in the case of the local communities making up the Municipality of Prespes, their acute interest in local affairs and their activism was seen as having played an important role in identifying the needs of the community, part of which PEEBRE sought to address.

DECIDE: Stakeholders of DECIDE implemented the publicity expected according to the technical requirements of the program. Still, some expressed the feeling that the project “did not have the publicity that it deserved”, as it was argued that one of the stakeholders involved did not advertise the project as energetically as it should and could have done. The response of the local community, the administrative region of the Municipality of Amyntaio, was described as positive but also as “indifferent”, an attitude that, according to an interviewee, pervades local mentality on many issues, with a negative effect on the development of the region. As it was succinctly put, “the local community carries a big responsibility about whether their area will progress or not... It is the mentality of the people, possibly they were raised like that, or simply they don’t care”.

Lhi-Lna: Most stakeholders were of the opinion that the visibility of the project can be regarded as quite satisfactory both in terms of the local media coverage as well as the response of the local population. All interviewees pointed out that one of the most important aspects was the effort of the municipality to present the project in most of the schools in its jurisdiction. All stakeholders also agreed that the municipality satisfied all the prerequisites described in the project.

There was a great deal of satisfaction on that matter. However, one finds a few but noteworthy variations. One of the interviewees expressed the opinion that Almopia Municipality did more than it was expected in terms of visibility, while another one thought of the outcome as rather “poor” due to the burden of the economic crisis both on the municipality's priorities and also on the general public's interest: “people... have their own problems. Citizens... have been absorbed by their problems”. Also, one of the interviewees referred to the choice of Almopia Municipality not to emphasize- in the context of the actions. Moreover, with regards to negative public reactions, one stakeholder mentioned sporadic cases of a “negative response” on the part of few citizens of Almopia: “unfortunately there was vandalism. Boards of the program were vandalized because they illustrated FYROM's flag together with the Greek and the European, i.e. the EU, flag”. However, in such cases “Almopia Municipality followed the protocol, the specifications and the guidelines of the Managing Authority of Interreg”.

KAIMAK: With regard to this question, the interviewees expressed rather divergent views. They all expressed their satisfaction with the fact that the project was presented in many schools and that a very significant number of students of various educational levels visited the facilities created by the project (i.e. the Mill of Taste in Edessa). On the other hand, different opinions were held with regard to the visibility of the project at a more general level and the response of the local community. One of the interviewees noted that the Municipality of Edessa should promote and communicate more actively such projects. Another interviewee argued that it takes time for the local community to digest and respond to such projects and that the municipality needs to maintain a very active dissemination policy in order to preserve the general public's interest. Another interviewee did refer to tensions caused by very few “nationalist and extremist elements”, especially in the early 2000s. As he remarked, “there were unfortunately a few, extreme, nationalist elements that they tried to boycott the project. We are talking about a few sad examples of behavior. However (the rest of) society is moving into a completely different context”.

THEME 6

The role of agency/individuals and the extent of institutionalization

Rationale

One of the key problems that Balkan countries, whether old democracies and states like Greece or newer like FYROM, are facing is the lack of comprehensive

institutionalization of public administration and public policies. The same applies to the overly influential role of individuals in all aspects of public policy making. We were interested to know whether this perennial problem manifested itself strongly in the projects that we investigated or whether its impact was limited. Did, for example, change in political personnel and staff impact negatively on project work? Or were various leaderships fully committed to the projects and actively ensured that work would continue unobstructed despite the change in personnel?

PEEBRE: Cross-border cooperation between the municipalities of Prespes and Resen has been a “success story” with all mayors supporting it, and not seeking to distance themselves or undermine programs that their predecessors had won. Most stakeholders interviewed argued that individuals have the capacity to significantly affect the course of cross-border cooperation. As one interviewee put it: “I think that personalities, and how open minded are looking towards the idea of cooperation play a dominant role. I don’t believe that structures are so solid that can function beyond personalities”.

DECIDE: There has been in principle “universal support” for cross-border cooperation in the project. But, as admitted by stakeholders involved in the implementation of the project, individuals that are in a leading position (like mayors or heads of NGOs) can affect the development of cross-border cooperation by intensifying it (for example by seeking actively involvement in cross-border cooperation programs) or, on the contrary, undermining it (by, for example, not participating as actively as they should in the implementation of cross-border cooperation programs). As it was habitually put “it’s irrelevant if you change the technical programmer (of the project). (However) if you change me and someone else would come in my place who did not understand the importance of the project and why we do it, then it would be hugely consequential... That would affect what happens next with the project...”

Lhi-Lna: None of the stakeholders interviewed referred to issues related with the changes of personalities (i.e. election of Mayors) and in particular to the eventual effects that such changes could have on the level of cooperation. In fact, judging by the high degree of satisfaction that most of the stakeholders communicated about their cooperation with Novaci, one might assume that they regard these networks of cooperation as a valuable *structure*, i.e. institution that has the capacity to function independently of particular leadership, for the implementation of new projects.

KAIMAK: Most of the stakeholders interviewed were of the opinion that changes in individuals do present the potential to affect the course of projects. However, they pointed out that the Municipality of Edessa has succeeded in maintaining – almost without changes - the same team of people that began implementing and managing Interreg Programs since the early 2000s. They all noted that changes in the Municipality's administration did not affect such structures. There was also the common perception that cross-border cooperation has become “institutionalized” to a large extent, bearing in mind that the channels of

communication with colleagues in FYROM have been maintained without significant changes. As one stakeholder noted, he had the opportunity to work recently with colleagues from a municipality in FYROM that he himself assisted and helped in their effort to manage Interreg programs in the early 2000s. He remarked that the progress of the colleagues from FYROM was “truly impressive”.

THEME 7

Overall impact and assessment of importance and usefulness

Rationale

This theme attempts to examine the first of a series of assessments of projects' significance. We asked stakeholders to provide their overall assessment about the significance, usefulness and impact of the projects they implemented or participated in. This is important since it provides a backdrop to the overall positive or negative inclination towards cooperation with potentially 'difficult' neighbours. It also offers insights about how stakeholders view EU-funded cross-border cooperation in general.

PEEBRE: The project sought to decrease energy consumption and to promote energy efficiency in public buildings in two regions of Greece and FYROM, where winter temperatures can be quite harsh. The project itself is assessed by stakeholders as “100 per cent useful”, and as “impressive” in its results, as “it was the first time that the Municipality could actually improve the energy efficiency of public buildings”. The fact that it also promoted, among public authorities in FYROM, awareness about the need to strive for energy efficiency, was also singled out as adding to its successful performance.

DECIDE: The project aimed to establish a logistical system, a software called *Intelligent Decision Support System* (iDSS) that would enhance the coordination capabilities of local authorities and all relative services in responding effectively to disasters, such as wildfires. The project's positive value – the strengthening Civil Protection – was self-evident for people working at the local municipality, “as when you have a wildfire, borders are irrelevant... you need the instruments to be able to cooperate”. Its scientific “added value”, because of its innovative technical character, was also a major advantage.

Lhi-Lna: The project aimed to promote economic development of the two regions by means of an increase of the tourist flow on the basis of thorough documentation and promotion of cultural and historical heritage. In that respect, all of the stakeholders interviewed expressed their satisfaction with the overall

impact of the project. It is noteworthy that all emphasized the important value of the work that led to the creation of digital archives recording important aspects of Almopia's cultural and historical heritage. Most of the stakeholders, and especially the project's managers, who had knowledge of the data concerning the operation of the Homepages created by the project, noted the impressive rise of the demand for further information, both in terms of tourism and of general knowledge about the region of Almopia after the project did promotional activities on the Internet.

KAIMAK: All stakeholders interviewed expressed their satisfaction about the impact and usefulness of the project. Their highly positive evaluation was linked not only to its impact upon the region of Edessa and its tourist appeal but also with the benefits stemming from cooperation with municipalities in FYROM. With regards to the first aspect, a stakeholder noted the project's important legacy when it comes to raising the awareness of private entrepreneurs - hotel and restaurant businesses - on the issue of the quality of the menus proposed to visitors and tourists in the wider region of Edessa. Furthermore, the positive legacy of the project for cooperation itself with municipalities in FYROM was equally highlighted, particularly with regard to its cultural aspects and the opportunity to obtain a better knowledge of neighboring countries and cultures: "tourism can help in changing mentalities; the basic thing is to accept the Other; only when you do that you can know your own self better".

THEME 8

Assessing the progress from Interreg III to IPA

Rationale

This theme attempts to take advantage of the fact that many stakeholders have either direct or indirect experience of EU cross-border cooperation over several years and under different financing schemes. Given that EU initiatives need to be improved based on 'lessons learned' from past implementation and, also, given that potentially politically sensitive cooperation will tend to rely on past experience to be more or less feasible, it's important to understand how stakeholders understand the progress of cross-border project implementation under different EU financing schemes. Moreover, local authorities, universities and NGOs have been cooperating with partners from neighbouring countries over many years; it is thus important to understand whether the trajectory of their cooperation with politically sensitive neighbouring partners has been on the whole more or less positive (or negative).

PEEBRE: The experience of cross-border cooperation, in particular for the Municipality of Prespes, was overwhelmingly positive. Cross-border cooperation

between the Municipality of Prespes and that of Resen was described as having achieved “a very good level” with the two municipalities having developed a “long-term (tradition) of cooperation” of working together in various areas, like the protection of the environment and local folklore, and on submitting proposals in programs like the Interreg. As it was succinctly put, “the two municipal authorities share a common understanding” on working together. In addition, the administrative personnel working in the two municipalities has developed a particularly close working relationship: “we know each so well. Particularly the administrative personnel that has remained in the same positions enjoys a different kind of communication”.

DECIDE: All stakeholders interviewed underlined the positive effects of cross-border cooperation, through the EU-financed programs, like the Interreg; in principle, cross-border cooperation has always being supported by local authorities. The programs have guaranteed financing, providing valuable funds that cover local developmental needs. The necessity of cross-border cooperation for a municipality situated at a border county like Amyntaion, is seen as self-evident, while it was characteristically stated that “we are obliged to have a good cooperation with neighboring countries. Nothing really divides people”. In addition it was stressed that local authorities in Greece could learn from their counterparts in FYROM, as “we are not always ahead. In some areas they are ahead. I think that they have a different mentality. They are not afraid to try”.

Lhi-Lna: It is noteworthy that none of the stakeholders interviewed referred to a previous experience of working in an Interreg project with FYROM. For most of them it was the first experience of the sort. Nevertheless, they all acknowledged the necessity of such programs and also stated their positive perception about the capacity of such programs to promote a better understanding between neighboring countries such as Greece and FYROM. Moreover, most of the stakeholders noted that one of the most enduring and positive legacies of the cooperation in the context of Lhi-Lna project is the strong ties of friendship that were created with their counterparts from FYROM, be it at the political level (i.e. Mayors) or at the administrative level (i.e. project managers). As a stakeholder underlined: “Our relations became closer... I believe that this would be a permanent feature and that many on both sides would continue to expand cooperation”.

KAIMAK: All stakeholders interviewed noted their very positive evaluation of the programs of cross-border cooperation. It is very indicative that nearly all of them have had significant experience when it comes to designing and implementing such programs with Municipalities from FYROM. Moreover, one interviewee expressed his strong satisfaction with the overall legacy of the Interreg programs when it comes to promoting channels of communication in the Balkan region: “Our aim from the beginning was to consolidate cross-border relations. And I can tell you that we have fully achieved it. We have developed human contacts, we have jointly produced work, we have realized the potential of our cooperation”.

THEME 9

Beyond existing cooperation – Assessing the need for follow up actions and the prospects of future cooperation

Rationale

Given the assessments provided in the above themes, it's important to discern whether partners involved in 'difficult' cross-border cooperation recognize the need for further, and possibly, enhanced future cooperation. It is also important to understand to what extent they would be willing themselves to take part in future cooperation efforts, what do they see as priorities or if, and how, they are willing to explore ideas for cooperation that go beyond and outside the well-known EU-funding pathway.

PEEBRE: There was unanimous support in favor of expansion of cooperation. As one stakeholder put it "it should (expand) in any case... I realized that... a hundred years – a hundred and twenty years ago there weren't any borders (between us)... We can live very well together. They are very close... Fifteen minutes away from Florina. You find Bitola. Half (of the population) in Bitola speaks Greek. Their economy depends very much on us... And (another) interesting thing is that for our country the connection to Europe is through there. Whether you like it or not".

DECIDE: There was unanimous agreement on the need to expand cross-border cooperation between the two countries, beyond the Interreg/IPA programs. A stakeholder pointed out that "unfortunately" Greece still does enjoy the same level of cross-border cooperation with its neighbors, as elsewhere in the EU, while another stressed the important financial opportunities presented by the development of cross-border cooperation with Albania and FYROM, as both states are potential candidates to join the EU. Finally, there was the reminder that for local authorities the present national, legal framework is rather cumbersome, inhibiting in practice the development of cross-border cooperation: "How can a Municipality take the initiative and come into contact with the Bitola Municipality? It's not so easy to make contacts, for the administrative personnel to move. Only through the Interreg programs... the legal framework covers us, a team of administrative personnel can travel, meet and exchange views. Otherwise it's very difficult...".

Lhi-Lna: Most of the stakeholders spoke in favor of the expansion of Interreg programs in other areas. Two of the stakeholders had precise ideas on how this very promising legacy of cooperation could be further enhanced. Their

suggestion was that permanent channels of communication between the permanent administrative personnel of the Municipalities would be important so that future cooperation could be even more effective and swift. The most positive response with regard to this matter regarded the necessity of an opening of the cooperation scheme to many institutions from the two countries and the need to overcome or modify the notion of “lead partner”. As it was pointed out, “it is necessary to expand cooperation (by) including other entities, with more NGOs, agricultural cooperatives, and why not even sports clubs”. On the other hand, all of the interviewees held the pragmatic and realist view that such issues depend mostly on the policies elaborated at a more central level as the one of the Managing Authorities, the EU and national governments.

KAIMAK: All stakeholders held the opinion that Interreg Programs will eventually change form and philosophy and that an expansion of cross-border cooperation will be very important and productive. One of the stakeholders suggested that such programs should be run by a larger community of partners from both countries. Another interviewee emphasized the need for Greece and FYROM to assume the “ownership” of cooperation and obtain a certain autonomy in designing and implementing programs of cooperation. As he noted, “maybe in our region municipalities could also acquire the freedom of movement existing in other European regions, cooperating directly between themselves and finding areas of common interest, (something) that will be the logical continuation of Interreg”.

Section 3: Comparisons

The four projects under consideration (PEEBRE, DECIDE, Lhi-Lna and KAIMAK) involved 6 Greek partners (4 municipalities, 1 Technical University and one governmental agency) and 6 partners from FYROM (3 municipalities, 1 governmental agency and 2 NGOs). The four projects had a total budget of around 1.975 € million (with PEEBRE having the highest budget of around 675,000 €, and KAIMAK the lowest with around 248.000 €), in a total program budget (i.e. for “Greece – the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia IPA Cross-Border program. 2007-2013”) of around 31,549,723 €. The implementation period of the four projects lasted around 4 and a half years - with KAIMAK beginning the earliest, in March 2012, while DECIDE being the last one to be concluded in September 2016. All four projects began with a considerable delay given the fact that the program itself, “Greece – the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia IPA Cross-Border program. 2007-2013” was approved with a considerable delay. Regarding the areas they were involved in, two projects concerned the *promotion and protection of environmental resources*, one the *promotion and protection of the natural and cultural heritage*, and another one the *promotion of sustainable tourism*.

Moving on the implementation of the four projects themselves and the wider experience of working in cross-border cooperation projects involving partners from FYROM, the opinions of the Greek stakeholders could be summarized in the following wide categories, based primarily on an analysis of the answers provided by Greek stakeholders involved in the four projects:

The overall experience of cooperation in projects and the work method adopted:

All stakeholders were satisfied and had positive feelings towards the whole experience of working with partners from FYROM, with cooperation being described for example as “productive”, “positive”, “very satisfactory”, or even “excellent”, an assessment that corresponds with previous research done on cross-border cooperation projects between the two countries,²⁹ while many

²⁹ See Γεώργιος Χρηστίδης, «Η διασυνοριακή συνεργασία ανάμεσα στο Νομό Φλώρινας και τον Δήμο Μοναστηρίου (Bitola) στο πλαίσιο του προγράμματος Interreg IIIA Ελλάδα-ΠΓΔΜ», (“Cross-border co-operation between the County of Florina and the City of Bitola in the context of Interreg IIIA Greece-FYROM Programme”), in I. Koliopoulos, K. Hatzikonstantinou, V. Gounaris (ed.), “Examining Cross-border Co-operation Between Greece and FYROM” in Greek, Epikentro Publishing House, Thessaloniki, 2008, pp. 349-390; also Γ. Χρηστίδης, «Η διασυνοριακή συνεργασία ανάμεσα στον Νομό Φλώρινας και τους Δήμους Bitola και Resen (ΠΓΔΜ) για ζητήματα περιβαλλοντικής προστασίας» (“Cross-border co-operation between the County of Florina and the Bitola and Resen Municipalities (FYROM) on issues of environmental

stakeholders underlined the element of “trust” enjoyed between the partners. In relation to the actual character of cooperation, i. e. working together or in parallel, for some of the interviewees the experience combined both elements - partners worked “together” during the initial conception of the project and during activities, such as progress meetings and dissemination events, and “parallel”, in actions and measures that each partner had to execute separately - while a number of interviewees underlined the “autonomy” that each partner enjoyed when it came to the implementation of the project. In any case, the overwhelming feeling of the Greek partners concerning the experience of working with their partners from FYROM was positive and highly satisfactory.

Obstacles and facilitating factors in project implementation:

The consensus among Greek stakeholders was that trust and a good working relations were the most important “facilitators” of the whole process, as they generated a favorable environment for cooperation. The elements of trust and working relations in many cases had been cultivated from previous experiences of working together in programs of cross-border cooperation or even in environmental programs, like in the case of the Prespa Transboundary Park involving the Prespes Municipality. Thus one can refer here to a cumulative effect of positive impact as a result of these collaborations. Among the obstacles, various issues were mentioned: difficulties faced by municipalities in FYROM in their effort to adjust to European legislation and procedures, differences in national legislation, frequent changes in legislation in FYROM, the impact of the Greek economic crisis, Greece’s insufficient public administration, the limited technical capabilities of Greek local authorities or even the factor of “physical distance” that hindered the ability to resolve swiftly various issues that arose. However, none of the above mentioned obstacles were deemed as too serious as to threaten the implementation of any project or to derail the cooperation itself.

Experience of trouble shooting during project implementation:

No substantial problems were mentioned by the stakeholders for the majority of projects. The exception concerned one project (DECIDE), where the non-participation of the FYROM partners, an issue that emerged only after the beginning of the implementation phase of the project, was a negative development that forced the Greek partners to alter part of the activities (seminars, workshops, etc), envisaged in the initial scheduling of the project, as well as their budget. Another issue that was alluded to by an interviewee, and was described as a “problem”, concerned the behavior of mayors of a certain political party in FYROM that had the tendency “to accompany the presence of

protection”), in proceedings of the international conference “Western Macedonia: from its incorporation to the Greek state until today”, organised by the University of Western Macedonia, the Regional Authority of Western Macedonia and the Municipality of Florina, 8 to 11 November 2012, (Epikentro Publishers, 2014), pp. 39-57

their Greek colleagues with cultural symbols seen as nationalist” in Greece. Still that did not appear to cause any problems to bilateral cooperation itself.

The ‘name issue’ as challenge in cooperation and project implementation – The ‘problem’ and the ‘solutions’ reached:

The name dispute was very much “omnipresent” in the minds of all involved, as an issue that *separates* and could *potentially* generate tension. However, none of the stakeholders interviewed reported that the dispute obstructed cooperation, even on practical issues, like official correspondence or the organization of seminars and conferences. The partners found a *modus operandi* on how to call each other in written and oral communication, based on the experience accumulated for more than two decades since FYROM became a member of the UN, the instructions of the Managing Authority of the Interreg in Thessaloniki as well as the relevant guidelines of the Greek Ministry of Foreign Affairs. No one of the Greek partners involved with the four projects challenged the significance of the dispute, although none was ready to allow the dispute to undermine or obstruct cooperation with the partners from FYROM, provided that the necessary mutually accepted ways (see above) were followed. Thus, it could be argued that, although the *dispute* is recognized as a serious issue affecting the whole context of bilateral relations, for the Greek stakeholders the prevalent feeling was that it should not obstruct, in any meaningful way, the development and implementation of the project they were involved in. For the *dispute* itself, the consensus was that “is holding back relations”, with a settlement of the problem would open up important opportunities for the development of bilateral relations.

Public visibility of the project and public reactions:

Publicity is an integral and necessary part of any Interreg program and in that sense all the projects had the publicity expected according to the technical requirements of the program. Still, in some projects, some stakeholders interviewed expressed the feeling that the project “did not have the publicity that deserved”, arguing that the municipality involved “could have promoted” more actively the concrete project, while the Greek economic crisis was mentioned, by one stakeholder, as having affected negatively both media coverage and local society response. Local media coverage was described as being “satisfactory” only in one project. Concerning the response of local societies, answers varied: in one case, intense local interest and activism was seen as having played an important role in identifying the needs of the community, part of which the program sought to address; in another, the response of the local community, was described as “positive” but also as “indifferent”, an attitude that according to a stakeholder pervades local mentality on many issues, with a negative effect on local development; while in another case, it was underlined that “the local community needs time to digest and respond to such projects” and thus that “the

Municipality needs to maintain a very active dissemination policy in order to preserve the general public's interest".

The role of agency/individuals and the extent of institutionalization:

Although it is assumed that the idea of cross-border cooperation enjoys "universal support" among all stakeholders involved, like municipalities and NGO's, and thus it is "unopposed", a prevalent opinion expressed by the stakeholders was that individuals in a "leading position", like Mayors, do have the capacity to affect the development of cross-border cooperation: they can intensify it, for example by seeking actively involvement in cross-border cooperation programs or, on the contrary, they can undermine it by, for example, not participating as actively as they should in the implementation of cross-border cooperation projects. As it was characteristically stated "structures are not so solid that can function beyond personalities". At the same time, the idea that in practice cross-border cooperation between the two countries has become, to a large extent, "institutionalized", irrespective of personnel changes taking place, for example among Mayors, was widespread, due largely to the positive experience accumulated until today and the good working relations developed between administrative staff.

Overall impact and assessment of importance and usefulness:

All Greek partners rated, without any skepticism or doubts, as "highly useful" and "valuable" the overall impact of the project they were involved in. The projects addressed both specific, local needs - whether in energy efficiency, civil protection, tourism or preserving cultural and historical inheritance, leaving in some cases what was described as "an important legacy" - while they also strengthened the bonds of trust and cooperation with partners from FYROM. One of the projects even promoted awareness, among public authorities in FYROM, about the need to deal with an important issue (energy efficiency), while another was seen as having an "added scientific value", due to its original character.

Assessing the progress from Interreg III to IPA:

The experience of cross-border cooperation has been overwhelmingly positive, with all stakeholders interviewed underlining its positive effects. In principle under its present form, cross-border cooperation has always being supported by local authorities, as EU programs have guaranteed financing, providing valuable funds that cover local developmental needs. The capacity of such programs to promote a better understanding between neighboring countries, such as Greece and FYROM, was also underlined, as well as the significant "capital" of trust and friendship they have generated, particularly between the administrative staff of municipalities (a common feeling across administrative staff, even for those with

no previous experience in working with partners from FYROM). It was even mentioned that local authorities in Greece could learn from their counterparts in FYROM, as in certain aspects local authorities in FYROM are more advanced. Legal constraints faced by local authorities and certain inefficiencies in the way EU cross-border co-operation programs function were underlined: it was argued that for local authorities the present legal framework in Greece is rather cumbersome, inhibiting in practice the development of cross-border cooperation, while other stakeholders stressed the necessity of an opening of the cooperation scheme to more institutions from both countries, to a “larger community of partners”, and the need to overcome or modify the notion of “lead partner”. The necessity for Greece and FYROM to assume the “ownership” of cooperation and obtain certain autonomy in designing and implementing programs of cooperation, was also underlined.

Beyond existing cooperation – Assessing the need for follow up actions and the prospects of future cooperation:

In all four cases there was unanimous support and solid argumentation in favor of the expansion of cross-border co-operation between the two countries. The need to have cross-border co-operation and to further expand it, is considered as “self-evident” given the geographic location of the regions involved and the financial benefits of the co-operation itself for the localities concerned, a particularly important factor at a time when central budgetary financial support for municipalities in Greece has decreased significantly due to the economic crisis affecting the country.³⁰ Furthermore, cross-border cooperation has been an important policy instrument, generating significant capital of trust and good-working relations among people involved with its projects, and thus it is contributing to improved relations between Greece and FYROM, at a time when bilateral relations are not fully normalized. Finally, as one stakeholder reminded, Greece does not enjoy the same level of cross-border cooperation with its neighbors, as it happens elsewhere in the EU, for example in Central Europe, and it should strive to expand its cross-border cooperation with its neighbors.

³⁰ It is indicative that the percentage of EU budgetary participation for the GR-FYROM cross-border cooperation programs increased from 75%, for the Programming Period 2000-2006, to 85% for the Programming Period 2007-2013, while there is talk of increasing European Regional Development Funds participation even further, to 95%. Giorgos Papapostolou, “Territorial Cooperation in South-East Europe & the Greece-FYROM Cross-Border Territorial Programme”, Thesis, MA in Politics and Economics of Contemporary Eastern and Southeastern Europe”, Department of Balkan, Slavic and Oriental Studies, University of Macedonia, Thessaloniki, 2015, p. 35, https://dspace.lib.uom.gr/bitstream/2159/19400/9/PapapostolouGeorgios_MSc2015.pdf (last accessed 12/11/2017)

PART III

COOPERATION IN THE FIELD OF HIGHER EDUCATION

Introduction

The number of academic works dealing with the issue of the cooperation between Greece and FYROM in educational and more generally cultural affairs is quite limited. In light of the long-lasting name dispute and its various implications, one notes a constant interest, from the standpoint of scientific research, in the evolution of the political relations between the two countries since the beginning of the 1990s and until the most recent period. Furthermore, important attention has been devoted to the issue of the economic relations between the two countries, which developed very rapidly after the Interim Accord of 1995 and continue to be very strong even in the context of the long economic crisis in Greece.³¹ It is well known that, in cases of long-lasting disputes between countries, the role of education and cultural exchanges are of considerable importance when it comes to changing negative stereotypes and creating a climate favorable to dialogue. It is, therefore, the aim of this chapter to map basic understandings on how the issue of cooperation in educational affairs between Greece and FYROM has evolved and what will eventually be its future.

31 There are many publications that address this issue. We can refer to the following: Haralambos Kondonis, "Bilateral relations between Greece and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia", in *Athens-Skopje: An uneasy symbiosis (1995-2005)*, Edited by Kofos, E. and Vlasidis, V., pp. 55-88, Athens: ELIAMEP, Christos Nikas, "The effects of the interim accord on the economic relations between Greece and FYROM", in *Athens-Skopje: An uneasy symbiosis (1995-2005)*, Edited by Kofos, E. and Vlasidis, V., pp. 89-123, Athens: ELIAMEP, Dimitri Mardas & Christos Nikas, "Trading and investing in the name of ...economic relations between Greece and FYROM", in *Southeast European and Black Sea Studies*, 2008, vol. 8, n.3, pp. 253-267, Ritsa A. Panagiotou, "Greece and FYROM: the dynamics of economic relations, in *Southeast European and Black Sea Studies*, 2008, vol. 8, n.3, pp. 227-251, Maria Brozou, "Economic and political relations between Greece and FYROM during the last 20 years: Did the economy affect politics or the opposite?", (Master's dissertation, University of Macedonia, Department of Balkan, Slavic and Oriental Studies, 2012), retrieved from *Psepheda- Digital Library and Institutional Repository*: <http://dspace.lib.uom.gr/handle/2159/15967>, Aristotle Tziampiris, "Greece and FYROM: A partnership for stability in Southeastern Europe?", in *Southeast European and Black Sea Studies*, 2002, vol. 2, n.1, pp.215-225.

Section 1: Cooperation at the governmental level

As mentioned above, there has been little attention to the issue of cross-border cooperation between Greece and FYROM in the context of the various and successive forms and periods pertaining to the Interreg framework (2000-today).³² When it comes to the specific issue of the cooperation in the educational sector, one finds works that describe the difficulties that characterized the period of the 1990s and, inversely, the significant progress as well as the intensification and the diversification of various forms of cooperation since the late 1990s and the early 2000s. According to Aristotle Tziampiris, during the turbulent period of the 1990s there were few opportunities for cooperation in educational and cultural affairs and, in fact, one could refer to unresolved “educational and cultural disputes between Greece and FYROM”.³³ The reversal of this situation began modestly and gradually since the mid and late-1990s, in particular after the signing of the Interim Accord (1995) and the intensification of the political dialogue between the two countries. This Accord did not address the issue of the “recognition by the Greek State of the diplomas granted by FYROM’s Institutions of Higher education” and more generally no Training agreement was signed between Greece and FYROM until the late 1990’s and early 2000s.³⁴ As Haralambos Kondonis notes, this did not “prohibit increasing co-operation among non-governmental organizations and universities focusing on educational exchanges and educational and cultural programmes”.³⁵ Thus, by the mid-2000s, one may refer to a very different and encouraging landscape in co-operation in education. However, as Haralambos Kondonis explains, “the name issue obstructed co-operation initiatives” at a governmental level and such initiatives developed mainly at “a non- governmental level”.³⁶

As it will be shown later in this section of our report, the cooperation in educational affairs did not change drastically in the period between the early 2000s and until recently at a governmental level. An important shift came in 2015 with the announcement by the governments of both countries of a series of Confidence Building Measures (Greek: ΜΟΕ, Μέτρα Οικοδόμησης Εμπιστοσύνης), which included the area of education and culture. These

32We are referring to the three following periods: **1)** 2000-2006: Interreg III-A, Greece-the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, **2)** 2007-2013: GREECE - THE FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA IPA CROSS BORDER PROGRAMME, **3)** 2014-2020: Interreg- IPA CBC, Greece- the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.

33Aristotle Tziampiris (2002), op. cit., p. 222.

34Haralambos Kondonis (2005), op.cit., p. 67

35Ibid, p. 67

36Ibid, p. 68. Two examples of cooperation that fit in the pattern of a governmental framework were: 1) the Agreement on military co- operation (signed in December 1999) which gave the opportunity to cadets from FYROM to attend military academies in Greece and 2) the SEELight Project (South-East European Lambda Network Facility for Research and Education) a trans-Balkan fibre-optics infrastructure project for the promotion of education and inter-university links. The SEELight project was funded by the HiPERB (Hellenic Plan for the Reconstruction of the Balkans. For more information see Ritsa Panagiotou (2008), op.cit. pp. 233-234.

measures regarded the “cooperation between universities, research centers and institutes, the exchange of students and the encouragement of cultural cooperation and exchanges”.³⁷ These measures have already reversed the stagnant situation in educational and cultural affairs through the intensification of cooperation between universities as well as the granting of scholarships (Athens has granted 3 scholarships for the year 2016-2017 and FYROM is supposed to grant 5 scholarships for the English-speaking department of Informatics at the University of Ohrid).³⁸

Section 2: Other forms of cooperation at various levels

One of the earliest frameworks of exchanges and cooperation in the education sector was the choice of numerous students from FYROM to study in the private colleges of Thessaloniki, given that it was “institutionally impossible” to study in Greek State Universities.³⁹ Apart from the political tensions and the absence of an agreement regulating the cooperation in education between Greece and FYROM, the choice of students from FYROM to study in the private colleges of Thessaloniki can be also explained by the possibility to have undergraduate and graduate courses in English. The rapid growth in the numbers of these students was impressive: in 1997, “the two largest English-language colleges in Thessaloniki, namely the American College of Thessaloniki and City Liberal Studies counted 36 students from FYROM. In 2002, they increase to more than 220, corresponding to more than 15% of total registrations and comprising by far the largest group of foreign students”.⁴⁰ Recent data show that students from FYROM continue to choose Thessaloniki’s private colleges in important numbers.

37Άγγελος Αθανασόπουλος, “Τα 11 Μέτρα Οικοδόμησης Εμπιστοσύνης που συμφώνησαν Αθήνα και Σκόπια”, *Το ΒΗΜΑ*, 24 Ιουνίου 2015.

38Βασίλης Νέδος, “Κινητικότητα με ΠΓΔΜ με επίκεντρο τα ΜΟΕ”, *Η Καθημερινή*, 30 Σεπτεμβρίου 2017.

39Christos Nikas (2005), *op. cit.*, p. 105. Apart from the political tensions and the absence of an agreement regulating the cooperation in education between Greece and FYROM, the choice of students from FYROM to study in the private colleges of Thessaloniki can be also explained by the possibility to have undergraduate and graduate courses in English.

40 *Ibid*, p. 105

The International faculty of Sheffield, CITY College- Number of active students from FYROM⁴¹

Academic year	Bulgaria	FYROM
2009-10	88	55
2010-11	74	47
2011-12	120	62
2012-13	158	56
2013-14	179	74
2014-15	187	97
2015-16	175	95

Along with higher education institutions of the private sector, cooperation between Greece and FYROM was expanded in the 2000s by following three more means: a) initiatives implemented by NGOs or international organizations, such as the “Pericles Programme” for Greek language teaching in Bitola and Gevgeli, funded by UNESCO⁴² and the “programme for combating unemployment through training, carried out in FYROM in 2001-2002 by the Thessaloniki-based NGO *Humanitarian Defense* in collaboration with local NGOs”,⁴³ b) direct collaboration between university faculties of the two countries for the realization of specific projects, such as financial aid for the Computer Science Department of the Cyril & Methodius University for the creation of a computer lab, and collaboration between Cyril and Methodius University and the University of Ioannina in natural sciences, in June 2001⁴⁴ and c) intensive and frequent collaboration between universities and faculties of the two countries in the context of EU-funded projects pertaining to the TEMPUS⁴⁵ and Interreg frameworks.

41Data provided by Nikos Zaharis, Director of the South-East European Research Center at CITY College. We would like to thank him for his assistance.

42Haralambos Kondonis (2005), op.cit., p. 68. This programme was implemented with the joined effort of the Florina Primary Education Department, the University of Bitola, the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, the Florina Municipal Agency for Social Development and the Municipality of Bitola.

43Ibid, p. 67. There are other examples that fit in the same pattern. For instance, in 2004-2005, the *EAST/WEST Institute* enhanced under its auspices intensive discussions between the Department of Balkan Studies of the University of Florina (Greece), the department of Public Administration of the St Kliment Ohridski University (FYROM) and the Department of Economics of the University of Prilep (FYROM) in order to promote their cooperation in the context of the “Euroregion /Prespa/ Ohrid”. These talks did not, however, result in a specific outcome.

44Ibid, p. 67

45Cooperation between Greece and FYROM in the context of TEMPUS, the European Union’s programme supporting the modernization of Higher Education in partner countries of Eastern Europe, Central Asia, the Western Balkans and the Mediterranean, regards mainly the TEMPUS III (2000-2006) and the TEMPUS IV (2007-2013) periods. For more information on the TEMPUS

This third category merits a special attention due to the important number of projects and programmes that were realized jointly by educational institutions of the two countries. When it comes to the TEMPUS framework, there have been twenty-one (21) projects implemented, involving the cooperation between higher education institutions of both countries in the following 3 periods (TEMPUS II: 1994-2000, TEMPUS III: 2000-2006, TEMPUS IV: 2007-2013).⁴⁶ In the TEMPUS II period only two projects by higher education institutions of the two countries were implemented.⁴⁷ In the context of TEMPUS III fourteen (14) projects were implemented. In most of these projects, higher education institutions of Greece and FYROM were the leading partners while in other cases they participated in the larger consortia of partners. In this period (2000-2006), one notes the diversification of the objectives of these projects. Apart from the objective of curricula development, there were also-among others- the objectives of the development of learning methods used in higher education institutions in FYROM⁴⁸ and training enhancing the adjustment to EU norms and regulations.⁴⁹ In the TEMPUS IV period (2007-2013), our research has been able to identify five projects.⁵⁰ A difference worth noting with regard to the themes of the projects is the frequency of projects with a clear regional (Western Balkan) character.⁵¹

When it comes to the Interreg framework for cross-border cooperation, we have been able to single out thirty-seven (37) implemented projects pertaining to the two following periods: 2000-2006, Interreg III-A, 27 projects; 2007-2013, IPA CBC, 10 projects. A factor which may explain the significant difference in the number of education-related projects between the two periods may be the explicit reference to the promotion of cross-border cooperation via the cooperation of education-related institutions in the programming document of

programme and its successor the ERASMUS+ visit the programme's Homepage:

<http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/tempus/>

46 All corresponding information and data on the TEMPUS programmes involving Greece and FYROM were retrieved from the TEMPUS official homepage:

http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/tempus/participating_countries/fyrom_en.php (last assessed on November 20 2017)

47 Due to the fact that these were- to the best of our knowledge- the first joint education programmes between Greece and FYROM within an EU framework, it would be worthwhile to mention them in detail. Both projects-accepted in 1999- had the objective of developing or establishing new academic curricula in FYROM with the assistance of Greek Universities: 1) "Modernization of Public administration and Public Policy in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia" (Partners: University of Macedonia- Greece- University St. Kliment Ohridski-Bitola), 2) "Distributed Information Technologies: New Curricula and Flexible Education" (Partners: Aristotle University of Thessaloniki and Sts. Cyril and Methodius University of Skopje).

48 See for instance the following project: "Multilingual Internet: Step-by-step Math for all" (Partners: The University of Macedonia- Greece and the University of St. Kliment of Ohrid).

49 See for instance the following project: "Towards EU copyright and neighboring rights standards" (Partners: The University of Macedonia- Greece- the University of Sts. Cyril and Methodius).

50 This figure regards the projects accepted in the 1st call for proposals (2008).

51 See for instance the following project: "Harmonizing Sport Science Curricula in the Balkans in the EU perspective" (Leading partner: Rome University of Movement Sciences, Partners: National and Kapodistrian University of Athens, Ministry of Education and Science of FYROM, State University of Tetovo).

the Interreg III-A, 2000-2006.⁵² It should be specified that the basic criterion for defining an Interreg project as educational in character in the context of this research was the participation and explicit involvement of education-related institutions from both countries.⁵³ However, there was also a smaller group of projects whose subject could be characterized as educational (i.e. professional training, student exchanges, joint seminars and workshops) even if they did not necessitate the participation of education-related institutions.⁵⁴

In both periods (2000-2006 and 2007-2013), seventeen (17) out of the thirty-seven (37) implemented projects involved the cooperation of education related institutions of both countries. In other words, the Interreg framework has clearly functioned as a very important channel and facilitator of cross-border cooperation in the field of education in a manner similar and comparable to the TEMPUS framework. It is observable that in both periods of the Interreg framework (2000-2013), such projects covered a wide variety of objectives, which included transfer in know-how, curricula development, professional training (i.e. the tourism sector), the health-care system, the protection of the environment or the promotion of cultural heritage, among others.⁵⁵ The projects that did not involve an education-related Institution focused frequently on professional training and cultural affairs and exchanges.⁵⁶

In summing up the general context of cooperation between Greece and FYROM in educational affairs, it is clear that due to the absence of direct and intergovernmental frameworks and agreements the EU frameworks have proved to be one of the most decisive factors enabling, channeling and shaping the cooperation between Greece and FYROM. In all appearances, it permitted the establishment of networks of cooperation engaging the public Universities and somewhat counterbalanced the difficulties and the complications relating to the governmental level. The Institutions of the private-sector (particularly those of

⁵²We are referring to the measure n. 4 (Cooperation of education-related Institutions for the promotion of cross-border cooperation) of the priority axis n.3 (Quality of life-environment). For more see the corresponding programming document at the homepage of the Managing Authority for the Interreg Programmes:

<http://www.interreg.gr/en/programmes/bilateral-cooperation-programmes/greece-former-yugoslav-republic-of-macedonia.html> (Last assessed, November 20, 2017)

⁵³See for instance the following project from the 2000-2006 period: "Cross-border cooperation between Universities and Education Institutions in the area of natural disasters and environmental education" (Partners: Aristotle University of Thessaloniki- University of St. Kliment Ohridski of Bitola)

⁵⁴See for instance the following project from the 2000-2006 period: "Enhancement of cross-border cooperation via the implementation of programmes for professional training of unemployed persons from Greece and FYROM in the area of alternative tourism" (Partners: Municipality of Cherso- Greece- Municipality of Gevgeli- FYROM)

⁵⁵See for instance the following project from the 2000-2006 period: "Programme of Post-Graduate studies on Informatics in FYROM-development of joint educational activities- transfer of know-how" (Partners: University of Macedonia- Greece- University of St. Kliment Ohridski at Bitola- FYROM).

⁵⁶See for instance the following project of the 2000-2006 period: "Promotion and dissemination of elements of cultural heritage and exchange of know-how in the area of traditional music". This project did not directly involve education-related Institutions. It did however propose joint seminars and workshops for students of music studies and also student exchange between the two countries.

Thessaloniki), also seem to have provided a very stable framework for educational exchanges and cooperation.

Section 3: Analysis

In order to process the above analysis in a more informed and up-to-date manner, we interviewed academic and administrative personnel from both the public and private Institutions of higher education in Thessaloniki. In total, five interviews were conducted in relation to the issue of cooperation between Greece and FYROM in higher education. The effort was made to include both academic and administrative staff from public and private education and research-related Institutions in the city of Thessaloniki.⁵⁷

We structure the analysis around 4 thematic issue areas:

- 1. Background and generic aspects of cooperation in the field of higher education Obstacles and facilitating factors in project implementation**
- 2. Assessment of cooperation – evolution, obstacles, facilitators**
- 3. Assessment of regional aspects of cooperation - Comparative dimension: How does cooperation measure against cooperation with other neighbouring countries**
- 4. The legacy of cooperation and future prospects**

We have opted for a presentation of the findings from the interviews according to the four above-mentioned themes. Furthermore, we made the choice to present the responses of the stakeholders by distinguishing between public and private institutions in order to measure differences and similarities in their experience.

⁵⁷ All interviews were conducted in Thessaloniki on November 1 and 2, 2017. Two professors were interviewed from the University of Macedonia (these interviews took place in the main building of the University of Macedonia at 156 Egnatia Av. in Thessaloniki on November 1, 2017 at 13.00 and 15.00 pm). One (1) senior administrative officer and research coordinator was interviewed from the IHU (International Hellenic University), which happens to be the only Greek University that offers both undergraduate and post-graduate studies in English (this interview took place in the main building of the IHU at Thessaloniki on November 2, 2017 at 12.00 pm). One senior administrative officer from the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki responded to our questions in writing on November 2, 2017. Finally, one senior administrative officer and research coordinator was interviewed from CITY College, the Greek branch of the prominent British University of Sheffield (official title: The University of Sheffield International Faculty); this interview took place on November 1, 2017 at the offices of the CITY College at 24, Proxenou Koromila in Thessaloniki at 13.00 pm.

THEME 1

Background and generic aspects of cooperation in the field of higher education

Rationale

In this theme we explore the background and generic aspects of cooperation in higher education. Issues like when did the cooperation with FYROM start, which were its forms, and what are the current trends in this cooperation are among the issues we examined. We also attempted to collect data and assessments about whether cooperation is becoming more frequent or, in contrast, whether it is becoming less frequent or even stagnant. Generic aspects form the backdrop for our subsequent analysis.

Public Higher Education Institutions: All interviewees from public institutions of Thessaloniki confirmed that the cooperation of their respective institutions in FYROM can be regarded as recent, limited and rather sporadic. In terms of determining the period it began we noted different responses according to the specificities of each institution. In the case of the University of Macedonia, one interviewee stated: “to the best of my knowledge this type of cooperation began around 2004-2005 in two forms, firstly with the frequent and enthusiastic participation of academics from FYROM in conferences in Greece and secondly with the participation of our University in Interreg programmes”.⁵⁸ In the case of the Aristotle University the interviewees emphasized the very recent character of this cooperation: “Our cooperation began under the auspices of our department of International Relations in 2013 with the signing of two agreements on scientific cooperation, one with the Ss. Cyril and Methodius University in Skopje in 2013 and one with the St. Kliment Ohridski University of Bitola in 2016. The agreements include the exchange of academic staff, the development of joint scientific projects and the co-organization of conferences”.⁵⁹ In the case of the International Hellenic University the beginning of the cooperation was traced back to 2008 with the organization of educational exhibitions and other presentations.

As to the different types of this cooperation, the responses provided indicate the long-lasting difficulties in developing synergies and various forms of cooperation. Apart from the two above-mentioned agreements of the Aristotle University⁶⁰, the University of Macedonia has signed only one similar agreement with the Ss. Cyril and Methodius University in Skopje in 2014. Also one common

⁵⁸Interview with a professor of the University of Macedonia in Thessaloniki.

⁵⁹Interview with a senior administrative officer of the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki.

⁶⁰With regard to these two programmes of the Aristotle University we were provided with the information that in both cases the cooperation among the institutions of the two countries did not really materialize.

trait of cooperation is the reception of post-graduate students from FYROM. These numbers however do not seem to be very significant. For instance, we have been provided with the information that the English-speaking Post-Graduate Programme of the Department of Balkan, Slavic and Oriental Studies of the University of Macedonia has since its inception year 2008 received only six students from FYROM; in contrast, the same programme has hosted dozens of students from other Balkan countries.

Private Higher Education Institutions: In the case of CITY College, the findings were completely different. The interviewee indicated that the cooperation with FYROM can be traced back to the early 2000s and that it can be divided in two categories: 1) cooperation in EU-funded research programmes and 2) reception of students in undergraduate and post-graduate studies. As it was explained, the cooperation in research programmes is quite recent, yet it has already included most frameworks (i.e. FP7, H2020, and Interreg). The interviewee explained that when it comes to research there seems to be a very good record of cooperation between Greece and FYROM: “There have been studies- I know of one that dates back to 2012- which show, on the basis of statistical data on FYROM’s participation in EU-funded research programmes, that Greece has been a privileged partner for FYROM, certainly the most privileged in the Balkans”.⁶¹

When it comes to students from FYROM that choose CITY College, the interviewee stressed the “smooth” and “uninterrupted” flow: “The students from FYROM constitute the biggest part of our cooperation. In 2002, the presidency and the ministry of education of FYROM provided 20 scholarships for CITY College. And of course, there are those who come by their own means. This has continued ever since without problems. Despite the different governments in FYROM, the programme was never halted. This shows their satisfaction with what we offer.”⁶² This Thessaloniki-based private university has an astonishing track record in attracting students from FYROM: “In total, there must have been around 500 alumni from FYROM since the first year we received students from there. Our alumni include ministers, CEOs of major banks and other enterprises, and also university professors”.⁶³

61Interview with a senior administrative officer/ research co-coordinator of The University of Sheffield International Faculty, CITY College

62Ibid.

63Ibid.

THEME 2

Assessment of cooperation – Evolution, obstacles, facilitators

Rationale

This theme attempts to identify the core dimensions of the project with regards to obstacles to cooperation or facilitation of it. The stakeholders provide information how cooperation evolved and whether it unfolded without serious problems. Questions we sought to investigate were: How did the cooperation with FYROM evolve? Which were the difficulties, the advantages and the benefits of this cooperation? How did the long-lasting name-dispute affect this cooperation?

Public Higher Education Institutions: The most optimistic view on the evolution of the cooperation in education between Greece and FYROM was expressed by the interviewee of the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki: “Our cooperation did progress and led to exchanges of academic staff, joint publications in scientific journals and common participations and presentations in international conferences”⁶⁴. The same firm view regards the view on the effects of the long-lasting name dispute on cooperation in education: “Our cooperation in educational and academic affairs was not affected”⁶⁵.

The interviewees from the University of Macedonia and the International Hellenic University gave a very different view on the matter, in the sense that they all held the opinion that the name dispute did affect the cooperation between the two countries, both in terms of the general climate in the relations between institutions and academic staff and also in specific issues and policies. In the case of the University of Macedonia, one interviewee regarded the name dispute as one of the main factors obstructing not only an Erasmus agreement but also a more intense cooperation at other levels: “There was and still exists an important will for cooperation on both sides. But there is also a lot of fear. Even if we secured that the stamps wouldn’t contain symbols that may pose us problems, there could be problems with the content of the courses. For instance, a course on the evolution of the diplomatic relations between Greece and FYROM could create problems. And also, there is the issue of language. The Greek students would have to take courses in “*Macedonian*”. The Greek Universities are official sector legal entities. How could they accept to sign such provisions? I could never sign that. There is a great deal of hesitation on behalf of the Greek academics. No one would like to see his/her career jeopardized (as a result of

⁶⁴Interview with senior administrative officer of the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki.

⁶⁵Ibid.

such a collaboration seen as controversial)".⁶⁶ Furthermore, the interviewee noted that apart from the name issue, another obstacle for developing ERASMUS agreements with FYROM is its inclusion in the group of the partner/candidate countries, which are eligible only under certain conditions.⁶⁷

In the case of the International Hellenic University, the interviewee noted that the response from the population in FYROM towards various initiatives of the university in FYROM (educational exhibitions and presentations) was "very positive" and that "particularly in the Southern parts of the country the population has been very friendly". However, he specified that there were also problems: "I would say that, in general terms, those who are not related to the state authorities in FYROM are much friendlier towards Greece. We had some issues with certain Institutions in FYROM".⁶⁸

Private Higher Education Institutions: In the case of the CITY College, the interviewee indicated a generally "problem-free" cooperation but with certain exceptions at the level of the student population: "We never had any problems with the presidency, the ministries or other formal institutions in FYROM. It is rather they who manifest a certain fear due to the tension that has been. They really love our country. They love our country very much. We offer them a very good combination of high-quality British education and a city in which they enjoy to live in. There have been some students that have experienced verbal abuse. We estimate that this might have reduced somewhat the number of those who want to come to Greece. We never had any such problem in our classrooms which, by the way, are all multi-cultural and multi-ethnic".⁶⁹ Furthermore, the interviewee advanced the idea that bilateral relations in education will flourish if the name issue is resolved: 'If the name issue is resolved, we'll experience a drastic improvement in our relations and a growth in the flow of students. Even the problems have not prevented us from doing so much. We never had any issue when we referred to their country as FYROM. They seem to understand the Greek choice".⁷⁰

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Interview with a professor of the University of Macedonia

67 For more information see the Homepage of the ERASMUS+ Programme:

https://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/about/who-can-take-part_en

68 Interview with a senior administrative officer of the IHU.

69 Interview with a senior administrative officer and research coordinator of the CITY College.

70 Ibid.

THEME 3

Assessment of regional aspects of cooperation – Comparative dimension: How does cooperation with FYROM measure against cooperation with other neighbouring countries

Rationale

Having assessed above the merits of cooperation with FYROM's institutions, this theme attempts to assess 'horizontally' by comparing it with relevant collaborative schemes that developed with other neighbouring and Balkan countries. The importance of this investigation is obvious: if all other issues, such as proximity, funding opportunities, educational needs etc, remain equal, then the differences in outputs, whether positive or negative, could be linked more plausibly with the political 'baggage' of relations with FYROM. Moreover, the comparative dimension can offer 'glimpses' into the potential for future cooperation with FYROM, provided that the political environment becomes less prohibitive. Among other issues that we wanted to examine here were: similarities and differences in cooperation with FYROM and with other South-East European countries; whether cooperation with FYROM started earlier or later; whether cooperation with FYROM had similar characteristics et.al.

Public Higher Education Institutions: The responses of the interviewees from public Institutions present mainly views which regard cooperation in education as a means of improving the relations among countries as well as enhancing the international appeal of Greek institutions. In the case of the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, the interviewee noted that there are "no differences" pertaining to the cooperation with FYROM in relation to other SEE countries: "Regarding the region as a whole, we believe that the cooperation between Institutions were not affected by the political relations between different countries. On the contrary, they have contributed and still contribute in the improvement and normalization of relations". The Aristotle University is highly esteemed and this is proved by the numerous proposals for cooperation that it receives on a daily basis".⁷¹ However, if we take into account the number of agreements signed between the Aristotle University and other countries it is clear that there appears to be a significant difference in numbers. Most agreements were signed with Bulgarian Institutions: 11 (6 completed, 5 active), Romania: 9 (3 completed, 6 active), Turkey: 8 (2 completed, 6 active), Serbia: 7 (2 completed, 5 active) and Albania: 5 (5 active). In the case of FYROM there are 2 active agreements, in the

⁷¹ Interview with a senior administrative officer of the Aristotle University.

case of Bosnia-Herzegovina 1 completed and lastly in the case of Croatia 1 completed.⁷²

Number of agreement signed by Aristotle University with individual Balkan countries

Country	Number of agreements
Bulgaria	11
Romania	9
Turkey	8
Serbia	7
Albania	5
FYROM	2
Bosnia and Herzegovina	1
Croatia	1

In the case of the University of Macedonia, the interviewee stressed the beneficial role of the ERASMUS programme when it comes to improving relations between countries: "Its basic characteristic involves the potential for a better knowledge and familiarization with other countries. It helps to smooth points of tension between countries. But in the Balkans, this is not always easy to achieve".⁷³ The data corresponding to the active ERASMUS agreements between the University of Macedonia and other countries of SEE bear important similarities with those pertaining to the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki in the sense that the highest number of agreements are regard Turkey (23), Romania (11) and Bulgaria (8). In the case of Croatia, there are three active agreements and one in the case of FYROM.⁷⁴

⁷² All the above mentioned data were retrieved from the Homepage of the Department of International Relations of the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki at the following address: <http://international-relations.auth.gr/en/completed-agreements> (last assessed on November 21, 2017).

⁷³ Interview with a professor from the University of Macedonia.

⁷⁴ The University of Macedonia provided us with the information the ERASMUS agreement with FYROM has not been implemented yet.

Number of agreement signed by the University of Macedonia with individual Balkan countries

Country	Number of agreements
Turkey	23
Romania	11
Bulgaria	8
Croatia	3
FYROM	1

In the case of the International Hellenic University, the interviewee emphasized that there are no differences when it comes to cooperation with FYROM and elaborated on the general policy of the Institution towards SEE countries: “There are important possibilities for enhancing our cooperation with FYROM. In general, all of our neighbors have many talented people, many of whom have, unfortunately, made the choice to emigrate to other Western countries. Our Institution aimed at attracting such people, many of whom have already obtained high-ranking positions in their respective countries and act as ambassadors of Greece”.⁷⁵

Private Higher Education Institutions: In the case of CITY College, the interviewee did not differentiate in any way the characteristics of cooperation with FYROM when compared to other countries. Furthermore, he specified-when it comes to the flow of students- that accordingly to its size, FYROM holds a very important share.

THEME 4

The legacy of cooperation and future prospects

Rationale

This final theme attempts to explicate the legacy that existing, extensive or limited, cooperation has left and what that means for the future. Stakeholders were asked to describe the legacy of cooperation between the two countries and also predict how this will evolve in the future.

⁷⁵ Interview with a senior administrative officer of the IHU.

Public Higher Education Institutions: With regard to this theme, all interviewees expressed similar views in the sense that they hoped for a widening and strengthening of the cooperation with FYROM in the area of higher education. In the case of the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, the interviewee stated that the institution “hopes for a continuation and the increase of relevant synergies and joint activities”.⁷⁶ In the case of the University of Macedonia the interviewee emphasized the need for confidence building between Greece and FYROM: “Such agreements and frameworks of cooperation demand continuity, consistency and mutual trust. In the case of Greece, we need a more effective legal framework that will make Thessaloniki more attractive for students coming from the Balkans”.⁷⁷

In the case of the International Hellenic University, the interviewee referred extensively to the positive legacy of cooperation with FYROM but also to the challenges that lay ahead: “Thessaloniki needs to apply more effective policies in order to increase the numbers of students from the Balkans. These will become its more effective ambassadors. Unfortunately, it seems that many students from Bulgaria, Romania and perhaps FYROM are turning their back to Greek academic institutions. Cooperation in education calls for reciprocity between the institutions. Greece needs to do more. For instance, the activities of major Greek enterprises in FYROM- generally speaking- created a good climate in economic relations and the motivation for students to choose Greek academic institutions. Unfortunately, the prolonged Greek economic crisis has affected such expectations. We need to develop policies that will counterbalance such trends”.⁷⁸

Private Higher Education Institutions: The interviewee from CITY College emphasized the important legacy of promoting mutual understanding and better knowledge among Balkan countries through education and also the necessity for more effective Greek policies: “We have contributed to a better understanding and familiarization among Balkan countries. Unfortunately, there still exists the difficult relation of Greek governments with the so-called private colleges. Greek authorities must seize the potential for a more effective internationalization of education that can have economic benefits and help to improve Greece’s relations with its neighbors”.⁷⁹

76 Interview with a senior administrative officer of the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki.

77 Interview with a professor from the University of Macedonia.

78 Interview with a senior administrative officer of the IHU.

79 Interview with a senior administrative officer and research coordinator of CITY College.

PART IV

THE EXPERIENCE OF COOPERATION BETWEEN GREECE AND FYROM - THE VIEW FROM BELOW

In what follows, we have selected a noteworthy number of characteristic verbatim quotes from interviews conducted with stakeholders for the purposes of the analysis for this project. We have fully anonymised the views in order to protect the identity of our interviewees. The verbatim quotes offer a nuanced picture of the grassroots views, the stakeholders' perspectives, of various aspects of collaboration between the two countries, its problems and challenges, its strengths and prospects for the future.

VERBATIM QUOTES

“Εμείς αγαπήσαμε πάρα πολύ αυτό το έργο. Να σας πωσ την αλήθεια ήταν η πρώτη φορά που πήγαινα και εγώ εκεί. Είχαμε ένα φόβο στην αρχή. Τι και πωσ, τι θα είναι οι άλλοι. Εξελίχθηκε όμως, είχαμε μια πάρα πολύ καλή συνεργασία... Γίναμε φίλοι, να σου πω την αλήθεια... Ήδη κατεβάσαμε και άλλες προτάσεις μαζί... Το μεγάλο εμπόδια όταν ξεκινήσαμε στην αρχή, και μιλάω σε προσωπικό επίπεδο, ήταν η αρνητική προκατάληψη. Δηλαδή, τι θα βρούμε και πωσ θα προχωρήσει αυτή η συνεργασία. Βέβαια, εγώ είχα μια ανησυχία μέσα σε όλο αυτό – ήμουν και επιστημονικός υπεύθυνος – διάφορα διαδικαστικά θέματα πωσ θα περπατήσουν μαζί τους... Εμείς από την πρώτη συνάντηση που είχαμε με τους ανθρώπους εκεί, οι οποίοι έδειξαν καλόπιστοι.”

"We loved this project very much. To be honest, it was the first time I went there. We were afraid at first. We didn't know the "what" and the "how", what the others would be like? But it evolved, we cooperated very well ... We have become friends, to tell you the truth ... We have already made other proposals together ... The big obstacle when we started at the beginning, and I speak on a personal level, was the negative prejudice. In relation to what we would find there and how this cooperation would proceed. Of course, I was worried about all of that, because I was also scientifically responsible, and about how various procedural issues would work for them ... From the first meeting, we had with the people there they showed good faith. "

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“Μπορώ να πω ότι μας εμπιστεύονται. Οπότε σε ότι κάνουνε μας βάζουν μπροστά. Όταν πάμε να μιλήσουμε για το Interreg μας λένε: «τι θέλετε να κάνουμε μαζί σας». Βέβαια γνωρίζουνε ότι οι διαδικασίες για τη χρηματοδότηση είναι μέσα στην Ελλάδα από την Ευρώπη την ίδια, με τις κοινές γραμματείες τις διασυνοριακές που υπάρχουν ότι είμαστε πιο μπροστά σε αυτό το επίπεδο του σχεδιασμού και έχουμε τα εργαλεία και τις μεθόδους για να το επιτύχουμε. Και όπως ανέφερα μας εμπιστεύονται πραγματικά...”

“I can say that they trust us. So, in whatever they do they put us ahead. When we go to discuss about Interreg, they say, "What do you want us to collaborate on with you?" Of course, they know that the procedures for funding go through Greece from Europe itself, with the common cross-border secretariats that exist, and that we are ahead at this level of planning and we have the tools and methods to achieve it. And as I said they really trust us ...”

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“Το τι είμαστε στα σύνορα σημαίνει ότι είχαμε σχέσεις και παλαιότερες και ιστορικές με τους όμορους δήμους... Τώρα, το Βαλκανικό Πάρκο Πρεσπών δεν ήτανε τυχαίο γιατί οι λίμνες είναι κοινές, τις μοιραζόμαστε: τη Μικρή Πρέσπα η Ελλάδα με την Αλβανία και τη Μεγάλη και οι τρεις χώρες. Οπότε αναγκαστικά έχουμε κοινά σημεία. Και το νερό αφού δεν χωρίζει... άρα θα πρέπει με κάποιο τρόπο να βρούμε τη συνεργασία, ώστε να παραμείνουμε σε καλά πλαίσια, και στη συνεργασία, αλλά και σε αυτό που λέμε ποιότητα ζωής σε ένα δήμο που όλοι φαντάζομαι θέλουν να πετύχουν για τον δικό τους κόσμο, μέσα από την ίδια διαδικασία. Είτε αυτή αφορά το περιβάλλον, είτε αφορά την ανάπτυξη μέσω υποδομών, ή οτιδήποτε άλλο χρειάζεται. Άρα το Βαλκανικό Πάρκο ήταν ένα εφελτήριο να καθίσουμε στο τραπέζι για να τα κάνουμε, και να πάμε μπροστά... Και έτσι προσπαθήσαμε και αναπτύξαμε αυτή τη συνεργασία και μέσα από αυτή την αρχική συνεργασία του Βαλκανικού, ο Δήμος μπόρεσε να αναπτυχθεί και σε άλλα θέματα, όπως είναι τα προγράμματα Interreg. Βρήκαμε έτοιμο το τραπέζι της συνεργασίας, καθίσαμε και αναπτύξαμε και παραπάνω σχέσεις”.

“Επί της ουσίας, υπάρχουν κάποια πράγματα να μας διευκολύνουν. Το σημαντικότερο απ’ όλα είναι η πολύ σημαντική χρηματοδοτική συνεισφορά του προγράμματος Interreg-IPA Ελλάδα-FYROM... Από εκεί και πέρα υπάρχουν οι λίμνες που μοιραζόμαστε. Κοινά συμφέροντα που έχουν να κάνουν σε σχέση με την προστασία του περιβάλλοντος... Και εμείς εδώ πέρα εμπλεκόμαστε, συμμετέχουμε ενεργά στον φορέα διαχείρισης κλπ. Μας ενδιαφέρει το κομμάτι της υγείας της λίμνης, που έχει να κάνει και με τα χαρακτηριστικά της λίμνης, δηλαδή καθαρά τα νερά...”

“The fact that we are at the border means that we had relations both old and historic with the neighboring municipalities ... Now, the Prespa Balkan Park was not accidental, because the lakes are on common land, we share them: Small Prespa is shared by Greece and Albania and Great Prespa by all three countries. So, we unavoidably have common points. And the water doesn't separate ... so we must find a way to cooperate somehow, so that we can be in a good situation, both in terms of cooperation and of what we call quality of life in a municipality

where everybody, I imagine, wants to succeed for their own people, through the same process. Whether this process relates to the environment or to the infrastructure development or to whatever else is needed. So, the Balkan Park was a springboard to get together and do it, and to move forward ... And so, we tried and developed this partnership and through this initial collaboration for the Balkan (Park), the municipality was able to make progress on other issues as well, such as the Interreg programs. We found the groundwork for cooperation laid, we sat down and developed more relationships"

"Overall, there are some things that make it easier for us. The most important of all is the very significant financial contribution of Interreg-IPA Greece-FYROM ... From there on, there are the lakes that we share. Common interests in relation to environmental protection ... And we are involved here, we are actively involved in the management sector, etc. We are interested in the lake's preservation, which also has to do with the features of the lake, specifically clean waters ... "

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“Δεν έχουμε αντιμετωπίσει κάποιο σημαντικό, ουσιώδες εμπόδιο στη συνεργασία. Υπάρχουν διάφορα πράγματα που εάν γίνουν μπορούν να διευκολύνουν τη συνεργασία. Το πιο απλό είναι η διασυνοριακή διάβαση στον Λαιμό η οποία θα κάνει πολύ πιο εύκολη την δια ζώσης επικοινωνία...” Official of Prespes Municipality; “Καλοί οι θεσμοί, καλοί οι δήμοι, αλλά ο κόσμος δεν έρχεται σε επαφή. Ο κόσμος έρχεται σε επαφή όταν γίνονται οι εκδηλώσεις εκατέρωθεν. Δεν κουβαλιέται όμως ο κόσμος του Δήμου Πρέσπας ούτε στο Δήμο Ρέσεν ούτε στο Κούστενετς. Και αυτό είναι ένα μειονέκτημα και λόγω των συνόρων. Δεν έχουμε διάβαση. Για να πάμε άμεσα και να έχουμε αυτή την επαφή και την επικοινωνία. Και ο κόσμος το θέλει. Είναι ένα ζητούμενο... Εμείς δεν ζητάμε τελωνείο. Συνοριακή διάβαση. Το πιο απλό. Δεν θέλουμε να διακινούμε εμπορεύματα. Ο κόσμος να έρχεται σε επαφή. Και εκεί υπάρχουν και άλλα θέματα. Είναι και θέμα ανάπτυξης αυτή η διάβαση. Αυτή τη στιγμή στην Οχρίδα χονδρικά, όπως μας λένε και από το Δήμο Ρέσεν, κατεβαίνουν κάθε χρόνο 200.000 δυτικοευρωπαίοι. Για τουρισμό. Αυτοί το να έρθουν από Οχρίδα στην Πρέσπα, είναι σχεδόν ένα τέταρτο απόσταση. Αλλά δεν έχουν τη δυνατότητα (να έρθουν στο ελληνικό κομμάτι). Όταν ακούν ότι πρέπει να κάνουν τουλάχιστον δύο ώρες μέσω συνόρων, από το τελωνείο Νίκης, είναι αποτρεπτικό γι’ αυτούς.”

"We have not encountered any significant, essential obstacle to cooperation. There are several things that, if done, can further facilitate cooperation. The simplest is the cross-border passage to Laimos, which would make in person contact much easier... "Official of Prespes Municipality; "The institutions are good, the municipalities are good, but people are not communicating. People connect when events take place on both sides. However, the people of Prespa Municipality don't travel to Resen Municipality or to Kustenets Municipality. And this is also due to the borders. We have no border crossing. To go directly there and have this contact and communication. And the people want it. It is a demand ... We do not ask for customs. (We want a) border crossing. The simplest thing. We do not want to move goods. People want to get in touch. And there are other issues. This border crossing is also a development issue. Currently, as the Resen Municipality informs us, roughly 200,000 Western Europeans visit Ohrid each

year. For tourism. For them to cover the distance from Ohrid to Prespa it would take almost a quarter of an hour. But they do not have the possibility (to come to the Greek part). When they hear they have to travel at least two hours across borders, through the Nike customs, it's deterrent to them. "

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"Εμείς δεν είχαμε προβλήματα συνεργασίας μαζί τους... Εμάς μας έμεινε μια πάρα πολύ καλή αίσθηση από την υλοποίηση του project. Και δεν υπάρχει περίπτωση να υπάρξει τώρα πρόγραμμα και να μην κατέβουμε μαζί σε πρόταση..."

"We did not have any problems working with them ... We were left satisfied with the completion of the project. And there is no way that a program would exist now and we would not come up with a proposal together ..." Professor of the TEI of Western Macedonia"

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"Σε επίπεδο δήμων, δεν έχουν προκύψει προβλήματα συνεργασίας. Προβλήματα συνεργασίας προκύπτουν σε δομές πάνω από τον δήμο... Γιατί είχαμε κάποιες τέτοιες περιπτώσεις που είχαμε κάποιους δημάρχους από τη FYROM που ήτανε κρατικοί... Στο πνεύμα του κράτους (προφανώς εννοεί του κυβερνώντος κόμματος...), της κυβέρνησης. Οπότε ακολουθούσαν τη γραμμή της κυβέρνησης και όχι την τοπική. Αυτοί δημιουργούσαν κατά καιρούς κάποια θεματάκια, όπως αυτά που σας ανέφερα. Με τα ονόματα, με κάποιες εκδηλώσεις που όταν ακούς το τραγούδι, γιατί πρέπει να το ακούς γιατί είσαι παρών, είναι ένα θέμα. Το βάζανε και δημιουργούνταν έτσι προβλήματα. Φεύγαμε ή δεν συνεχίζαμε. Ή πηγαίναμε σε αίθουσες που υπήρχαν κάποιες φωτογραφίες που δεν έπρεπε να υπάρχουν..."

"At the municipal level, no cooperation problems have arisen. Problems of cooperation arise in structures higher than the municipality ... Because it happened to have such cases, where some mayors from FYROM were governmental... (They behaved) in the spirit of the state (obviously he means the governing party ...), of the government. So, they followed the government policy rather than the local one. They occasionally created some issues, like those I mentioned already. With the names, with some events, it becomes an issue, when you must listen to the song, because you are there. They would play it and create problems like that. We would leave or not continue. Or we would go to different rooms, where there were some pictures that should not have been there ..."

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"Από τις πρώτες φορές που συναντηθήκαμε έπεσε στο τραπέζι το θέμα, διότι οι άνθρωποι προσπαθούν να βάζουν συνεχώς το όνομα μπροστά. Επίσης εμάς μας έλεγαν «Δημοκρατία της Ελλάδος» για να λένε και το αντίστοιχο το δικό τους... Εμείς όμως, μεταξύ μας εδώ, είχαμε συμφωνήσει ότι δεν θα ταραχτούμε απ' αυτό. Απλώς θα ζητήσουμε να εφαρμόσουμε τι υπάρχει. Γιατί δεν είναι η δουλειά μας αυτή. Ούτε να συμφωνήσουμε. Άλλοι είναι οι ειδικοί. Αυτή ήταν η

δική μου η άποψη. Βέβαια. Εγώ θα αναφέρω όπως λένε τα επίσημα έγγραφα: Πρώην Γιουγκοσλαβική Δημοκρατία της Μακεδονίας... Εκεί μέσα κυριαρχούσε το όνομα το δικό τους. Μακεδονία και Μακεδονία. Εδώ δεν ήταν έτσι. Στο συνέδριο που κάναμε εδώ ήταν προσεκτικοί. Στις παρουσιάσεις, τα papers, γιατί ήταν συνέδριο επιστημονικό. Το γυρίσαμε. Το κάναμε εμείς επιστημονικό. Και κρατήθηκε γενικά ένα πολύ καλό επίπεδο. Γιατί; Γιατί πιστεύω ότι οι άνθρωποι πέρα της πολιτικής διάστασης των πραγμάτων, οι άνθρωποι που συνεργαζόμαστε, πιστεύω ότι τους ενδιαφέρει πάρα πολύ να συνεργαστούνε μαζί μας..."

"Είναι γνωστή η διαμάχη που υπάρχει μεταξύ Ελλάδας και ΠΓΔΜ για το όνομα. Αυτό. Βέβαια σε επίπεδο δήμων δεν αγγίζετε. Και το κρατάμε απ' έξω. Σύμφωνα με ότι μας έχουσε δώσει και οι κυβερνήσεις, εκατέρωθεν. Ακόμη και με το πρόβλημα του ονόματος δεν έχει σταματήσει η συνεργασία... σαν δήμος ακολουθούμε τις εθνικές γραμμές... Αλλά αυτό, όπως σας είπα, δεν μας δημιούργησε πρόβλημα στο να συνεργαστούμε. Γιατί είναι σε άλλο επίπεδο. Ούτε το βάλαμε ποτέ στο τραπέζι της συνεργασίας μας..."

"... έχουμε συνηθίσει, έχουμε βρει ένα *modus operandi*, πως αποκαλεί ο ένας τον άλλο, εν πάση περιπτώσει στον γραπτό και στον προφορικό λόγο. Οπότε κάνουμε τη δουλειά μας... δεν έχω ακούσει εγώ ποτέ κάτι τέτοιο: «Α αυτό δεν μπορούμε να το κάνουμε γιατί περιμένουμε να λυθεί το θέμα του ονόματος» ή γιατί έχουν δείξει κακή πίστη ή κάτι τέτοιο οι απέναντι..."

"From the first time we met, the issue arose, because people continuously tried to put the name above all other issues. Additionally, we were called the "Republic of Greece", so that they could say their own name in the same way, respectively... But, between us, we agreed that we would not be annoyed by it. We would just ask to apply what exists. Because that is not our job. Neither is reaching an agreement. Others are the experts. That was my opinion. Of course. I will address it the same way as official documents do: The Former Yugoslavic Democratic of Macedonia. There, their chosen name dominated the conversation, Macedonia and Macedonia. Here it was not like this. They were careful at the conference we held here. In the presentations, the papers, because it was a scientific conference. We turned it around. We made it scientific. And it generally remained at a very good level. Why? Because I believe that people, beyond the political dimension, the people we are working with, I believe that they are very interested in working with us ... "

"The dispute between Greece and FYROM about the name is known. That's it. Of course, at municipal level, it is untouchable. And we avoid it. It's according to the instruction given by both governments. Even with the name problem, cooperation has not stopped ... as a municipality we follow the national policy ... But that, as I said, did not create problems in working together. Because it is on a different level. Nor have we ever brought it up at the table of our cooperation ...

"... We got used to it, we have found a *modus operandi*, how to call each other, in any case in the written and spoken word. So, we do our work ... I have never heard anything like this: "Oh, we cannot do that, because we are waiting for the

name issue to be resolved" or because they have shown bad faith or something similar from the opposite side ... "

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"Μία λύση θα διευκολύνει πάρα πολύ τη συνεργασία... θα δημιουργηθεί πρώτα ένα πολύ καλύτερο πλαίσιο στις ψυχές των ανθρώπων. Ανάμεσα στους ανθρώπους, από τους λαούς, από τις δύο χώρες..."

"A solution will greatly facilitate our cooperation ... first, a much better frame will be created in the souls of the people. Among the people, from the people, from the two countries ..."

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"Πρώτα απ' όλα το δεύτερο πακέτο σε αυτά τα Interreg είναι η δημοσιότητα. Είσαι υποχρεωμένος δηλαδή να έχεις δημοσιότητα... Εμείς εδώ νομίζω ότι το έργο το περπατήσαμε, όσο αφορά τη δημοσιότητα, πάρα πολύ καλά. Και βλέποντας μας εμάς να είμαστε τόσο ικανοποιημένοι, όλο οι τοπικοί εδώ γύρω μας συνδράμανε..."

"First of all, the second part of these Interreg programs is publicity. You are obliged to have publicity ... We here, I think, moved forward with the project, as far as publicity is concerned, very well. And seeing us being so satisfied, all the local people around helped us ... "

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"Καλώς ή κακώς σαν Δήμος έχουμε αρκετά ενεργούς πολίτες-δημότες... Οι σχολικές μας επιτροπές ήταν και ένα εφαλτήριο, γιατί το συζητούσαμε για πολλά χρόνια, την κατάσταση με το έξοδο του πετρελαίου, που ήταν ο τρόπος θέρμανσης των κτηρίων αυτών... Οπότε γνωρίζαμε το πρόβλημα και προσπαθούσαμε να βρούμε λύση... Οπότε αυτό το πρόγραμμα μας ήρθε εξ ουρανού για να μπορούμε να κάνουμε τα δύο κτήρια..."

"For better or for worse, as a municipality, we have quite active citizens... Our school committees functioned also as a springboard, because we were discussing it for many years... the situation with the price of oil, that was used for heating these buildings ... So, we knew the problem and we were trying to find a solution ... This program came *deus ex machina* so that we can construct the two buildings ... "

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Εκατό τοις εκατό χρήσιμο. Ήταν η πρώτη φορά που ο Δήμος μπόρεσε να κάνει επέμβαση σε κτήρια που είχαν πρόβλημα ενεργειακής απόδοσης, ώστε να μειώσει το κόστος λειτουργίας τους...

"Hundred per cent useful. It was the first time that the municipality was able to intervene in buildings that had an energy efficiency problem, in order to reduce their operating costs ..."

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“Τα αποτελέσματα που είχαμε δε από την ελληνική πλευρά ήταν εντυπωσιακά – είναι και το αντικείμενο μας εμάς αυτό. Είναι εντυπωσιακό γιατί: παραδώσαμε δύο σχολεία σε εξαιρετική ενεργειακή κατάσταση. Δηλαδή το σχολείο, με 70 περίπου παιδιά – έχω και φωτογραφικό υλικό πολύ ενδιαφέρον – έκαιγε 20 τόνους πετρέλαιο το χρόνο. Αλλάξαμε το κέλυφος. Βάλαμε αντλίες θερμότητας... Και φοβόμασταν ότι λόγω των καιρικών συνθηκών ότι δεν θα πάει καλά. Και πάει πάρα πολύ καλά. Το δε νηπιαγωγείο είχε φοβερά προβλήματα. Τα δύο σχολεία έφτασαν σχεδόν «Κλάση Α». Πολύ ψηλά σε σχέση με το τι ήταν... Και έχουμε και τα 25 κτήρια από την πλευρά της Ελλάδος (στον Δήμο Πρεσπών), για τα οποία βγάλαμε πιστοποιητικά ενεργειακής απόδοσης... Το φυσικό αντικείμενο του έργου για εμάς, από την πλευρά της χώρας μας ήταν εντυπωσιακό. Έχουμε δεδομένα για πενήντα δημόσια κτήρια στη Βόρειο Ελλάδα... Δηλαδή, το έργο ως αποτέλεσμα, απ’ όπου και εάν το πιάσεις ήταν πολύ πετυχημένο...”

"The results we had from the Greek side were impressive - it is also what we do here. It is impressive, because we delivered two schools in an exceptional energy condition. So, the school with about 70 children – and I also have very interesting photographic material - burned 20 tons of oil a year. We changed the shell. We put heat pumps ... And we were afraid that because of weather conditions, it would not work well. But it's going very well. The kindergarten also had terrible problems. The two schools almost reached "Class A". That's very impressive if you taking into account how they were ... And then we have the 25 buildings on the Greek side (in the Prespa Municipality), for which we obtained certificates of energy efficiency ... The physical issue of the project for us, for our country's part, was impressive. We have data for fifty public buildings in northern Greece ... So, the work's end result was very successful from every angle... "

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“Από την πλευρά τους δε εκεί, οι άνθρωποι ήρθαν για πρώτη φορά «αντιμέτωποι» με την ενεργειακή απόδοση των κτηρίων. Ενώ εμείς τρέχαμε το πρόγραμμα, ενδιαφέρθηκε και το Υπουργείο Ενέργειας τους. Κάποια στιγμή ήρθε και μας παρακολούθησε ένας εκπρόσωπος τους. Ακριβώς για να μούνε σιγά-σιγά στο θέμα της ενεργειακής αναβάθμισης των κτηρίων. Μέχρι τότε δεν είχαν τίποτε ολοκληρωμένο. Και νομίζω ότι συνέβαλλε λίγο αυτό το πρόγραμμα στο να, δεν θέλω να υπερβάλλω... Τους άρεσε πάρα πολύ η αντιμετώπιση που είχαμε. Εμείς έχουμε χωρίσει την Ελλάδα σε τρεις (ενεργειακές) ζώνες. Η περιοχή μας (η Δυτική Μακεδονία) είναι στην χειρότερη. Κάναμε μια ζώνη και τους εντάξαμε και αυτούς. Βγάλανε και αυτοί ενεργειακούς επιθεωρητές. Νομίζω ότι βοήθησε (το πρόγραμμα) κάποιους ανθρώπους να δουν την ενεργειακή απόδοση... να δουν πως χρησιμοποιούμε εμείς τους ενεργειακούς επιθεωρητές και αντίστοιχα δημιουργήσαν την ανάλογη δομή...”

"People from their side faced for the first time the issue of the energy efficiency of buildings. We had already started running the program, when their Ministry of Energy became interested. At some point, one of their representatives came and observed us. So that they could slowly become active in upgrading the energy structures of buildings. At that time, they didn't have anything complete. And I think this program aided to that, I do not want to exaggerate ...They liked the way

we handled things. We have divided Greece into three (energy) zones. Our region (Western Macedonia) is in the worst one. We created a zone and we included them too. They also appointed energy inspectors. I think the program helped some people to realize what energy efficiency means... it was helpful for them to see how we use our energy inspectors so that they can respectively create the appropriate structure ... "

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"Η συνεργασία με τον όμορο δήμο της ΠΓΔΜ, γιατί μ' αυτόν συνεργαζόμαστε, κατά βάση, μάλλον αποκλειστικά... είναι σε πάρα πολύ καλό επίπεδο. Είναι μια συνεργασία η οποία είναι μακροχρόνια, έχει και συγκεκριμένη πολιτική βάση, η οποία είχε διαμορφωθεί σε προηγούμενες φάσεις από προηγούμενες δημοτικές αρχές. Υπάρχουν δηλαδή δύο μνημόνια συνεργασίας μεταξύ των δημάρχων (σημ: εννοεί Πρεσπών και Ρέσεν), που έχουν διαμορφώσει μια συναντίληψη. Επίσης πρακτικά οι δήμοι συνεργάζονται πολύ συστηματικά στην από κοινού διεκδίκηση χρηματοδοτικών εργαλείων, στην αξιοποίηση χρηματοδοτικών εργαλείων για κοινά προγράμματα. Και συζητάνε διάφορα θέματα, ανταλλάσσουν επισκέψεις και συμμετέχουν σε διάφορες, χαμηλού προφίλ καμπάνιες που έχουν να κάνουν, και ιδίως, με την προστασία του περιβάλλοντος. Αλλά και τοπικά, λαογραφικά κλπ..."

"Cooperation with the neighboring municipality of FYROM, because it's the one we work with for the most part and rather exclusively... is at a very good level. It is a long-lasting partnership that has a specific political base, which had been already established by previous municipal authorities. So, there are two memorandums of cooperation between the mayors (meaning of Prespa and Resen) that have established a consensus. Additionally, in reality municipalities collaborate very systematically on joint claims for financial instruments, on utilizing financial tools for joint projects. They discuss various topics, visit each other and participate in various, low-profile campaigns that relate, specifically, to environmental protection. But also relating to local issues, folklore issues etc ... "

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"Αγκαλιαζόμαστε όταν βρισκόμαστε με τους αντίστοιχους δημάρχους και το προσωπικό των αντίστοιχων δήμων. Γνωρίζουμε τόσο καλά πλέον. Και ειδικά οι υπάλληλοι που έχουμε μείνει σταθεροί, έχουμε άλλη σχέση επικοινωνίας..."

"We embrace each other when we meet with the respective mayors and the staff of the respective municipalities. We know each other so well by now. And especially the employees that have been there for a long time, we have another level of communication..."

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"Στο Δήμο Πρεσπών δεν έχει συμβεί αυτό. Και δεν έχει συμβεί, απ' ό,τι έχουμε δει και στους όμορους δήμους. Δεν το απαξιώνουν. Ίσα-ίσα ξέρουν ότι έχουν μόνο να κερδίσουν από αυτή τη συνεργασία. Και ειδικά από τα προγράμματα. Και μην ξεχνάτε ότι είναι και αυτά χρήματα που τα διαχειρίζονται. Και είναι ευρωπαϊκά

χρήματα που έχουν τον σκοπό τους. Βοηθάνε την τοπική ανάπτυξη, σ' όλα τα επίπεδα... Και ψάχνουν τον κοινό σκοπό. Απαξίωση δεν έχουμε δει πουθενά..."

"This has not happened in the Prespa Municipality. And, from what we have seen, it has not happened in neighboring municipalities either. They do not denigrate it. On the contrary, they know they only have something to gain from this collaboration. And especially from the programs. And let's not forget that we are talking about money they manage. European money that have a purpose. It helps the local development, at all levels ... And they are looking for the common purpose. We have not seen denigration anywhere ... "

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Σε κάποιο βαθμό ναι, πάρα πολύ. Δηλαδή διαχρονικά εδώ στον Δήμο Πρεσπών, στις τρεις τελευταίες που είναι τρεις (εννοεί δημοτικές αρχές) είχε και μια τέταρτη... αλλά εν πάς περιπτώσει τα τελευταία δεκαπέντε χρόνια όλες οι δημοτικές αρχές, τρεις διαφορετικοί δήμαρχοι, έχουν εργαστεί, ο καθένας με τις δυνατότητες του, αλλά δεν έχει υπονομεύσει κανείς τη συνεργασία, να δείξει ότι δεν θέλει τη συνεργασία... να διεκδικήσει η παράταξη του τη διοίκηση του Δήμου Πρεσπών λέγοντας ότι δεν θέλει τη συνεργασία. Όλοι λένε «ναι στη συνεργασία και θέλουμε να τη διευρύνουμε». Στο πλαίσιο και στο κομμάτι που αναλογεί και στις αρμοδιότητες των δήμων..."

"To some extent yes, very much. Through the years here in the municipality of Prespa, in the last three (municipal authorities) there was a fourth ... but in any case, for the last fifteen years all municipal authorities, three different mayors, have worked, each with his own capabilities, but no one has undermined our cooperation or showed that they did not want cooperation... or seeking to win the administration of Prespes Municipality, saying that they do not want cooperation. Everyone says, 'yes to the partnership and we want to expand it'. In what of course belongs to the domain and jurisdiction of the municipalities ... "

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"Εγώ πιστεύω ότι τα πρόσωπα παίζουν μεγάλο ρόλο. Αυτή είναι η αίσθηση μου. Νομίζω ότι τα πρόσωπα και σε τέτοιες καταστάσεις, έτσι λίγο «προβληματικές»... Νομίζω ότι τα πρόσωπα και το πόσο ανοιχτά μπορούν να δουν αυτές τις συνεργασίες και τις καταστάσεις, παίζουν κυρίαρχο ρόλο. Δεν είναι νομίζω τόσο ισχυρές οι δομές ακόμη ώστε να είναι υπεράνω των προσώπων..."

"I believe that people play a big part. This is what I feel. I think that people in such situations, that are, let's say, a little "problematic" ... I think the people and how openly they can see these collaborations and situations play a significant role. I do not think the structures are so solid that they are more important than people ... "

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"Σε κάθε περίπτωση... συνειδητοποίησα ότι εκατό χρόνια πριν δεν υπήρχαν σύνορα... Δεν υπήρχαν σύνορα εκατό-εκατόν είκοσι χρόνια πριν... Εμείς

μπορούμε να ζήσουμε πάρα πολύ καλά μαζί τους. Όλες οι περιοχές έχουν ενδιαφέρον. Εμείς μπορούμε να ζήσουμε καλά μαζί τους. Είναι πολύ κοντά. Ένα τέταρτο από τη Φλώρινα. Βρίσκεσαι στα Bitola. Τα μισά Bitola μιλάνε ελληνικά. Η οικονομία τους είδα στηρίζεται πάρα πολύ σε εμάς... Και το ενδιαφέρον επίσης, να σου πω λιγάκι, η χώρα μας συνδέεται με τη Ευρώπη μέσω εκεί. Θες δεν θες....”

"In any case ... I realized that a hundred years ago there were no borders ... There were no borders one hundred or a hundred and twenty years ago ... We can live very well with them. All regions are interesting. We can live well with them. It's very close. A quarter of an hour from Florina. You are in Bitola. Half of Bitola speaks Greek. Their economy, as I saw, is very much depended on us ... And the interest thing is also, to explain shortly, that our country is connected with Europe through them. Whether you want it or not ... “

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“Ήταν πάρα πολύ θετικοί. Πήγαμε κάναμε και την πρώτη διαπραγμάτευση με τη Διαχειριστική. Πήγε πολύ καλά. Με τους συναδέλφους από τη γείτονα χώρα είχαμε άριστη συνεργασία, δεν είχαμε διαφωνίες...”

“Θετικές είναι, κυρίως, οι εντυπώσεις. Είναι σε κάποια πράγματα μπροστά... Γενικότερα πιστεύω ότι δουλεύουν πολύ συστηματικά. Έχουν μια σειρά οι άνθρωποι. Αυτά που ειπώθηκαν δεν ήταν λόγια του αέρα. Θεώρησα ότι θα ήταν πολύ καλή η συνεργασία αυτή. Δυστυχώς δεν προχώρησε. Έμεινα ωστόσο ενθουσιασμένος μετά την επιστροφή μου...”

"They were very positive. We went and conducted the first negotiation with the Management Authority (of the Interreg). It went very well. With our colleagues from the neighboring country we had excellent cooperation, we did not have any disagreements ... “

"The impressions are mainly positive, for the most part. They are ahead in some things... As a whole, I believe they work very systematically. The people follow a line. What was said was not empty words. I thought this cooperation would be very good. Unfortunately, it did not go forward. However, I was left excited after my return ... “

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“Δυστυχώς η γραφειοκρατία στη χώρα μας είναι ένα θέμα, ένα μεγάλο θέμα, κωλυσιεργεί. Θα σας πω συγκριτικά στοιχεία, ότι τα γραφειοκρατικά θέματα στα Σκόπια έτρεχαν πιο γρήγορα απ’ ότι σε εμάς εδώ, στην Ελλάδα. Άρα αυτό είναι ένα θέμα που θα πρέπει να το προσέξουμε ιδιαίτερα... Εκτιμώ ότι δεν θα τρέχανε αυτά τα προγράμματα εάν δεν επιμέναμε εμείς, δηλαδή οι δήμοι. Και όποιος δήμος δεν επιμένει, δεν έχει Interreg. Και εάν κοιτάξετε το «χάρτη εγκρίσεων» των Interreg θα δείτε ότι πολλοί δήμοι δεν έχουν πάρει κανένα Interreg... Άρα λοιπόν το πρόβλημα είναι δικό μας, δηλαδή πρέπει είτε η περιφέρεια είτε οι δήμοι να τρέξουν, και τα υπουργεία, εν πάση περιπτώσει, οι υπηρεσίες θα πρέπει να αντιληφθούν ότι θα πρέπει να διευκολύνουν τη διαδικασία. Δυστυχώς, σε αυτό το κομμάτι έχουμε πρόβλημα... Δεν γίνονται

εκπαιδευτικά προγράμματα, έτσι ώστε και οι υπάλληλοι να εκπαιδευτούν γύρω απ' αυτά, γύρω από τις διαδικασίες ένταξης στο Interreg, για να ενημερώνονται..."

"Unfortunately, the bureaucracy in our country is an issue, a big issue, it is obstructing. I will tell you comparative statistics that show that the bureaucratic procedures in Skopje were running faster than here in Greece. So, this is an issue that we must pay particular attention to ... I acknowledge that these programs would not exist unless we, the municipalities, had insisted on them. And any municipality that does not insist, does not have an Interreg. And if you look at Interreg's "Approval Map", you will see that many municipalities have not received any Interreg ... So, the problem is ours, meaning that either the region or the municipalities must move along... and the ministries, in any case, the services should realize that they should facilitate the process. Unfortunately, we have a problem with that part ... No training programs are being carried out so that employees can be trained for these things, for integration to Interreg processes, for getting informed ... "

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"Για να τρέξουν τα συγκεκριμένα προγράμματα, όπως σας είπα, το σημαντικότερο πρόβλημα για μένα είναι οι δυνατότητες του ελληνικού δημοσίου... Πραγματικά είναι να απορεί κανείς πως αντέξαμε τόσα χρόνια με τέτοιο κράτος. Δηλαδή είναι απίθανη η κατάσταση της ανοργανωσιάς μας. Καμία σχέση με την ευρωπαϊκή νοοτροπία! Το Interreg είναι ένα ευρωπαϊκό πρόγραμμα, οπότε το από πίσω το σκεπτικό είναι τελείως διαφορετικό απ' ότι υλοποιείτε τελικά στην Ελλάδα. Καλά, δεν είναι μόνο στην Ελλάδα αυτά. Το βασικό πρόβλημα για εμένα, για την υλοποίηση των προγραμμάτων είναι το ελληνικό δημόσιο. Υπάρχουν πάντα φωτεινές εξαιρέσεις. Αλλά δυστυχώς, σε αυτές τις περιοχές της Ελλάδας σίγουρα έχουμε ζητήματα. Και δεν νομίζω ότι δεν υπάρχει καλός κόσμος και ικανά στελέχη. Υπάρχει απλή ανοργανωσιά. Ανευθυνότητα... Η προσωπική μου άποψη, εάν το επιτρέπετε, είναι ότι είναι πάρα πολύ παράξενο ότι στο ελληνικό κράτος σε φορείς τοπικής αυτοδιοίκησης, περιφέρειας και οι μεγάλες περιφέρειες, έχουν γραφεία ευρωπαϊκών προγραμμάτων, μετά από τριάντα χρόνια που είμαστε μέλη και δίνονται κονδύλια της ίδιας λογικής όπως το Interreg... Υπάρχουν γραφεία ευρωπαϊκών προγραμμάτων, όπου η αντίληψη τι είναι ένα ευρωπαϊκό πρόγραμμα είναι «ευκαιρία για ταξίδια στο εξωτερικό και project management». Δηλαδή έχουμε να διαχειριστούμε ένα project. Σε επίπεδο όμως project management. Καταλαβαίνετε πως το εννοώ; Καμία ουσία, για το τι είναι το project. Το management μας νοιάζει. Σε αντίθεση με εκπληκτικούς δήμους του εξωτερικού, που έχουν μια σαφέστατη στόχευση και στρατηγική, και κοιτάνε πως μπορούν να εντάξουν τις ανάγκες τους στα ευρωπαϊκά έργα. Τους είναι πλήρως ξεκάθαρο πως τα διαχειριζόμαστε: δεν χρειαζόμαστε γραφείο για να διαχειριστούμε ευρωπαϊκά έργα. Αυτό είναι αστείο... Πάει να πει πως σου είναι δύσκολο και έχεις ένα ειδικό τμήμα, το οποίο κάνει αυτή τη «δύσκολη» δουλειά. Τα ευρωπαϊκά προγράμματα είναι πολύ πιο απλά από τα ελληνικά συνήθως. Έχουμε ακόμη πρόβλημα προσαρμογής στα ευρωπαϊκά δεδομένα. Δυστυχώς και σε κεντρικό επίπεδο. Και στα υπουργεία συμβαίνει αυτό που σας λέω. Δυστυχώς. Μετά από 30 και χρόνια μέλη της ΕΕ τα πράγματα αντιμετωπίζονται

με Ειδικές Διευθύνσεις για τα ευρωπαϊκά προγράμματα... Για μένα αυτό είναι αστείο..."

"For these programs to run, as I said, the most important problem for me is the capabilities of the Greek state ... It is really astonishing how we survived for so many years with such a state. It is bewildering how unorganized we are. There is no comparison with the European mentality! Interreg is a European project, so the thought behind it is completely different from what is ultimately being implemented in Greece. Well, this is not happening in Greece. The main problem for me, for the implementation of the programs, is the Greek government. There are (of course) always bright exceptions. But unfortunately, in these regions of Greece, we definitely have issues. And it is not that I do not believe that there are good people there or capable employees. It is simply the issue of lack of organization. Irresponsibility ... From my point of view, if I may say so, it is so strange that in the Greek state, in the local and regional sectors, and in the large regions, we have offices for European programs, after thirty years of membership and funds of the same logic such as Interreg ... There are offices for European programs, where the understanding of what a European program boils down to "an opportunity for travelling abroad and project management". Say, we have a project to manage. But, at the level of project management. Do you understand what I mean? There is no understanding about the essence of the project. We only care about the management. Contrary to (how) exceptional municipalities abroad (operate), which have a clear target and strategy and they care about finding a way to integrate their needs in European projects. It is perfectly clear to them how we manage: we do not need an office to manage European projects. That's funny ... It means that it would also be hard for you to have a special department that does this "difficult" job. European programs are usually much simpler than Greek ones. We still have problems adapting to the European standards. Unfortunately, this is also the case at a central level. The ministries have the same issue that I'm stating. Unfortunately. After 30 plus years of EU membership, things are being dealt with by Special Directorates for European Programs ... For me this is a joke ... "

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"Επειδή γενικώς είμαι στο Εθνικό Κέντρο Έρευνας και Τεχνολογικής Ανάπτυξης είμαι πολύ αυστηρός με πολλά πράγματα. Άλλος σε κάποιον άλλο φορές θα μπορούσε να είναι πάρα πολύ ευχαριστημένος με το τι συμβαίνει. Και να το εννοούσε. Εγώ θα σταθώ λίγο κριτικά. Γιατί τα καλά είναι τα προφανή. Τώρα, ένα σημαντικό θέμα, για μένα, είναι οι δυνατότητες των ελληνικών δημοσίων αρχών και ιδίως αυτών που είναι σε μικρές πόλεις, εδώ στις περιοχές της βορειοδυτικής Ελλάδας, που είναι επιλέξιμες για να συμμετέχουν στο συγκεκριμένο πρόγραμμα... Οι τεχνικές τους δυνατότητες είναι εξαιρετικά περιορισμένες..."

"Because I am part of the National Center for Research and Technological Development in general, I am very strict with many things. Another person could at some other time be very happy with what's going on. And to mean what he/she says. I will be a little critical. Because the good things are obvious. Now, an important issue for me is the potential of Greek public authorities, especially

those in small towns, here in the areas of northwestern Greece that are eligible to participate in the specific program ... Their technical capabilities are extremely limited ... "

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"Η Ελλάδα ήταν σε πλεονεκτικότερη θέση από τα Σκόπια και την Αλβανία και το ενδιαφέρον τους ήταν έντονο. Αρκεί εμείς να είχαμε τη βούληση, τη θέληση να ασχοληθούμε. Πιστεύω ότι αυτές οι χώρες... σε πολύ μεγάλο βαθμό εξαρτιόντουσαν από εμάς και αυτό εμείς πρέπει να το εκμεταλλευτούμε. Δηλαδή να εξαντλήσουμε όλα τα προγράμματα..."

"Greece was in a better position than Skopje and Albania and their interest was intense. It is enough for us to have the will, the will to get involved. I believe that these countries ... to a great extent depended on us and that we must take advantage of it. That is to exhaust all programs ... "

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"... μη μη-συμμετοχή τους είχε ως αντίκτυπο στο έργο ότι έπρεπε να αλλάξουμε το τεχνικό δελτίο και να μηδενίσουμε επί της ουσίας το κόστος συμμετοχής, άρα και τη συμμετοχή των δύο εταίρων που είχαμε από τα Σκόπια στις διάφορες δράσεις του έργου. Γιατί είχαμε αρκετά. Είχαμε προδιαγράψει ότι θα πηγαίναμε εμείς αρκετές φορές για να δούμε πως λειτουργούν εκεί όλοι οι φορείς που σχετίζονται με τη Πολιτική Προστασία. Θα συμμετείχανε στο σχεδιασμό και σε πολιτική δοκιμή που έγινε του software που αναπτύξαμε... Επειδή είχανε μηδενικό προϋπολογισμό, αυτό που συνέβη είναι ότι αναλάβουμε, σίγουρα το Ινστιτούτο Μεταφορών... πολύ πιθανόν ένα ποσό και στο Δήμο Αμυνταίου, μας ζήτησε η Διαχειριστική Αρχή να αναλάβουμε εμείς μέσω του δικού μας προϋπολογισμού, να καλύψουμε τα έξοδα έστω και για κάποια λίγα ταξίδια συμμετοχής εκπροσώπων αυτών των δύο εταίρων σε κάποιες λίγες συναντήσεις και δράσεις του έργου. Οπότε ήρθαμε σε επαφή στην πραγματικότητα μαζί τους, τρεις ή τέσσερις φορές τον ενάμιση-δύο χρόνια. Επίσης μια φορά, πήγαν δύο συνάδελφοι μου μια επίσκεψη τεχνική στην πόλη των Σκοπίων, στο πλαίσιο αυτού του έργου. Οπότε επί της ουσίας η επαφή μας ήταν αρκετά μικρή..."

"their non-participation forced us to change the technical bulletin and to nullify the costs of participation, hence also the participation of the two partners we had from Skopje in the various activities of the project. Because we had enough (activities). We had planned to visit several times to see how all civil protection-related actors operate there. They would have participated in the planning and political testing of the software we developed ... Because they had zero budget, what happened was that we agreed, certainly, the Transport Institute, probably some money were also provided by the Amyntaion Municipality, we were asked by the Managing Authority to undertake with our own budget to cover the costs of even a few trips involving representatives of these two partners in a few meetings and activities of the project. So we actually came in contact with them, three or four times a year or two. Also once, two colleagues went to a visit to the city of Skopje in the framework of this project. So, in fact, our contact was quite small ... "

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“Μέχρι στιγμής δεν είχαμε ποτέ θέμα με οποιονδήποτε μιλήσαμε με την άλλη πλευρά... Μας έχουνε δώσει, το Interreg, οδηγίες προς τους Έλληνες εταίρους να μην χρησιμοποιούμε το ακρωνύμιο FYROM, να το λέμε κανονικά Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. Βέβαια μεταξύ μας δεν έχουμε κανένα πρόβλημα, δηλαδή στις επαφές που έχω με τους συναδέλφους, συνήθως δεν προκύπτει κιάλας. Οι άνθρωποι είναι πολύ θετικοί. Ίσα-ίσα που κάνουμε και πλάκα... μέχρι στιγμής με όσους είχαμε επαφές δεν είχαμε κάποιο πρόβλημα...”

“Αναφέρθηκαν αρκετές φορές (στο όνομα Μακεδονία). Το προσπεράσαμε. Δεν έδωσα σημασία. Δεν έδωσα συνέχεια σε όποια αναφορά σε ονομασία. Αυτοί βέβαια προσπαθούσαν με κάθε ευκαιρία να το τονίσουν. Απλά δεν υπήρχε διάθεση εκ μέρους μου να το συνεχίσω, να δημιουργήσω κάποιο πρόβλημα. Σεβάστηκα το γεγονός ότι με φιλοξένησαν και ότι η φιλοξενία τους ήταν κατ’ άλλα άψογη...”

“Πραγματικά οι γείτονες μας κάπου εκεί θέλανε να το προτάξουνε. Στη δική μου εμπειρία δύο φορές συνέβη και τις δύο φορές τους εξήγησα ότι εάν θέλουνε να έχουμε καλή συνεργασία, καλή σχέση, αυτό να το ξεχάσουνε. Διαφορετικά δεν θέλω καμία επαφή μαζί τους. Το καταλάβανε και πιστεύω από εκεί και πέρα δεν ξαναφέρονε τέτοιο θέμα στη συνεργασία μας... Θέλω να πω ότι είναι ένα κομμάτι στο οποίο δίνουμε μεγαλύτερη σημασία, μεγαλύτερη ένταση απ’ όσο έχει. Δεν θεωρώ ότι είναι σημαντικό και ιδιαίτερα σε αυτά τα προγράμματα που έχουμε μια διαδημοτική, διασυνοριακή συνεργασία ότι παίζει κανένα ρόλο. Ούτε μπορούμε να σταθούμε. Είδα ότι και οι φίλοι στα Σκόπια δεν δημιουργήσανε τέτοια κωλύματα...”

“Νομίζω σε ελληνικό πολιτικό επίπεδο υπήρξαν μια-δύο αναφορές, κάποιες φορές που ήταν μπροστά συνάδελφοι από τους εταίρους μας στην ΠΓΔΜ. Αναφέρθηκε έτσι κάπως το θέμα. Όμως με διάθεση: ότι είναι ένα θέμα το οποίο πρέπει να λυθεί. Από την πλευρά των εταίρων της ΠΓΔΜ, δεν υπάρχει ΠΓΔΜ, Makedonija παντού. Δεν θυμάμαι εάν είχαμε προβλήματα σε έγγραφα, γιατί αυτοί όπως ξέρετε αρνούνται να υπογράψουν δημόσια έγγραφα που αναφέρουν FYROM γιατί δεν το δέχονται. Αλλά αυτά κάπως τα λύνει η Διαχειριστική Αρχή του Interreg... Νομίζω ότι για τους ανθρώπους που είναι επαγγελματίες στο χώρο τους, αυτά τα προβλήματα δεν τους αφορούν. Δηλαδή, όπως και εγώ κοιτάω να κάνω τη δουλειά μου, έτσι και αυτοί κοιτάνε να κάνουν τη δουλειά τους. Κάποιοι που είναι πολιτικοί, η δουλειά τους είναι να εκλεγούν οπότε πρέπει να πουν πράγματα τα οποία ηχούν καλά σε ένα μεγάλο ακροατήριο το οποίο θα τους εκλέξει. Γιατί αυτή είναι η δουλειά τους τελικά. Είναι πολιτικοί. Θέλουν να τα έχουν καλά με πολύ κόσμο. Δεν νομίζω να υπάρχει κανένα φοβερό πρόβλημα στο θέμα της ονομασίας... Τώρα, είναι σίγουρα ένα θέμα το οποίο άμα ξεκινήσει πολώνει. Δηλαδή, άμα μπούμε σε αυτή τη κουβέντα σε μια συνάντηση μαλώσαμε... Είχαμε σαφείς εντολές ότι οποτεδήποτε δημιουργηθεί υποψία για κουβέντα περί ονομασίας, που μπορεί να πάει προς τα γνωστά προβλήματα, την κόβουμε. Γιατί εκεί απλά θα μαλώσεις. Κάποιος θα πει την προσωπική του άποψη, όπως και εγώ έχω την προσωπική μου άποψη, αλλά δεν έχει σημασία ποια είναι. Εάν μπεις σε αυτήν την κουβέντα κατευθείαν πολώνει και

κατευθείαν μαλώνεις. Και είναι εκτός οποιαδήποτε νοήματος διασυνοριακού προγράμματος Interreg, καλής καλής γειτονίας, σύσφιξης σχέσεων κλπ..."

"So far we have never had a question with anyone we had spoken to on the other side ... Interreg, has given instructions to the Greek partners not to use the acronym FYROM, to call it Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. Of course, we have no problem with each other, that is, in the contact I have with colleagues, it usually does not come up. People are very positive. We even have fun with it ... so far with whomever we were in contact we did not experience any problems...

"They mentioned it several times (the name Macedonia). We got over it. I did not pay any attention. There wasn't any more attention by me on the "name". They, of course, were trying at every opportunity to emphasize it. There was simply no will from my part to continue, to create a problem. I respected the fact that they hosted me and that their hospitality was otherwise impeccable ... "

"Indeed our neighbors wanted there to highlight it. In my experience it happened twice and I explained to them both times that if they wanted to have good cooperation, good relationship, they should forget about it. Otherwise, I do not want any relations with them. They understood it and I believe that from then on they did not bring it up in our cooperation ... I mean, it is an issue that we give more importance, more intensity than it has. I do not think it is important , and in particular in these programs, that we have an inter-municipal, cross-border cooperation that it plays any role. Nor that we should insist on it. I saw that friends in Skopje did not create such obstacles ... "

"I think at a Greek political level there were a couple of references, sometimes when colleagues from our FYROM partners were present. This is how the issue was mentioned. But in a good mood: that it is a matter to be solved. On the side of FYROM, there is no FYROM, but Makedonija everywhere. I do not remember if we had any problems with documents because they, as you know, refuse to sign public documents mentioning FYROM because they do not accept it. But this is somewhat solved by the Interreg Managing Authority ... I think that the people who are professionals in their field are not concerned with these problems. Indeed, just like me, the way I try to do my job, they too are also trying to do theirs. For some who are politicians, their job is to be elected, so they have to say things that sound good to a wider audience who will elect them. Because that's their job in the end. They are politicians. They want to maintain a good relationship with a lot of people. I do not think there is a terrible problem with the issue of naming... Now, it's definitely a problem that from the moment it begins it generates tension. Indeed, whenever we begin this conversation at a meeting we will start to argue. We had clear instructions that whenever there was suspicion of a discussion concerning the name issue, to terminate it because it may lead to known problems. Because at that point you will just fight. Someone will say his personal opinion, just like I have my own opinion, but it won't matter what that opinion is. If you come into this conversation, it directly polarizes and you immediately argue. And it is beyond any meaning of Interreg cross-border program, good neighborliness, tightening of relations, etc. "

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“Το καλύπτουνε γιατί στο πλαίσιο του κάθε προγράμματος υπάρχει το κομμάτι της δημοσιότητας, πρέπει ο Δήμος να βγάζει τα δελτία τύπου, πρέπει να τους καλέσουμε. Έρχονται πάντα, δεν υπάρχει θέμα...”

"They cover it up because in the context of each program there is the piece of publicity, the municipality must issue the press releases, we must call them. They always come, there is no issue..."

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“Αυτά δυστυχώς εντάσσονται στις υποχρεώσεις των υπεργολάβων, των συμβούλων που έχει το ελληνικό δημόσιο. Εάν αυτοί τα κάνουν (έ)γιναν, εάν αυτοί δεν τα κάνουν δεν (ε)γιναν. Αυτά είναι τα προβλήματα της υλοποίησης στην Ελλάδα. Στο συγκεκριμένο έργο, το Αμύνταιο είχε... τη δημοσιότητα που έπρεπε να δώσει. Δεν νομίζω ότι ασχολήθηκε ιδιαίτερα. Εννοώ και η εταιρία που είχε αναλάβει υποχρεώσεις αντίστοιχες. Στο βαθμό που η δημοσιότητα ήταν υποχρέωση δική μας, παρόλο που δεν είμασταν εμείς τυπικά οι συντονιστές του έργου, και γενικώς υπεύθυνοι για το έργο, να δημοσιοποιούμε, όπως όλα μας τα έργα, πολύ. Αλλά το ακροατήριο το δικό μου δεν είναι το ίδιο με ενός Δήμου. Έτσι. Και δεν είναι και υποχρέωση μου... Είναι κάτι στο οποίο νομίζω δεν πήγαμε καλά. Αν το κρίνω ως project. Δεν έτυχε της δημοσιότητας που του άξιζε. Αυτά είναι κάποια πράγματα που πρέπει να τα τρέξει πάντα ο επικεφαλής... Ξέρετε αυτό είναι ένα ζήτημα που σχετίζεται με την κλίμακα και που νομίζει ο κάθε φορέας ότι πρέπει να απευθυνθεί. Δηλαδή, δυστυχώς, όχι δυστυχώς, ο Δήμος Αμυνταίου απευθύνεται στους δημότες του. Και εκεί λήγει...”

"These unfortunately are included in the obligations of the subcontractors, the consultants of the Greek government. If they do their job, it will take place, if (however) they don't, it will not take place. These are the implementation problems in Greece. In this particular project, the Amyntaion (Municipality) had... gave the publicity it had to give. I do not think that they paid particular attention. I mean the private firm that had the obligation to do it. To the extent that publicity was our own obligation, although we were not formally the project coordinators and generally responsible for the project, yes we are publicizing it, like all our works, a lot. But my audience is not the same as the audience of a municipality. And it's not my obligation ... This (i.e. publicity) is something that I think that we did not do well. If I judge it as a project. It did not get the publicity it deserved. These are some things that always have to be run by the supervisor ... You know this is an issue that is related to the scale and to whom each carrier thinks he needs to address. Indeed, unfortunately, not unfortunately, the Municipality of Amynteou addresses its citizens. And there is where it ends ... "

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“Εννοείται η δική μας πλευρά; Δεν νομίζω να υπάρχει κάποιο τέτοιο θέμα. Ο κόσμος δεν γνωρίζει και πολλά πράγματα. Δεν νομίζω να υπάρχουν και πολλοί που το βλέπουν αρνητικά. Θα έλεγα ότι εάν οι μισοί είναι θετικοί, οι άλλοι μισοί απλά αδιαφορούν...”

"Do you mean our own side? I do not think there is such a thing. People do not know much about it. I do not think there are many people who see it negatively. I

would say that if half of them are positive, the other half are simply indifferent ...
"

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"Δυστυχώς, αυτό είναι ένα μέγα θέμα. Το ενδιαφέρον των τοπικών κοινωνιών. Είναι μεγάλο θέμα, διότι η τοπική κοινωνία έχει μερίδιο ευθύνης για ένα τόπο, εάν πάει μπροστά ή όχι... Είναι η νοοτροπία των ανθρώπων, ή γιατί έτσι γαλουχήθηκαν ή γιατί δεν ενδιαφέρονται. Βλέπω δηλαδή ότι δεν ασχολούνται με το αύριο, δεν ασχολούνται με ουσιαστικά πράγματα, το πώς θα οικοδομήσουμε για να αντιμετωπίσουμε τις δυσκολίες... Θέλω να πω ότι οι τοπικές κοινωνίες έχουν μέγα ευθύνη, έχουν τεράστιο μερίδιο γι' ότι δεν συμβαίνει η ανάπτυξη στο Αμύνταιο. Δεν ενδιαφέρονται. Αυτό είναι πολύ αρνητικό. Πρέπει να αντιληφθούμε ότι δεν είναι έχουν μόνο ευθύνη αυτοί που εκλέγονται. Τη μεγαλύτερη ευθύνη έχουν αυτοί που τους εκλέγουν..."

"Unfortunately, this is a big issue. The interest shown by local communities. It is a big issue, because the local community has a share of responsibility for a place, if it will progress or not ... It is the mindset of people, perhaps because they learned to act like that, or perhaps because they are simply not interested. I see that they do not care about "tomorrow", they do not deal with essential things, for how to build foundations in order to cope with the difficulties ... I want to say that local societies have a great responsibility, they have a huge share in the fact that development does not happen in Amynteo. They are not interested. This is very negative. We have to realize that it is not only those who are elected who are responsible. The greatest responsibility lies with those who elect them ... "

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"... το DECIDE, το οποίο τελικά δεν έτρεξε η πλευρά της FYROM, ήταν για να αντιμετωπίσουμε μαζί καταστροφές. Πολιτική προστασία. Όταν έχουμε μια φωτιά, δεν θα κοιτάξει τα σύνορα. Οπότε θα ήταν καλό να έχουμε το ίδιο σύστημα εντοπισμού. Φτιάχτηκε ένα σύστημα για τη διαχείριση της κρίσης. Να ξέρεις πως θα διαχειριστείς μια κρίση, ένα σεισμό, μια φωτιά, τον αποχιονισμό. Όταν έχουμε συνεργασία με τον ακριβώς γειτονικό δήμο – θα έμπαινε και ο Δήμος Φλώρινας, θα έμπαιναν και οι απέναντι Δήμοι πέρα από τα σύνορα – όταν επεκταθεί μια φωτιά έχεις το εργαλείο για να συνεργαστείς..."

"... the (project) DECIDE, which eventually did not have participation from the FYROM side, concerned tackling disasters together. Civil protection. When a fire breaks out, it will not take borders into account. So it would be good to have the same tracking system. A system for managing the crisis has been prepared. To know how to handle a crisis, an earthquake, a fire, the removal of snow. When we cooperate with the neighboring municipality - the Florina Municipality would have been included, the municipalities over the border would also have been included – in case a fire expands, we have the tools to cooperate (work together)
... "

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“Εμείς προσπαθήσαμε να τους δώσουμε ένα ηλεκτρονικό εργαλείο. Πάρα πολύ απλό. Γιατί την ώρα που θα συμβεί κάτι κακό, δεν έχεις τον χρόνο για να χρησιμοποιήσεις περίπλοκα συστήματα. Μπορείς να κάνεις κάτι για δύο-τρία λεπτά. Τόσο γρήγορα. Προσπαθήσαμε λοιπόν να τους δώσουμε μια ηλεκτρονική πλατφόρμα, η οποία θα τους βοηθούσε σε διάφορες φάσεις, όπου Αρχές που σχετίζονται με την Πολιτική Προστασία πρέπει να κάνουν κάτι για να ανταποκριθούν στο εκάστοτε συμβάν... να έχουνε μια εικόνα του συμβάντος... Επί του τεχνικού (μέρους), όπως σας είπα και πριν, εάν μπίτε στην ιστοσελίδα του έργου νομίζω ότι είναι αρκετά ξεκάθαρο περί της ποιότητας της δουλειάς. Πόσο δουλεύτηκε ή όχι. Δείτε και τα άλλα Interreg. Και θα βγάλετε συμπεράσματα για την ποιότητα της δουλειάς. Εγώ ως ερευνητής στο ΕΚΕΤΑ τα αποτελέσματα του DECIDE τα έχω αξιοποιήσει πάρα πολύ. Και θα συνεχίσω να το κάνω. Γιατί για τα δικά μας επιστημονικά ενδιαφέροντα ήταν πολύ καλό...”

"We tried to provide them with an electronic tool. A functional (tool). Because when something bad happens, you do not have time to use sophisticated systems. You must do something within two or three minutes. It is so fast. So we tried to give them an electronic platform that would help them in various phases, where Civil Protection Authorities have to do something to respond to the incident ... to have a picture of the event ... On the technical part, as I said before, if you enter the project website, I think that whatever concerns the quality of the work is quite clear. How hard we worked on it or not. See other Interreg projects. And you will draw conclusions concerning the quality of the work. As a CERTH researcher, I have used the results of DECIDE very much. And I will continue to do so. Because it was a particularly good project for our own scientific interests ..."

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“Νομίζω ότι όλοι – δήμαρχοι, δημοτικά συμβούλια – βλέπουν με θετικό τρόπο τη συνεργασία με τις γειτονικές χώρες. Ποτέ δεν υπήρξε κάποιο εμπόδιο να πούνε «σταμάτα με το πρόγραμμα», ή δεν «θα κατεβάσουμε πρόταση...”

"I think that all - mayors, municipal councils - see the cooperation with neighboring countries in a positive way. There has never been an obstacle, to say "stop with the program", or "we will not make a proposal ..."

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“Θεωρώ ότι είχαν πολύ μεγάλο αποτέλεσμα και θετικό για την περιοχή μας... τα προγράμματα αυτά πραγματικά δίνουν ένα αποτέλεσμα. Δίνουν και αναπτυξιακό εάν θέλετε χαρακτήρα, διότι είναι χρηματοδοτούμενα εκατό της εκατό ένας, αλλά ένας σημαντικότερος και κυριότερος λόγος που πρέπει αυτά να τα εξαντλούμε είναι ότι είμαστε ένας περιφερειακός, συνοριακός δήμος και με Αλβανία, Σκόπια μπορούμε να συνεργαστούμε και να εξαντλήσουμε πολλά χρήματα μέσω του Interreg και να έχουμε ένα όφελος στις τοπικές κοινωνίες... Μόνο θετικά αποτελέσματα έχει η διασυνοριακή συνεργασία...”

"I think they have had very considerable and positive effects on our region ... these programs really do deliver. They also have a developmental character due to the fact that they are funded a hundred percent, but one even more important

and cardinal reason for taking full advantage of them, is that we are a regional, border municipality and with Albania, Skopje we can work together and exhaust a lot of money through Interreg and have a benefit for the local communities ... Cross-border cooperation brings positive results only ... "

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“Προσωπική μου άποψη είναι ότι είμαστε υποχρεωμένοι να έχουμε καλή συνεργασία με τις γείτονες χώρες... Δεν έχουμε να χωρίσουμε τίποτε με τους ανθρώπους...”

"My personal opinion is that we are obliged to have good cooperation with our neighbors ... We do not have anything to divide with these people ..."

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“Ναι, δεν είμαστε παντού πρωτοπόροι. Σε κάποια θέματα έχουν προχωρήσει. Νομίζω ότι έχουν μια διαφορετική νοοτροπία. Δεν φοβούνται να επιχειρήσουν. Εμείς είμαστε πιο μαζεμένοι. Αυτό έχω διαπιστώσει. Στο Δήμο της Οχρίδας για παράδειγμα. Το τουριστικό του κομμάτι το έχει προχωρήσει πολύ περισσότερο από ότι εμείς. Εμείς έχουμε τέσσερις λίμνες και «μόνο τις κοιτάμε». Έχουνε μάθει να δουλεύουν (πολύ) με συνεργασίες. Έχουνε μεταξύ τους δίκτυα. Συμμετέχουν σε ευρωπαϊκά. Έχουν διαφορετική νοοτροπία. Εμείς φοβόμαστε τις συνεργασίες. Αυτό έχω διαπιστώσει.”

"Yes, we are not pioneers everywhere. In some issues they are ahead of us. I think they have a different mindset. They are not afraid to try. We are more reserved. That's what I've seen. In the Ohrid Municipality for example. The tourism part has been developed more there than we have developed our own. We have four lakes and "we only stare at them". They have learned to work (a lot) through collaborations. They have created networks. They participate in European affairs. They have a different mindset. We are afraid of collaborations. That's what I've seen. "

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“Όχι επηρεάζει. Εγώ να σας πω όταν έκανα τις προτάσεις σε Αλβανία και Σκόπια, μου είπαν ότι πρώτη φορά έχουμε τέτοια προσέγγιση... Άρα δεν ενδιαφέρθηκε κανείς να ξεκινήσει μια τέτοια διαδικασία. Και σας είπα ότι στα διασυνοριακά προγράμματα τον πρώτο λόγο τον έχει η Ελλάδα, διότι είναι μέλος της ΕΕ. Έχει απευθείας επαφές και επικοινωνία με τους θεσμούς και τις υπηρεσίες της ΕΕ που δεν μπορούν να τις έχουν ούτε η Αλβανία, ούτε τα Σκόπια. Αν δεν κινήσουμε εμείς το ενδιαφέρον, οι Σκοπιοί και οι Αλβανοί δεν μπορούνε. Εμείς πρέπει αυτό το κομμάτι, το πλεονέκτημα να το εκμεταλλευτούμε...”

“Συνήθως και προς το χειρότερο. Σπάνια προς το καλύτερο. Πάρα πολύ. Ιδίως σε ζητήματα, ας πούμε σε αυτά τα projects τα διασυνοριακά, τα οποία έχουν να κάνουν με τη γενική κατανόηση του τι πάμε να κάνουμε. Στο πάνω πάνω επίπεδο. Δηλαδή εμείς τελικά είχαμε να φτιάξουμε ένα software. Ο τεχνικός προγραμματιστής δεν έχει σημασία εάν αλλάξει. Μπορεί να προσλάβεις κάποιον

άλλο. Αλλά ένα έφευγα εγώ και ερχόταν κάποιος άλλος στη θέση μου που δεν μπορούσε να καταλάβει γιατί τα κάνουμε όλα αυτά, και τι νόημα έχουν όλα αυτά και να τα απαξιώσει κιόλας όλα αυτά... Αυτό επηρεάζει μετά καθολικά τι συμβαίνει σε όλο το έργο. Αφορά τη συνέχεια που σας είπα πιο πριν. Ναι, έχει τεράστια επίπτωση... Το DECIDE ατύχησε γιατί άλλαξε η διοίκηση στο Δήμο Αμυνταίου, σημαντική αλλαγή, και δυστυχώς δεν ήταν προς το καλύτερο ήταν προς το χειρότερο. Δηλαδή η νέα πολιτική ηγεσία του Δήμου Αμυνταίου από την πρώτη μας συνάντηση, εδώ σ' αυτό το γραφείο στη Θεσσαλονίκη ήτανε πολύ επιφυλακτική γιατί δεν ξέρω τι νόμιζε είμαστε εμείς..."

"No, It does have an impact. I'm telling you that when I made the proposals to Albania and Skopje, I was told that it was the first time that we had such an approach... So (until then) no one was interested in starting such a process. And I already told you that Greece has the first say in cross-border programs because it is a member of the EU. It has direct contacts and communication with the EU institutions and services that neither Albania nor Skopje can have. If we do not attract their interest, the "Skopjans" and the Albanians cannot. We need (to do) this part, to take advantage of it ..."

"Usually to the worst. Rarely for the best. A lot. Especially in matters, let's say in these cross-border projects, which concern the general understanding of what we are going to do. At the upper level. We finally had to create a software. It doesn't matter if the technical developer changes. You may hire someone else. . But if I left and someone else would come in my place that could not understand why we were doing it all, and what does it all means, (or) even devalue it ... This all affects what happens in the whole project. It's about the continuation, of what I told you before. Yes, it has a huge impact ... DECIDE was unlucky because the administration in Amyntaion (Municipality) changed, a major change, and unfortunately it was not for the best, it was for the worst. The new political leadership of Amyntaion Municipality was very sceptical from our first meeting here at this office in Thessaloniki because I do not know what it thought we were representing ..."

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"Σίγουρα είναι ωφέλιμη. Είναι αυτονόητη. Δυστυχώς στα χερσαία σύνορα της Ελλάδας η διασυνοριακή συνεργασία δεν είναι πολλές φορές αυτονόητη με την άλλη πλευρά. Ναι, πρέπει να ενταθεί περαιτέρω κατά την άποψη μου. Και να επεκταθούν αυτά. Δεν έχουμε συνεργασία με τις γειτονικές μας χώρες όπως έχουνε η Γερμανία με την Αυστρία. Και αυτό για μένα είναι το επιθυμητό. Δηλαδή όπως αυτοί συνεννοούνται αυτονόητα, σηκώνουν το τηλέφωνο και μιλάνε, τα σύνορα είναι κάτι το παράξενο. Ναι σίγουρα θα πρέπει η συνεργασία να ενταθεί..."

"It is definitely beneficial. It is self-evident. Unfortunately, at the land borders of Greece, cross-border cooperation is often not self-evident with the other side. Yes, it must be further intensified in my view. And to expand it. We do not have the same level of cooperation with our neighboring countries as Germany and Austria have. This is what I would like to see. As they communicate

automatically, they pick up the phone and talk, the borders become something strange. Yes, surely, cooperation must be intensified ..."

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"Επιβάλλεται να γίνει επέκταση των προγραμμάτων, διότι είναι υπαρκτό το ενδιαφέρον των Σκοπίων και των Αλβανών να μπουνε στην ΕΕ. Υπάρχει έδαφος, αρκεί η Ελλάδα να αντιληφθεί και να κάνει προτάσεις τέτοιες που να σύρει και αυτές τις χώρες... Η ΕΕ επεξεργάζεται όποια πρόταση έχει ένα χαρακτήρα αναπτυξιακό σε οποιαδήποτε επίπεδο - οικονομικό, περιβαλλοντικό, κλπ. Άρα λοιπόν εμείς σαν χώρα, εφόσον έχουμε το πλεονέκτημα αυτό έναντι των δύο χωρών, πρέπει να κάνουμε προτάσεις, να δημιουργήσουμε προτάσεις, να γίνουνε ημερίδες, μέσα από τις ημερίδες να καθιερώσουνε αυτές τις προτάσεις και να τις υποστηρίξουμε στα ευρωπαϊκά φόρα, προκειμένου να δημιουργηθούν ειδικά ταμεία... στα ευρωπαϊκά ταμεία υπάρχουν πολλά χρήματα τα οποία περιμένουν προτάσεις για να απορροφηθούν. Διότι πέρα από τα συγκεκριμένα προγράμματα, πέρα από τα συγκεκριμένα μέτρα, υπάρχουν πλεονάσματα, που προκύπτουν από προγράμματα που έχουν ακυρωθεί και δεν έχουν απορροφηθεί. Και ξέρετε ένα πρόγραμμα όταν δεν ολοκληρωθεί τα χρήματα επιστρέφουν στην ΕΕ. Αυτά είναι διαθέσιμα για τέτοιου είδους προτάσεις. Εμείς έχουμε πολύ μεγάλη ευκαιρία, μπορούμε να κάνουμε άπειρες προτάσεις μεταξύ Σκοπίων και Αλβανών για νέες μεθόδους ανάπτυξης. Επειδή αυτές οι δύο χώρες είναι στον προθάλαμο ένταξης στην ΕΕ..."

"It is necessary to extend the programs, because Skopje and the Albanians are interested in joining the EU. There is potential, if only for Greece to realise it and to make proposals to draw these countries in as well ... The EU will examine any proposal that has a developmental character at any level - economic, environmental, etc. So, as a country, since we have this advantage over the other two countries, we have to make proposals, create proposals, and arrange workshops, through the workshops, to formulate these proposals and to support them in European forums in order to create special funds... there are a lot of money in EU Funds, waiting for proposals to be absorbed. Because, beyond the specific programs, beyond the specific measures, there are surpluses resulting from programs that have been canceled and have not been absorbed. And you know if a program is not completed the finance returns to the EU. These are available for such proposals. We have a great opportunity, we can develop many proposals between Skopje and Albanians concerning new methods of development. Because these two countries are at the forefront of joining the EU ..."

**

"Εγώ θεωρώ ότι η διασυνοριακή συνεργασία είναι πολύ χρήσιμη και ότι θα έπρεπε να επεκταθεί. Απλά υπάρχουν εμπόδια άλλου τύπου: νομικά κωλύματα. Πως ένας δήμος θα πάει να συνεργαστεί με τον δήμο στα Bitola; Δεν είναι τόσο εύκολο να κάνουμε επαφές, δεν είναι τόσο εύκολο να μετακινηθούν οι υπάλληλοι. Μόνο μέσω των διασυνοριακών (προγραμμάτων), όπου υπάρχει η νομοθεσία που μας καλύπτει, μπορεί να μετακινηθεί μια ομάδα υπαλλήλων, να δει, να ανταλλάξουμε απόψεις. Διαφορετικά, είναι πολύ δύσκολο, εάν δεν

αλλάξει το νομικό καθεστώς που διέπει τη λειτουργία των δήμων. Οι Εταιρίες έχουν άλλη (νομική) βάση. Μπορούν πιο εύκολα να κάνουν μια συνεργασία με τους «δίπλα». Απλά εμείς είμαστε πιο περιορισμένοι. Δεν έχουμε τόση ευελιξία...

"I think cross-border cooperation is very useful and should be expanded. There are simply other obstacles: legal impediments. How will a municipality cooperate with the municipality in Bitola? It's not so easy to create contacts, it's not so easy to transfer employees. Only through cross-border (programs), where the legislation covers us, can a group of employees move, see, exchange views. Otherwise it is very difficult, if the legal status that governs the functioning of the municipalities does not change. Other entities have different (legal) basis. They can more easily collaborate with the "next". We are simply more limited. We do not have such flexibility..."

**

“Είμαστε πολύ ευχαριστημένοι με την ευκαιρία που είχαμε να αναπτύξουμε τις επαφές μας με τους δήμους της γειτονικής χώρας και έτσι να γνωρίσουμε ακόμα καλύτερα την κουλτούρα, τον πολιτισμό και την ιστορία τους. Η πολιτιστική πλευρά των επαφών αυτών και της συνεργασίας μας μπορεί να αποτελέσει και προστάδιο για καλύτερες σχέσεις και σε άλλα επίπεδα”

"We are very pleased with the opportunity that we had to develop our contacts with the Municipalities of the neighboring country and thus to get to know their culture and their history even better. The cultural aspect of these contacts and our cooperation can also function as a preliminary stage for better relations at other levels".

**

“Η υλοποίηση των διασυνοριακών προγραμμάτων μας έφερε πιο κοντά με διαφορετικούς δήμους της γειτονικής χώρας, τις κοινωνίες τους και τις νοοτροπίες τους”

"The implementation of cross-border programs brought us closer to different municipalities of the neighboring country, their societies and their attitudes"

**

“Όχι, σε καμιά περίπτωση δε νομίζω πως η συνεργασία μας ήταν απλά μια παράλληλη διεκπεραίωση των δράσεων και των δραστηριοτήτων που αναλάβαμε να φέρουμε εις πέρας. Είχαμε μια ουσιαστικότατη συνεργασία σε όλα τα στάδια του προγράμματος, δηλαδή από το σχεδιασμό και τη διαμόρφωση της πρότασης μέχρι και την από κοινού υλοποίηση διάφορων δράσεων. Σίγουρα, υπήρχαν δράσεις και ενέργειες που εκ των πραγμάτων υλοποιήθηκαν ανεξάρτητα αλλά σε πολλές περιπτώσεις συμμετείχαμε είτε από απόσταση είτε αυτοπροσώπως σε δράσεις και ενέργειες της άλλης πλευράς”

"No, I do not think that in any case was our cooperation simply a parallel implementation of the actions and the activities that we set to accomplish. We have had a substantial cooperation at all stages of the program, from designing and formulating the proposal to the joint implementation of various actions.

Surely, there were actions and initiatives that were de facto implemented separately, but in many cases we participated either remotely or in person in actions and initiatives of the other side”

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“Τη συνεργασία με το Δήμο του Νόβατσι θα τη διαχωρίσω ως εξής: Στο ανθρώπινο κομμάτι που αφορά την ανάπτυξη κοινωνικών επαφών και στο τεχνοκρατικό κομμάτι που αφορά την ουσιαστική συνεργασία. Σε ότι αφορά το πρώτο μέρος, πράγματι αναπτύχθηκαν ουσιαστικά διαπροσωπικές σχέσεις, οι οποίες όμως τελείωσαν με τη λήξη του προγράμματος. Σε ότι αφορά το δεύτερο μέρος, θεωρώ ότι ήταν μια παράλληλη υλοποίηση των μέτρων τα οποία όντως αφορούσαν κάθε Δήμο ξεχωριστά”

"I will make the following distinction with regard to our cooperation with the municipality of Novaci: The human part concerning the development of social contacts and the technocratic part concerning the substantial cooperation. As far as the first part is concerned, substantial interpersonal relations have actually developed but ended with the end of the program. As far as the second part is concerned, I believe that it was a parallel implementation of the measures that regarded each municipality separately”.

**

“Δυστυχώς είμαστε ακόμα σε περίοδο κρίσης. Φοβάμαι πως η οικονομική κρίση μας ανάγκασε να έχουμε μια διασυννοριακή συνεργασία επιφανειακού χαρακτήρα. Το ίδιο θα μπορούσα να πω και για τις συνενώσεις που επέβαλε ο “Καλλικράτης”. Παρά την έλλειψη προσωπικού, η προσπάθεια ήταν πολύ θετική. Θα έπρεπε όμως να έχουμε μόνιμο και πιο καταρτισμένο προσωπικό για αυτά τα προγράμματα. Τώρα αποκτήσαμε την εμπειρία. Το Novaci είχε αυτή την εμπειρία”

"Unfortunately, we are still in a period of crisis. I am afraid that the economic crisis has forced us to maintain a cross-border cooperation of a superficial nature. The same could be argued about the mergers imposed by "Kallikratis". Despite the lack of human resources, the effort was very positive. But we ought to have permanent and better educated staff for these programs. We have acquired the experience now. Novaci had this experience already. "

**

“Η διαφορετική κουλτούρα, οι διαφορετικές ανάγκες και το σημαντικότερο η διαφορετική νομοθεσία δημιούργησαν κάποια ζητήματα. Το μεγαλύτερο έχει να κάνει με τη νομοθεσία περί των δημοσίων συμβάσεων, αναθέσεων και προμηθειών”,

“Στα Σκόπια έχουν άλλη διοίκηση. Έχουμε μεγάλες διαφορές. Αυτοί δεν έχουν πολλούς φορείς και τους λείπει η γραφειοκρατία και οι δικλείδες ασφαλείας που έχουμε εμείς. Είναι φοβερό... Ξεκινούσαμε μαζί με το Novaci μια παρόμοια δράση και ενώ εμείς λόγω γραφειοκρατίας ήμασταν ακόμα στον διαγωνισμό για την

καλύτερη προσφορά εκείνοι είχαν προχωρήσει από την ανάθεση στην υλοποίηση. Έχουμε πολύ γραφειοκρατία στην Ελλάδα”

"Different cultures, different needs, and, most importantly, different legislation created some issues. The most important regard public contracts and procurement laws"

"The administration in Skopje is different. We have big differences. They have fewer institutions, and also they lack the bureaucracy and the safeguards that we have. That's terrifying... We started a similar action with Novaci at the same time and while we were still at the stage of receiving offers due to the bureaucracy regarding the procurement, they had advanced from the stage of sub-contracting to the stage of implementation. We have a lot of bureaucracy in Greece”.

**

“Είχαμε διαρκώς μια πολύ καλή επικοινωνία. Πολλές φορές συμμετείχαμε στις εκδηλώσεις του άλλου δήμου με δικά μας έξοδα ακόμα κι αν αυτό δεν ήταν υποχρεωτικό και απαραίτητο με βάση τον προγραμματισμό. Θα μπορούσα να πω πως οι επαφές μας ήταν διαρκείς, απέκτησαν προσωπικό χαρακτήρα και ξεπέρασαν την τυπικότητα που είχαν στην αρχή”

"We always had a very good communication. We frequently participated in events of the other municipality at our own expense even though this was not mandatory and necessary according to the planning of activities. I could say that our contacts were enduring; they acquired a personal character and surpassed the formality they had at the beginning”

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“Ναι, υπήρξαν προβλήματα αλλά αντιμετωπίστηκαν με διακριτικό τρόπο. Σε θέματα όμως επίσημων συναντήσεων, η από εκεί πλευρά ήταν όσο πιο διακριτική μπορούσε”

"Yes, there were problems but they were dealt with in a discreet way. But in terms of formal meetings, the other side was as discrete as possible."

**

“Δυστυχώς υπήρξαν βανδαλισμοί. Πινακίδες του προγράμματος καταστράφηκαν ακριβώς επειδή αναγραφόταν το όνομα της FYROM και η σημαία της μαζί με την ελληνική και την ευρωπαϊκή. Ωστόσο, ο Δήμος Αλμωπίας ακολούθησε κατά γράμμα το πρωτόκολλο, τις προδιαγραφές και τις οδηγίες της Διαχειριστικής Αρχής σε σχέση με αυτά τα ζητήματα. Γενικότερα, αυτό έγινε για κάθε μορφή αλληλογραφίας και εγγράφων. Και από την πλευρά του Novaci, πέρα από κάποιες δεδομένες αστοχίες, αποκόμισα την εντύπωση μιας ήπιας στάσης.

"Unfortunately, there have been vandalisms. Program signs were destroyed precisely due to the fact that FYROM's name and flag were mentioned along with the Greek and the European flag. However, the Municipality of Almopia respected fully the protocol, the specifications and the instructions of the

Managing Authority concerning these issues. Generally, this was done for all forms of correspondence and documents. And from Novaci's side, apart from certain mishandlings, I got the impression of a mild attitude."

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"Η εντύπωση που αποκόμισα από τις επαφές μου με αξιωματούχους και πολίτες του Δήμου του Novaci είναι πως οι περισσότεροι ήταν φιλικοί, φιλικότατοι. Αναπτύξαμε μια πάρα πολύ καλή σχέση που βασίζεται στην καλή συνεννόηση χωρίς καμία δυσκολία στην επικοινωνία. Είναι σίγουρο πως θα μας επιζητήσουν ως εταίρους για μελλοντικά προγράμματα"

"The impression I got from my contact with officials and citizens of the City of Novaci is that most of them were friendly, very much so. We developed a very good relationship based on good understanding without any difficulty in communication. It is certain that they are going to seek us our partnership for future projects"

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"Με βάση τις δυνατότητες προβολής των δράσεων σε τοπικό επίπεδο, θεωρώ ότι ανταποκριθήκαμε στις απαιτήσεις του προγράμματος. Η τοπική κοινωνία έγινε κοινωνός των δράσεων και συμμετείχε ενεργά σε αυτές"

"Based on the possibilities of promoting actions at a local level, I think we have met the program requirements. The local community became a partaker of the initiatives and actively participated in them. "

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"Δεν υπήρξε μεγάλη προβολή σε επίπεδο τοπικής κοινωνίας. Δυστυχώς, το πρόγραμμα δεν προβλήθηκε αρκετά και φοβάμαι και εδώ ότι αυτό οφείλεται στην οικονομική κρίση και την ύφεση. Και ο κόσμος από την μεριά του έχει πολλά προβλήματα. Οι πολίτες και ο κόσμος έχουν χαθεί στα προβλήματά τους. Για τους περισσότερους πολίτες οι δράσεις του προγράμματος πέρασαν απαρατήρητες"

"There has not been much promotion at the local community level. Unfortunately, the program has not been promoted enough and I am afraid that this is due to the economic crisis and the recession as well. The population has many problems. The citizens and the society in general have been consumed with problems. For most citizens, the program's actions went unnoticed."

**

"Έγινε μεγάλη προσπάθεια να παρουσιαστεί το πρόγραμμα σε όσο το δυνατό περισσότερα σχολεία. Στους μαθητές δόθηκε και υλικό. Σε πολλές παρουσιάσεις συμμετείχε και ο ορειβατικός σύλλογος για να δίνει ακόμα περισσότερες πληροφορίες. Το γενικότερο κοινό έδειξε ενδιαφέρον. Δόθηκε μεγαλύτερη έμφαση στο εδώ κομμάτι των δράσεων και όχι τόσο στη διασυνοριακή συνεργασία"

"A great effort has been made in order to present the program to as many schools as possible. The students were given material. In many presentations the mountaineering club also participated to provide even more information. The general public manifested its interest. More emphasis was given on the local part of the initiatives and not on cross-border cooperation. "

**

"Το πρόγραμμα άφησε παρακαταθήκη την προβολή της περιοχής και επίσης τα ψηφιακά δεδομένα τα οποία είναι προίκα στα χέρια μας για μελλοντική αξιοποίηση. Επίσης, δόθηκε η δυνατότητα σε επισκέπτες να κινηθούν με μεγαλύτερο ενδιαφέρον στην περιοχή και να έχουν την περιέργεια να γνωρίσουν ένα ακόμα μεγαλύτερο κομμάτι της",

"The project has left as its legacy the region's promotion and also the digital data that will rest at our disposal for future exploitation. It also incited visitors to show a greater interest for the region and to have the curiosity to familiarize themselves with a larger part of it."

**

"Οι σχέσεις μας έγιναν πιο στενές. Οπωσδήποτε. Και αναφέρομαι και στο διαπροσωπικό επίπεδο. Θεωρώ ότι αυτό θα έχει μόνιμο χαρακτήρα και πολλοί κι από τη μία και από την άλλη πλευρά θα συνεχίσουν και θα επεκτείνουν αυτή τη συνεργασία. Ως Δήμαρχος επισκέφτηκα το Νόβατσι πολλές φορές. Γνωρίστηκα με όλα τα μέλη του δημοτικού τους συμβουλίου και κατόρθωσα να διατηρήσω την επαφή και την επικοινωνία. Θα ήθελα να έχω ολοκληρώσει εγώ το πρόγραμμα"

"Our relations have become much closer. Definitely. And I also refer to the interpersonal level. I believe that this will be permanent trait and that many people, from both sides, will continue and extend this cooperation. As a Mayor, I visited Novaci many times. I met all the members of their council and I managed to maintain these contacts and communication. I would like to have been the one who completed the program".

**

"Πέρα από τις πολύ καλές βάσεις δεδομένων που μας άφησε αυτό το πρόγραμμα αποκτήσαμε πάρα πολύ καλές επαφές με τους συναδέλφους μας από τη FYROM. Δουλέψαμε από κοινού και φτάσαμε σ' ένα κοινό αποτέλεσμα. Είναι χαρακτηριστικό ότι μοιραζόμαστε πλέον τους προσωπικούς λογαριασμούς ηλεκτρονικής αλληλογραφίας πέρα από τους υπηρεσιακούς. Νομίζω πως χρειαζόμαστε ακόμα περισσότερες δράσεις γνωριμίας και εξοικείωσης με τους συναδέλφους από τη γειτονική χώρα. Αυτό έγινε σε επίπεδο στελεχών αλλά νομίζω πως θα μπορούσε να γίνει πιο συστηματικά σε επίπεδο παρατήρησης",

"In addition to the very good databases that this program has left us with, we have also gained very good contacts with our colleagues from FYROM. We worked together and achieved a common result. It is noteworthy that we now share our personal and not only our business e-mail accounts. I think we need

more initiatives to get acquainted with our colleagues from the neighboring country. This was done at an executive level but I think it could take place more systematically at an observation level.

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“Είναι απαραίτητο να διευρυνθεί ο κύκλος των ανθρώπων που συνεργάζονται από τις δύο χώρες. Θα έπρεπε να συμμετέχουν και άλλοι φορείς. Γιατί να μη συμμετέχουν περισσότερες ΜΚΟ, αγροτικοί συνεταιρισμοί ή ακόμα και οι αθλητικές ομάδες; Οι Δήμοι θα μπορούσαν να συμμετέχουν σε περισσότερα προγράμματα χωρίς να πρέπει να είναι απαραίτητα lead partner. Πρέπει όλο αυτό το πλαίσιο συνεργασίας να ανοίξει προς την κοινωνία”,

"It is necessary to broaden the circle of people working together from the two countries. Other players should also be involved. Why not involve more NGOs, agricultural cooperatives or even sports teams? Municipalities could participate in many programs without necessarily being lead partners. The entire framework of cooperation must open towards society. "

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“Όταν οι προσκλήσεις βγαίνουν κεντρικά, το τί θεωρώ εγώ είναι άνευ ουσίας”

"When invitations are planned centrally, my personal considerations are not of substance,"

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“Η Έδεσσα έχει τρέξει πολλά προγράμματα Interreg με Δήμους της FYROM ξεκινώντας από τα τέλη της δεκαετίας του 1990. Η συνεργασία αυτή περιλάμβανε και το Δήμο του Kavadarci. Στην αρχή, η συνεργασία μας ήταν τυπική. Βαθμιαία, γνωριστήκαμε πολύ καλά και έτσι η συνεργασία μας έγινε πολύ αποτελεσματική και ουσιαστική. Από πολύ νωρίς, δηλαδή από τις αρχές του 2000, η Έδεσσα επένδυσε στην εξοικείωση των κατώτερων στελεχών με τα προγράμματα Interreg, ώστε να υπάρχει διαρκής βελτίωση και εξοικείωση όχι μόνο στη διαχείριση αυτών των προγραμμάτων αλλά και στην επικοινωνία με τους συναδέλφους από τους συνεργαζόμενους Δήμους. Ακολουθήσαμε δηλαδή μια προσέγγιση «από τα κάτω» (bottom-up). Εμείς θέλαμε να συμμετέχουμε σε Interreg από τις αρχές του 1990 αλλά ο Νομός Πέλλας δε συμπεριλήφθηκε για γεωπολιτικούς λόγους”

"Edessa has implemented many Interreg programs with Municipalities from FYROM, starting in the late 1990s. This cooperation included the Municipality of Kavadarci. In the beginning, our cooperation was rather formal. Gradually, we familiarized the one with the other and thus our cooperation became very effective and substantial. Since early 2000s, Edessa has invested in familiarizing the younger executives with Interreg programs in order to achieve continuous improvement and adaptation not only in the management of these programs but also in the communication with colleagues from the cooperating Municipalities. We followed a "bottom-up" approach. We wanted to participate in Interreg since

the beginning of the 1990's but the Prefecture of Pella was not included for geopolitical reasons. "

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"Πάντα είχαμε δομημένες σχέσεις με τα Σκόπια. Ιδιαίτερα στις αρχές του 2000, όταν αρχίσαμε να τρέχουμε πολλά Interreg, οι ομάδες μας , επειδή συνήθως εμείς ήμασταν ο Leader- είχαν το ρόλο του "εκπαιδευτή" για τους συναδέλφους τους από τα Σκόπια ως προς τις ευρωπαϊκές πρακτικές και τη νομοθεσία και γενικότερα ως προς τη μεταφορά τεχνογνωσίας. Νομίζω πως ήταν μια σχέση αμοιβαίου οφέλους, εμείς επιζητούσαμε πόρους και εκείνοι να βρεθούν όσο γίνεται πιο κοντά στην Ε.Ε."

"We have always had structured relations with Skopje. Particularly at the beginning of 2000, when we began to run many Interreg (programs), our teams- given that we held the position of the lead partner- had the role of the "trainer" for their colleagues from Skopje, regarding European practices and legislation and generally regarding know-how transfer. I think it was a relationship of mutual benefit; we were looking for resources and they were looking to be as close as possible to the EU".

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"Για το Δήμο της Έδεσσας τα προγράμματα Interreg αποτέλεσαν και αποτελούν τμήμα του γενικότερου αναπτυξιακού σχεδιασμού. Στο πλαίσιο αυτό έγινε και γίνεται ανάλυση με Δήμους της FYROM ώστε να βρίσκουμε τους πιο πρόσφορους τομείς συνεργασίας",

"For the municipality of Edessa, the Interreg programs have constituted, and still do, part of the overall development plan. In this context, an analysis was made along with FYROM Municipalities to find the most appropriate areas of cooperation,"

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"Η συνεργασία μας ήταν ουσιαστικότερη και δεν αντιμετωπίσαμε ιδιαίτερα προβλήματα. Αστεειεύομενος θα έλεγα πως συχνά αντιμετωπίζουμε περισσότερα προβλήματα στη συνεργασία μας με Δήμους στην περιοχή μας. Βέβαια, θα άξιζε να σημειώσω πως η σχετικά μικρή εμπειρία που οι Δήμοι της FYROM είχαν ως προς την ενσωμάτωση και την εναρμόνιση με την Ευρωπαϊκή νομοθεσία μας δημιουργούσε περιοδικά κάποια εμπόδια τα οποία όμως τα ξεπερνούσαμε γρήγορα λόγω της πολύ καλής επικοινωνίας. Αυτό συχνά μεταφραζόταν σε μια διαφορετική αντίληψη ως προς την τήρηση των χρονοδιαγραμμάτων ή άλλων υποχρεώσεων του προγράμματος. Δεν είναι μόνο το γεγονός ότι στη FYROM έχουν διαφορετική νομοθεσία. Την αλλάζουν και συνέχεια! Από την πλευρά μας και εμείς δυσκολευτήκαμε λόγω του υψηλού ΦΠΑ και των capital controls"

"Our cooperation was substantial and we did not have any particular problem. Jokingly, I would say that we often encounter more problems in our cooperation with Municipalities in our region. Of course, it would be worth mentioning that the relatively little experience that the Municipalities from FYROM had in terms

of incorporating and adapting to European legislation, created periodically some obstacles that we quickly overcame thanks to the very good communication. This was often translated into a different perception of compliance with timetables or other program obligations. It's not only the fact that they have different legislation in FYROM. They also seem to change it all the time! For our part, we also had issues because of the high VAT and the capital controls."

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"Στα Βαλκάνια είμαστε. Εδώ τα προβλήματα δε λύνονται μόνο με την τυπική οδό. Χρειάζεται και η διαπροσωπική επαφή και σχέση. Γι' αυτό είναι σημαντικό όχι μόνο τα στελέχη αλλά και οι Δήμαρχοι να έχουν πολύ καλή επαφή και επικοινωνία. Γλιτώνουμε πολύτιμο χρόνο έτσι"

" We are in the Balkans. Here, problems are not solved only by following the formal procedure. Interpersonal contact and relationships are also needed. That's why it is important not only for executives but also for the Mayors to have very good contact and communication. We save valuable time this way."

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"Όχι. Δεν αντιμετωπίσαμε κανένα πρόβλημα. Δεν αφήσαμε σε καμιά περίπτωση τα πολιτικά προβλήματα να επηρεάσουν το πρόγραμμα. Εξάλλου, και οι δυο Δήμοι ακολουθήσαμε όλες τις προδιαγραφές και τους κανόνες που προβλέπονται από τη Διαχειριστική Αρχή. Η γραφειοκρατία είναι δομημένη και συγκεκριμένη. Σε προστατεύει και σε βοηθάει"

"No. We did not have any problem. We have not allowed the political problems to affect the program in any way. In addition, both municipalities have followed all the regulations and the rules laid down by the Managing Authority. Bureaucracy is structured and specific. It protects and helps you. "

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"Δεν υπήρξε κανένα πρόβλημα. Γενικότερα πρέπει να σας πω πως η Έδεσσα έχει μια πολύ καλή παράδοση σε ότι αφορά τη διπλωματία των πόλεων. Συμμετέχουμε πολύ ενεργά στο δίκτυο αδελφοποιημένων πόλεων τόσο στην περιοχή των Βαλκανίων όσο και με την Τουρκία. Έχουμε επενδύσει σε αυτό από τα τέλη της δεκαετίας του 1990"

"There was no problem. In general, I have to tell you that Edessa has a very good tradition in terms of city diplomacy. We are very active in the network of twinned towns both in the Balkan region and with Turkey. We have invested in this since the late 1990s"

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"Ποτέ δεν μπήκε θέμα πολιτικής από το Σκόπια. Είμαι απόλυτος. Δε συνέβη ποτέ. Πάντα στην Ελλάδα έβλεπαν ένα φίλο, ένα συμπαραστάτη και αρωγό για τις ευρωπαϊκές τους φιλοδοξίες και όχι έναν ανταγωνιστή"

"There has never been a policy issue from Skopje. I am certain. It never happened. They always saw a friend in Greece and a supporter of their European ambitions, not a competitor. "

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"Νομίζω πως θα έπρεπε να είχαμε κάνει περισσότερα σε σχέση με την επικοινωνία και την προβολή του προγράμματος. Μας έλειψε αυτό σε κάποιο βαθμό. Η κοινωνία το επιζητά και δείχνει ενδιαφέρον, αλλά εξαρτάται και από εμάς να προβάλλουμε καλύτερα τόσο τους στόχους όσο και το τελικό αποτέλεσμα του προγράμματος"

" I think we should have done more with regard to the dissemination and the promotion of the project. There was a certain omission in this matter. Society is eager and shows its interest but it is up to us to better promote both the goals and the final result of the program"

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"Ενδιαφέρον ζήτημα. Θεωρώ πως η τοπική κοινωνία δεν αντιδρά γρήγορα αλλά σταδιακά. Χρειάζεται συνέχεια από την πλευρά του Δήμου ώστε να προκαλέσει στο κοινό ακόμα πιο έντονο ενδιαφέρον. Σίγουρα και το αντικείμενο του προγράμματος παίζει και αυτό τον ρόλο του. Αλλά νομίζω πως τα πήγαμε αρκετά καλά. Στον Μύλο των Γεύσεων ήρθαν περισσότεροι από 4.000 μαθητές. Το θέμα ήταν η γαστρονομία αλλά πολλοί βρήκαν μια ευκαιρία να γνωρίσουν και να εξοικειωθούν με μια γειτονική κουλτούρα"

"Interesting issue. I think that local society does not respond quickly but gradually. Consistency is needed on the part of the Municipality in order to incite a more active interest in the public. Certainly, the subject of the program also plays its role. But I think we did well enough. More than 4,000 students came to the Mill of Flavors. The subject was gastronomy but many found an opportunity to get acquainted and become familiar with a neighboring culture."

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"Υπήρξαν δυστυχώς και κάποιες μειονότητες ακραίων και εθνικιστικών στοιχείων που προσπάθησαν να σαμποτάρουν τα προγράμματα. Πρόκειται για τραγικές συμπεριφορές και μειονότητες. Η κοινωνία κινείται ευτυχώς σε εντελώς διαφορετικό πλαίσιο"

"There were unfortunately some minorities of extreme and nationalist elements who tried to sabotage the programs. These are tragic behaviors and minorities. Fortunately, Society is moving in a totally different context".

**

"Πετύχαμε πολύ σημαντικά πράγματα με αυτό το project. Εμπλέξαμε και ευαισθητοποιήσαμε πολλούς φορείς και ιδιώτες επιχειρηματίες και από το χώρο της εστίασης και των ξενοδοχείων. Τα σεμινάρια που πραγματοποιήσαμε τους βοήθησαν να καταλάβουν πόσο σημαντικό είναι η ποιότητα των πιάτων που προσφέρουν να είναι σταθερή αλλά και επίσης τα μενού να περιλαμβάνουν όσο

γίνεται πιο πολλά στοιχεία από την τοπική κουζίνα. Ο οδηγός γαστρονομίας που φτιάξαμε είναι εξαιρετικά χρήσιμος. Επίσης, αναδείχθηκε μέσα από το πρόγραμμα η σημασία μιας ελάχιστης ομοιομορφίας στα μενού που προσφέρονται στο σύνολο του Νομού Πέλλας και όχι μόνο στην περιοχή της Έδεσσας”

"We have achieved very important things with this project. We engaged and mobilized many operators and private entrepreneurs both from the catering and the hotel sectors. Our seminars helped them to understand how important it is for the quality of their dishes to be consistent and for the menus to include as many elements as possible from the local cuisine. The gastronomy guide we have produced is extremely useful. Also, the program helped to stress the importance of a minimum of homogeneity in the menus offered in the entire Prefecture of Pella and not only in the region of Edessa.

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“Αυτό το πρόγραμμα αφορούσε τον τουρισμό και τη γαστρονομία αλλά είχε και χαρακτηριστικά που αφορούν γενικότερα ζητήματα. Με το Καβαντάρτσι φτιάξαμε έναν κοινό οδηγό γαστρονομίας. Αυτό από μόνο του δείχνει πως φτιάχνουμε δομές για να αναδειχθεί συνολικότερα η περιοχή μας και στα Βαλκάνια αλλά και στην Τουρκία. Ήταν όμως και μια ευκαιρία να συνειδητοποιήσουμε τις ομοιότητές μας στις γεύσεις και στα έθιμα. Και πιστεύω πως ο τουρισμός βοηθάει να αλλάξουν οι νοοτροπίες. Το βασικότερο είναι να αποδέχεσαι τον Άλλο. Όταν τον αποδέχεσαι τότε μόνο μπορείς να γνωρίσεις τον εαυτό σου”

"This program concerned tourism and gastronomy, but it also had features that relate to more general issues. Along with Kavadarci we have created a common gastronomy guide. This in itself shows that we are building structures to make our region more visible both in the Balkans and in Turkey. But it was also an opportunity to realize our similarities in tastes and customs. And I think that tourism helps in changing mindsets. The most important thing is to accept the Other. From the moment you accept him, only then you can begin to know yourself."

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“Αυτά τα προγράμματα είχαν αυτό που ονομάζουμε soft δράσεις, όπως π.χ. Ο τουρισμός και ο πολιτισμός. Ο στόχος ήταν από την αρχή η εμπέδωση των διασυνοριακών σχέσεων. Μπορώ να πω πως αυτός ο στόχος επιτεύχθηκε πλήρως. Έχουν αναπτυχθεί διαπροσωπικές σχέσεις, έχει παραχθεί κοινό έργο, έχουμε επίγνωση πια των δυνατοτήτων της μεταξύ μας συνεργασίας”

"These programs included what we call soft actions, such as tourism and culture. The goal was, from the outset, to consolidate cross-border relations. I can say that this goal has been fully achieved. Interpersonal relationships have been developed, joint work has been produced, we are already aware of the possibilities of our cooperation."

**

“Οι αλλαγές των προσώπων μπορούν να παίξουν ρόλο. Αλλά στην Έδεσσα καταφέραμε να έχουμε σταθερές δομές και πρόσωπα εδώ και περίπου 20 χρόνια. Οι δυο εταίροι, από την Ελλάδα και την FYROM, πρέπει να έχουν ομάδες που να είναι σταθερές και να εξειδικεύονται μόνο στη διαχείριση διασυνοριακών προγραμμάτων”

"Changes in characters can play a role. But in Edessa we managed to have stable structures and actors for about 20 years. The two partners, from Greece and FYROM, must have teams that are stable and specialize only in the management of cross-border programs".

**

“Από πολλές απόψεις νομίζω πως η διασυνοριακή συνεργασία μεταξύ Ελλάδας και FYROM ήταν πολύ παραγωγική. Εκείνοι ως υποψήφιο μέλος είδαν τα οφέλη της Ε.Ε. και εμείς καταφέραμε και έργα να κάνουμε αλλά και να ξεπεράσουμε το αδιέξοδο της δεκαετίας του 1990. Αυτό που συνέβη με την ονομασία μας πήγε πολύ πίσω. Είχαμε καταφέρει να είμαστε ο πιο σημαντικός οικονομικός εταίρος της γειτονικής χώρας. Εξαρτιόταν από εμάς. Αυτό το δυναμικό δεν το αξιοποιήσαμε. Ίσως και στην περιοχή μας να γίνει αυτό που γίνεται σε άλλες περιοχές της Ευρώπης, να υπάρχει δηλαδή ελευθερία κίνησης και οι Δήμοι από διαφορετικές χώρες να μπορούν να συνεργάζονται απευθείας και να σχεδιάζουν τους τομείς κοινού ενδιαφέροντος. Θα είναι νομίζω η λογική συνέχεια των Interreg”

"I think that cross-border cooperation between Greece and FYROM has been very productive in many ways. They, as a candidate Member, acknowledged the benefits of the EU. And we have been able to implement projects and also to overcome the deadlock of the 1990s. What happened with the name issue was counter- productive. We had managed to be the most important economic partner of the neighboring country. It was up to us. We did not exploit this potential. Perhaps what is taking place in other parts of Europe will happen in our region as well, the fact that there is freedom of movement and that Municipalities from different countries can collaborate directly and plan the areas of common interest. It will be the logical continuation of Interreg. "

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CONCLUSIONS

A general and widespread feeling of satisfaction with the experience of cross-border cooperation can easily be discerned by the material studied and the interviews conducted. The process of working with stakeholders from FYROM “passed the test” of initial reluctance and uncertainty, leading to what can be described as contentment with the overall experience of cooperation. For the Greek stakeholders, as a result of the experience of cross-border cooperation, a “spirit of partnership” with stakeholders from FYROM emerged.

It is specifically this trust and good working relations, which became clear only after initial hesitation and was a result of the actual ‘doing’ the work, that became the biggest “capital” of the projects: a “capital of trust and goodwill”. It’s important to also note that previous experience of cross-border cooperation, in the context of earlier EU financing schemes or other collaborative initiatives, such as the Prespa Transboundary Park, became the springboard for building trust. The cumulative effect of repeated cross-border collaborative efforts has significant positive implications for the relations between the two sides.

However, the study revealed also a number of obstacles that the stakeholders encountered in project implementation. Such obstacles may have tested the longevity of the projects had there not been the above described newly built “capital of trust”. Among the issues that stakeholders identified as negatively affecting cross-border cooperation were the difficulties faced by municipalities in FYROM in their effort to adjust to European legislation and procedures, differences in national legislation, frequent changes in legislation in FYROM, the impact of the Greek economic crisis, red tape and other bureaucratic problems in Greece, the Greek public administration’s weak capacity, the limited technical capabilities of Greek local authorities or even the factor of “physical distance”.

Clearly we may reasonably draw the conclusion that the obstacles were multiple and could be identified in both sides of the border, in both the legal frameworks and the prevailing political culture, pertaining to institutional malaise in the two countries and at various levels of governance; in addition, all these enduring factors were in recent years coupled with the negative consequences of the severe economic crisis in Greece. However, it is important not to miss here the point made by the stakeholders themselves; i.e. that none of the above problems, whether individually or in combination, did actually manage to threaten or seriously undermine cross-border cooperation itself. This is both a significant and an optimistic finding of this study. It is also a quite optimistic finding of the study that some stakeholders identified further and stronger cross-border cooperation and communication as the adequate responses to obstacles and other challenges. Partners seem to develop a cooperative problem solving culture as a result of the experience of project implementation.

When discussing problems and obstacles, nothing could potentially be more damaging than the side effects of the name dispute. Although the dispute was recognized as a serious issue affecting the whole context of bilateral relations, the prevalent feeling of the Greek stakeholders was that it did not and should not obstruct, in any meaningful way, the development and implementation of cross-border cooperation. Mutually agreed patterns and processes helped prevent potential “crises” that could result from fallouts of the name dispute. It is worth mentioning here that the experience accumulated for more than two decades since FYROM became a member of the UN, the instructions of the Managing Authority of the Interreg in Thessaloniki as well as the relevant guidelines of the Greek Ministry of Foreign Affairs were instrumental in making the name issue a “non-issue” in cross-border cooperation. Project partners utilized the rules and procedures of cross-border programmes, the advice of the Managing Authority, but also the “received knowledge” and the “capital of trust and good will” to deal with the practical aspects of the issue, such as written and oral communication.

Similarly, adequate responses to the “political problem” and other similar challenges were also the focus on the actual work to be done. A “do my job” attitude was useful for seeing through the “cloud” of politically sensitive issues. Professionalism, focus on the practical implementation of agreed tasks, following mutually agreed protocols and rules were all important prescriptions for “not being lost” in politics. Overall, a culture of professionalism and institutionalization are recipes for success. Local organisations that implement several projects, or wish to implement several in the future, tend to develop a culture of professionalism and institutional cooperation that spreads across border.

It’s important also to stress here that the local reactions to project interventions were not always positive – quite the contrary. Some project interventions encountered the reservation or the indifference of the local communities; such attitudes were not necessarily associated with the “political problem” surrounding cross-border cooperation; instead they were linked to pathologies of peripheral and rural communities that are for decades neglected by their central governments. But there were also in some cases very negative and aggressive reactions to some projects. None of these problems managed to derail cooperation. This is important to stress. The projects did not unfold in a local setting that was necessarily ideal for cross-border cooperation – far from it. But the important lesson to be drawn here is that cooperation that is well designed, professionally implemented and running on the “capital of trust and good will” that is accumulated can overcome nationalist reactions in the localities.

Overall, the conclusion that partners involved in cross-border cooperation also drew was that a future agreement on the name dispute will significantly contribute the building better local relations and generate local growth. The partners involved in the project do not downplay the significance of the issue – quite the contrary. They also worked hard so that cross-border cooperation becomes a success in spite of the “political problem”. But they could also draw the conclusion that the dispute is “holding back relations”; a future resolution will likely open up important opportunities for the development of bilateral relations.

The overall conclusion to be drawn is that implemented projects were a success also because they tackled issues, which are important for local communities. This built cooperation on a safer ground. Cross-border cooperation was not initiated because the two sides needed the building of trust. Rather, the projects implemented responded to real, and in some cases urgent, needs of the local communities. These ranged from questions of energy efficiency in areas severely challenged by winter weather conditions, civil protection from disasters that necessitate coordinated responses by both sides of the borders, the development of local tourism in border areas that are economically challenged, or the need for protecting and promoting heritage as economic resource. Most projects also had a noteworthy “added scientific value”. It’s important to stress that it was the successful implementation of interventions in such important for the local community issues that consolidated the sense of success in cross-border cooperation and also made the “capital of trust and good will” more meaningful.

Among the important benefits of cross-border cooperation was also the building of capacity of local administrations in handling relations with neighbours, recognize needs and opportunities and develop forward looking thinking in developing solutions. Local authorities developed an understanding for the need and a positive environment for the reception of EU programmes. The latter, in turn, guaranteed financing, providing valuable funds that cover local developmental needs. The above-mentioned “capital of trust” was developed also among administrative staff of municipalities, even among people and institutions that had never in the past had experience of cooperation. It was even mentioned that local authorities in Greece could learn from their counterparts across border, as in certain aspects local authorities in FYROM are more advanced. The project stakeholders identified also in the legal organization and actual operation of local authority in Greece: the legal framework in Greece makes administrative affairs more cumbersome, inhibiting in practice the development of cross-border cooperation. Overall, cross-border osmosis allowed for healthy competition and positive comparisons, not influenced by national interests and high politics.

Another conclusion drawn by stakeholders was that the involvement of a larger community of partners could be beneficial in the future. The necessity for Greece and FYROM to assume the “ownership” of cooperation and obtain certain autonomy in designing and implementing programs of cooperation were also underlined as key conclusions. Overall, cross-border cooperation schemes could and should be extended in the future and even expanded, if possible. The need to have cross-border co-operation and to further expand it is considered as “self-evident” to those involved in such efforts. The mollifying European context and the EU instruments of cooperation policy are seen as generating practical benefits to local communities, but also allowing the building of trust and goodwill between individuals and communities across borders; the overall outcome is a contribution to improved relations between Greece and FYROM in general.

Higher Education

The analysis of the literature, relevant documents and relevant data as well as the interviews with stakeholders clearly shows that the potential for cooperation with FYROM in the area of higher education has not been fully utilized. This can be seen as a direct consequence of the long-lasting name dispute, in the sense that it prevented the reaching of a comprehensive bilateral agreement that could have facilitated and enhanced different forms of cooperation. The effects of the absence of such a framework are more visible in public higher education institutions, where cooperation with FYROM progressed primarily via the EU frameworks (TEMPUS, Interreg); even there, however, it never really took off. The frequent cooperation in the context in EU-funded projects is certainly a matter that should be studied and documented in full detail. But the conclusion of this study is that, despite best intentions and some collaborative efforts, relations are nowhere near their actual potential.

The negative implications of the name dispute are also evident at the level of the general perceptions and dispositions in the public higher education institutions in Greece. The most counter-productive among these is a general sentiment of hesitation when it comes to cooperation with FYROM. In this case, the difficulties are not only related to the absence of a framework agreement, but also to the general climate in relations between the two countries, which has evidently shaped and maintained an attitude of cautiousness. One can expect that the Confidence Building Measures agreed between the two countries will increase interaction. But further research will be necessary in order to measure and evaluate the implementation and effects of the CBMs.

In the case of private institutions, the cooperation between the two countries appears to be more versatile and yet consistent. Moreover, it could be argued that it has managed to take advantage of the benefits of cooperation much more than public higher education institutions. Apart from the economic aspects and the constant flow of students from FYROM in Thessaloniki, it has promoted a better understanding and a stable environment of exchange and familiarization between the two countries.

Lastly, it should be noted that the EU frameworks for cooperation in education have proved very beneficial in the sense that they provided the incentives and guarantees (financial, legal and institutional) for such cooperation to take place. The mollifying EU context is also seen here as an important legacy to be highlighted and preserved. It is certainly a legacy to be taken into account and on which future policies and initiatives could be built.

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&lang=en](http://www.spp.gr/index.php?option=com_content&view=frontpage&Itemid=1&lang=en)

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http://citycollege.sheffield.eu/frontend/index.php?chlang=GR_EN

APPENDIX I

List of interviews – Cross border cooperation

Interviewee	Institution	Project	Interview date
Professor	Technological Educational Institution (TEI) of Western Macedonia	PEEBRE	3 July 2017
Official	Prespes Municipality	PEEBRE	20 July 2017
Official	Prespes Municipality	PEEBRE	20 July 2017
Official	Amyntaion Municipality	DECIDE	28 June 2017
Elected Official	Amyntaion Municipality	DECIDE	28 June 2017
Ex-elected official	Amyntaion Municipality	DECIDE	2 July 2017
Official	Centre for Research & Technology Hellas (CERTH)	DECIDE	14 July 2017
Official	Almopia Municipality	Lhi-Lna	7 July 2017
Elected official	Almopia Municipality	Lhi-Lna	7 July 2017
Ex-elected official	Almopia Municipality	Lhi-Lna	8 July 2017
Elected official	Almopia Municipality	Lhi-Lna	2 August 2017
External consultant	Almopia Municipality	Lhi-Lna	20 August 2017
Official	Edessa Municipality	KAIMAK	8 August 2017
Official	Edessa Municipality	KAIMAK	18 August 2017
Elected official	Edessa Municipality	KAIMAK	9 August 2017
Ex-elected official	Edessa Municipality	KAIMAK	29 September 2017
Senior official	Managing Authority of	Overall	9 May 2017

	European Territorial Cooperation Programmes	supervision of Interreg Programmes	
Senior Official	Managing Authority of European Territorial Cooperation Programmes	Overall supervision of Interreg Programmes	1 August 2017

List of interviews – Higher education

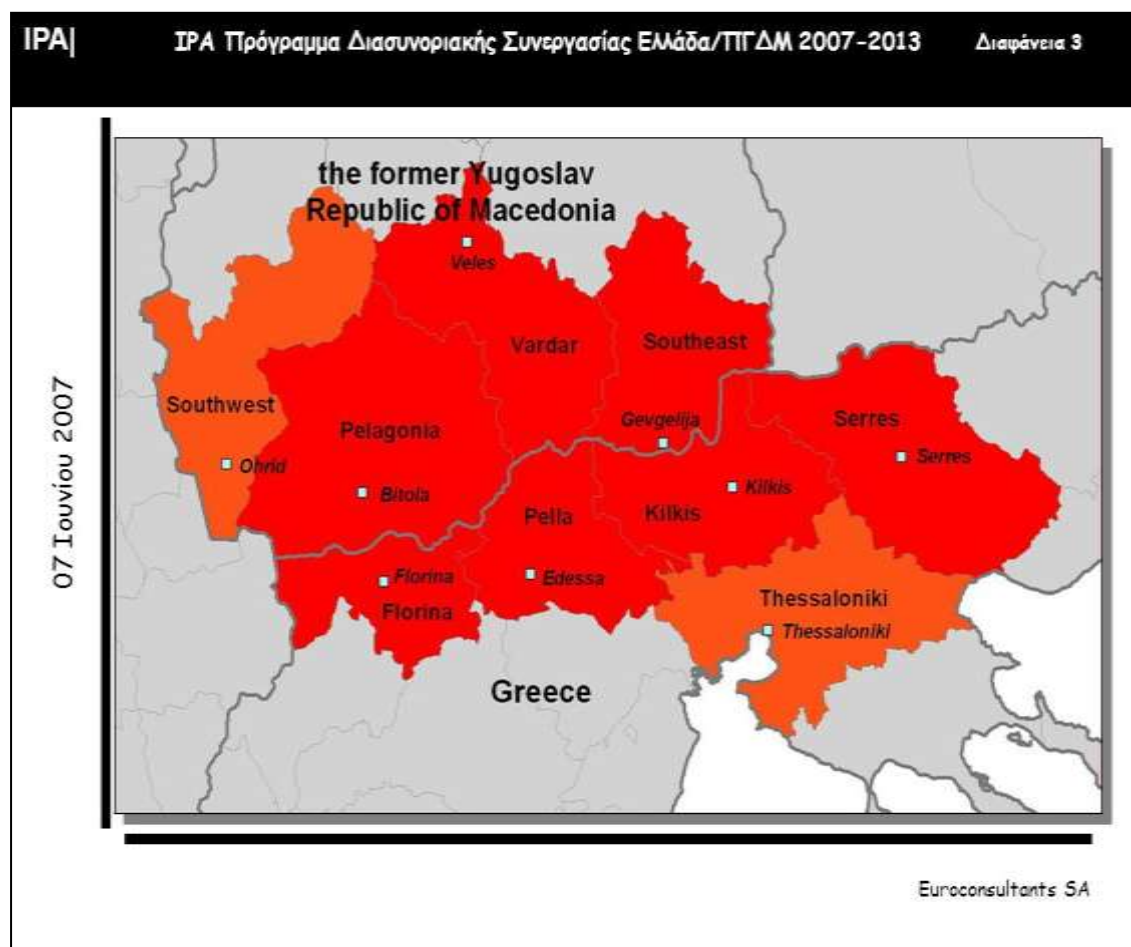
Interviewee	Higher education institution	Interview date
Professor	University of Macedonia (Thessaloniki)	1 November 2017
Professor	University of Macedonia (Thessaloniki)	1 November 2017
Senior Administrative Officer and Research Coordinator	The University of Sheffield International Faculty- CITY College (Thessaloniki)	1 November 2017
Senior Administrative Officer	IHU-International Hellenic University (Thessaloniki)	2 November 2017
Senior Administrative Officer	Aristotle University of Thessaloniki	2 November 2017

APPENDIX II

Maps

Eligible Regions, IPA Cross-border Programme

“Greece – the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia 2007-2013”



Source:

https://www.google.gr/search?biw=1366&bih=588&tbm=isch&sa=1&ei=VpIIWvytBo_8kwXp2qHgCQ&q=Επιλέξιμες+περιοχές+Interreg+Greece+Fyrom&oq=Επιλέξιμες+περιοχές+Interreg+Greece+Fyrom&gs_l=psy-ab.3... (last accessed 1/12/2017)

Eligible Regions, IPA Cross-border Programme “Greece – the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia 2007-2013”

IPA | IPA Πρόγραμμα Διασυνοριακής Συνεργασίας Ελλάδα/ΤΓΓΔΜ 2007-2013 | Διαφάνεια 2

07 Ιουνίου 2007

Επιλέξιμες Περιοχές

- Νομοί Φλώρινας, Πέλλας, Κιλκίς, Σερρών,
- Νομός Θεσσαλονίκης ως όμορη περιοχή βάσει του άρθρου 21 του Κανονισμού ΕΤΠΑ,
- Περιφέρειες Pelagonia, Vardar, Southeast (Jugoistochen),
- Περιφέρεια Southwest (Jugozapaden) ως όμορη περιοχή βάσει του άρθρου 97 του Κανονισμού IPA.

Euroconsultants SA

Source:

https://www.google.gr/search?biw=1366&bih=588&tbm=isch&sa=1&ei=VpIIWvytBo_8kwXp2qHgCQ&q=Επιλέξιμες+περιοχές+Interreg+Greece+Fyrom&oq=Επιλέξιμες+περιοχές+Interreg+Greece+Fyrom&gs_l=psy-ab.3... (last accessed 1/12/2017)

Prefecture of Florina



Source: "Travel Greece, Florina-Northern Greece-Greece",

https://www.google.gr/search?q=Florina+map&source=lnms&tbn=isch&sa=X&ved=0ahUKewjFi4Xf-DXAhXQDewKHXQqDr0Q_AUICigB&biw=1366&bih=588#imgsrc=jl7uX6fUqqvEfM: (last accessed 1/12/2017)

Prefecture of Pella



Source: "Travel Greece, Pella-Northern Greece-Greece",
https://www.google.gr/search?biw=1366&bih=588&tbn=isch&sa=1&ei=SJEIWvuGG8-TsAer_KXgCw&q=pella+greece+map&oq=pella+map&gs_l=psy-ab.1.1.0i7i30k1l5j0i30k1.264577.266792.0.268735.12.12.0.0.0.129.1169.8j4.12.0....0...1c.1.64.psy-ab..1.11.1085...0j0i19k1j0i7i30i19k1j0i8i30i19k1 (last accessed 1/12/2017)

APPENDIX III

Examples of Project Outputs

Poster announcing a conference organized in the context of the project PEEBPE.

The poster is for a seminar organized by PEEBPE (Project for the Promotion of Energy Efficiency in Buildings and Protection of the Environment). It features logos for PEEBPE, TEI (Technical Institute of Eastern Macedonia and Thrace), and the Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs. The main title is 'ΣΕΜΙΝΑΡΙΑ ΓΙΑ ΜΗΧΑΝΙΚΟΥΣ ΜΕ ΘΕΜΑ:' followed by three bullet points: '- ΕΞΟΠΛΙΣΜΟΣ ΚΑΙ ΜΕΘΟΔΟΛΟΓΙΑ ΜΕΤΡΗΣΕΩΝ ΓΙΑ ΕΝΕΡΓΕΙΑΚΕΣ ΕΠΙΘΕΩΡΗΣΕΙΣ ΚΤΙΡΙΩΝ', '- ΕΝΕΡΓΕΙΑΚΗ ΑΝΑΒΑΘΜΙΣΗ ΔΗΜΟΣΙΩΝ ΚΤΙΡΙΩΝ ΒΑΣΕΙ ΜΕΤΡΗΣΕΩΝ', and '- ΣΥΜΠΑΡΑΓΩΓΗ ΑΠΟ ΒΙΟΑΕΡΙΟ: ΔΙΑΔΙΚΑΣΙΑ ΠΑΡΑΓΩΓΗΣ & ΠΑΡΑΔΕΙΓΜΑΤΑ'. The central image shows a hand holding a green house-shaped cutout with a color-coded energy efficiency scale (A to G) overlaid on it. The text 'Πρόωθηση της Ενεργειακής Απόδοσης Κτιρίων & Προστασία του Περιβάλλοντος (PEEBPE)' is below the image. The date 'Πέμπτη 17 Ιουλίου 2014' and location 'Αίθουσα Δημοτικού Συμβουλίου Δήμου Γρεβενών' are prominently displayed, along with the time 'Ώρα 18:00'. At the bottom, it says 'Θα δοθούν βεβαιώσεις παρακολούθησης' and includes logos for the European Union, Greece, and the project itself.

PEEBPE
Πρόωθηση της Ενεργειακής Απόδοσης Κτιρίων
& Προστασία του Περιβάλλοντος (PEEBPE)

TEI
ΤΕΧΝΙΚΟ ΙΝΣΤΙΤΟΥΤΟ
ΔΥΤΙΚΗΣ ΜΑΚΕΔΟΝΙΑΣ

ΥΠΟΥΡΓΕΙΟ ΠΑΙΔΕΙΑΣ ΚΑΙ ΘΡΗΣΚΕΥΜΑΤΩΝ

ΣΕΜΙΝΑΡΙΑ ΓΙΑ ΜΗΧΑΝΙΚΟΥΣ ΜΕ ΘΕΜΑ:
- ΕΞΟΠΛΙΣΜΟΣ ΚΑΙ ΜΕΘΟΔΟΛΟΓΙΑ ΜΕΤΡΗΣΕΩΝ
ΓΙΑ ΕΝΕΡΓΕΙΑΚΕΣ ΕΠΙΘΕΩΡΗΣΕΙΣ ΚΤΙΡΙΩΝ
- ΕΝΕΡΓΕΙΑΚΗ ΑΝΑΒΑΘΜΙΣΗ ΔΗΜΟΣΙΩΝ ΚΤΙΡΙΩΝ ΒΑΣΕΙ ΜΕΤΡΗΣΕΩΝ
- ΣΥΜΠΑΡΑΓΩΓΗ ΑΠΟ ΒΙΟΑΕΡΙΟ:
ΔΙΑΔΙΚΑΣΙΑ ΠΑΡΑΓΩΓΗΣ & ΠΑΡΑΔΕΙΓΜΑΤΑ

Πρόωθηση της Ενεργειακής Απόδοσης Κτιρίων
& Προστασία του Περιβάλλοντος (PEEBPE)

Πέμπτη 17 Ιουλίου 2014
Αίθουσα Δημοτικού Συμβουλίου
Δήμου Γρεβενών | Ώρα 18:00

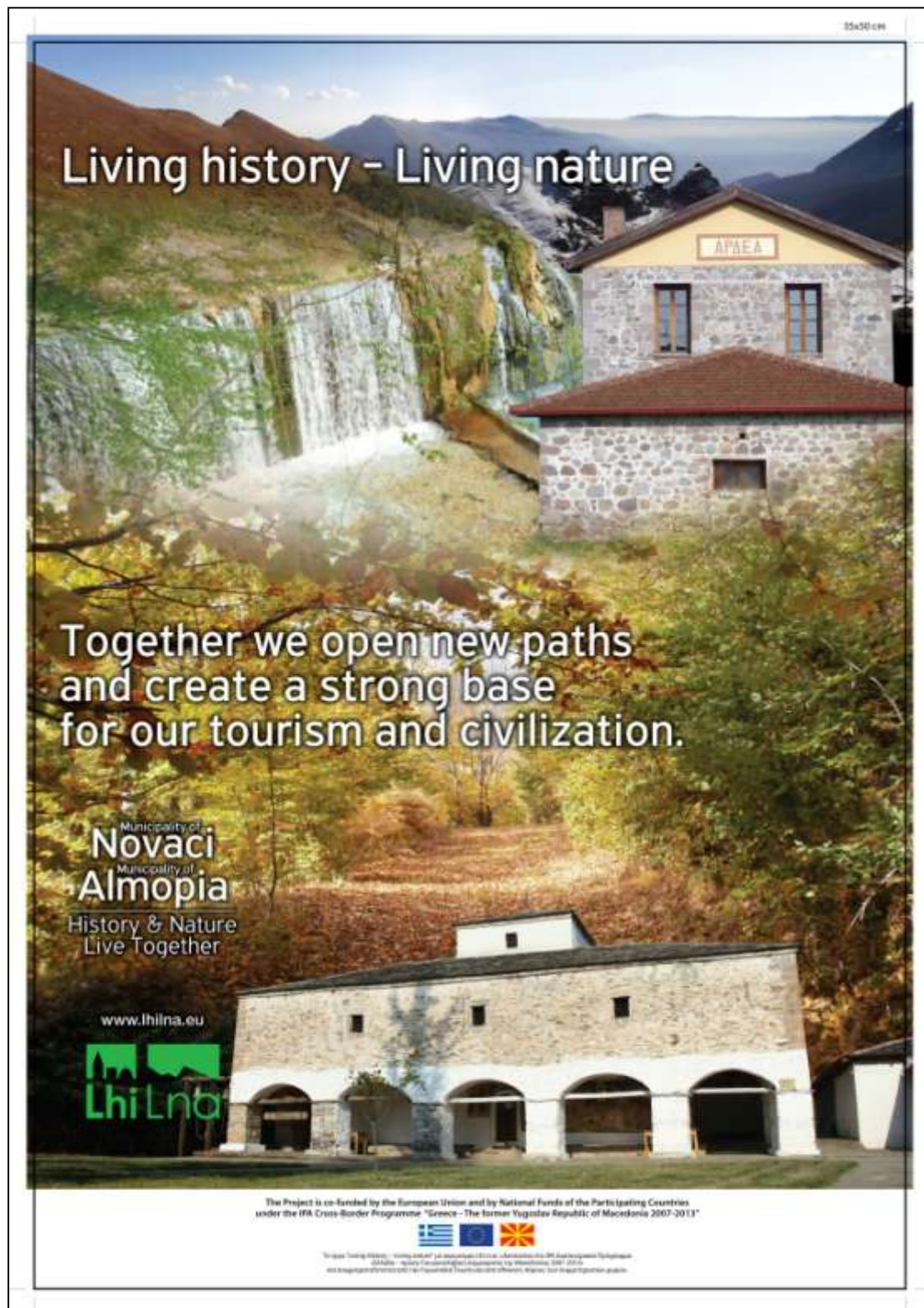
Θα δοθούν βεβαιώσεις παρακολούθησης

Ευρωπαϊκή Ένωση Ευρωπαϊκό Ταμείο Περιφερειακής Ανάπτυξης
Πρόγραμμα Περιφέρειας Θεσσαλίας
ΠΡΟΓΡΑΜΜΑ ΠΕΡΙΦΕΡΕΙΑΣ ΘΕΣΣΑΛΙΑΣ
ΠΡΟΓΡΑΜΜΑ ΠΕΡΙΦΕΡΕΙΑΣ ΘΕΣΣΑΛΙΑΣ
ΠΡΟΓΡΑΜΜΑ ΠΕΡΙΦΕΡΕΙΑΣ ΘΕΣΣΑΛΙΑΣ

Information brochure for the project DECIDE

[illegible][illegible]

Poster for the project Lhi-Lna



35x50 cm

Living history - Living nature


Together we open new paths
and create a strong base
for our tourism and civilization.

Municipality of
Novaci
Municipality of
Almopia
History & Nature
Live Together

www.lhilna.eu

Lhi Lna

The Project is co-funded by the European Union and by National Funds of the Participating Countries
under the IPA Cross-Border Programme "Greece - The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia 2007-2013"



Το έργο "Living History - Living Nature" για την ανάπτυξη του τουρισμού και της πολιτιστικής κληρονομιάς στην περιοχή του Νοτίου Αιγαίου, με την επωνυμία Lhi Lna, υλοποιείται με την επιχορήγηση της Ευρωπαϊκής Ένωσης και των εθνικών πόρων της Ελλάδας και της πρώην Γιουγκοσλαβικής Δημοκρατίας της Μακεδονίας (2007-2013) στο πλαίσιο του Προγράμματος Συνεργασίας Διαμετασυνοριακού χαρακτήρα "Ελλάδα - πρώην Γιουγκοσλαβική Δημοκρατία της Μακεδονίας 2007-2013".

Digital application for the project Lhi-Lna



Poster for the project KAIMAK



Poster for the project KAIMAK

Project KAIMAK
KAIMAKTSALAN GASTRONOMY ROUTES
Municipality of Edessa, Municipality of Kavadarci

INFO No 1 | Summer 2012

DOSSIER
KAIMAKTSALAN GASTRONOMY ROUTES

mountain lines,
many traditions,
much more actions,

one gastronomy,
a lot of benefits

... Keep the tips please!

NOTES
Don't forget for KAIMAK :

Inform also :

Connect by Kaimak Project :

Project KAIMAK
KAIMAKTSALAN GASTRONOMY ROUTES
Municipality of Edessa, Municipality of Kavadarci
The Project is co-funded by the European Union and by National Funds of the Participating Countries under the IPA Cross-Border Programme "Greece - The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia 2007-2013"

Poster for the project KAIMAK.



Poster for the project KAIMAK.



APPENDIX IV

Complete list of the approved projects of the “IPA Cross-Border Cooperation Programme: Greece- The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, 2007-2013”

Acronym	Title	Measure	Overall Lead Partner
1. A.T.C.	Regional Certification of Professional Skills on Agro Tourism Sector	1.2 Enhance Human Resources	American Farm School Post – Secondary Educational and Training Association
2. BEC-TSB	Cooperation for the Establishment of a “Business and Employment Centre” and a “Trade Show and Bazaar” in the Cross-border Area	1.1 Economic Development	Municipality of Gevgelija
3. CBW	Cross – Border Wheels	1.3 Promote Sustainable Tourism	Serres Racing Circuit
4. CENET	Center for Education and Networking in Tourism	1.2 Enhance Human Resources	Municipality of Demir Kapija
5. CHILDRENHEALTH	Using New Technologies to Promote Children Health in the Cross-Border Region	1.4 Protect human life	Special Account for Research Funds of Aristotle University of Thessaloniki (2nd Pediatrics Clinic)
6. CONCERT	Choirs and Orchestras: innovative Cooperation cross-paths	2.2 Promote and protect the natural and cultural heritage of the area	Cultural and Intellectual Association “Korais”
7. E-HIGHWAY	Environmental Highway Observatory	2.1 Promote and protect the environmental resources of the area	Egnatia Odos S.A.

8. ENVI	Local Communities in Environmental Action	2.1 Promote and protect the environmental resources of the area	Municipality of Delta
9. FIRESHIELD	Developing cross-border joint fire-protection plan "FIRESHIELD"	2.1 Promote and protect the environmental resources of the area	Center for development of Pelagonija region
10. InCluDe	Promote Innovative Entrepreneurship through Development of an Aromatic and Pharmaceutical Plants Cluster, to Succeed Sustainable Development	1.1 Economic Development	Chamber of Kilkis
11. InterAct	Interacting through Acting: From drama to contemporary arts	2.2 Promote and protect the natural and cultural heritage of the area	Artistic Organization Andreas Voutsinas
12. ISPROP FORGEN	Integrated Selection, Protection and Promotion of Balkan Forest Genetic Resources with Aesthetic Value	2.1 Promote and protect the environmental resources of the area	Special Account for Research Funds of Aristotle University of Thessaloniki (Laboratory of Forest Genetics and Plant Breeding)
13. KAIMAK	Kaimaktsalan Gastronomy Routes	1.3 Promote Sustainable Tourism	Municipality of Edessa
14. NTheSSIS	Network of Thermal Spring Sources as an Integrated System	1.3 Promote Sustainable Tourism	Thermal Spring Sources Association of Municipalities and Communities
15. PROMO.CROSS	Integrated Plan for the Promotion of the Joint Architectural Heritage and the Development of Religious Tourism in the Cross Border Area	2.2 Promote and protect the natural and cultural heritage of the area	Kilkis Development Agency S.A.
16. RULAND	Interactive Farmers' Support System for	2.1 Promote and protect the	Region of Western Macedonia

	Efficient Water Use Management	environmental resources of the area	
17. TELE THERM	Know- How Transfer for District Heating Applications in Bitola and Novaci	2.1 Promote and protect the environmental resources of the area	Municipality of Bitola
18. WIN - WIN	Women In Network for Innovation and Entrepreneurship	1.1 Economic Development	Ergani Centre for the Support of Employment and Entrepreneurship of Women
19. PROM-CULT	Promotion of the Vlachs' cultural heritage in the regions of Serres and Konce	2.2 Promote and protect the natural and cultural heritage of the area	Water & Sewerage Utility of Serres

20. TOURISM DATA	Developing Alternative Tourism Aspects	1.3 Promote Sustainable Tourism	Region of Western Macedonia
21. AGRAS	Improving of road network for development of rural cross-border area	1.1 Economic Development	Region of Central Macedonia
22. E-AUCTION	Development of an e-auction of agri-food products in the cross-border area	1.1 Economic Development	Greek –Italian Chamber of Commerce of Thessaloniki
23. TRAWBOR	Trade without Borders for the Companies of Greece - The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia Interregional Area	1.1 Economic Development	Greek International Business Association
24. ZONES & ROADS	Industrial zones and commercial roads in the cross-border area	1.1 Economic Development	Region of Central Macedonia
25. BORDER.IN	Development of Border Infrastructure between Greece and the former Yugoslav Republic of	1.1 Economic Development	Decentralized Administration of Macedonia and Thrace

	Macedonia		
26. EARLY CHILDHOOD CARE	Deliver Pre-School Alternative services	1.2 Enhance Human Resources	University St. Kliment Ohridski Higher Medical School – Bitola
27. FACT	Flight and connect tourism	1.3 Promote Sustainable Tourism	Association Aero club “MIRKO TODOROVSKI” - The Grant contract has been terminated
28. ZOO INNOVATIVA	Innovative educational programmes enhancing the environmental resources of the cross-border region Pelagonija/Florina	2.1 Promote and protect the environmental resources of the area	Center for development of Pelagonija planning region
29. IPA SHIELD	Joint Actions for the protection and improvement of public health in the Cross-Border Area	1.4 Protect human life	General Hospital of Kilkis
30. SAFE WASTECYCLE	Recycling of organic waste and green entrepreneurship in the urban web to secure public health	1.4 Protect human life	Municipality of Thessaloniki
31. AITOLOS	Cross-border collaboration to fight illegal logging and timber trade to protect trans-boundary Greek-F.Y.R.O.M ecosystems	2.1 Promote and protect the environmental resources of the area	Decentralized Administration of Macedonia & Thrace- General Directorate of Forests & Rural Affairs
32. FOOD FOREST PARKS	Selection, Protection and Promotion of Balkan Food Forest species	2.1 Promote and protect the environmental resources of the area	Special Account for Research Funds of Aristotle University of Thessaloniki (Laboratory of Forest Genetics and Plant Breeding)
33. PEEBPE	Promotion of Energy Efficiency in Buildings and Protection of the Environment	2.1 Promote and protect the environmental resources of the area	Technological Educational Institute (TEI) of Western Macedonia
34. PREPARING FOR INTENSIVE TORRENTIAL PHENOMENA	Developing River Basins Sustainable Management Mechanisms (mainly by infrastructures' restoration)	2.1 Promote and protect the environmental resources of the	Development Agency of Pella S.A.

	as Precautionary Measure Against Intensive Torrential Phenomena	area	
35. SAFE-WET	Common support structures for the quality monitoring of water resources and the protection of public health	2.1 Promote and protect the environmental resources of the area	Region of Central Macedonia
36. WWM-QUAL	Transfer of know-how to Dojran Municipality and adaptation of DEYAK to the new status created by “Kallikratis” for the management of waste water in the area of intervention – Improvement of citizens' quality of life	2.1 Promote and protect the environmental resources of the area	Municipal Enterprise for Water Supply & Sewerage of Kilikis (DEYAK)
37. HERITAGE PROTECT	Protection and promotion of natural and cultural heritage in the cross-border region of the Municipality of Strumica and Municipality of Kilikis	2.2 Promote and protect the natural and cultural heritage of the area	Municipality of Strumica
38. LHI-LNA	Living history, Living Nature	2.2 Promote and protect the natural and cultural heritage of the area	Municipality of Novaci
39. ENERGYNET	Sustainable Energy thematic network of cross-border Local Authorities	2.1 Promote and protect the environmental resources of the area	Municipality of Florina

40. PARK	Networking of SMEs from Creative Industry in Cross Border Region	1.1 Economic Development	Life Long Learning Level 2 Center of Region of Central Macedonia – Regional Unit of Serres
41. REMEDIC	Cross Border Stem Cell Regenerative Medicine Center	1.4 Protect human life	Aristotle University of Thessaloniki - Special Account of Research Funds – School of Medicine
42. LHI-LNA II	Living history - Living	2.2 Promote and	Municipality of Novaci

	nature II	protect the natural and cultural heritage of the area	
43. TERRA-MED	Soil degradation assessment and rehabilitation strategies for sustainable land use planning	2.1 Promote and protect the environmental resources of the area	Region of Central Macedonia
44. Microstars	Invest in People of the cross-border area	1.2 Enhance Human Resources	Business and Cultural Development Centre (KEPA)
45. DECIDE	Decision Support System for Disaster Emergency Management	2.1 Promote and protect the environmental resources of the area	Municipality of Amyntaio
46. BEE-CONOMY	Support and Development of the Bee-Products' Economy in the cross-border area	1.1 Economic Development	Municipality of Negotino
47. BIOFOSS	Protection of the Environment through the Promotion of Biomass for Substitution of Fossil Fuels in Heating and Power Generation	2.1 Promote and protect the environmental resources of the area	Municipal District Heating Company of Amyntaio
48. PRESPAS	New Prespas Festival: The ladies of the Prespas Lakes	2.2 Promote and protect the natural and cultural heritage of the area	Cultural Organization for Cultural Activities at Prespas of Florina
49. ProLife	The quality of life prerequisite for progress and sustainable development in the cross border area	2.1 Promote and protect the environmental resources of the area	Region of Western Macedonia

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