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Second Monitoring Committee (MC) meeting for the

Interreg NEXT MED Programme 2021-2027

Athens (Greece)

July 17 and 18, 2024

Summary of the main decisions



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DELLA SARDEGNA

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July 17, 2024

Main results of the meeting

DOCUMENTS / ITEMS on the Agenda	RESULTS
1. Opening session	<p>The Monitoring Committee (MC) meeting starts at 2:30 p.m. and it is chaired by Ms. Giovanna Medde, the Director General of the Managing Authority (MA).</p> <p>Ms. Eva Karagianni (Head of Greek Delegation) and Ms. Christina Antoniou (DG Regio - European Commission) give the opening remarks.</p> <p>Ms. Giovanna Medde (MA) welcomes the participants and declares the formal establishment of the Interreg NEXT MED Monitoring Committee. The Palestinian delegation participates in the MC meeting via online streaming.</p> <p>During her opening speech, she points out the importance to launch the next call on Green Transition as soon as possible to avoid the de-commitment of funds. Moreover, she stresses on the need to ensure the effectiveness of projects, for this reason it is proposed to take this aspect into consideration in the evaluation criteria, without affecting the overall architecture of the evaluation process of the project proposals.</p>
2. Overview of submission results and state of play of evaluation process	<p>Ms. Silvia Cubadda (Chairperson of the Assessment Board – MA) presents an overview of the results of the first call, in terms of participation and topics, and the state of play of the evaluation process.</p> <p>She highlights that 631 proposals were successfully received and all participating countries submitted proposals as lead applicant.</p> <p>Regarding the state of play of the evaluation process, the provisional results of the administrative check were presented, as well as the timetable of the qualitative evaluation to be carried out by the external assessors under STEP1. She also ensures that the AB members will receive a specific training before starting STEP 2 and that the first meeting related to STEP 1 will be on-line while the second meeting for STEP2 will be a physical meeting.</p>





<p>3. Exchange on lessons learnt from first call for proposals</p>	<p>Mr. Rosario Sapienza (TESIM) provides an overview on the lessons learned from the first call for proposals and an important contribution for refining the second call, aimed at boosting the green transition in the cooperation area.</p> <p>Interreg programmes are evolving, as 6 out of 7 received additional funds and most popular priorities have changed. The Interreg NEXT MED Programme plays a decisive role in this context, specifically in covering some specific areas (energy efficiency, circular economy, competitiveness of SMEs). Youth and green transition are among its pillars.</p> <p>The presentation is followed by a debate on the topics, in particular on improving communication among partnerships and on the water management projects.</p>
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<p>4. Second call for proposals:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Decision on the Specific Objectives to be addressed by the call- Budget allocation- Follow up	<p>Mr. Martin Heibel (MA) presents the opportunities for transnational cooperation projects and shows the results of a public consultation for the stakeholders of the Interreg NEXT MED call. New ideas are necessary to develop climate friendly solutions, taking into account the relevance of cross-sector approach for environmental transition. He points out that green transition is a driver for sustainable projects, it is convenient in terms of benefits for communities.</p> <p>For this reason the MA proposes to open the call to all the 9 Specific Objectives of the Programme. The proposal is approved by the MC.</p> <p>Mr. Aldo Puleo (MA) describes the outcomes of the public consultation on the second call and the requests for funds during the first call. He specifies the data relating to the budget of the call (overall amount, distribution of funds among the Programme Priorities and the Specific Objectives). Mr. Puleo presents the MA proposal to keep the original plan to allocate 35% of the total EU budget of the programme (approximately 83 ml. euro) and the distribution among the Policy Objectives according to the percentages of the Programme. Finally, he describes the two proposals on the allocation of funds among specific objectives: option 1 to keep the same percentage distribution according to the programme document; option 2 to allocate 7% to the water management specific objective (SO) and to increase up to 12,5% and 12% respectively the allocation Climate change and Energy efficiency SOs.</p> <p>The MC approves the proposals and it chooses option 1.</p> <p>Mr. Ricardo Sanchez-Blanco Cordoniu (Spain) informs the MC members on the availability of the Valencian Community to host the next meeting in Valencia.</p> <p>Ms. Giovanna Medde (MA) thanks Spain for the availability of the Valencian Community and she closes the first day of work.</p>
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July 18, 2024

Main results of the meeting

DOCUMENTS / ITEMS on the Agenda	RESULTS
<p>1. Preliminary outcomes of the final evaluation of the ENI CBC MED Programme</p>	<p>Ms. Giovanna Medde (MA) opens the second session of the MC meeting.</p> <p>Mr. Pietro Celotti (Consultant – T33 Company) provides an outline of the main recommendations from the final evaluation of the previous ENI CBC MED Programme.</p> <p>In terms of benefits, it was very important to add new participating countries within the Interreg NEXT MED Programme (Türkiye, Algeria). He describes the implementation mechanism, the monitoring system (which is very complex and needs simplification), the communication strategy (efficient strategy, smart use of social media and events at local level), the territorial impact, the connection and synergies with other programmes. He specifies that it is important to maximise a multi-programmes coordination among the EU programmes.</p> <p>He explains the complexity of the indicators underlining the necessity to reduce them to facilitate their interpretation and use. Furthermore, more regular practices of self-evaluation by the projects would provide a stronger basis for the impact evaluation carried out by the programme.</p> <p>The presentation is followed by a discussion of the topics mentioned: the uniqueness of the Interreg NEXT MED Programme, the need to have a successful Programme, request for information on the technical assistance report, the request for opening to new actors within the Programme.</p> <p>Regarding the state report of the projects implementation, Mr. Aldo Puleo (MA) specifies that the MA will share the report updated until 30th June 2024 with the MC members after the summer break.</p>





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<p>2. Second call for proposals:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Type of projects and main rules for eligibility and participation - Evaluation criteria and process 	<p>Mr. Martin Heibel (MA) speaks about the potential of Youth-oriented and Governance projects as new features of the Programme and illustrates the results of public consultation on second call, that show the added value of youth. He describes the proposal to have two typologies of projects (impact projects and youth-oriented projects), which apply to the 4 programme priorities (smart, green, social, governance). The MC approves the proposal asking to modify the branding of the “impact projects”. MA will provide a new branding.</p> <p>Mr. Aldo Puleo (MA) describes the proposal about the financial dimension and the common elements of the project. He stresses on the need to keep, also for this second call, the same rules concerning: submission of proposals, the eligibility of applicant and partners and the geographical eligibility.</p> <p>Portugal asks for the possibility to use art. 22 of the CPR regulation (1060/2021) to open to other actors from other regions of Portugal. France is in favour while Italy proposes to open to actors coming from countries not represented in the Monitoring Committee (hence out of the Programme area). The Cyprus and the MA suggest not to re-open this issue as it has been previously decided, since adjoining regions have demonstrated low interest in the participation to previous calls. MA proposes the possibility to replace the special rules for (decentralized structures, Ministries/International Organizations outside the eligible territories) out of the eligible area by introducing the role of Advisory partner from other regions but still based in one of the 15 participating countries (max.1 per project) with activities to be carried out for the benefit of the Programme area (to be approved on a case by case by MC). All MC members agree.</p>
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<p>3. Post 2027 perspectives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Objectives of consultations and next steps - Findings of consultations with stakeholders and national authorities 	<p>Ms. Nathalie Verschelde (European Commission) points out that Interreg should evolve, in November 2024 and March 2025 there will be a new meeting with the MA and a new consultation on the Programme. It is mandatory for the Commission to present the next budget by July 2025.</p> <p>Mr. Martin Heibel (MA) illustrates a preliminary report of the partner country consultation on Interreg post-2027, launched by the Interreg NEXT MED Programme. He describes the modalities of consultation (online public consultation with 8 core questions and 711 replies received) and the topics (i.e. climate change and environmental sustainability, obstacles to transnational cooperation, desired actions, additional ideas to improve the cooperation, importance of cooperation within the Mediterranean Sea basin, young people to be involved in transnational cooperation).</p> <p>Mr. Rosario Sapienza (TESIM) presents in more detail the results of the consultation. The findings will be integrated in the consolidated Interreg NEXT MED report to be submitted to European Commission’s DG REGIO by the end of the year. The consultation highlighted the importance of maintaining the current implementation specificities of Interreg NEXT MED in the forthcoming programming period, in particular a co-financing rate of up to 90% and the possibility to pre-finance projects. Other topics covered: financing agreements; governance of the Programme; geographic scope of the Programme and territorial coverage; policy and specific objectives; synergies; types of projects; infrastructures; points of reflections (i.e. need for improvement and flexibility, the power of synergies).</p> <p>Ms. Nathalie Verschelde (European Commission) underlines that it is important the cooperation level, it does not matter the kind of the project (environmental, social, etc.). Defending the security and stopping climate change are essential parts of the agenda. Trying to imagine a new and better Interreg Programme, it is important to understand the needs of the context we are working for and to facilitate cooperation. Moreover, she underlines that it is essential to be creative in terms of reforms, it is extremely complicated but necessary.</p>
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<p>4. Second call for proposals:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Evaluation criteria and process 	<p>Mr. Martin Heibel (MA) begins the presentation on the evaluation criteria with the proposal of a greater focus on effectiveness (from 16 to 20 points) and the confirmation of the role of the Assessment Board. New criterion 4.3 on climate-friendly topics; criterion 4.4 on communication is double scored; new element introduced in the criterion 5.1 to emphasize eco-friendly implementation of the projects.</p> <p>Mr. Aldo Puleo (MA) illustrates the evaluation process, in continuity with the first call: step 1 (administrative check, operational evaluation) and step 2 (strategic evaluation, eligibility check).</p> <p>Following is a discussion on the evaluation grid, with a request for preferences. The preference is for 24 points for relevance (minimum threshold after step 2: 16/24, as suggested by Türkiye), 16 for quality of design, 12 operational and financial capacity, 20 effectiveness (including 8 points for communication through a double score criterion), 12 sustainability, 12 cost effectiveness, 4 horizontal principles.</p>
<p>5. Action plan 2024-2025 for multi-programme coordination mechanism</p>	<p>Mr. Aldo Puleo (MA) presents the Action plan 2024-2025 for multi-programme coordination mechanism. The main objectives are: coordinate with other Programmes to gather the best results achieved by their projects; maximize the impact of the Interreg Programmes; promote the synergies. He describes the pilot topic (sustainable tourism), the members and how it is working so far. Furthermore, he illustrates some tools to be implemented and main activities foreseen for 2024 and 2025. He specifies that working together is not easy but we have to try, it is an ambitious goal to be reached.</p> <p>Following the discussion on these topics, the Action Plan is approved by the MC.</p>
<p>6. End of the meeting</p>	<p>Due to the lack of sufficient time, Ms. Giovanna Medde (MA) informs that the presentations on the communication, activities related to the MA and the financial plan for technical assistance will be sent by email to the MC members. She thanks all the participants for their important contributions and she officially closes the MC meeting at 6:15 pm.</p>





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ANNEXES

1. List of participants
2. Final Agenda
3. Documents presented during the meeting including:
 - a. Interreg NEXT MED Second call - Specific objectives and budget
 - b. Interreg NEXT MED Second call - Type of projects, Rules for participation
 - c. Interreg NEXT MED Proposal Evaluation Grid - second call
 - d. Interreg consultation post 2027 - Preliminary report
 - e. Multi-programme coordination mechanism action plan 2024-2025

