



Greek Republic
EPIRUS REGION
SPECIAL MANAGEMENT AUTHORITY OPERATIONAL PROGRAMME
EPIRUS REGION



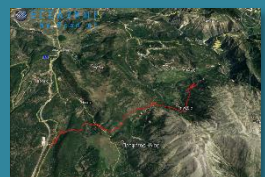
Project: «3rd Evaluation- Implementation of the Epirus Region OP 2014-2020»
Contract N: 1487/24.05.2023

Executive Summary
Implementation Course – November 2023



3rd Evaluation – Implementation of the Epirus Region OP 2014-2020

Conclusions and Recommendations of the Evaluation – Executive Summary



1. Summary of OP Epirus 2014-2020

The Regional **O.P. "Epirus 2014-2020"** is part of the structure of the NSRF 2014-2020 and one of its 13 Regional Operational Programmes, funded by two Structural Funds (ERDF – European Regional Development Fund and ESF – European Social Fund) and National Resources. **Adopted** by C (2014) 10172 Executive Decision of 18.12.2014 of the European Commission.

The structure of the OP "Epirus 2014-2020" focused **on the Region's Development Vision**, which is:

«To make the Region worth-living and sustainable, having outward-looking development, focused on productive activities which are comparative advantages and reinforce the local identity, respecting the environment, history and the citizen of Epirus»

In the context of achieving the above vision, special emphasis is given to the implementation of the Regional Strategy "Smart Specialization", with support focusing on the following areas of specialization:

- ✓ Primary sector - processing - agri-food - gastronomy
- ✓ Industry of experience: Tourism, Culture & Creative Economy
- ✓ Academic Institutions, ICT and Youth Entrepreneurship
- ✓ Health and Wellness.

The achievement of the vision of the OP "Epirus 2014-2020" is achieved through five (5) Strategic Objectives (SO):

- SS1: **Enhancing** regional competitiveness by developing innovation and ICT
- SS2: Environmental **protection** and sustainable development
- SS3: **Strengthening** of transport infrastructure
- SS4: **Strengthening** education, health and welfare infrastructures
- SS5: Human Resources **Development**, Social Inclusion and Anti-Discrimination

The resources allocated to the Programme based on the last revision, amounted to €236.4 million Community Assistance (€ 295.5 million Public Expenditure), of which €194.3 million CA comes from the ERDF (€242.9 million Public Expenditure (€ 52.6 € Public Expenditure) and €42.1 million from the ESF (€52.6 Public Expenditure).

In order to serve the central goal – vision of the Region, the Operational Programme was structured into **7 Priority Axis (PA)**, of which the first five PAs correspond to the **five Strategic Objectives** of the Programme and the last two PAs relate to the ESF and ERDF **Technical Assistance** of the Programme. In particular, the PAs of the OP "Epirus 2014-2020", referring to the **thematic objectives** with which each one is connected, are the following:

- **Priority Axis 1: Enhancing regional competitiveness by developing innovation and ICT**
 - **TO 1.** Strengthening Research, Technological Development and Innovation
 - **TO 2.** Improving access to Information and Communication Technologies (ICT), their use and quality
 - **TO 3.** Improving the competitiveness of small and medium-sized enterprises
- **Priority Axis 2: Environmental protection and sustainable development**
 - **TO 4.** Supporting the shift towards a low-carbon economy in all sectors
 - **TO 5.** Promoting climate change adaptation and risk prevention
 - **TO 6.** Conservation and protection of the environment and promotion of resource efficiency
- **Priority Axis 3: Strengthening transport infrastructure**
 - **TO 7.** Promoting sustainable transport and removing bottlenecks in key network infrastructures

- **Priority Axis 4: Strengthening education, health and welfare infrastructures**
 - **TO 9.** Promoting social inclusion and combating poverty, particularly with the priority of health and social infrastructure
 - **TO 10.** Investing in education training and vocational training for skills and lifelong learning
- **Priority Axis 5: Human Resources Development, Social Inclusion and Anti-Discrimination**
 - **TO 8.** Promoting sustainable and quality employment and supporting labour mobility
 - **TO 9.** Promoting social inclusion and combating poverty and any discrimination
- **Priority Axis 6: ESF Technical Assistance**
- **Priority axis 7: ERDF Technical Assistance.**

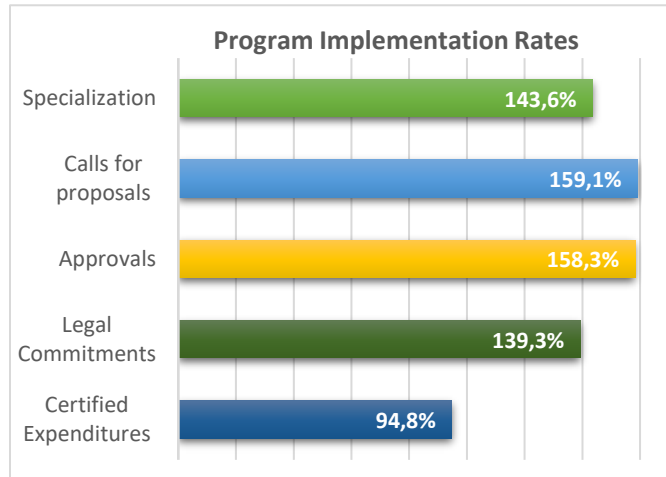
2. Evaluation of the implementation course and effectiveness of the O.P. Epirus 2014-2020

Progress of implementation of the programme

The progress of the implementation of the Epirus Region OP is important both in terms of the implementation of the projects and the implementation of the Program's development policy and objectives and also it gives results to the significant development problems facing the region as a whole, as well as the productive stakeholders, workers and unemployed people.

The progress of the implementation of the program based on the financial data until 25.09.2023, can be summarized as follows:

- ▶ **92 actions** have been specified with a total budget of **€ 424.31 million**
- ▶ **108 Calls for proposals** with a total public expenditure of **€ 470.12 million** have been issued
- ▶ **5,386 projects** with a total eligible public expenditure of **€ 467.71 million** **have been approved for support by OP.**
- ▶ **Legal Commitments** amount to **€ 411.69 million**
- ▶ **Certified Expenditures** amount to **€ 280.2 million**



Overall, until 07.11.2023 the program shows a **high degree of activation, approvals and legal commitments** and a **satisfactory degree of absorption (94.8% of program resources)**.

In total, until 07.11.2023, the Program has intergrated:

- ▶ **237 public procurement projects (projects other than State aid)**, of which:
 - 99 projects have been completed, with a total budget of €60.01 million
 - 101 projects are in progress and it is estimated that they will be completed by the end of 2023

- 13 projects are ongoing projects related to the operation of social structures whose funding will be transferred to the programming period 2021-2027
 - 8 projects are planned to be transferred to the new programming period
 - 3 projects are planned to be disengaged from the Program
 - 9 projects are characterized as “phasing”
 - 4 projects are characterized as “incomplete” projects
- ▶ **5,149 state aid projects**, of which **4,982 projects** with a total budget of €67.12 million **have already been completed**, while **the rest** are estimated to **be completed on time** by the end of 2023.

The above data, analyzed in the 7 Priority Axis (PA) of the Program, are presented below:

Priority Axis 1, "Enhancing regional competitiveness through the development of innovation and ICT", has a **budget of €73.27 million** and represents almost **24.8%** of the total budget of the OP. 4,986 projects have been approved for support and PA 1 shows a significant excess in the activation of its resources (154.4%), as well as a high degree of approvals and legal commitments of its projects (130% and 128.2% respectively). As a result, the absorption of its resources is also high (82.9%).

Priority Axis 2, "Environmental protection and sustainable development" has a **budget of € 102.72 million** and represents almost **34.8 %** of the total budget of the OP. It shows a high degree of activation and project approvals (89 projects with a total eligible public expenditure of €172.95 million have been approved, which corresponds to 168.4% of its budget), as well as a high degree of legal Commitments (137.1%) and absorption of its resources (98.1%). A significant acceleration in the legal commitments was observed during the year 2021 (+46.8%), resulting to an increase in expenditure in 2022.

Priority Axis 3, "Strengthening of transport infrastructure" has a budget of **€33.1 million** and represents **10.5%** of the total budget of the OP. 5 projects have been approved for support under PA3 and It shows a significant excess in the activation of its resources (314.2%), approvals (267.2%) and legal commitments (219.2%) and a satisfactory degree of absorption of its resources (91.3%).

Priority Axis 4, "Strengthening education, health and welfare infrastructure" has a budget of **€ 31.58 million** and represents **10.5%** of the total budget of the OP. 25 projects have been approved for support and PA 4 shows very high degree of activation (314.2%), approvals (267.2%) and legal commitments (219.2%) and a satisfactory degree of absorption of its resources (91.3%).

Priority Axis 5, "Human Resources Development, Social Inclusion and the Fight against Discrimination", has a budget of **€52.29 million** and represents **17.7%** of the total budget of the OP. 354 projects are being implemented in PA 5. It shows very high degrees of approvals, legal commitments and absorption of its resources, which exceed the budget of the axis (136.4%, 127.4% and 101.6% respectively).

Priority Axis 6, "ESF Technical Assistance", has a budget of **€286.27 thousand** and represents only **0.10%** of the total budget of the OP. It shows high activation and approvals (274.7% and 112.8%), but very low degree of legal commitments (43.8%) and absorption of programme resources (32.8%).

Priority Axis 7, "ERDF Technical Assistance", has a **budget of €4.21 million** and represents only **1.4%** of the total budget of the OP. It shows a high degree of activation (123.7%), approvals (148.1%) and legal commitments (107.8%) and a satisfactory degree of absorption of its resources (91.4%)

Effectiveness of the programme

The Program's **effectiveness index amounts to 0.9806**, a value which is satisfactory, considering that it relates to all the approved projects that will contribute to the closure of the Program with estimated expenditures that exceed the available resources (completion rate 116.3 %). Particularly important is the contribution of Priority Axis 2, which shows an effectiveness index of 0.9718 and at the same time has a significant financial weight in the Program (31.4%), followed by Priority Axis 1 with an effectiveness index of 0.9865 and a financial weight of 22%. A high value of the effectiveness index is presented by AP 4 (0.9913), but its effect on the overall effectiveness index of the OP is reduced due to its lower financial weight (9%)

In more detail, per PA:

- ▶ **PA 1** presents an effectiveness index of 0.9865, which is mainly due to the progress of the physical implementation of the projects under the TO 3 (efficiency index 0.9840), which has a high financial weight on the total budget of approvals of PA1 (76.7 %).
- ▶ The effectiveness index of **PA 2** amounts to 0.9718 and is mainly due to the high rate of physical implementation of the operations of TS 6 (0.9873), which commits 57.25% of the budget of the approved projects of the Axis.
- ▶ The implementation progress of the projects of **PA 3** (effectiveness index 0.9829) is similar, with its approved projects covering 19.4% of the budget of the total approvals of the Program which will contribute with expenditures to the closure.
- ▶ **PA 4** presents the highest effectiveness index (0.9913), which is mainly due to the significant progress in the implementation of the operations of TO 9 (0.9898), which cover 56.3% of the total budget of the PA4 approvals. Similar high implementation progress is also shown by the operations of the TO 10 (effectiveness index 0.9938) with a financial weight of 43.7%.
- ▶ **PA 5** presents the 3rd highest effectiveness index in the Program (0.9840), mainly due to the progress of the implementation of the operations of TO 9 funded by the ESF (efficiency index 0.9840), which has a high financial weight (90.42%).
- ▶ **PA 6 and 7** concerning Technical Assistance, have limited financial weight. As a result, the comparatively lower effectiveness of PA 7 (0.9575) and the even lower effectiveness of PA 6 (0.8247) do not significantly affect the overall course of the Program.

The main conclusions from the analysis of the effectiveness of the Program are the following:

PA 1: Enhancing regional competitiveness through the development of innovation and ICT

The implementation course of PA1 highlights the problem of "delayed" activation and implementation of Research, Technological Development and Innovation actions (TO 1), actions to improve access and use of ICT (TO 2), as well as actions for the improvement of competitiveness of small and medium-sized enterprises (TO 3).

Based on the data on 07.11.2023, PA 1 shows high degrees of activation, approvals and contracting (154.4%, 130% and 128.2% respectively) which essentially reflect the activation of the COVID-19 action in 2021, whose projects have now showed expenditures, raising the degree of absorption of program resources to satisfactory levels (82.9%).

The progress of PA 1 operations has been affected by many factors including:

- the difficulties presented in the mandatory use of the State Aid Information System, which significantly affected the progress of the implementation of state aid actions of TO 1, 2 & 3
- the activation of actions of TO 1 & 2 was significantly delayed by the relevant conditionalities and self-commitments.
- the activation of actions of TO 2 was further burdened by the implementation of the new evaluation process and their approval by the General Secretariat for Digital Policy, which, as a new structure, needed a significant period to organize its operation to respond timely to the relevant requests of the entities.
- the legal difficulties encountered in the process of selecting an Intermediary Body
- the introduction of the new regulatory framework for Financial Instruments for the period 2014-2020 and the actions required to update their ex-ante evaluations, which delayed their implementation.

PA 2: Environmental protection and sustainable development.

The activation of PA2 has started almost from the beginning of the FP, with the first approved projects in 2015, while in 2016 the approved projects in the PA increased almost tenfold with their rate reaching 85.6% of PA's total budget, mainly due to the transferred projects from the 2007-2013 programming period.

PA 2 shows very high degrees of activation, approvals and contracting (160.7%, 168.4% & 137.1% respectively) and a high degree of absorption of program resources (98.1%). A significant acceleration was observed in the contracting of projects 2021 (+46.8%) which resulted in an increase of expenditures in 2022 (+25.6%).

The main limiting factors to the smooth implementation of AP2 projects were the following:

- The progress of the implementation of certain operations of Thematic Objective 4 was significantly affected by the delay in the fulfillment of conditionality 4.1, regarding the introduction of measures to ensure the minimum requirements for the energy efficiency of buildings, which was covered by the publication of the Common Ministerial Decision for the approval of "energy performance of buildings" ("KENAK") regulation in June 2017. Also, the launch of the "Exoikonomo" Program II required many time-consuming preparatory actions, such as the redesign of the projects selection / criteria for approval for the households, the updating of the required supporting documents in the framework of the new Application Guide, the required modification of the information system of the Energy Performance Certificates, due to the new KENAK, as well as the development of a unified information system for submitting applications. As a result, the submission of applications to the Program began in March 2018.
- The progress of the implementation of the interventions of TO 6 was significantly affected by the requirement of fulfillment of Conditions 6.1 for the water sector (existence of a) a pricing policy for water and b) adequate contribution of the various uses of water in recovering the cost of water services, at the rate specified in the approved river basin management plan for investments supported by the programs) & 6.2 for the waste sector (promotion of economically and environmentally sustainable investments in the waste sector, in particular through the preparation of waste management plans in accordance with Directive 2008/98 / EC and on the basis of waste prioritization).
- An additional limiting factor was the reform of the Institutional Framework of Public Procurement - Law 4412/2016 (and the required time of adaptation of the Beneficiaries to it), as well as the delay in the start of operation of the Register of Members of Tender Committees - (Feb 2018), which influenced the auction of projects with the system "Design - Construction".

- Moreover, the required maturation time of the Integrated Territorial Investment Interventions (ITII) should be noted as an inhibiting factor. The implementation of spatial development tools is governed by complex requirements and procedures and requires sufficient maturation time to implement the relevant strategies. The enhanced role of the civil authorities is a positive element; however, time is needed for the consultation with the citizens, in order to ensure the role of the civil authority and on the other hand to achieve the optimal and smooth implementation of the interventions.
- Finally, the delay observed over time in the implementation of the interventions of PA2 (contracts, expenditures) is due to the large percentages of discounts (50%-60%) during the bidding procedures.

PA 3: Strengthening transport infrastructure

PA 3 shows the highest degrees of activation (314.2%), approvals (267.2%) and contracts (219.2%) and a very satisfactory degree of absorption of program resources (91.3%), with most expenditures carrying out during the previous two years (2021 & 2022).

Key factors that influenced the smooth implementation of the Axis interventions in the transport sector are:

- The lack of maturity of the projects for issuing calls for proposals
- The time-consuming expropriation procedures, which are necessary preparatory actions for the bidding of the projects.
- The reform of the Institutional Framework of Public Procurement - Law 4412/2016: the changes brought by the Law in the procedures of the tenders, the delay in the issuance of the necessary interpretative circulars and decisions for the implementation of the tender procedure, as well as model structures for the submission of tender documents, significantly delayed the tender procedures of the projects.

PA 4: Strengthening education, health and welfare infrastructures

PA 4 shows an over-commitment in approvals (121.7%), contracting (118%) and expenditure (105.3%).

Most of approvals in AP 4 took place in the years 2016-2017, while several of the approved projects of the Axis are projects transferred from the previous 2007-2013 period.

PA 5: Human Resources Development, Social Inclusion and Anti-Discrimination

PA 5 has already achieves its targets, since the expenditures exceed the total available resources of the PA (101.6%), while the overcommitment of approvals (136.4%) and contracting (127, 4%) is also significant.

PA 6 & 7: Technical Assistance (ESF and ERDF)

PA 6 shows full activation and degree of approvals, but a very low degree of legal commitment (43.8%) and absorption of its resources (32.8%). The acceleration observed in the project approval processes in 2017 has not, so far, provided the required momentum in the implementation of PA 6.

PA 7 shows full activation and high degree of approvals and contracting (148.1% and 107.8%) and a relatively satisfactory absorption of its resources (91.4%).

3. Results from the analysis of the Performance Framework

Based on the analysis of the Performance Framework of the OP, the following conclusions may be drawn:

- ▶ For **Priority Axis 1**, it is estimated that all the indicators of the Performance Framework will fully achieve or over-achieve the target values set for 2023, while the achievement value of the financial indicator F100 is estimated around 98% of its target value for 2023 by the end of the programming period.
- ▶ For **Priority Axis 2**, it is estimated that all the output indicators and the Financial indicator of the Performance Framework will fully achieve or even exceed the target set for 2023, with the exception of the CO19 indicator "Wastewater treatment: Additional population served by improved wastewater treatment", which is estimated to achieve 25% of its target value, as some of the approved projects that contribute to the indicator will not be completed within the current programming period.
- ▶ For **Priority Axis 3**, the output indicator of the Performance Framework " is estimated to achieve >75% of the target value, but not full achievement, as it is estimated that two of the three approved operations contributing to the indicator will not be completed within the current programming period. For the financial indicator F100 it is estimated that the target for 2023 will be over-achieved (>100%).
- ▶ For **Priority Axis 4**, it is estimated that all the indicators of the Performance Framework will fully achieve or even exceed the target for 2023, except for the SO031 indicator which is estimated to achieve 92% of its target value, as one of the approved projects that contribute to the indicator will not be completed within the current programming period.
- ▶ For **Priority Axis 5**, it is estimated that all the indicators of the Performance Framework will fully achieve or even exceed the target for 2023.

To sum up, it seems that all Priority Axes **will successfully achieve the targets of the Performance Framework** for 2023.

4. Efficiency of the Program

In terms of **efficiency of the Program**, i.e. based on the ratio of physical (effectiveness) to financial implementation, **Epirus OP** shows a value of **1.3906**, since the progress of implementation of the physical object of the approved projects (effectiveness index) is followed by slightly lower absorption rate.

The highest efficiency is shown by the interventions implemented under **PA 3** (2.8368), as they have a lower absorption (34.65%) compared to the degree of their physical completion (98.29%), which should be interpreted as a result of the delay in declaration of expenses in individual projects of the axis and not a result of their financial implementation.

Similarly, **PA 6** shows a high efficiency index (2.8342), given that the ESF Technical Assistance actions implemented under the PA, show lower absorption (29.10%) compared to their degree of physical completion (82.47%), because of the delay in declaration of expenses in individual projects.

In the other Priority Axes, the progress of the physical implementation of the projects is followed by a corresponding progress of the financial absorption, with the result that the efficiency index is slightly above unit.

5. Conclusions from the analysis of intervention logic of the OP

The analysis of the intervention logic of the OP Epirus 2014-2020 takes into account the needs in the policy areas and the Strategic Objectives of the Program, the Specific Objectives and the expected results of the interventions of the Investment Priorities, the actions corresponding to specific Investment Priorities, as well as the Result and Output Indicators selected for measuring the desired results.

The following conclusions emerge from the evaluation of the intervention logic of the Program:

- The **strategy of the OP** is characterized by **satisfactory logic** and **programmatic continuity** from the upper to the lower level of targeting.
- The **formulated development needs reflect the critical issues** that the Region is called to face, while where necessary, the needs that are predicted to be covered by other Operational Programs of the current programming period are indicated,
- The **Strategic Objectives** of the OP follow smoothly and are fully integrated into the logic of the General Development Objective / Vision of the Region of Epirus and are specialized in turn equally smoothly by the specific objectives set at the PA level.
- The **Specific Objectives** at the PA level are compatible with the Strategic Objectives and the expected results are in line with the identified needs and challenges of the political responsibility areas of the Program,
- The planned **Action Categories** as categorized in Investment Priorities are compatible with the **Specific Objectives** of the OP, while confirming through them the contribution of the Program in addressing the needs and achieving the desired results.
- The system of indicators of the Program, after its successive modifications, consistently reflects the desired result of the interventions that have been designed and implemented during the implementation of the Program.

6. Conclusions - Proposal for the revision of the OP Epirus 2014-2020

Based on the evaluation results regarding the degree of completion of the Regional OP at the end of the Programming Period 2014-2020 and taking into account the evaluation of risk level of the individual projects (approved and new projects), it follows that there is a need to revise the OP Epirus 2014-2020. The present revision proposal of the EP Epirus 2014-2020 constitutes the last revision of the Program and aims to ensure its effective and efficient completion, taking into account the course of implementation of the individual actions and the possibility of their completion, as well as the utilization of the possibilities of phasing and "transferring" projects, according to the eligibility and available resources of the Programming Period 2021-2027.

In this context, an internal reallocation of the Program's available resources and corresponding changes in individual indicators of the Program are proposed.

The main points of the proposed revision are the following:

A. Internal redistribution of resources within the Program by modifying its financial tables

- ▶ Reduction of the co-financed public expenditure of Priority Axis 1 by € 8.800.000 (-15%)
- ▶ Increase of the co-financed public expenditure of Priority Axis 2 by € 1.600.000 (+1,9%)

- ▶ Increase of the co-financed public expenditure of Priority Axis 3 by € 7.200.000 (+28,9%)
- ▶ No changes are proposed in the allocation of the available resources of Priority Axis 4.
- ▶ The co-financed public expenditure of Priority Axis 5 is maintained the same, with a change in the allocation of available resources to Thematic Objectives
- ▶ No changes are proposed in the allocation of the available resources of PA 6 & 7 of Technical Assistance

B. Modification of the Output and Result Indicators of the RDP

- ▶ Minor corrections in the target values of individual output and result indicators in selected investment priorities of the program
- ▶ Deletions of output and result indicators from various investment priorities

Γ. Modification of the Performance Framework of the RDP

- ▶ Reduction of the target value of the Financial Indicator F100 of the PA1
- ▶ In PA2, reduction of the target value of the CO19 output indicator, increase of the target value of the CO09 output indicator and increase of the target value of the Financial Indicator F100
- ▶ Increase of the target value of the Financial Indicator F100 of the PA3
- ▶ No change to the PA4 Performance Framework
- ▶ Increase of the target value of the output indicator 10501 of the PA5.

Δ. Analysis of the proposal for reallocation of resources

The proposed reallocation of resources between TOs are as follows:

| Fund | Thematic Objective | BUDGET (PE) | NEW BUDGET (PE) | Change | % Change |
|--------------|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|------------|-------------|
| ERDF | 1 | 9.500.000 | 7.600.000 | -1.900.000 | -20,0% |
| ERDF | 2 | 8.538.948 | 7.288.948 | -1.250.000 | -14,6% |
| ERDF | 3 | 55.231.039 | 47.381.039 | -7.850.000 | -14,2% |
| ERDF | 4 | 31.246.289 | 36.246.289 | 5.000.000 | 16,0% |
| ERDF | 5 | 7.396.094 | 8.896.094 | 1.500.000 | 20,3% |
| ERDF | 6 | 64.079.169 | 59.579.169 | -4.500.000 | -7,0% |
| ERDF | 7 | 31.141.712 | 40.141.712 | 9.000.000 | 28,9% |
| ERDF | 9 | 18.611.869 | 18.611.869 | 0 | 0,0% |
| ERDF | 10 | 12.970.340 | 12.970.340 | 0 | 0,0% |
| ESF | 8 | 7.188.195 | 4.888.195 | -2.300.000 | -32,0% |
| ESF | 9 | 45.103.925 | 47.403.925 | 2.300.000 | 5,1% |
| ESF | TB | 286.274 | 286.274 | 0 | 0,0% |
| ERDF | TB | 4.210.908 | 4.210.908 | 0 | 0,0% |
| Total | | 295.504.762 | 295.504.762 | 0 | 0,0% |

7. Contribution of the OP “Epirus 2014-2020” to the goals of the Europe 2020 strategy

"Europe 2020" is the EU's growth strategy for a smart, sustainable and inclusive economy. The Union has set five ambitious objectives – on employment, innovation, education, social inclusion and climate/energy – to be reached by 2020. Each Member State has adopted its own national targets in each of these areas.

The OP Epirus 2017-2020 was designed so that on the one hand it responds to the development planning of the Region, on the other hand it contributes to the priorities of E2020 and the national goals that have been set in this context.

All of the 10 Thematic Objectives of the Program, with the actions included in them, contribute to the three priorities of the EUROPE 2020 Strategy, and more specifically:

- ▶ **Thematic Objectives 1, 2, 3:** These TOs (with available resources corresponding to 24.8% of the total budget of OP and to 22.8% after the proposed revision) are directly linked to the Regional Smart Specialization Strategy and contribute mainly to the E2020 priority for a "Smart growth".
- ▶ **Thematic Objectives 4, 5, 6:** These TOs (with available resources corresponding to 34.8% of the total budget of OP and to 36.3% after the proposed revision) are linked to the achievement of the integrated transition to an environmentally friendly economy and contribute directly to the E2020 priority for a "Sustainable development".
- ▶ **Thematic Objective 7:** This TO (with available resources corresponding to 10.5% of the total budget of OP and to 11% after the proposed revision) relates to the upgrading of transport infrastructures and actions for road safety improvement. It is estimated that it mainly supports the E2020 priority for a "Sustainable development".
- ▶ **Thematic Objectives 8, 9 (ESF):** These TOs (with available resources corresponding to 17.7% of the total budget of OP) are connected to the upgrading / support of the region's human resources and mainly contribute to the E2020 priority for "Inclusive Development", while at the same time individual interventions also support the E2020 priority for a "Smart Development".
- ▶ **Thematic Objectives 9 (ERDF), 10:** These TOs (with available resources corresponding to 10.7% of the total budget of OP) are linked to ensuring access to quality health services for the residents of the Region, as well as reducing the deficit in social infrastructure (health - welfare, education). Therefore, they contribute to the E2020 priority of "Inclusive Growth".

Regarding the contribution of the OP Epirus 2014-2020 to the national objectives of the EUROPE 2020 Strategy, the key points are the following:

1. Investment in R&D (as a% of GDP) (National target: 1.3% of GDP): Actions implementing under Thematic Objective 1 of the OP and Investment Priority 1b contribute to this goal. The available resources amount to €9.0 million public expenditure and, based on the available data by 07.11.2023, 45 projects have been approved with a total budget of €11.7 million public expenditure, which is expected to reach €8.78 million by the end of programming period. In the above projects the contribution of the enterprises amounts to €2.07 million (private participation in the approved projects) and based on the estimates for the closure of the projects the supported enterprises will contribute additional resources of €1.55 million. Based on this, it is clear that the Program's contribution to the E2020 target for R&D investments will amount to €10.33 million.

2. Reduction of the greenhouse gas emissions (National target: 60.05 million tonnes of CO₂eq): Actions implementing under Thematic Objective 4 of Priority Axis 2 of the OP contribute to this target, with available resources of €31.25 million. The contribution of the program to this objective comes from 6 approved operations that include the improvement of energy efficiency in the residential building sector and in the public buildings of the Region, as well as from 16 integrated operations of the invitations of the IP 4e. The current contribution of these actions to the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions amounts to 8,823.61 tons of CO₂ equivalent by the end of 2022 and it is estimated that a further increase will occur at the close of the Program and the estimated contribution will amount to ~11,000 tons of CO₂ equivalent (0.44 % of the national target).

3. Energy efficiency – reduction of energy consumption (National target: Reduction of primary energy consumption by 2.85Mtoe by 2020): The actions implemented under the Thematic Objective 4 of the Program directly contribute to the target of reducing energy consumption through the improvement of the energy efficiency in energy-intensive public buildings. The contribution is estimated around 1.000.000 kWh per year (target value of the CO₃₂ indicator).

4. Employment rate (ages 20-64) (National target: 70%): The following actions of the Program mainly contribute directly or indirectly to the objective of strengthening employment:

Investment Priority 3a - Action 3.1.1.1, with an estimated contribution of 30 full-time equivalents

Investment Priority 3b - Action 3.2.1.1, with an estimated contribution of 3.20 full-time equivalents

Investment Priority 3c - Action 3.3.1.1 A, with an estimated contribution of ~ 7 full-time equivalents

Investment Priority 8i - Action 8.1.1.1, contributing currently with the employment of 343 unemployed people.

Investment Priority 9v - Local Development Programs, with an estimated contribution of the employment of 136 unemployed people

5. School drop-out rate (%) (National target: 10% in population aged 18-24): The Program does not include actions directly related to the goal of reducing early school leaving. The contribution to this target is indirect and results from action 10.a.2.1, in the context of which projects to supplement and improve the education infrastructure are implemented.

6. Population completing tertiary education (%) (National target: at least 32% in population aged 30-34): The Program does not include outputs or results directly related to this target.

7. Reduction of people in poverty or social exclusion or at the risk of poverty or social exclusion (National target: -450.000 with respect to 2008): The goal of combating poverty and social exclusion is one of the main areas to which the Epirus OP contributes, through the actions of Thematic Objective 9 of Priority Axis 5, with a total budget of €45.1 million (15.3% of the total budget of OP, which is expected to reach 16% after the proposed revision of the Program),