

# **EEA Financial Mechanism 2014-2021**

**Strategic Report 2022-2023 for Greece**



**HELLENIC REPUBLIC**  
**Ministry of Economy and Finance**

**General Secretariat for Public Investments & the NSRF**  
**Special Service EEA Grants - National Focal Point**

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## 1. Executive summary

As per Art. 2.6 of the EEA Grants Regulation 2014-2021, the National Focal Point submits by the present document the Strategic Report of the EEA Grants 2014-2021 in Greece for the reporting period from November 2022 to October 2023.

The Strategic Report is following the Regulation Annex template and its foreseen sections, as follows:

**Political, economic and social context** section presents the overview of the political, economic and social status and developments in Greece in the reference period. In a challenging global environment, Greece has succeeded to maintain positive domestic dynamics and political stability, whereas the need to address imbalances and structural lags in the economy remains.

**Effects of the Grants** section presents the overall anticipated effects in the funding period of the Grants in their sectorial interventions and at the national level. Each Programme and the Bilateral Fund are designed to contribute to the overall objectives of the EEA Grants for the reduction of social and economic disparities and the strengthening of the bilateral relations. In the reference period implementation had a significant progress, leading to first remarkable results of the Grants interventions.

**Status of Programmes** section presents the status and the developments for each programme separately. All programmes operated by Greek national authorities were into the implementation phase with project contracts issued for all their projects. In most cases, implementation progresses according to plan while cases of deviations are monitored and managed accordingly.

**Status of the Bilateral Funds** section presents, under the approval of the JCBF, the developments of the Bilateral Fund. In the reporting period, the selected initiatives have made a significant progress with 70% of the Bilateral Fund at the national level paid to promoters already. All resources are allocated and a need for further funds is recognized.

**Management and implementation** section presents the activities related to the Management and Control System at the national level and of the associated Manual of Procedures. All procedures foreseen in the MCS such as monitoring, controls, public procurements, verifications, financing, reporting and IFRs, irregularities and audits were implemented as applicable.

**Communication** section presents the progress and developments in the implementation of the Communication strategy at the national level. Activities included inter alia networking, cooperation and training between the different entities and staff related to the Grants and continuous and dynamic presence in the social media.

**Monitoring** section presents the main responsibilities and tasks of the NFP in monitoring progress of programmes, bilateral fund and technical assistance.

**Annexes** section presents further information on risk assessment and mitigation, the Technical Assistance implementation and organizational issues related to NFP and the national level authorities.

The issues to be discussed at the Annual meeting 2023, reflect the issues of the respective sections of the current Strategic Report.

## 2. Political, economic and social context

During the period covered by this report and in a challenging global environment, Greece has succeeded to maintain positive domestic dynamics and political stability, whereas the need to address imbalances and structural lags in the economy remains. National elections took place in June 2023 leading to a government reshuffle by the same parliament party, which however is not expected to impact the policy priorities and the administration. Minor adjustments to jurisdictions of sectoral ministries related to Good Governance and Roma programmes are monitored and they not expected to affect significantly their implementation.

In the economy front, according to the [Post-Programme Surveillance Report - Greece, Spring 2023](#)<sup>1</sup> executive summary, adopted as Commission Communication C(2023) 4002 on 22 May 2023, the Greek economy, despite a challenging international environment, grew at a solid pace in 2022, but economic growth is expected to moderate in 2023 and 2024 reflecting tighter monetary and fiscal policy conditions and the still challenging global environment. According to the [Commission 2023 spring forecast](#)<sup>2</sup>, real GDP is expected to grow by 2.4% in 2023 and 1.9% in 2024. Investment is expected to be a key driver of growth, as the implementation of the Recovery and Resilience Plan is expected to boost both public and private investment. Consumer price inflation has eased but price pressures are set to remain persistent and moderate gradually over the coming years. The labour market has proved resilient to external shocks, but employment growth is set to decelerate as the economy slows down. The current account deficit has widened further, and it is expected to decrease only slowly in the coming years.

The labour market improved markedly in 2022 amid sustained job creation. Even as people continued to return to the labour market following the pandemic, implying a rising labour force, the unemployment rate fell to 12.5% and is set to decline to 11.8% by 2024. Despite the expected pick-up in nominal wage growth this year and next, real wage growth is not expected to turn positive before 2024.

The following table, as included in the Report presents the fluctuation of the main macroeconomic variables from 2021 to 2024 projection.

Table 2.1: Summary of main macroeconomic variables (%)

	2021	2022	2023	2024
Real GDP growth	8.4	5.9	2.4	1.9
Employment growth	2.7	3.8	0.8	0.7
Unemployment rate (a)	14.7	12.5	12.2	11.8
Harmonized Index of Consumer Prices growth	0.6	9.3	4.2	2.4

Source: European Commission.

According to the Institute of Economic and Industrial Studies<sup>3</sup>, quarterly reports on the Greek economy, in the Q1/2023 main points:

- GDP growth was reported at 2,1y/y in a slowdown from +4,8% y/y in Q4/2022. The growth was driven by driven by exports and consumption.
- Inflation decreased in the first five months of 2023 to 5.6% y/y as energy goods prices fell, but there is still pressure on food prices

<sup>1</sup> [Post-Programme Surveillance Report- Greece, Spring 2023](#)

<sup>2</sup> [European Commission/Economy and Finance/Economic surveillance of EU economies](#)

<sup>3</sup> [Quarterly Report on the Greek Economy 2, 5 July 2023](#)

- Eurozone: Inflation reached a 25-year high in the first five months of 2023, with 7.4% y/y; up from 6.8% a year ago.
- Large decline in the private savings rate in Greece in 2022
- Economic sentiment improved in the second quarter of 2023, slightly higher than last year. Significant improvement in Consumer Confidence in 2023; it is much lower compared to the Eurozone, however
- General Government Balance & Debt (% of GDP) Public finances improved in 2022; balances were better and debt (as a percentage of GDP) was lower
- Industrial production increased by 2.4% in the first four months of 2023 (0.3% in the Eurozone), following a similar increase in first four months of 2022
- Unemployment decreased by 2.0 percentage points in the first quarter of 2023 — The unemployment rate reached 11.8% in Q1/2023, down from 13.8% in Q1/2022. —
- Employment increased in 13 sectors. Indicatively: Primary sector (+30.1 thousand), Health sector & social care (+29.4 thousand), Education (+11.2 thousand), Manufacturing (+10.4 thousand)

As regards the EU cohesion funds, they have been, throughout the past decades, one of the most significant tools for the promotion of economic growth and regional development in Greece. Currently underway is the implementation of the "Partnership Agreement for the Development Framework (ESPA) 2014-2020", which comprises of 6 Sectoral programmes, 13 Regional programmes (one for each Region of the Country), 6 Territorial Cooperation programmes and the Rural Development programme. Its total budget amounts to €31,3 bn, €25,5 bn of which are EU funds contribution. 2023 is the final year for the eligibility of expenses for ESPA 2014-2020 programmes and, therefore, safe closure of all programmes without fund returns and with minimum additional burden for the Greek Public Investments Programme is a top priority. Implementation figures indicate that this target is feasible since until 11 September 2023 total approvals amount to €46,5 bn (148,6%), total commitments amount to €39,3 bn (125,9%) and total expenses amount to €26,4 bn (84,5%). During the past few years, Greece has steadily been ranking in the first places among EU member states, in fund absorption.

Greece was also the first EU member state to submit officially and receive approval for its new "Regional Development Partnership Agreement 2021-2027" ("ESPA 2021-2027") and one of the first to have all its programmes approved in summer / autumn 2022. With a total budget of €26,6 bn, (€21,1 bn of which are EU funds and €5,5 bn are national contribution), ESPA 2021-2027 reflects the new European Union priorities and is tailored to the country's targets, namely developing the economy's productive resources and infrastructure, enhancing skills and strengthening social protection. It's noteworthy that 20% of total funds is allocated to promote innovative and smart transformation of the economy, 30% of funds is allocated to social cohesion and supporting employment, 27% of total funds is allocated to green projects to promote clean and just energy transition and civil protection. There is also an important increase in the Regional programmes' budget by €2,2 bn. ESPA 2021-2027 comprises of 9 Sectoral, 13 Regional and 5 Territorial Cooperation programmes. The activation of ESPA 2021-2027 is already underway: there have been calls of over €5 bn, whereas projects amounting to €2,7 bn have been approved and are in implementation. The programmes' specialization has advanced significantly and with the final closure of the 2014-2020 programmes the amount of projects to continue in the new programming period will be finalized.

In the migration and asylum front, Greece reports <sup>4</sup>a sharp increase in arrivals as they are recorded up

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<sup>4</sup> [Ministry of Migration and Asylum/Briefing Notes on International Protection and Legal Migration – June 2023](#)

to 52% more in June 2023 in comparison with the first semester 2022, while at the same time the residents have declined by 36%. Significant decrease is reported also to the pending asylum applications - 17.825 in June 2023 (25.310 in May 2022, down from 49.235 in July 2021). The unaccompanied minors are estimated up to 1.576 by August 2023 (2.023 in August 2022)<sup>5</sup>.

Regarding the Ukrainian refugee crisis<sup>6</sup> Greece, immediately after Russia's invasion of Ukraine, on February 24, 2022, began accepting applications for the temporary protection of citizens from Ukraine. From February 25, 2022 to August 17, 2023, Greece received 26.318 applications. The 25.561 citizens of Ukraine have been placed under temporary protection status to date. Of these, 6.982 are children or teenagers and 3.649 are over 60 years old. In total, 17.723 who applied for temporary protection are women, and 7,838 are men.

In the field of the digital transformation of the public administration, the positive momentum in continues in 2023. Up to 1.543 procedures of administration have been digitalized whereas about 5.000 procedures in total have been identified, setting the target of further digitalization for the years ahead.

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<sup>5</sup>[Ministry of Migration and Asylum/ Unaccompanied Minors- Data August 2023](#)

<sup>6</sup>[Ministry of Migration and Asylum/Press release](#)

### 3. Effects of the Grants

Effects of the EEA Grants at the strategic level are identified in the time horizon of the funding period FM 2014-2021 as well as in the total period of the financial mechanism implementation in Greece, since 1994. These effects may interact, conform, adopt and contribute to the developments and to unforeseen situations in the country and beyond as they unfold during the period. In the reporting period the effects of the grants have been gradually iterated in terms of implementation and communicated.

Since the commencement of the EEA Financial Mechanism in 1994, Greece has been a beneficiary state continuously and the effects of its presence and implementation in the country in the previous funding periods, in terms of results, institutional framework, national authorities, donor partners and stakeholders' networking as well as in terms of communication and publicity, constitute a substantial basis on which to develop the EEA Grants period 2014-2021.

For the EEA Grants 2014-2021 period, critical sectors have been selected for the programme interventions, to reflect the interests of both the Donor countries and of Greece as the Beneficiary country. Further to the thematic area 16 for "Good Governance, Accountable Institutions, Transparency", which is instructed by the EEA Grants for intervention in all beneficiary countries, 4 other thematic areas have been selected, to be funded through programmes implemented by the Greek authorities and it is anticipated that these programmes will have significant impact to their respective sectors. Additionally the Bilateral Fund at the national level is expected to have a significant impact, in the objectives of reducing social and economic disparities and strengthening the bilateral relations. In particular, the effect of each programme is anticipated to be as follows:

**Programme B for Roma Inclusion and Empowerment** aims to address the needs and challenges of Roma population in Greece. The implementation of a Task force Unit in areas of high concentration of Roma populations will ensure the effective implementation of the national strategy of Roma inclusion as it will partake in the support of local government and the activation of the Roma population in all policy – measures concerning social inclusion (housing, education, employment, health, empowerment, etc.). Additional activities funded by the reserve resources already allocated to the programme will contribute further to the objectives of the programme and to its greater impact and effect. Although the housing intervention to accommodate the needs of Roma community in the Municipality of Katerini was withdrawn from the programme due to insuperable difficulties, the soft measures which remain in the programme will have a significant impact to the local community.

**Programme D for Water Management** addresses the need to improve the environmental status of water ecosystems by supporting the rational use of water mainly in vulnerable areas and islands. It is expected to provide drinking water to vulnerable areas and islands and technologies for water leakages in water grids. In addition, the programme will finance research studies, which will provide with data and solutions for the improvement of the status of water bodies or improvement of water management. The programme will fund awareness campaigns highlighting the water problems and the importance of improving the status of water bodies.

At the same time, bilateral relations with donor state entities will be strengthened by having donor partners in projects and by activities organized in the context of the bilateral fund budget allocated to the programme. Additional projects funded by the reserve resources allocated to the programme will contribute further to the objectives of the programme and to its greater impact and effect.

This programme is implemented without serious delays or difficulties. Its impact is important in the sense that it is targeted to geographical areas with significant problems regarding water management.

**Programme E for Renewable Energy, Energy Efficiency** aims to promote Renewable Energy Sources and Energy Efficiency and substantially contributes to the implementation of a balanced development

framework that creates high added value and prospects for the local economy, while familiarising residents with sustainable practices which improve their quality of life.

The programme will support all three pillars of sustainability, i.e. the economic, social, and environmental pillars, thus increasing the general welfare of their respective communities. Apart from their direct positive environmental impact, the projects will enhance social sustainability by applying Renewable Energy Sources and Energy Efficiency solutions to promote sustainable living in the local communities. All chosen projects will reinforce the local economy of their communities by providing work to local contractors, during times of adverse economic climate. At the same time, the chosen projects will promote economic sustainability, as project promoters will save energy for their public buildings and infrastructures every year. Additional projects funded by the reserve resources allocated to the programme in the current reporting period will contribute further to the objectives of the programme and to its greater impact and effect.

The energy crisis that the world is experiencing now makes the relevance of this programme even more evident. As it is being implemented, it helps both to mitigate the effects of the crisis and to move towards greener energy sources.

**Programme F for Good Governance, Accountable Institutions and Transparency** will significantly and directly contribute to the integrity, transparency, accountability and effectiveness of public administration. Through the proposed actions, direct citizen access to public administration will be improved, technological modernization of public administration and reduction of bureaucracy will be enhanced. The proposed reform actions concerning the reduction of bureaucracy and the technological modernization of public administration are in line with the anti-corruption transparency and integrity actions of the Programme. Finally, actions to reduce maladministration and enhance management concerning citizens' problems will contribute and reinforce the objectives and effects of the programme.

**Programme G for Asylum and Migration** aims to ensuring well-functioning national asylum and migration management systems while at the same time assisting asylum seekers to exercise basic rights. The target group focuses to Third Country Nationals arriving at Greek territory with emphasis placed on unaccompanied minors and vulnerable groups. Moreover, the programme contributes to strengthening the bilateral relations among national institutions playing key roles in the field of asylum and migration and Donor States partners. Most of the predefined projects will be implemented in close cooperation with donor project partners, such as the Norwegian Directorate of Immigration (UDI), the Norwegian Immigration Appeals Board (UTLENDINGSNEMNDA-UNE), the Norwegian Ministry of Justice and Public Security as well as the Directorate of Integration and Diversity (IMDI).



#### 4. Status of programmes

In the reporting period from November 2022 to October 2023, programmes operated by Greek national authorities, were into implementation phase. The majority of the Grants showed progress according to their design and timeline, while in some cases, there are delays and challenges to be addressed and recovered. The NFP in cooperation with the POs initiated revisions and consequent adjustments, presented in the section for the MoU modifications in order to increase both absorption and impact. The status and developments per programme in the reporting period are as follows:

##### Programme B – Roma Inclusion and Empowerment

<b>Programme Operator:</b> Executive Authority ("Special Service - Executive Structure NSRF") , Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs	<b>Modalities:</b> 2 predefined projects, 3 small grant schemes and bilateral activities
<b>IPO:</b> European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (EU FRA) <b>National Programme Partner:</b> General Secretariat for Social Solidarity, Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs	<b>Budget:</b> 6,2ME (EEA Grants: 4ME, National co financing 2,2ME). The budget is updated including the additional funds from the reserve and the reduction according to the new budget of PDP2.

##### Predefined Project 1: "Task Force Units supporting Roma inclusion and empowerment"

The implementation of the PDP1 proceeds as prescribed in the Programme Agreement. The Task Force has recruited 25 employees, distributed to units which operate in four regions of the country (Attica, Western Greece, Central Macedonia, Eastern Macedonia & Thrace). Moreover, in 2022 the procurement procedures for i) the office rentals, ii) the provision of office equipment, iii) for car leasing were completed and concluded in contracts. The implementation of the PDP1 is following the timetable. There has been a delay in the contracting for car leasing, because the initial Call for proposals didn't conclude in any contract, therefore it was relaunched.

The operation of the Task Force is fully developed and it includes the submission of monthly reports about the actions taken place in the field, the action plan of each Task Force Unit in each region, the training of the Task Force members, the networking of the Task Force members with the involved parties, the contribution to the Roma empowerment, the activities carried out to enhance the Roma empowerment and to the promotion of the national Roma strategy. There are regular meetings with the General Secretary for social solidarity and fight against poverty and a weekly feedback by the information collected in the field by the Task Force members.

##### Predefined Project 2: "Integrated pilot social housing relocation scheme for Roma inclusion"

In overall, the implementation of the PDP2 presented critical challenges and delays. The necessary preliminary technical studies for the housing specifications, funded by national resources, were delayed due to changes in the tendering legal framework. Therefore the conclusion and delivery of the approved studies took place in November 2022, allowing very short time for the next steps of the project.

In addition to the delay and in the context of the foreseen geotechnical study, a volume of waste was found in the underground, as the area had been a landfill in the past. As a result, the necessity for further research was identified both for geotechnical & static reasons, in a specialized remediation study. The remediation study was carried out and concluded that specific scientific and technical solutions for soil

decontamination were necessary, whose duration was estimated to exceed 10 months. In the next step of case handling, and in the process to secure additional national resources for the necessary technical studies and works, the Project Promoter was informed that no further actions were possible, as the current legal framework does not foresee the case of constructions or housing works in a decontaminated or restored landfill in the country.

As a follow up, the Project Promoter, Municipality of Katerini, submitted to the Programme Operator the detailed description of the project and the developments. The Programme Operator examined thoroughly the case and in cooperation with NFP submitted a proposal for the modification of the project and the Programme Agreement which foresees that a) it is not feasible to implement a fully new redesigned housing component under the PDP2 within the eligibility period, b) the project will be downsized by 2,3ME and these resources will be released from the programme and c) the soft measures under PDP2 with total budget 0,4ME which are already approved and in implementation phase will continue, as they consist of activities that can be implemented independently of the housing activities. The Programme Agreement was approved and came in effect by the respective publication in the Official Gazette.

### **Small Grant Scheme 1: «Empowerment of women and young Roma»**

The call text for the SGS1 was published on 15 July 2022 and was prolonged twice with final deadline on 31 October 2022. 13 proposals were submitted, out of which 6 were positively assessed at stage A and were forwarded to stage B for the evaluation of the selection criteria. After the evaluation procedure was completed, on 21 April 2023, 5 projects were finally selected and project contracts were issued. 2 of them correspond to outputs for social cooperative enterprises of Roma supported and awareness raising campaigns combatting anti-Roma attitudes. No project for the reinforcement of advocacy capacity of Roma NGOs was selected. The projects are currently in implementation phase.

### **Small Grant Scheme 2: “Promotion and Support of Roma children in summer camps and community activities»**

The call text of the SGS2 was discussed with FMO and published on 20 January 2023. After the evaluation procedure was completed, one project was positively evaluated and selected. A project contract was issued and the project is currently in implementation phase in three Prefectures. The respective target of 50 children attending summer camps was successfully over-reached. In summer 2023, 80 Roma pupils of primary education, with the necessary equipment, and after consulting and training, attended for 15 days each of them, 3 summer camps. 40 of them attended a summer camp in the Prefecture of Peloponnese, 20 in the Prefecture of Central Macedonia and 20 in the Prefecture of Eastern Macedonia and Thrace. The camping period at Peloponnese was to last from 19 August 2023 to 2 September 2023. Unfortunately, on 26 August 2023 some of the children had symptoms of covid-19, so it was decided that all children should return to their families and so the period was completed earlier than initially planned, on the 28 August 2023.

### **Small Grant Scheme 3: “Small Scale Interventions”**

The SGS3 will be suspended, as this was discussed and agreed upon with the representatives of the FMO at the technical meeting in Athens on 15-17 March 2023. The reason for this decision for suspension has been the fact that the administrative cost for a call issue, evaluation and implementation exceeds the operational benefit of the eventual project, especially since the time frames are too narrow for a new call to be issued.

## **Bilateral Outcome**

There hasn't been any progress regarding the bilateral collaboration between beneficiary and donor state entities so far. Recommendations from the FMO were given for a study visit in Romania, where another similar project for Roma inclusion was successfully implemented.

As a bilateral activity, related to the programme, the General Secretary for Social Solidarity and Combating Poverty accompanied by the Coordinator of the Task Force of PDP1 and one member of the steering committee travelled to Slovakia on 5 July 2023 to get information about the European experience and the good practices applied at the European level in relation to similar European programmes for Roma communities. The purpose was the developing of partnerships and networks relevant to the new National Strategy for the Social Integration of the Roma 2021-2030 as well as the exchange of experiences in the field of social housing.

## **Programme level & Management Cost:**

In the previous reporting period, there was a MoU modification for the allocation of funds from the reserve to programmes, including the Roma programme. In this context, additional funds of 700.000 euros were allocated to the programme after an extensive discussion between FMO and the Programme Operator for the nature of the additional activities and a modification of the Programme Agreement was concluded on 19 July 2022. In the current period, a new modification of the Programme Agreement was agreed. As it was not possible for the GR-Roma programme to implement the initial plans for housing under pre-defined project #2 "Pilot Social Housing Relocation Scheme in Katerini", the programme budget was downsized and 2.300.000€ were made available. The modification was concluded on 24 July 2023 and the publication of the respective MD to the Official Gazette is imminent by September 2023.

Regarding the management cost, the Programme Operator has signed the foreseen contracts. The last pending contract is the one with external consultants/chartered accountants for the expenditure's verification.

## **Monitoring**

In the context of monitoring, the Programme Operator is in regular contact with the Project Promoters of the PDP1 & PDP2 and the SMS projects as well, on weekly basis or several times per week depending on the issues emerged. Also the Programme Operator carried out 3 on the spot verifications to the following project components:

1. PDP1- Task Force Unit in the Prefecture of Western Greece from 13 to 15 June 2023
2. PDP1- Task Force Unit of Central Macedonia from 3 to 4 August 2023
3. PDP2- Soft measures of PDP2 on 1 August 2023
4. SGS2 - Camp at Chalkidiki on 2 August 2023

The on spot verifications confirmed:

- that the implementation of the physical and financial object of the actions, in accordance with the

terms of the implementation decision and the corresponding legal commitment,

- the accuracy and correctness of the information provided by the implementing body regarding the physical and financial progress of the operation as well as in relation to the outputs
- there is compliance with the publicity rules

The Programme Operator submitted 2 IFRs regarding the progress accomplished and the grants used within the reference period according to the Regulation.

#### **Cooperation with IPOs, DPP and NPP- Cooperation meetings**

The Programme Operator has a close and frequent communication with the representative of FRA that is the IPO for the programme. The Programme Operator has followed the IPO's recommendations and suggestions of good practice (e.g. the focus group methodology, the consultation with the Roma NGO's and entities). In addition, the Programme Operator has asked for IPO's expertise on drafting the call for SGS3. At the national level, the General Secretariat for Social Solidarity and Fight against Poverty which serves as national partner was reshuffled to General Secretariat for Social Solidarity. The change didn't affect the programme implementation. No cooperation meetings have been held the last year. A cooperation committee will be scheduled by the end of 2023.

#### **Communication**

The Programme Operator has a new contract with a consultancy vendor for communication and publicity activities. All news, call texts at programme and project level, press releases and any information related to the programme are published on the official website. The Programme Operator regularly participates to the communication group sessions by the NFP and exchanges useful best practices and recommendations.

**Table 1: Financial progress of the programme**

Module	Project title	Grant	Contracts	Incurred expenditure
<b>PDP 1</b>	Task Force Units supporting Roma inclusion and empowerment	3.099.860,00	2.961.889,99	1.047.744,82
<b>PDP 2</b>	Integrated pilot social housing relocation scheme for Roma inclusion	400.000,00	400.000,00	15.047,20
<b>SGS 1</b>	Women and Youth Empowerment	924.171,05	339.084,14	0,00
<b>SGS2</b>	Promotion and Support of Roma children in summer camps and community	199.460,00	199.460,00	0,00

	activities			
<b>SGS 3</b>	Small Scale Interventions	50.000,00	0,00	0,00
<b>BI</b>	Not available yet	50.000,00	0,00	0,00
<b>MC</b>	Management cost	600.000,00	599.581,26	187.971,10
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>5.223.491,05</b>	<b>4.500.015,39</b>	<b>1.250.763,12</b>

### Next steps

As the projects are being implemented, are operational and go to the end of the eligibility date the mechanism for their monitoring and evaluation has been ongoing and will remain so. The technical experts and advisers to the Programme Operator and the Project Promoters continue to record the implementation progress while monitoring, reviewing and ensuring the projects' outputs. The PO is aiming at activating the bilateral outcome of the programme by organizing a study trip in a beneficiary country of the EEA Grants' network.

## Programme D - Water Management

<b>Programme</b> Environment and Energy, Executive Authority of the Partnership Agreement, Environmental Sector	<b>Operator:</b> Ministry of	<b>Modalities:</b> 3 open calls, 1 small grant scheme and bilateral activities
<b>IPO:</b> N/A	<b>Budget:</b> 6,5ME (EEA Grants: 5,2ME, National co financing: 1,3ME) (Including 1,5ME from the reserve-PA amendment in November 2021)	
<b>National Programme Partner:</b> N/A		

In the reporting period 2022-2023, the Water management programme developments and progress were according to the plan. All projects are in the phase of implementation and are expected to have concluded by April 2024. The implementation of the programme outputs was as follows:

### Output 1.1 Implementation of water management systems –Desalination Units

There are 8 projects in total selected for the construction of 3 desalination units and the installation of 5 telemetry systems for leakage detection. All projects are in the phase of implementation since last year.

The projects have been selected from 2 open calls. In more detail:

The call 1.1 for the output 1.1 was published on 10 December 2020, with deadline on 26 March 2021. Project contracts were signed from April and June 2022. The projects are 2 desalination units and 2 telemetry systems.

There have been changes to the project “Advanced energy systems for sustainable water management and desalination units in remote island communities EQUATION=ISLANDS’ with grant 1.396.515,6 3euro. It was named “Supply and installation of a desalination plant on the island of Thirasia with Renewable Energy Sources” and the grant was deducted to 695.932,00 euro. One of the partners abandon the project and part of it will not be developed.

A second call 1.1.2 was published on 9 March 2022 with deadline 27 May 2022, with budget 1.450.000€. Project contracts were issued in January 2023. The projects are about the construction and installation respectively of 1 desalination unit and 3 telemetry systems.

### Output 1.2 -Implementation of research measures of river basin management plans

The call for the output 1.2 was published on 13 November 2020, with deadline on 11 February 2021. By October 2022, 3 project contracts were issued. All projects are research projects and implement research measures of river basin management plans. All the projects have been in implementation phase since 2022. Two of the 3 projects have reserved an advanced payment (30%) of their budget and the third one has reserved payment up to 80%. One of them has a Donor partner, the Institute for Energy Technology.

### Output 1.3 -Small grant scheme

The call for output 1.3 was published on 19 November 2021, with deadline on 31 March 2022. The evaluation took place by the end of 2022. The Hellenic Center for Marine Research (HCMR) was selected to implement the information and awareness campaign in 2023-2024, that involves students, local communities, and visitors on the islands of Santorini, Ios, Leros, Kalymnos, Pserimos and Telendos. The overall goal is to raise public awareness for good water status, through involvement and participation

The slogan is “Water matters”. The first part of the campaign took place from April to June 2023 and the second part will start in October 2023. This is a good practice project.

### **Bilateral outcome**

The amount allocated to the Programme for bilateral initiatives was doubled to 100.000 in March 2022. Project Promoters have been invited to submit proposals for bilateral initiatives in the context of the calls for Outputs 1.1, 1.2. and 1.3. Three (3) out of 12 projects include bilateral initiatives, with 4 donor state entities participating in the implementation. These are the following:

- The University of Iceland and Institute for Energy Technology (IFE) participate in the green desalination project in Kimolos with budget: 40.320,50€
- The Norwegian University of Life Sciences and the Water Supply Company of Oslo participate in the project for the installation of the system for leakage control in Paramythia city, municipality of Souli with budget: 20.000€
- The Inland Norway University of Applied Sciences participates in the Small Grant Scheme awareness raising campaign for the importance of improving the status of water bodies with budget: 39,679€.

One more bilateral initiative was initially selected, for exchange of visits between the Democritus University of Thrace and the Matis Research Institute in Iceland. The Matis Research Institute however withdrew from the initiative, in November 2022 and thus the initiative was dropped. The amount released was added to the bilateral initiatives budget.

### **Results so far**

The selected projects are currently in implementation phase and they are designed to produce the results according to the programme indicators, as follows:

- Additional water production capacity installed per day (in m3): 1.024
- Installed capacity for production of renewable energy (in MW): 0.18
- Improved brine disposal solutions: 2 projects/interventions
- Supported measures: 8
- Research studies for “Good status” of water bodies carried out:3
- Awareness raising campaigns carried out:1
- People reached by awareness campaigns: 18.000
- Guidelines for water saving developed: Yes
- Number of projects involving cooperation with a donor project partner:4

### **Programme level & Management Cost**

No changes have been to the Programme Agreement and the Management and Control system, since last strategic report. The Ukraine-Russian war did not affect the programme implementation in 2022.

The main developments at the programme level were as follows:

The programme submitted 2 interim financial reports, in the reporting period, related to projects and the Management cost activities.

The MOU special concern is: “The programme addresses the water management needs of particular vulnerable areas and islands through support to projects aiming at water saving and desalination. The programme encourages the increased exploitation of innovative technologies including RES”. The calls for the output 1.1 considered the special concern in whole. Regarding the call 1.2, it promoted through the evaluation criteria, the particularly vulnerable areas and islands. Call 1.3 raises awareness on water management and water saving.

According to the Programme Agreement:

The Programme Operator encouraged bilateral partnerships across all calls. It is worth to mention that, apart from contracting projects with bilateral initiatives, there are 3 projects contracted under output 1.1 and 1 project contracted under output 1.2 with donor state partners.

The terms listed in the Programme Agreement regarding the buildings purchased, constructed, renovated, or reconstructed under the project, were incorporated in the calls.

An ex-ante review of public procurement and contracting procedures and documentation carried out under the Programme, is carried out by a competent independent entity (the NFP) to ensure compliance with all applicable procedures and the Greek public procurement legislation.

All projects of the program have developed a communication plan and have appointed a contact person.

Strategic collaboration and the reciprocal sharing of expertise and best practices are cultivated with other Programmes implemented by other beneficiary states within the framework of the EEA Grants.

## **Monitoring**

The Programme Operator followed the foreseen procedures of the Management and Control System for all elements and processes of implementation. On-spot verifications for the projects will start in the third quarter of the year, which means from September 2023. The scheduling considers the progress of scope, time, and cost (economic and physical object).

## **Communication**

The Programme Operator developed two videos for the programme to highlight the necessity, geographical position, budget, duration, and bilateral relations of the projects. These videos were presented at the International Fair of Thessaloniki and are now hosted in the Programme Operator's website and in the NFP's website. The videos will be re-edited to include the four new projects signed under the new call of output 1.1, 'Water Management Solutions Implemented'.

Additionally, the Programme Operator has signed a contract to re-frame its website dedicated to EEA-GRANTS. The new website is expected to be completed by the end of September 2023.

Finally, the logos of EEA grants are displayed publicly both online and in print in all actions or events carried out by the Programme Operator.

## **Next steps- planning for the year ahead**



In the year ahead, projects from output 1.1, 1.2 and the small grant scheme will be under implementation and will be finalized by April 2024.

In the second semester of 2023, and contingent upon the advancement of projects allowing for the dissemination of initial outcomes, a conference will be convened by inviting the Project Promoters, with the aim to saw off their project achievements, share good practices, exchange experiences, problem solving, and acceleration of projects if necessary.

**Table 1: Financial progress of the programme**

Module	Project title	Grant	Contracts	Incurred expenditure
OC1	Electronic system installation location and control of leakages in the internal networks of DEVAVA CHANIA - Phase A'	540.000,00	432.000,00	0,00
OC1	Smart green system for leakage control and water quality monitoring of water district area of city Paramythia of Municipality of Souli	640.000,00	607.700,00	94.000,00
OC1	Installation of green desalination plant at Kimolos island incorporating innovative technology of brine treatment-BriZE	973.934,30	925.142,83	142.180,91
OC1	Supply and installation of a desalination plant on the island of Thirasia with Renewable Energy Sources	695.923,00	531.000,00	0,00
OC2	Delineation of saline groundwater in Zakynthos Island. Investigative monitoring and examination of artificial recharge potential as a restorative measure. Zante – Sal.	196.500,00	176.500,00	52.950,00
OC2	Actions for the improvement of the qualitative and quantitative situation and the adaptation to the climate change of the coastal Underground Water System "Larissos" of the catchment area of Peiros-Vergas-Pinios, Northern Peloponnese Water Department	200.358,00	200.358,00	52.457,40
OC2	Assessment of Arsenic and other contaminants in surface and groundwaters of Almopia municipality, Greece	222.058,08	222.058,08	62.020,65
OC3	Smart Leak detection network, in the water supply network of Heraklion, based on IoT technology and Knowledge (SmartLIK)	1.442.954,84	210.000,00	0,00
OC3	Smart system for Leak Detection for water supply Network of Aigio	574.979,03	552.880,00	0,00

<b>OC3</b>	Smart integrated platform for Leak Detection of water supply Network in the city of Argos.	603.729,00	266.750,00	0,00
<b>OC3</b>	Installation of an innovative desalination plant with brine and RES treatment in Alepochori of the Municipality of Mandra - Idyllia	904.000,00	0,00	0,00
<b>SGS</b>	WATER TANK: Promoting the importance of water loops management in island regions	99.550,00	99.550,00	20.395,33
<b>BI</b>	Smart green system for leakage control and water quality monitoring of water district area of city Paramythia of Municipality of Souli- Bilateral initiative	20.000,00	20.000,00	6.000,00
<b>BI</b>	Installation of green desalination plant at Kimolos island incorporating innovative technology of brine treatment-BriZE - Bilateral initiative	39.352,76	39.352,76	12.096,15
<b>BI</b>	Increasing Knowledge on the importance of good status of water bodies- Bilateral initiative	39.679,00	39.679,00	11.903,85
<b>MC</b>	Management cost of the programme	300.000,00	300.000,00	43.961,51
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>7.493.018,01</b>	<b>4.622.970,67</b>	<b>497.965,80</b>

## Programme E - Renewable Energy, Energy Efficiency

<b>Programme Operator:</b> Centre for Renewable Energy Sources and Saving (CRES)	<b>Modalities:</b> 1 open call and bilateral activities
<b>IPO:</b> N/A	<b>Budget:</b> €15,9ME (EEA Grants: €11,9ME, National co financing: ME €3,97). The budget of the GR-Energy Programme was increased (2023) by €2,57ME (Grants contribution: €1,9ME National contribution: 644,356 €) in order to ensure the implementation of the physical object of 10 Projects in accordance with the initial Inclusion Decisions, due to price increases in materials and equipment, following the energy crisis caused by the events in Ukraine.
<b>National Programme Partner:</b> N/A	

GR-Energy continues its progress ensuring that all Projects will be successfully completed by the end of the eligibility period until 30 April 2024. The construction sub-projects, which constitute the "core" of the GR-Energy programme, are gradually completing their tendering procedures. All projects are in the implementation stage and their progress regarding energy upgrading interventions is monitored by the Programme Operator through on-site verifications. In parallel, the issues related to price increases in the supply of materials and equipment due to the global energy crisis were addressed as the submitted request to EEA Grants, for additional funding for the Project Promoters amounting to €2.577.424 was approved. The sub-projects created by additional funding are on the tendering procedure (most have already been tendered and the rest will be tendered by September) with the aim of being completed by the end of the program period. Moreover, the Programme Operator continues to enrich its communication actions and web presence, through social media postings and further guidance to Project Promoters (PPs) on the development of their project websites and their Communication Plans.

Currently 70% of the programme is in the contracting process (legal commitment) while some projects are gradually being completed and delivered. In the next 2 months all legal commitments will be completed. So now the achievement of the GR-Energy indicators is beginning to be recorded. The selected projects are currently in implementation phase and they are designed to produce the results according to the programme indicators, as follows:

- Estimated annual CO<sub>2</sub>-emissions reductions: 4,834 tonnes
- Estimated energy savings: 4,096 MWh/year
- Estimated increase in renewable energy production: 1,250 MWh/year
- Number of jobs created: 18
- Estimated monetary savings: 537,000 EUR/year
- Number of people who declare that they benefited from improved public social infrastructure: 67,650
- Installed capacity for production of renewable energy: 0,95 MW
- Number of implemented projects with innovative Energy Efficiency/Renewable Energy technologies/processes/solutions applied: 13
- Number of implemented projects with systems for monitoring of energy consumption: 13
- Number of people trained in energy efficiency and renewable energy: 650
- Number of people reached by awareness campaigns: 65,000
- Number of conferences / workshops held related to results from projects: 39
- Number of projects involving cooperation with a donor project partner: 13

These results are significant considering that 30 emblematic public buildings throughout Greece are

being upgraded (schools, universities, sports centres, municipal buildings and biological treatment plants) and important information actions on innovative technologies that affect a large part of citizens are being implemented. The interventions concern the upgrading of the heating-air conditioning system, which has the highest energy consumption in buildings, the production of energy and heat from RES (photovoltaics, solar thermal systems, geothermal), the increase of the Energy Efficiency through thermal insulation of the building envelope, changing the energy behaviour of users through the installation of measuring equipment and BEMS in buildings, etc.

### **Bilateral Initiatives**

The Programme Operator has recently started to implement its Bilateral Relations plan. As regards to the actions that will be conducted in the coming period, they concern activities through partnerships in projects, visits to donor countries and meetings/workshops at each project site.

During the reporting period, the Programme Operator finalized the Bilateral Relations plan and strengthened the network of partners involved in the bilateral relations. The programme's communication activities and the NFP's publicity actions also contribute to further strengthening the potential of developing bilateral relations in the fields of RES - Energy Efficiency. As a result, for all activities there will be cooperation with distinguished bilateral partners for know-how sharing and exchange of expertise. All PPs will be invited to participate, according to their field of expertise and project scope.

### **Programme level & Management Cost**

The Programme Operator submitted the APR for 2022, as well IFR#8 and IFR#9 with incurred expenditure related the Programme's Management Cost. The Programme Operator continues to respond to the PPs payment requests in order to proceed in a timely manner with the Projects' financing. Also, the Programme Operator implements projects monitoring through (MIS) -Monitoring Information System (Administrative verification of expenditure, approval of payment claims, pre-approvals of contract amendments, etc.) in accordance with the Management and Control System. Furthermore, during this period two successful audits for the Programme were carried out by the Financial Audit Committee (EDEL), one concerning the management cost and the other concerning the Act of a Project Promoter. The Programme Operator cooperated closely with the Audit Authority and responded to everything requested.

### **Communication**

The Programme's website <http://eeares.cres.gr> and social media page (Facebook) remain the key communication tools between the Programme Operator and PPs and are regularly updated in both English and Greek language, in accordance with the requirements of the EEA FM 2014-2021. All information regarding the Projects' latest developments such as the tendering procedures are promptly posted. In the on-site verifications, (in which the National Focal Point is invited and often participates), communication issues are also discussed such as, e.g., the implementation of the communication activities of the PPs' communication plans and the development of the content of the Projects' websites.

### **Next steps- planning for the year ahead**

As "GR-Energy" program moves towards completion, a key objective is the successful completion of the construction sub-projects. All construction sub-projects have contracts signed and have started or are

about to start with a completion deadline of no later than 4/30/2024. A key and critical responsibility of the Programme Operator continues to be the timely provision of funding to all PPs, so that there are no delays in the project schedules. Thus, in the coming months there will be a peak in the checks of approvals of PPs payment claims as well as of Statements of Expenditure in the Monitoring Information System (as most of the construction sub-projects' expenditure will mainly be incurred during this period). The Programme Operator will continue to carry out on-site verifications at the premises of the Project Promoters to ensure compliance with the requirements of the Technical Datasheets and the timely completion of the Projects.

Upon completion of the construction sub-projects, Energy Performance Certificates will be issued to the buildings certifying the upgrade in the energy category of the buildings to category B and above. These certificates will also document the achievement of the key programme indicators.

Following the completion of the construction subprojects, the communication actions included in the PPs Communication Plans will be culminated/finalized. Also, PO CRES plans to implement communication actions for the capitalization of the results of the demonstration projects. The last actions will aim at informing the general public about the financial mechanism of the GR-ENERGY programme and the importance of the investments of the demonstration projects in increasing the quality of life and improving the sustainability of buildings.

**Table 1: Financial progress of the programme**

Module	Project title	Grant	Contracts	Incurred expenditure
<b>OC 1</b>	Modern Energy Upgrade of Municipal Stadium and Actions to Reduce the Energy Footprint for the Local Community of Katerini	956.053,44	84.444,00	20.548,61
<b>OC 1</b>	NZEB Sports Building Infrastructure for the Activation of Citizens of the Municipality of Moschatos – Tavros	828.724,77	76.220,32	19.605,23
<b>OC 1</b>	Smart Building Model & Living Lab Energy Innovation Centre of ASFA at the Delphi Art Station	1.259.096,75	111.897,60	47.507,60
<b>OC 1</b>	Upgrade of Iconic Buildings of Samos through RES-EE Interventions and Innovative Actions with Applicability throughout Greek islands	746.816,18	66.662,40	33.689,99
<b>OC 1</b>	Application of Innovative Green Technologies in an Iconic Building and Facilities	1.025.222,31	734.172,99	137.393,00

	of the AUA			
<b>OC 1</b>	Complete Energy Renovation of the Model Centre for Culture, Education and Innovation in Central Greece	963.882,63	84.936,40	13.775,95
<b>OC 1</b>	Integration of Innovative Energy Technologies into the Central Building Infrastructure of High Use & Footfall of the AUTH	1.070.094,85	93.545,60	46.460,00
<b>OC 1</b>	Smart Application of Innovative RES Interventions and Energy Efficiency Improvement in Buildings & Facilities of the Municipality of Skyros	1.235.857,48	115.829,65	12.869,59
<b>OC 1</b>	Demonstrating Use of Renewable & Alternative Energy Technologies in Social Infrastructures of the Municipal Water Supply – Sewerage Company of Drama	1.292.151,13	944.260,00	60.091,26
<b>OC 1</b>	Demonstration projects for the Energy Upgrade of North Evros Municipal Buildings	1.295.831,04	56.396,00	15.776,40
<b>OC 1</b>	Energy Upgrade of the School Complex of Perigiali Municipality of Kavala	1.299.638,22	1.102.493,85	382.053,76
<b>OC 1</b>	Energy Upgrades and Installation of RES in buildings of the Municipality of Varis-Voulas-Vouliagmenis under the EEA Financial Mechanism Framework	1.296.961,00	1.205.497,05	312.621,35
<b>OC 1</b>	RES Projects and Energy Upgrade in Municipal Buildings of M.C. Ag. Anargyroi	1.299.999,99	1.266.433,49	42.817,12
<b>MC</b>	Management Cost of the Programme GR-ENERGY	1.233.333,00	0,00	662.021,56
<b>BI</b>	Bilateral Relations GR-ENERGY	100.000,00	0,00	0,00
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>15.903.662,79</b>	<b>5.942.789,35</b>	<b>1.807.231,42</b>

## **Programme F - Good Governance, Accountable Institutions, Transparency**

<b>Programme Operator:</b> Managing Authority for Programme Digital Transformation	<b>Modalities:</b> 3 predefined projects and bilateral activities
<b>IPO:</b> Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)	<b>Budget:</b> 7,1 ME (EEA Grants: 6,06 ME, National co financing: 1,04ME)
<b>National Programme Partner:</b> N/A	

In the reporting period 2022-2023, the programme underwent a modification and rationalization of the results framework as 2 foreseen subprojects of Outcome 2 “Transparency and integrity in public institutions enhanced” implemented by the National Transparency Authority could no longer be implemented within the eligibility period despite long and tedious deliberations. The MoU was also modified to reflect changes that happened in the jurisdiction of the Programme Operator, which became the Managing Authority of a Programme titled “Digital Transformation”, within the new EU ESIF programming period. A new internal restructuring of the Units of the Programme Operator created a dedicated unit for monitoring the EEA Grants’ projects. Moreover, one year on from the project contracts, project promoters procured most of the physical object (subprojects) and had their projects reassessed to comply with the modified programme agreement. The communication plan of the programme was submitted and approved by the Communications Officer at the Financial Mechanism Office , several catch up calls and meetings took place between the Programme Operator and the programme officer at the Financial Mechanism Office as well as between the Programme Operator and the Project Promoters regarding progress updates, risk identification and management as well as, communication planning and guidelines for compliance with Annex III of the Regulation. Continuous monitoring according to the management and control system tool place as was verified from 2 audits (one systemic, one on a Management Cost project), performed extensively by the Audit Authority which found no errors or suggestions. The Programme Operator participated in a meeting at the Norwegian Embassy and updated the newly appointed Deputy Head of Mission on the programme progress and key lessons learnt from managing it. 2 Cooperation Committees were held one hybrid and one online to update the stakeholders on progress, risk and measures as well as enable exchange of information and guidelines. Project Promoters were invited to present their project progress and results. The Programme Operator worked on closure scenarios to raise awareness on decisions needed to be made, actions to take by all involved stakeholders so early warning acted as a catalyst for changes to happen. This will continue in late 2023 and as the end of the eligibility period approaches.

Overall, 5 subprojects concerning the communications activities of PDP1, the digital signature infrastructure in the Citizen Services Centers (CSCs), the reengineering and reorganization of processes and services provided by the CSCs as well the development of the training material cannot be implemented within the remaining eligibility period Recent elections interrupted the flow of tendering process due to the change of responsibilities and jurisdiction of the Project Promoter of Outcome 1 “Effectiveness of public administration improved “ Decisions need to accelerate on how PDP1 will close. The Greek Ombudsman capacity to actually implement all foreseen working visits in the regions remains a factor to watch regarding this result from Outcome 3 “ Maladministration in the public sector decreased”

The developments and the progress per project are :

### **Predefined project 1: “Organizational Upgrade and Digital Transformation of Citizen Service Centers Network (KEP) and public services provided”**



PDP 1 consists of 9 activities (subprojects) with a total budget that was increased from 3.400.000,00 euros to 3.863.992,00 euros. This budget increase reflects an expressed need to increase the tablets, software and training so all Citizen's Service Centers would have the capacity to allow for digital signature thus, be inclusive (subproject 6). All other subprojects were tendered with delays caused by either that no competition was developed or appeals delayed the awarding process or errors were detected leading to retendering. For instance, the tender of the installation of tablets for the digital signature was fruitless. The partnership with GRNet is being implemented and the new back office system has been developed, tested within an increasing community of Citizen's Service Centers employees who participate in the pilot operation of the new system. A community practice has been built to allow for tuning the system due to its operational use under real conditions. There is a roadmap of rolling out the new back office to all Citizen's Service Centres and until now about 150 of them participate in the pilot phase. All stakeholders of the project work together to make the transition happen while at the same time increase the easiness of servicing the Greek citizen more effectively.

The partnership agreement with OECD has been concluded and the results were communicated through a workshop with the participation of OECD. The project management consultant contract has been awarded to strengthen the internal coordination and acceleration of the implementation. No communication planning has been done yet and the timetable of the activities foreseen to implement the communication activities lies partially beyond the eligibility period. The Project Promoter informed the Cooperation Committee in summer 2023 that the nominal amount for the completion of all subprojects which is non-eligible under the Programme Agreement due to them, getting completed, after the end of the eligibility but before the end of 2024, closes to 1 ME. Recent changes in the jurisdiction of the authorities of the Project Promoter have affected the capacity to draw more robust estimates until at least the briefing of the newly appointed responsible General Secretary of the Ministry of Interior is done. Delays in the decisions needed affect a) the award of subprojects, 2 (communications), 4, 5 (reorganisation and reengineering of processes), 6 (the installation of tablets to enable digital signature of the citizens) and 8 regarding the development of the training material. The Project Promoter though estimates that the studies under subproject 4 & 5 and the procurement of the tablets (subproject 6) could be ready to proceed to the contract phase, as soon as the briefing concludes and there is clarity on the course of actions from all involved.

#### **Predefined project 2: "Strengthening of integrity, transparency and anti-corruption framework"**

The project consisted of 3 different activities (subprojects) with a total budget of 1.998.640,59 euros. The Project Promoter requested a change of scope cancelling the partnership that it sought to sign with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and the Ministry of Finance on the digital management of confiscated assets since there was not sufficient eligible time to conclude and the necessary law was not in place. The scope of PDP2 was further reduced since the partnership agreement with OECD, signed on 17 December 2021 was modified to reflect the actual scope agreed after certain activities foreseen in the project scope with OECD were already performed by the NTA due to priorities set by the Government, using other funding. The partnership agreement with OECD was modified on 17/12/2022 to 484.037,00 euros. Payment to the international partner have begun and in July 2023 the OECD has started its missions working with the team at National Transparency Authority. A need to adjust internally some deliverable will extend the foreseen 12 months timeplan and this will be reflected in a modification of the partnership agreement. Collaboration seems to yield first results which are going to be announced on 9 December 2023, where a conference will be held on the International Anti-Corruption Day designated by The United Nations General Assembly. After the OECD 3 days visit in July the project seems to be on track with a clear way forward also activities such as press releases are communicating the cooperation with OECD and its results and a new dedicated web page within the <https://aead.gr/en/> is going to be built

#### **Predefined project 3: "Greek Ombudsman actions for strengthening good governance, accountability"**



## **and combating maladministration in the public sector"**

The project consists of 10 activities (subprojects) with a total budget of 1.938.000,00 euros. In the reporting period all subprojects have been contracted but one (the communication implementation) and 2 have finished (an international conference and an assessment study to define the digital infrastructure needs. A partial budget reallocation took place within the budget to cater for adjustments needed. The office in Thessaloniki has been established and is operational from January 2023 onwards and is the base of meetings in Northern Greece. The subproject that supports the visits to the regions to collaborate with officials of public entities is under way with 70 visits been already done. The short period until the end of the eligibility exerts an urgency to the delivery of the visits to the regions and monitoring the capacity of the Project Promoter to perform them will allow for early detection of the potential of fully achieving the envisaged objective. Digital infrastructure projects contracts have been signed end of summer 2023 while the communication and raising awareness campaign subproject 6 has a timeline reaching the end of the eligibility, flags have been raised to closely monitor and accelerate any actions needed to safely implement within the eligibility period.

### **Bilateral Initiatives**

The Greek Ombudsman has finalized the collaboration with the Norwegian Ombudsman on their bilateral projects' scope, timeline and budget and has indeed submitted their proposal and the PO has asked for some supplementary information to assess the proposal. The National Transparency Authority is in consultation with its potential partner in Norway to define the scope of cooperation with their peer entity. The Project Promoter of PDP1 focused their resources to the implementation of PDP1 and will work on their bilateral proposal in 2024 under the new administrative jurisdiction (Ministry of Interior). The PO will proceed with a further round of focused assistance to promote the bilateral projects, where it is needed.

### **Programme level & Management Cost**

In the reporting period, the Programme Operator processed activities in the context of management cost to support the smooth implementation of the programme needs such as organization of the cooperation committees, translations, digital support etc. The early contract on the communications was concluded, supporting the Programme Operator with the development of the communications plan which was approved by the Financial Mechanism Office. The draft tender documentation of its implementation is at the later stages before tendering so in 2024 the results of the Programme can be communicated. The initial administrative support consultant was contracted and was successfully concluded. The tendering procedure of an administrative consultant until the closure of the programme is at the later stages of award, soon to have the contract signed. The consulting services will support the Units of the Programme Operator in their tasks. The Financial Mechanism Office after the modification of the PA has notified the PO that all conditions of the Programme Agreement have been met. The MoU has also been modified to reflect the change of the Programme Operator legal status

### **Monitoring**

Administrative verifications of declared as incurred expenditure take place according to the MCS at national and programme level to ensure quality and/or regularity of implementation. The Monitoring Unit of the PO collaborates with the Unit operating the Integrated System of EEA Grants to issue a sample based on eligible expenditure and then plan, the on-the-spot verifications for 2023 and 2024, according to the MCS at national and programme level. At the same time visits to Project Promoter are being organized to check on progress like a one day visit to the premises of GRnet the partner of the Project Promoter of PDP1 to review the status of the implementation of the new back office system, identify areas of improvement and frequent catch up calls are being held. IFRs have been submitted looking after the accounting periods with the help of the Certifying Authority and balancing the needs of finance from EEA Grants and the Public Investment Programme.

## **Cooperation with IPOs**

The Programme Operator invited the IPOs to participate in the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> Cooperation Committee that took place during the reporting period. The IPOs provided with their point of view and suggestions, which proved helpful towards framing the issues and solutions forward.

The partnership agreements with international organizations namely OECD (PDP 1) and FRA (PDP 3) were signed and are in effect. The cooperation with OECD (PDP1) has been concluded. The Project Promoter of PDP2 also modified its partnership agreement with OECD in December 2022 and paid the first tranche of their modified PA after all necessary steps were taken.

## **Communication**

The Programme Operator actively supports the Project Promoters in fulfilling their communication objectives with the support of the NFP. The Programme Operator successfully developed the communication plan which was shared with the NFP and was approved by the FMO. The physical object to implement the communication plan is going to be awarded by the beginning of 2024 so results of the programme are communicated throughout 2024. The Programme Operator actively participates in social media promoting the programme and the results of the projects.

Early communication activities are consistent with the Branding Manual, based on the fruitful collaboration between the NFP and for instance, the Greek Ombudsman. The PO organizes special meetings with the Project Promoters to create the necessary framework of cooperation within the network setup by the NFP like a meeting held with NTA. The Programme Operator seeks to make sure that all digital assets being made available like the new back office of Citizen Service Centers maintains the visual identity of the contribution of EEA Grants.

## **Next steps- planning for the year ahead**

On 30.4.2024 the eligibility period of this programming period ends for the predefined projects. While an initial letter to the NFPs regarding closure guidelines have been sent by the FMO the PO is awaiting for concise closure guidelines at the national level. Despite this the Programme Operator has made closure scenarios and have communicated the need to work on them to the project promoters. In the next period, all projects will be in implementation phase while the realization of interim results will happen as contracts or partnership agreements will be under way. On the results, PDP 1 has already created the EU GO and is rolling out the new back in a pilot operation to Citizen Service Centers whereas the partnership agreement with the OECD on good practices has been concluded and communicated with a workshop. The change of jurisdiction of the Project Promoter of PDP1 after the general summer elections (the Secretariat General of Digital Governance and Simplification of Procedures of the Ministry of Digital Governance was transferred to the Ministry of the Interior) causes delays in the decisions needed for a) the award of subprojects, 2 (communications) 4, 5 (reorganisation and reengineering of processes), 6 (the installation of tablets to enable digital signature of the citizens) and 8 regarding the development of the training material. On the other hand, the procured, nominal time schedule of subprojects 2, 4, 5 and 6 due to legal processes or, tender processes, not coming to fruition, is beyond the end of the eligibility period and the PO has made very clear that a decision needs to be made about whether the "other funding" option by the PP, as explained by the FMO in their initial closure guidelines, is a desirable and viable way forward. The main subproject (7) on the implementation of the new back office system of the Citizen Service Centers continues to be piloted in more than 100 CSCs and a community of practice is used by GRnet to familiarise key users from CSCs to its use. The Programme Operator seeks to mitigate evolving risks in close collaboration with the restructured Project Promoter.

PDP3 in cooperation with FRA has been implementing seminars to the personnel of the Greek Ombudsman, the bureau at Thessaloniki is in operational status. The Project Promoter will continue to

deliver on a plan their workshops and visits to the regions while the upgrade of the technical infrastructure and back – office processes according to the contractual timeline will get implemented until early 2024 The communication plan is expected to be getting implemented via the awareness raising campaign contract ready to be awarded.

The Project Promoter of PDP2 (NTA) will modify their PA with OECD to reflect some necessary internal readjustments according to the NTA, OECD is working on the deliverables being discussed at the recent mission in Greece. The NTA has also developed a communication plan of all foreseen activities being implemented .

**Table 1: Financial progress of the programme**

Module	Project title	Grant	Contracts	Incurred expenditure
PDP 1	Organizational Upgrade and Digital Transformation of Citizen Service Centers Network (KEP) and public services provided	3.863.992,00	1.668.092,00	633.335,76
PDP 2	Strengthening of integrity, transparency and anti-corruption framework	484.037,00	484.037,00	145.211,10
PDP 3	Program - Good Governance, Accountable Institutions, Transparency	1.938.000,00	1.665.753,67	190.054,60
BI	Not available yet	0,00	0,00	0,00
MC	Management Costs	823.529,00	153.172,74	153.172,74
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>7.109.558,00</b>	<b>3.971.055,41</b>	<b>1.121.774,20</b>

## Programme G - Asylum and Migration (Capacity building of national asylum and migration management systems)

<b>Programme Operator:</b> European and Development Programs Management Agency - Ministry Of Citizen Protection (EDPMA)	<b>Modalities:</b> : 8 predefined projects, 1 small grant scheme and bilateral activities
<b>Donor Programme Partner:</b> Norwegian Directorate of Immigration (UDI)	<b>Budget:</b> 19,4ME (EEA Grants:16,5ME, National co financing:2,9 ME )

### Predefined project 1: "Assistance to Appeals Authority"

On 22 December 2022, Project Promoter, Appeals Authority, submitted a project contract amendment request, as the reduced backlog cases within Appeals Authority no longer justify the necessity for the establishment of additional ten 3-member Committees. In addition, the Project Promoter proposed to further enhance the capacity of the existing twenty-one (21) 3-member Committees by organizing ad-hoc meetings for certain categories of appeals, as well as to recruit personnel. Their request was examined by the relevant units of the Programme Operator and the project contract was amended on 24 January 2023.

Furthermore, the relevant staff has been recruited and the Country of Origin Information (COI) Unit commenced its operation. Ad-hoc committee meetings have taken place and the capacity of the personnel has been enhanced via trainings and study visits. However, taken into consideration the timetable and the fact that the "Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund" of the European Union 2021-2027 also foresees the recruitment of additional personnel for both Appeals Authority and Asylum Service, it seems highly unlikely that an additional recruitment procedure will be performed in the context of the Predefined Project.

### Results so far:

- A total of 93 appeal cases were examined, in the context of 10 meetings of the committees
- A Country of Origin Information Unit (C.O.I. Unit) was created which was staffed with 2 investigators and assisted in the examination of 11 pending cases.
- 6 Training Seminars were organized for the staff of the Appeals Authority.
- 4 study visits of Appeals Authority executives were conducted in Finland, Cyprus, Iceland and Poland.
- 1 librarian was hired to staff the library and books have been received
- 2 trainings were carried out by UNE representatives to the staff of the Appeals Authority and the Members of the Independent Appeals Committees in the LEAN method and to the Judges and assistant rapporteurs, which concerned the issues of reliability and evidence assessment as well as interview and oral hearing techniques.
- The Appeals Authority has procured and acquired computers, electrical and office equipment for its needs

### **Predefined project 2: "Assistance to Asylum Service"**

On 8 May 2023, Project Promoter, the Asylum Service submitted a project contract amendment request, by which the total budget was set at 3.219.864,00 euros (reduced by 593.600,00 euros, which were allocated within different outcomes of the programme), as the personnel was not recruited according to the timetable. Apart from the reduction of the budget, the description of the activities as well as their timetables were also modified. Their request was examined by the relevant units of the Programme Operator and the project contract was amended on 16 May 2023. Furthermore, Programme Operator proposed on 6 July 2023 to modify the Partnership Agreement between Asylum Service and UDI, which is still under assessment by the parties.

Moreover, the relevant staff has been recruited and the Project Promoter has performed the technical studies for the Regional Asylum Offices in Athens and Thessaloniki. Currently, several procurement procedures have been commenced, which include inter alia (a) the technical interventions within the buildings, (b) the provision of Qlik Sense licences and (c) the provision of the teleconference system.

#### **Results so far:**

- 47 employees have been hired since March 2023 who are working for the needs of the Asylum Service in Attica and Thessaloniki.

### **Predefined project 3: "Enhancing and building-up national capacity of migration and asylum strategic planning"**

On 14 March 2023, Project Promoter, the Special Secretariat for the Coordination of Stakeholders, submitted a project contract amendment request, so as to include additional activities (within the agreed budget) with Ionian University and also to take advantage the framework contracts already in place within the Ministry of Migration and Asylum. It is foreseen that the university will assist the Project Promoter to develop a system, which will evaluate and certify the language proficiency, the knowledge and capacity/skills of the registered interpreters. This evaluation will further enhance the capacity of the Project Promoter, enabling them to provide more qualitative interpretation services to the third country nationals and the asylum seekers. Their request was examined by the relevant units of the Programme Operator and the Project Contract was amended on 29 March 2023. Furthermore, a Partnership Agreement between the Project Promoter and Ionian University was submitted for evaluation, which was positively appraised on 24 April 2023.

In the context of the predefined project, the relevant personnel has been recruited and the maturity/feasibility study for the Observatory and the Registry of Interpreters is still ongoing. Furthermore, various technical meetings have been performed between the Project Promoter and its Donor Programme Partners. Finally it is worth mentioning that according to the Presidential Decree 77/2023, as published in the Official Gazette of the Hellenic Republic (130/A/27.06.2023), the composition of the Hellenic Government was modified, in the aftermath of the General Elections that took place on 25 June 2023. As a result of the abovementioned changes, the Special Secretariat for the Coordination of Stakeholders is abolished. The mandates, roles and responsibilities, as well as the personnel of the entity have been transferred to the General Secretariat for the Reception of Asylum Seekers of the Ministry of Migration and Asylum.

#### **Results so far:**

- The Immigration & Asylum Observatory and the Registry of Interpreters are staffed with the recruitment of 4 employees.
- 2 visits were conducted by officials of the Ministry of Justice and Public Security of Norway to Greece for the exchange of know-how for the implementation of the Migration and Asylum Observatory.
- 1 visit of 2 executives of the Special Secretariat for the Coordination of Stakeholders in Norway was conducted, with the aim of training the executives in the methodology, practices and corresponding tools of the Norwegian partners.
- A contract was signed for the Maturity Study for the Migration and Asylum Observatory and the Interpreter Registry in order to develop the organizational structure, the relevant procedures and identify the necessary competencies (cost, needs, requirements, scope of competencies, interface with existing structures and services, establishment and operation), from which its interim report was submitted, and the final report is awaited.
- For the creation of the Interpreter evaluation and training system, a Cooperation Agreement was signed with the Ionian University and the first deliverables are expected in mid-September 2023.

#### **Predefined project 4: "Enhancing the capacity of National Center for Social Solidarity (EKKA) to manage unaccompanied minors and vulnerable groups"**

The Project Promoter, the National Center for Social Solidarity, has completed the recruitment procedure on October 2022. Furthermore the technical specifications of the equipment that will further enhance the national hotline have been determined and an additional procurement procedure for the provision of equipment has been finalized. Finally, several important preparatory steps for the implementation of the rest of the activities have been performed.

##### **Results so far:**

- The Project Promoter- National Center for Social Solidarity- is staffed since October 2022 by 6 interpreters, 2 psychologists, 3 social workers, 1 social scientist, 1 administrator of IT communication networks, 1 administrative employee who are working for the project scope activities.
- The Electronic System Requirements Study has been completed and is used in the implementation of the national hotline.
- The Project Promoter is equipped with electronic equipment.

#### **Predefined project 5: "Providing fundamental rights expertise to stakeholders operating in Greek migration and asylum system"**

In June 2022, Fundamental Rights Agency of the European Union (Project Partner) officially informed the Project Promoter (the Greek Ombudsman) that due to unforeseen circumstances and in the context of the Ukrainian Refugee crisis, it is not able to allocate personnel and resources in this project and cannot participate in the project.

Taken all of the above into consideration, Programme Operator and the Donor Programme Partner suggested to the Project Promoter to assess its real needs, to identify potential gaps and needs which could be addressed by the available resources, as well as any proposal for new activities to be included in the Pre Defined Project. In this context, a Programme Agreement amendment request was submitted in March 2023, which included, inter alia, the reduction of the budget by 796.680,00 euros (total budget set at 450.520,00 euros) and the inclusion of additional activities (recruitment of administrative and specialized personnel as well as the publication of a special report with results of the project). However, although that the proposed changes were positively appraised by the Financial Mechanism Office, the

Project Promoter has not submitted yet a Project Contract amendment request, which seriously questions the capacity of the Greek Ombudsman to implement the Project within the remaining timetable until April 2024.

**Results so far:**

- Officials of the Greek Ombudsman have conducted on-site visits to structures located in Chios, Samos, Alexandroupolis, Drama and Evros Prison and it is expected that by the end of the project, two conferences will be held and an issue of findings / autopsies will be issued.

**Predefined project 6: "Improving Hellenic Police capacity to identify and manage unaccompanied minors and vulnerable groups"**

A Programme Agreement amendment request was submitted in March 2023, which included, inter alia, the increase of the budget by 400.000,00 euros (total budget set at 1.000.000,00 euros) and the inclusion of additional activities in the Project (increase of the trainees from 150 to 330 persons and increase of the training sessions from 6 to 8). The proposed changes were positively appraised by the Financial Mechanism Office and the Project Promoter (Hellenic Police) submitted a Project Contract amendment request on 26 July 2023. Their request was examined by the relevant units of the Programme Operator and the Project Contract was amended on 3 August 2023. Furthermore a draft Partnership Agreement has been submitted to the Programme Operator for evaluation. Apart from that, the overall implementation of the Project is satisfactory and within schedule.

**Results so far:**

- 4 experts for the unaccompanied minors and the vulnerable people have been recruited in a team. The experts' team visited the Reception and Identification Centers in Lesvos and Samos to identify the conditions in the field. The on-spot inspections allow the expert to coordinate with the actual conditions at the RICs. The collected data are gathered and presented in a Report of the team and they will be addressed throughout the training program with the development of indicators, educational material, manual for the training simulators, contributing to a targeted education outcome.
- 5 experts were recruited to develop 2 simulators for training in identification and management of unaccompanied minors and vulnerable immigrant/refugee groups.
- Educational material and vulnerability indicators have been completed
- The project promoter is equipped with software, video editing services, manual and infographics and (e-learning platform).

**Predefined project 7: "Enhancing first reception conditions and services provided to third country nationals".**

Project Promoter, the Reception and Identification Service, submitted a technical project contract amendment request in 16 November 2022, so as to depict the current situation within the project and also to take advantage the framework contracts already in place within the Ministry of Migration and Asylum. Their request was examined by the relevant units of the Programme Operator and the Project Contract was amended on 30 November 2022.

In the context of the predefined project, the relevant personnel has been recruited, the technical

interventions within the accommodation structure in Pyrgos have been completed and the facility commenced its operation in May 2023 and the first residents are accommodated at the premises. Finally it is worth mentioning that the submission of an additional project contract amendment request is imminent, so as to modify the methodology of implementation of several activities, as well as to mitigate the repricing of the provision of goods and services within the accommodation structure.

#### **Results so far:**

- From May 2023, the shelter for the vulnerable groups of immigrants in Pyrgos Ilias is in full operation. At the moment, 144 third-country nationals (88 adult women and 56 minors) are accommodated, while the arrival of another 49 people (24 adult women and 25 minors) is expected in September 2023. The structure employs social workers, psychologists, nurses, babysitters, administrators and a lawyer who provide their services to all guests. The framework agreements for the guarding, cleaning and maintenance services of the structure are already being implemented, while the tender procedures for the supply of electronic equipment, clothing - footwear, medical equipment, and the fire extinguishing system in the structures of Diavati and Corinth are expected to start in the next period.

#### **Predefined project 8: "Enhancing the capacity of the Special Secretariat for the Protection of Unaccompanied Minors (SSPUAM) to evaluate the quality of services provided to unaccompanied minors within the Accommodation Centres".**

Project Promoter, the Special Secretariat for the Protection of Unaccompanied Minors, submitted a project contract amendment request on 19 December 2022, so as to include additional activities within the Project, in the aftermath of the Programme Agreement amendment that took place in October 2022. Their request was examined by the relevant units of the Programme Operator and the Project Contract was amended on 28 December 2022. Following the latest Programme Agreement amendment that took place in March 2023, by which additional funding was reallocated within the project so as to extend the implementation period of the activities until April 2024, the project contract was once again amended on 11 August 2023.

In the context of the predefined project, the programmatic contracts between the project promoter and the services providers have been signed and payments have been performed toward them. However, the recruitment procedure resulted into fewer than the expected personnel (5 persons instead of the originally envisaged 13). Nevertheless, the Project Promoter reassured the Programme Operator that the project shall successfully achieve its outcomes, despite this setback. Finally, according to the Presidential Degree 77/2023, as published in the Official Gazette (130/A/27.06.2023), the composition of the Hellenic Government was modified, in the aftermath of the General Elections that took place on 25 June 2023. As a result of the abovementioned changes, the Special Secretariat for the Protection of Unaccompanied Minors is abolished. The mandates, roles and responsibilities, as well as the personnel of the entity have been transferred to the newly established General Secretariat for the Protection of Vulnerable Persons and Institutional Protection of the Ministry of Migration and Asylum. Furthermore, following communication with the Financial Mechanism Office, the abovementioned entity has been designated as the Project Promoter in the latest version of the project contract.

#### **Results so far:**



- 2.385 cases of unaccompanied minors have received services from the National Emergency Response Mechanism and the Accompaniments Mechanism so far
- In the context of the agreement with the bilateral partner, cooperation visits and meetings have contributed to the framework for monitoring and evaluation of the accommodating shelters. The framework has been published to the Official Gazette.
- Helidon platform operation is supported
- 4 social scientists and 1 project manager were recruited and they have drawn up 25 evaluation and audit reports for long-term accommodation structures for unaccompanied minors

### **Small Grant Scheme**

A call for proposals was published on April 2023 by the Programme Operator. A total of 9 proposals were submitted within the timeline set in the call (1 from a public administration entity and 8 from civil society organizations). Currently the first stage of evaluation (administrative and eligibility criteria) has been concluded and it is estimated that the respective project contracts will be signed until September 2023.

### **Bilateral Initiatives**

The Programme Operator published a call for proposals in July 2022. Bilateral initiatives have been proposed by the Programme Operator (Programme Operators' Forum) and currently, potential synergies with the Norwegian Police are exploited. Furthermore within the second quarter of 2023, Programme Operator along with UDI, are evaluating potential bilateral proposals submitted by the Project Promoters, which shall also be discussed in the forthcoming Cooperation Committee Meeting.

### **Programme level & Management Cost (Including MoU special concerns and Programme Agreement conditions)**

A call for proposals was published in September 2021, which refers to the management cost of the programme. Currently, only the Programme Operator has requested assistance via the management cost and the relevant project contract was signed in February 2022. The available budget covered expenditures related to the Cooperation Committee, travel and subsistence allowances and the provision of external experts for the selection and the monitoring of Projects.

Regarding the conditions stipulated in the Programme Agreement, the conditions No.1, 2 and 3 have been fulfilled. The appraisal of PreDefined Project 6 as well the certification of payment claims have been performed by an external entity independent and unrelated to the Programme Operator (Conditions No. 1 & 2). Furthermore, the appraisal of Predefined Project 7 occurred after the provision of the accommodation structure.

### **Monitoring**

Within the 1<sup>st</sup> half of 2023, Programme Operator performed administrative verification of all the projects at the premises of each Project Promoter (excluding predefined project 6, the monitoring of which is delegated to external entity independent to the Programme Operator. Furthermore, the Programme Operator visited twice the accommodation facility which is financed in the context of predefined project 7, with the participation of representatives from the Financial Mechanism Office and UDI. The administrative verifications resulted into the impose of financial correction in predefined project 1 (1100,00 euros), as a piece of equipment could not be retrieved. Furthermore, Programme Operator submitted the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> Interim Financial Reports in February and March respectively, as well as the Annual Programme Report of 2022.

Finally, it is worth mentioning that the Programme Operator, along with the National Focal Point, reevaluated the predefined projects of the programme within the final quarter of 2022 and the first quarter of 2023, in order to calculate their absorption rates. In this context, an amount of € 2.450.188,37 was estimated that will not be absorbed. Hence, in March 2023, Programme Operator communicated this to the Ministry of Migration and Asylum, which acts as the Policy Maker of the programme, and suggested to reallocate funds from the Management Costs and the Outcomes 1 and 4 to Outcome 3, so as to support new activities within Pre Defined Projects 6 and 8, which was agreed by the General Secretary of Migration Policy. This reallocation was included in the Programme Agreement modification request submitted by the Programme Operator in March 2023.

### **Cooperation with IPOs, DPP and NPP- Cooperation meetings**

The Norwegian Directorate of Immigration (UDI), which is the central agency in the Norwegian immigration administration that implements and helps to develop the government's immigration and refugee policy, acting as the Donor Programme Partner, provides continuous advice on the implementation of the programme. During the reference period, UDI supported Programme Operator in critical phases of the programme modification, such as the Programme Agreement amendment, the preparation of the call for proposals in the context of the Small Grant Scheme, the preparation and the successful implementation of the Cooperation Committee meetings and the update and evaluation of the milestones of the programme. The assistance is mainly provided by means of teleconferences, phone calls, e-mail exchanges and in person meetings.

The 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> Cooperation Committee meetings of the programme were held in October 2022 and March 2023 respectively. The 12<sup>th</sup> Cooperation Committee Meeting is estimated to take place in September 2023.

### **Communication**

Press releases were published on the dedicated webpage of the programme, as well as relevant posts in social media, regarding the publication of the calls for proposals, as well as the project contracts of the Predefined Projects. Furthermore, Programme Operator participated in the Thessaloniki's International Fair in 2022, whereas the programme was presented and it is estimated to participate again this year.

### **Next steps- planning for the year ahead**

Upon consultation with UDI and the Financial Mechanism Office, an additional Programme Agreement amendment is estimated to take place within 2023, so as to reallocate resources within the different outcomes of the programme, as well as to modify the Project Promoters of predefined projects 3 and 8, as mentioned above.

Furthermore, particular emphasis shall be placed to the limited implementation period remaining until April 2024, as well as the completion of the selection procedure of the projects within the Small Grant Scheme. Additionally, Programme Operator shall be prepared for the administrative procedures for the closure of the programme, as well a potential communication event within 2024, as well as the implementation of bilateral activities.

**Table 1: Financial progress of the programme**

Module	Project title	Budget	Contracts	Incurred expenditure
PDP 1	Assistance to Appeals Authority.	908.521,00	763.469,90	131.118,21
PDP 2	Assistance to Asylum Service.	3.219.864,00	2.101.730,67	161.709,67

PDP 3	Enhancing and building-up national capacity of migration and asylum strategic planning.	1.950.000,00	859.390,07	114.864,83
PDP 4	Enhancing the capacity of National Center for Social Solidarity (EKKA) to manage unaccompanied minors through the effective operation of the National Child Protection Hotline "1107".	744.254,00	560.260,00	123.773,98
PDP 5	Providing fundamental rights expertise to stakeholders operating in Greek migration and asylum system.	450.520,00	97.800,00	9.201,60
PDP 6	Improving Hellenic Police capacity to identify and manage unaccompanied minors and vulnerable groups.	1.000.000,00	1.000.000,00	251.750,00
PDP 7	Enhancing first reception conditions and services provided to third country nationals.	4.180.996	2.661.945,85	240.851,64
PDP 8	Enhancing the capacity of the Special Secretariat for the Protection of Unaccompanied Minors (SSPUAM) to evaluate the quality of services provided to unaccompanied minors within the Accommodation Centres.	4.547.602	4.335.736,76	1.140.123,08
BI	Not available yet	125.000,00	0,00	0,00
SGS	Improved strategy and contingency planning	1.259.508,37	0,00	0,00
MC	Management costs of the Programme GR-G "Capacity Building of National Asylum and Migration Management Systems".	850.500,00	412.305,95	100.731,58
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>19.236.765,37</b>	<b>12.792.639,20</b>	<b>2.274.124,59</b>

## 5. Status of bilateral funds

### National Level

In the current reporting period 2022-2023, Bilateral Fund made further progress in terms of output implementation and financing at the national level. Despite the challenges that the Bilateral Fund faces, such as the limited capacity of small promoters and partners, the payments and verifications of the bilateral partners, the financial reporting of both the payments to the promoters and the verifications, the burden and workload of bureaucracy of payments affecting both the promoters and the involved public services and so on, the Bilateral Fund implementation has reached a rate of approx. 70% of the budget at the national level paid to initiatives' promoters.

In the ongoing developments, in June 2023 JCBF reviewed the latest submitted proposals in the context of the open call and a) decided that selects for funding the initiative "Mathematical and computational aspects of potential field modelling of finite distributions" by the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki and b) expressed in principle positive opinion for the selection of the two initiatives "ELEctrification of Coastal TRANsport in Greece" and "Supporting the transition towards green coastal shipping" but due to overlapping of their activities and budget exceeding of the available funds, suggested that the proposals should be updated and adjusted.

Furthermore, given the resources depletion, the National Focal Point introduced to the Joint Committee of the Bilateral Fund the proposal for the increase of the Bilateral Fund resources by redirecting available funds. The JCBF expressed in principle positive opinion for the increase of the BF budget, on the condition, however, that risks' mitigation and financial progress will bring tangible results until September 2023. Following the forecast of the NFP, the JCBF agreed that from 30% of the budget at the national level paid to initiatives' promoters in June 2023, the target is that this rate will increase to approx. 70% by September 2023 – a target achieved as reported to the following tables.

In detail, the overall progress at the national level includes 13 selected initiatives for funding in the context of 3 calls, as follows:

**Strategic projects:** 7 initiatives

**Open Call:** 4 initiatives

**Call for Ukraine:** 2 initiatives

The overall financial progress is presented in the following table

Title	Budget	Budget granted	Remaining budget	Payments to promoters	Incurred expenditure	% Payments to budget granted
Strategic projects	834.000,00	771.959,63	62.040,37*	488.974,67	299.085,34	63%
Open Call	400.000,00	221.896,00	178.104,00	74.660,00	19.241,14	34%
Call for Ukraine	300.000,00	300.000,00	0	300.000,00	300.000,00	100%
<b>Total</b>	<b>1.534.000,00</b>	<b>1.293.855,63</b>	<b>240.144,37</b>	<b>863.634,67</b>	<b>618.326,48</b>	<b>67%</b>

\*The amount of 62.040,37€ corresponds to a project by NFP, foreseen in Work plan, which has not been initiated yet.

Module	Title	Implementing Partners	Implementation Status - Outputs as per the project contract
Strategic	Transmissions	Onassis Foundation ULTIMA Festival	<p>The initiative is currently under implementation. The outputs include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• University Exchange Program. Report and at least 2 articles on the project's blog.</li> <li>• Sound Art Residencies: artist hosting programs, debriefing report, 6 articles on the project's blog, audio-visual documentation.</li> <li>• Communication design, project logo and slogan.</li> <li>• Development of the project website (blog).</li> <li>• Educational artistic actions (Community &amp; School Art Projects): 2 educational exchanges (one in each country), debriefing report, 2 articles on the project's blog.</li> <li>• Devised Production. Creation of a new artistic production that will be presented once in Norway and once in Greece.</li> <li>• Public Art Program: Implementation of 2 artistic hostings (one in each country) and submission of two proposals for future productions.</li> </ul> <p>More information about the initiative is available at <a href="https://www.onassis.org/el/onassis-stegi/networks/transmissions">https://www.onassis.org/el/onassis-stegi/networks/transmissions</a></p>
Strategic	Youth Employment and Gender Equality: Mobilizing human capital for sustainable growth in Greece	Hellenic Foundation for European and Foreign Policy - ELIAMEP Fafo Research Foundation	<p>The initiative is fully completed. The outputs, include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Two papers that map the labor market and related policies in Greece (with an emphasis on the young and women respectively)</li> <li>• Two papers on the role of the Greek education, training and skills development in enabling youth and early career women to access to the labor market</li> <li>• A report on the Scandinavian experience of integrating the youth and women into the labor market</li> <li>• A Youth Survey, designed by the research team and respective paper on the survey findings</li> <li>• A paper on the impact of the pandemic on the Greek labor market</li> <li>• A final brief paper on 'EU Policy and Financial Instruments for Youth and Women Access in the Labor Market'</li> </ul> <p>More information about the initiative is available at <a href="https://www.eliamep.gr/projects/page/3/">https://www.eliamep.gr/projects/page/3/</a></p>
Strategic	Necessary legislative adjustments to promote offshore wind energy in Greece	Hellenic Wind Energy Association ELETAEN Norwea	<p>The initiative is fully completed. The outputs include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Overview and evaluation report of the international offshore wind experience.</li> <li>• Opinion on the Legal Issues of the Siting and Licensing of offshore wind farms in Greece.</li> <li>• Proposals for legislative regulations in Greece regarding the zoning and licensing of wind farms.</li> <li>• 2 webinars.</li> </ul>
	Head to Head, a bilateral	A-Dash Space Kling & Bang gallerí ehf	The initiative is implemented in 2 phases with exhibitions in Greece and Iceland respectively.

Strategic	exhibition project between Greece and Iceland	(Iceland), ASFA / Athens School of Fine Art, The Icelandic Art Centre	<p>The first phase was implemented in 2021 with the participation of 30 artists from Iceland who exhibited their artworks in Greece</p> <p>The second phase is planned to be implemented in 2024 with the participation of Greek artists who will exhibit their works in Iceland.</p>
Strategic	ProGender: A Digital Hub on Gender, the COVID-19 crisis and its Aftermath	Panteion University University of Iceland Reykjavik (Iceland), Norwegian University of Science and Technology Trodheim, Research and Education Collective, STIN PRIZA	<p>The initiative is fully completed. The outputs include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Online seminar on gender, care and labour in crises</li> <li>• Online video making workshop on necessary precarious sectors of employment</li> <li>• Educational material, report and video on gender, care and labour in the times of COVID-19 and in post-coronavirus societies</li> <li>• Online seminars on gender-based violence</li> <li>• Online workshop on gender-based violence students</li> <li>• Educational material, report and podcast on gender-based violence in the time of the Coronavirus</li> <li>• Online consultation seminars on gender perspectives in research</li> <li>• Online workshop on the gendered aspects of the science and the coronavirus crisis</li> <li>• Educational Material, report and podcast on gender, women scientists</li> <li>• Online seminars on gender and communities</li> <li>• Online workshop on gender, migration and homelessness.</li> <li>• Educational material, report and podcasts on Gender, Migration, Homelessness and bottom-up community responses to COVID-19.</li> <li>• Online seminar on women in decision making during crises</li> <li>• Online workshop on the role of women during crises and gender -equality in post-crises</li> <li>• Educational material, report and podcast on women in crisis and post-crisis periods and processes that impact on gender inequalities in political representation more broadly</li> </ul> <p>More information about the initiative is available at <a href="https://progender.panteion.gr/">https://progender.panteion.gr/</a></p>
Strategic	Energy Governance for Sustainable Development (Norway-Greece ENERGO)	University of Ioannina University of Athens, Norwegian Institute of International Affairs (NUPI)	<p>The initiative is currently under implementation. The outputs include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Policy brief with recommendations for the utilization of domestic potential in energy projects in Greece.</li> <li>• Publication in a peer-reviewed scientific journal on public policies that can support the use of domestic potential in energy projects.</li> <li>• Policy brief on the impacts of energy diversification and recommendations for the management of revenues from the exploitation of natural resources.</li> <li>• Publication in a peer-reviewed scientific journal on the challenges and solutions related to the management of revenues from the exploitation of natural resources in view of the energy transition and the achievement of the goals for sustainable</li> </ul>

			<p>development.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conference presentations (at least 2).</li> <li>• Informational online material (36 posts).</li> <li>• Educational material on domestic potential utilization policies.</li> <li>• Educational material on energy resource revenue management policies and projects.</li> </ul>
Strategic	<p>“Winds of Change”: Can Renewable Energy shape a new geo-economic paradigm for the EU, Greece and its Neighbourhood</p>	<p>Hellenic Foundation for European and Foreign Policy - ELIAMEP Alma Economics, Norwea</p>	<p>The initiative is fully completed. The outputs include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A final report of the geopolitical study entitled “From Hydrocarbons to Renewables: Rethinking Energy Geopolitics in the Eastern Mediterranean”, including an executive summary and the main findings and conclusions based on the analysis carried out.</li> <li>• A final Social Impact Study Report that includes an executive summary and the study’s findings.</li> <li>• A working model of the cost-benefit analysis (CBA) built in Excel. This is easily accessible to users without a technical background, allowing them to understand both how the models work and how input parameters and assumptions might be altered.</li> <li>• One closed workshop to discuss the findings of the Social Impact Study with policy makers, representatives of the EEA Donor States and civil society.</li> <li>• One public webinar for the presentations of results for the Geopolitical Study.</li> <li>• 4 opinion pieces.</li> <li>• Two infographics accompanying the geopolitical study and the social impact study for wider dissemination on social media</li> </ul> <p>More information about the initiative is available at <a href="https://www.eliamep.gr/projects/page/2/">https://www.eliamep.gr/projects/page/2/</a></p>
Open call	<p>Review of Norwegian Oil &amp; Gas Industry’s Transformation during the Energy Transition and its Application to Greece</p>	<p>Hellenic Hydrocarbon Resources Management SA SINTEF AS by its institute SINTEF Digital</p>	<p>The initiative is currently under implementation. The outputs include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Joint policy briefs</li> <li>• Workgroup Meeting reports</li> <li>• Presentations in conferences and/or scientific papers</li> </ul>
Open call	<p>#GIL4W - Greek Innovation Lab for Women: Partnership for Norwegian Transfer of Knowledge to boost the female expertise in R&amp;I and entrepreneurship in Greece</p>	<p>Athena Research Center Institute of Communications and Computer Systems (ICCS), CTI Diophantus, Demokritos NCSR, Hellenic Institute Pasteur, European Centre for Women and Technology-ECWT</p>	<p>The initiative is planned to kick off implementation with a delay due to administrative complexities in September 2023. The outputs include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Creation of the Roadmap – Conceptual Framework.</li> <li>• Methodological Approach for the transfer of information through formal and informal channels.</li> <li>• Stakeholder engagement to implement the analysis / Interviews for the organization of the #GILW.</li> <li>• Stakeholder engagement to implement the analysis / Interviews for the organization of the #GILW.</li> <li>• Expert advice on technology and approach to modeling from Norway.</li> <li>• Preparation of Report on the GIL4W organization and Action Plan.</li> <li>• Findings and stakeholders engagement of the roadmap adaptation from Norwegian ecosystem</li> </ul>

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Activity reports and publication of results.</li> </ul> <p>More information about the initiative is available at <a href="https://www.athenarc.gr/en/women-innovation-unit/projects/gil4w-greek-innovation-lab-women-partnership-norwegian-transfer">https://www.athenarc.gr/en/women-innovation-unit/projects/gil4w-greek-innovation-lab-women-partnership-norwegian-transfer</a></p>
Open call	GENDER- IN: Integrating Gender in interdisciplinary research	Hellenic society of university women KILDEN- Knowledge Centre for Gender Balance and Gender Perspectives in Research	<p>The initiative is currently under implementation. The outputs include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Six online 2-hours seminar with researchers (webinars). One for each of the six clusters</li> <li>• Two 3-days workshops (live) (one in Athens/one in Thessaloniki)</li> <li>• Drafting of six thematic reports one in each interdisciplinary area with examples from Greece.</li> <li>• On-line policy discussions in Greek (one for each of the 6 clusters)</li> <li>• One day conference (live) on Gender in Research in the premises of a University located in Athens</li> <li>• One publication on Gender in research</li> </ul> <p>More information about the initiative is available at <a href="https://www.elegyp.gr/el/gender-in?format=html">https://www.elegyp.gr/el/gender-in?format=html</a></p>
Open call	NANOSCOPY-GR: Greek Nanoscopy Network	Aristotle University of Thessaloniki Centre for Materials Science and Nanotechnology (SMN) tou University of Oslo (UiO)	<p>The initiative is currently under implementation. The outputs include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 5 technical reports / studies</li> <li>• 5 webinars with online discussions</li> <li>• 5 live or online one-day scientific meetings</li> <li>• 5 practical workshops</li> <li>• 3 packages of educational material</li> <li>• 1 (S)TEM quantitative image analysis software package</li> <li>• Website and promotional material (banner / brochure)</li> </ul> <p>More information about the initiative is available at <a href="https://nanoscopy.web.auth.gr/">https://nanoscopy.web.auth.gr/</a></p>
Ukraine call	Care for displaced persons from Ukraine seeking protection in Greece	Doctors of the World	<p>The initiative is fully completed. The outputs include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Care services for in total &gt;1000 beneficiaries-refugees from Ukraine</li> <li>• Child Care Services</li> <li>• Health Care Services for chronic patients</li> <li>• Nursing Services</li> <li>• Social service</li> <li>• Psychological Help</li> </ul> <p>More information about the initiative is available at <a href="https://mdmgreece.gr/en/missions/in-greece/programs/care-displaced-persons-ukraine-seeking-protection-greece/">https://mdmgreece.gr/en/missions/in-greece/programs/care-displaced-persons-ukraine-seeking-protection-greece/</a></p>
	Direct and holistic support of refugee families from Ukraine	Smile of the Child	<p>The initiative is fully completed. The outputs include:</p> <p>61 beneficiaries (23 families) -refugees from Ukraine Accommodation in fully equipped houses of the Organization Supply of basic food and hygiene items Support of families accommodated by third parties Psychological and social support</p>



Ukraine call			<p>Information and prevention activities through the European Hotline for Missing Children 116000 and its European Helpline 116111</p> <p>More information about the initiative is available at <a href="https://www.hamogelo.gr/gr/el/ta-nea-mas/apotelesmata-ergov-amesh-olistikh-yposthriksh-prosfygikwn-oikogeneiwn-oykrania/">https://www.hamogelo.gr/gr/el/ta-nea-mas/apotelesmata-ergov-amesh-olistikh-yposthriksh-prosfygikwn-oikogeneiwn-oykrania/</a></p>
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#### Financial progress by initiative– September 2023\*

Module	Title	Start date	End date	Budget allocation	Payments to promoters	In-curred expenditure
Strategic	Bilateral activities at the national level*			62.040	0,00	0,00
Strategic	Transmissions	9/11/2021	28/2/2024	284.400,00	100.000,00	30.371,03
Strategic	Youth Employment and Gender Equality: Mobilizing human capital for sustainable growth in Greece	19/7/2021	30/9/2023	119.077,00	118.445,25	55.673,98
Strategic	Necessary legislative adjustments to promote offshore wind energy in Greece	26/1/2021	1/9/2021	25.000,00	23.233,23	23.233,23
Strategic	Head to Head, a bilateral exhibition project between Greece and Iceland	25/10/2021	31/12/2024	20.000,00	10.000,00	6.728,04
Strategic	ProGender: A Digital Hub on Gender, the COVID-19 crisis and its Aftermath	18/1/2021	30/9/2023	135.493,00	135.493,00	73.161,95
Strategic	Energy Governance for Sustainable Development (Norway-Greece ENERGO)	8/7/2021	28/4/2024	110.400,00	25.000,00	13.872,78
Strategic	“Winds of Change”: Can Renewable Energy shape a new geo-economic paradigm for the EU, Greece and its Neighborhood	1/11/2021	30/9/2023	77.590,00	76.803,19	76.803,19
Open call	Review of Norwegian Oil & Gas Industry’s Transformation during the Energy Transition and its Application to Greece	25/7/2022	31/12/2023	39.660,00	39.660,00	10.000
Open call	#GIL4W - Greek Innovation Lab for Women: Partnership for Norwegian Transfer of Knowledge to boost the female expertise in R&I and entrepreneurship in Greece	1/4/2022	31/8/2023	79.776,00	0,00	0,00
Open call	GENDER- IN: Integrating Gender in interdisciplinary research	1/4/2022	21/3/2021	62.460,00	35.000,00	9.241,14
Open call	NANOSCOPY-GR: Greek Nanoscopy Network	22/7/2022	31/12/2024	40.000,00	0,00	0,00
Ukraine call	Care for displaced persons from Ukraine seeking protection in Greece	7/6/2022	31/10/2023	150.000,00	150.000,00	150.000,00

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Ukraine call	Direct and holistic support of refugee families from Ukraine	7/6/2022	30/9/2023	150.000,00	150.000,00	150.000,00
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\*Payments to promoters after 30 June 2023 will be reported to IFR of March 2024

## Programme level

The Bilateral Fund at the programme level is implemented as follows:

- The programmes operated by the Greek national authorities have received their allocation for operation as a module of the programme. The NFP maintains the responsibility of overall monitoring and reporting.
- The programmes operated by the Fund Operators of art.6.13 receive their allocation through projects operated by the NFP, following the MCS provisions for all the projects/initiatives at the national level.

The selected projects of the Bilateral Fund at the programme level so far and their progress is presented in the following table. More details about the bilateral progress at the programme level is presented in the section “Status of programmes”.

Programme	Title	Start date	End date	Budget allocation	Payments to promoters	Incurred expenditure
GR-ENVIRONMENT	Smart green system for leakage control and water quality monitoring of water district area of city Paramythia of Municipality of Souli-Bilateral initiative	7/6/2022	30/4/2024	20.000,00	6.000,00	1.799,92
GR-ENVIRONMENT	Installation of green desalination plant at Kimolos island - Bilateral initiative	17/6/2022	30/4/2024	39.352,76	12.096,15	0,00
GR-ENVIRONMENT	Increasing Knowledge on the importance of good status of water bodies- Bilateral initiative	31/10/2022	30/4/2024	39.679,00	11.903,85	0,00
GR-ENERGY	Bilateral relations of programme GREENERGY	25/5/2023	30/4/2025	100.000,00	0,00	0,00
GR-INNOVATION (FMO)	Innovation Norway - Bilateral Activities	14/3/2022	31/12/2024	150.000,00	135.000,00	112.685,00
GR-LOCALDEV(FMO)*	Bilateral cooperation initiatives - programme asylum and migration	9/8/2022	31/12/2023	125.000,00	112.500,00	0,00
GR-HOMEAFFAIRS (FMO)*	Bilateral cooperation initiatives - programme local development and poverty reduction	18/8/2022	31/12/2023	50.000,00	45.000,00	0,00

Finally, the financial progress of the Bilateral Fund as per the workplan budget breakdown is shown on the following table.

Title	Budget allocation	Project contracts	% project contracts to budget	Payments to promoters	% payments to budget	Incurred expenditure	% expenditure to budget
Activities carried out by the NFP	62.040,37	0,00	0%	0,00	0%	0,00	0%
Strategic initiatives (incl. The Ukraine projects)	1.071.959,63	1.071.959,63	100%	788.974,67	74%	599.085,34	56%
Open Call	400.000,00	221.896,00	55%	74.660,00	19%	19.241,14	5%
GR-INNOVATION (FMO)	150.000,00	150.000,00	100%	135.000,00	90%	111.628,00	74%
GR-ROMAINCLUSION	50.000,00	0, 00	0%	0,00	0%	0,00	0%
GR-LOCALDEV(FMO)*	50.000,00	50.000,00	100%	45.000,00	90%	0,00	0%
GR-ENVIRONMENT	100.000,00	98.258,07	98%	30.000,00	30%	1.799,92	2%
GR-ENERGY	100.000,00	100.000,00	100%	0,00	0%	0,00	0%
GR-GOODGOVERNANCE	100.000,00	0,00	0%	0,00	0%	0,00	0%
GR-HOMEAFFAIRS	125.000,00	0,00	0%	0,00	0%	0,00	0%
GR-HOMEAFFAIRS (FMO)*	125.000,00	125.000,00	100%	112.000,00	90%	0,00	0%
Funds still to be allocated	0,00	0,00		0,00		0,00	
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>2.334.000,00</b>	<b>1.817.113,70</b>	<b>78%</b>	<b>1.185.634,67</b>	<b>51%</b>	<b>731.754,40</b>	<b>31%</b>

## 6. Management and implementation

### **a. Management and control systems (MCS)**

The Management and control System has been in effect since the year 2019-2020. In the current reporting period, there were not any modifications. All foreseen procedures were followed by all entities for all operational areas and procedures.

### **b. Irregularities**

The NFP submitted Irregularities reports through Grace according to the foreseen quarters. Reporting was based to input from Certifying Authority, Audit Authority and Programme Operators. No irregularities have been reported so far.

### **c. Complaints**

In the reporting period, no complaint was filled.

### **d. Audit**

As per Art. 5.5, the Audit Authority (EDEL) has drawn-up an audit strategy that spreads throughout the programming period 2014-2021, lays down general and specific objectives and incorporates the methodology that is necessary for its implementation. The audit strategy covers all the programmes of EEA Grants for which EDEL is the Audit Authority and sets out the audit methodology, the sampling method for audits on projects and the indicative planning of audits to ensure that audits are spread evenly throughout the programming period. Audits are performed according to EDEL's Audit Manual that meets the requirements of the international standards on auditing. The last Audit Strategy was adopted by Audit Authority after the 920th meeting on 6 April 2023 and is available to FMC/FMO upon request. The key points of this strategy are summed up to:

- For the current reference audit period (i.e. from 1/1/2023 to 31/12/2023) the sampling unit is the project and the population consists of 30 projects. The expenditure for these projects is €2.351.819,09 and corresponds to the IFRs that were declared and certified within the Reference Period. The aforementioned amount includes €329.952,31 which correspond to advance payments that have not been actually expended yet and will be monitored in the following periods for their actual incurred expenditure.
- A non-statistical sampling method (single period) has been applied and the selected sample of projects (4 audits) covers 13,33% of the population and the expenditure of the sample covers 46,73% of the total expenditure declared.
- As far as the system audits are concerned, for the current reference audit period (i.e. from 1/1/2023 to 31/12/2023), it was taken into account the Programmes' low activation rate so far, low error rate found in EDEL's audits and the high coverage of EDEL's audits (both in terms of number of projects and expenditure) and it was decided to carry out two (2) system audits on the following bodies:
  - a. "Management & Implementation Authority for Information Communication Technologies (Programme "Good Governance, Accountable Institutions, Transparency" Operator)
  - b. "Special Service EEA, General Secretariat for Public Investments & the NSRF Ministry of Development & Investments" (National Focal Point)
- EDEL's audit sampling strategy is based on the "Sampling Guidance on how to design audit sampling strategies under the EEA and Norwegian Financial Mechanisms for 2014-2021".

## 7. Communication

In the realm of Comms, the NFP has been working closely with all of the entities involved in the implementation of programmes, projects as well as the initiatives that form part of the Bilateral Fund. It is a commonsensical approach that the realization of the comms aims, as described in the Annex 3, can produce tangible results based primarily on a sense of togetherness.

The NFP in Greece carries on with the promotion and knowledge sharing about the programmes/projects implemented in Greece through the online presence and content created on behalf of the NFP.

- (a) The [www.eeagrants.gr](http://www.eeagrants.gr) site hosts all the updated information regarding documents issued on behalf of the POs and PPs, such as calls-for-proposals, relevant amendments, etc., and press releases which showcase vibrant activities of the projects' life-cycle.
- (b) Our social media accounts ([Facebook](#), [Platform X](#), and [LinkedIn](#)) are always refreshed and up-to-date, according to a scheduled timeline posting—that takes into consideration each medium's idiosyncrasies and metrics—, and the reports issued as part of the platforms updating and guidance. The aim of the social media planning and content creation is that we would be in concert with the KPIs described in the NFP's Communication Strategy.

In addition, a number of other publicity activities also took place during the past year:

- (c) “Water Matters”, the first-ever awareness campaign has been implemented under the programme “[Water Management](#)”. The NFP presented the campaign as a best practice at the Annual Comms Workshop held in June, in Brussels.
- (d) In keeping strong relationships with the National Comms Network, the NFP organised a visit at the Ancient Agora where we visited the excavations where the archaeologists are now working to bring to light new, extraordinary discoveries, and the exhibits at the Museum of Stoa of Attalos. The EEA and Norway Grants funded a project there back in 2012, where all of the archaeologists' diaries were digitised (from 1931) (e.g., <https://www.linkedin.com/feed/update/urn:li:activity:7080091768364384256> <https://www.facebook.com/EEAGrantsGR/posts/pfbid0Nyt3q4SLbZ9zYPUA2FJfXSNWWySjCDMLbciGrAduxTcKkUC6F8eertMTxU9Vqgg8l>)
- (e) A very successful participation with two events in the Thessaloniki International Fair (one of the largest trade fairs in Greece, for close to a century, a testament to Greece's economic and cultural advancements) based roughly on two thematic areas: programmes that touch people in an immediate manner, and those that care for the environment and the preservation of natural resources.

Fifteen (15) key-speakers representing involved entities came together to share with the audience their hands-on work, and invaluable experience. The ultimate goal was to give voice to the PPs who have already started implementing their projects, instead of presenting the works in a faceless way. An audience comprised of universities, local government, NGOs, environmental associations, experts was invited to form part of this interaction that shows how the EEA Grants Mechanism in Greece works to enhance human lives. Both the events were covered through a Facebook campaign that ran specified for time and place, stories uploaded throughout the events, and livestreaming (September 2023) (e.g., <https://www.facebook.com/events/450622470443504> <https://fb.watch/IMYYwTvl4F/>)

- (f) In the same line, the NFP organised for the second consecutive year the so-called “Fall Comms Meeting”, where all of the members were presented with the lessons learnt from the events at

the Thessaloniki International Fair (basically, the outcomes of our close co-operation). In addition, we discussed our comms plan for the year ahead.

The NFP monitors the overall Comms activities beyond the POs' requirements, that is, collaborates with the PPs including the ad agencies that work for them. The NFP also helps the PPs draft their own Comms plans, and welcomes new members, such as Municipalities, BF partners, etc., as the implementation in itself takes its course. Finally, the NFP stays updated regarding the emerged communicative habitats participating in conferences about the content and the methods imposed by the AI tools.

## 8. Monitoring and evaluation

### a. Monitoring

**MoU modifications:** In accordance with the Regulation art.6.9, par.6 which foresees that should a modification of a programme result in a reduction of the programme grant, the available funds may be allocated to other programmes and the procedure that must be completed by 30 April 2023, two consecutive modifications of the MoU took place in 2023 -they were the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> modifications of the MoU, respectively. The 3<sup>rd</sup> modification concerns the reallocation between the GR-Innovation, GR-GoodGovernance and GR-Energy programmes and the naming of to the Programme Operator. Total savings of 1.000.000€ were identified in the GR- Innovation programme and a total savings of 1.097.729€ were identified in the GR- GoodGovernance programme, as the intervention of the programme related to the asset management was aborted due to lack of regulatory framework on time for the programme timeframe. At the same time the GR-ENERGY programme identified a need for additional funds to meet the exceptional price increases, affecting specially costs of energy equipment needed for projects under Outcome 1 of the programme and thus this redirection of funds was agreed through the 3<sup>rd</sup> modification. For the process, Greece sent a proposal letter to FMC on 29 March 2023, the FMC replied with the approval of the amendments on 19 April 2023 and Greece replied on the same day with the affirmative letter.

The 4<sup>th</sup> modification of the MoU came as a contiguous procedure to the 3<sup>rd</sup> modification. As it was not be possible for the GR-Roma programme to implement the initial plans for housing under pre-defined project #2 “Pilot Social Housing Relocation Scheme in Katerini”, the programme budget was downsized and 2.300.000€ were made available. According to the modification, the amount of 1.500.000€ was allocated to the Active Citizens Fund (ACF). For the process, FMC set the context of the modification with its letter on 18 April 2023 and Greece confirmed the modification with an affirmative letter on 21 April 2023. Programme agreements were modified consequently for the involved programmes.

**The Declaration and the verification of expenditures as well as the subsequent IFRs submissions** are done, covering the preparation phase and/or preliminary actions’ expenditures in programmes and in Technical Assistance.

**Forecasts** submitted as foreseen in the Regulation for accurate and realistic forecasts, to the best possible degree. The NFP as well as all programme operators cooperated with Certifying Authority in this regard.

**Overall progress monitoring, coordination and support** where applicable and/or necessary: The NFP is closely monitoring not only formally, but also informally, all aspects of implementation and absorption.

All implementation follows procedures, roles and tasks as foreseen in the respective JMD which transposes the Regulation and the adjacent Manual of Procedures. Helpdesk and support is provided by the National Focal Point, the Certifying Authority and the Special Service for MIS OPS to all involved parties on daily basis. Meetings and follow ups are organized with all programmes and national entities on regular basis.

**Coordination of the JCBF** and implementation for the selected initiatives of the Bilateral Fund.

### b. Evaluation

As per art.10.1 of the Regulation and the Evaluation plan that the NFP has submitted to FMO, in the reporting period NFP decided the ongoing evaluation of the programmes GR-Roma and GR-GoodGovernance on the grounds of a) the delays observed in projects of the programmes related to the Pilot Social Housing and the Asset management respectively and b) the need to identify the available

funds to be reallocated to other programmes until 30 April 2023. In this context NFP awarded a respective contract to external independent experts on 21 October 2022. The evaluation for the 2 programmes was submitted and finally approved by the NFP on 4 July 2023. The evaluation reports were drafted in accordance with guidelines issued by the FMC. NFP shared the evaluation with the Programme Operators and FMO. The final reports and an executive summary for the general public are sent to the Programme Operators and FMO and are published at [www.eeagrants.gr](http://www.eeagrants.gr)



## **9. Issues for the Annual meeting 2023**

The Annual meeting 2023 has been scheduled to take place on 16 November 2023. The issues to be included in the agenda are as follows:

1. Status of Programmes: Progress and outstanding issues, timeframe, risks and deficiencies, planning and goals for the year ahead, preparation of closure.
2. Status of the Bilateral Fund: Progress of implementation, strategic initiatives, open call, timeframe, planning and goals for the year ahead, increase of funds.
3. Communication -Publicity: Strategy and activities' progress, planning ahead, dynamic showcase of complementary programmes and projects, effective and captivating dissemination of the new EEA Grants campaign taking into account both the linguistic and the cultural idiosyncrasies of Greece.
4. Organizational issues of NFP – Technical Assistance.
5. AOB, according to issues raised by Donors and the participants.