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REGION OF CENTRAL MACEDONIA
MANAGING AUTHORITY
O.P. Region of Central Macedonia



Regional Operational Programme Central Macedonia 2014-2020

Short summary

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Identity of the Region

The Region of Central Macedonia (RCM) has an important place in the country, both in population terms (the permanent population of the RCM accounts for 17.40% of total population in Greece, occupying the 2nd place in the country after Attica Region, in 2011) and in economic terms (approximately 13,50% of the country's GNP comes from the RCM, occupying again the 2nd place after Attica Region, in 2012).

Central Macedonia borders and is the main road and rail gateway to the Balkans. From Central Macedonia, both the National Road Patras - Athens - Thessaloniki (PATHE) and "Egnatia Odos" pass, that significantly strengthens its central position. The Region is connected to the neighboring countries via PATHE, Egnatia Odos and the vertical road connections (all sections of the Trans-European Transport Networks), the railway network, Macedonia airport and the port of Thessaloniki. In particular, the completion of the construction of the Egnatia Highway has contributed substantially to the accessibility of the remote areas in the north-Greek area, the inversion of introversion, the facilitation of transport and tourism, with expected multiplier benefits. The country's economic crisis and prolonged recession have led to divergent trends in key growth indicators, resulting in a worsening of the Region's position in areas such as research and technology, innovation, competitiveness, investment, extroversion, etc. Moreover, in recent years, there has been a steady decline in the number of employed people in the Region, while unemployment is rising. In the area of social cohesion there has been dramatic deterioration due to the protracted crisis. Poverty mainly affects young people, the elderly, the unemployed, and other vulnerable population groups that do not have access to the social protection and welfare system, and there are other special groups (e.g. people with disabilities, the homeless, etc.) whose problems have been aggravated.

However, despite the adverse conditions, the Region of Central Macedonia presents significant advantages, which are:

- The geopolitical position of RCM in the wider economic area of Southeastern Europe.
- Concentration of important economic activities and services combined with the existence of the metropolitan center of Thessaloniki.
- A dynamic productive pole and center for the production of basic agricultural products coupled with the existence of a strong processing base.
- Developed transport infrastructure for local, inter-regional, interregional and international passenger and freight transport.
- An important energy transfer hub in Greek and Balkan level.
- Existence of important research and educational infrastructure, incubators, technology park and specialized human resources.
- Rich natural and cultural environment and the possibility of further developing tourism in the direction of a qualitative and diversified tourist product.

The Regional Operational Program 2014-2020 for Central Macedonia

The development planning in the Region of Central Macedonia that in the 2014-2020 programming period is ranked among the "Less Developed" Regions, takes into account European and national objectives and priorities, recognizes the specificities of the economic context, such as the deep and extensive structural transformation which is under way in the country and in the Region due to the competitiveness crisis, but also the constraints imposed by the fiscal adjustment.

The development vision of the Region for the new programming period 2014-2020 is: **"The promotion of Central Macedonia as a dynamic development area of international reach with distinct identity, competitive and innovative production base, quality environment, strong social and territorial cohesion"**.

The Regional Operational Program (ROP) of Central Macedonia 2014-2020 follows and serves the general objectives of the overall regional development strategy, focusing on:

- **Transitioning the regional economy into a new and sustainable production model with competitiveness, extroversion, innovative entrepreneurship and smart and friendly use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT)**
- **Protection and sustainable management of the natural and man-made environment and natural resources to ensure the quality of life and resource efficiency**
- **Integration - promotion of the transport infrastructures and networks for the promotion of the Region in an international transport hub - utilization of its central position in the macroregions of Southeast Europe and the Eastern Mediterranean**
- **Supporting and strengthening the mobility and upgrading of human resources, addressing unemployment dynamically and ensuring social cohesion.**

The Regional Operational Program of Central Macedonia was approved on 17.12.2014 by the European Commission and is the main programmatic and financial instrument supporting the development policy of the Region of Central Macedonia for the period 2014-2020.

The programme was designed and submitted to the European Commission following an open consultation with the social and economic partners as well as with the citizens of the Region of Central Macedonia in line with the National Strategic Reference Framework for the period 2014-2020.

Structure and content of the programme per priority axis / thematic objective

PRIORITY AXIS 1: Strengthening research, technological development and innovation

Within this axis will be implemented actions that are qualified by the Regional Strategy of Smart Specialization and concern:

- ✓ **Promoting Applied Research in areas of interest for the MS -** the actions aim at strengthening and upgrading the regional research system through the qualitative improvement of the Public Research Infrastructure for Technological Development and Innovation
- ✓ **Promoting investments by SMEs to develop products and services in the areas of smart specialization AF:** Strengthening the capacity of the MS business research and innovation production in priority sectors of the Regional Strategy Smart specialization (RIS3), through grant schemes and innovation vouchers.
- ✓ **Creation of permanent cooperative mechanisms to support research ecosystem - Innovation - Entrepreneurship:** creating lasting shareholder cooperation mechanisms of the "Triple Helix" (Enterprises, Research Institutions, Public Administration) regional RIS3 aimed at efficient production, dissemination and exploitation of the knowledge .

PRIORITY AXIS 2: Enhancing access to, and use and quality of information and communication technologies (ICT)

The interventions of this Axis concern:

- ✓ **Development and penetration of innovative ICT products and services :** business plans (via grants and technology vouchers) for the development, promotion and effective use of innovative ICT product and services from the SMEs in Central Macedonia.
- ✓ **Upscaling of public ICT services :** reinforcement of public entities' capacity to streamline the offered ICT services, in the fields of e-governance, e-learning, health, e-inclusion, e-culture and e-health.

PRIORITY AXIS 3: Enhancing the competitiveness of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs)

The Axis target's Regional SMEs with a view to promote entrepreneurship, innovation, competitiveness and extroversion in the national and global context, as follows:

- ✓ **Support to knowledge-intensive, innovative entrepreneurship:** provision of grants for the creation of innovative start-up (including spin-offs, spin-outs)
- ✓ **Increased supply of innovative products and services by SMEs** –reinforcement of SME's capacity to innovate and introduce new products and services in the market
- ✓ **Increase SME productivity and extroversion:** funding business plans for the promotion of competitive entrepreneurship, extroversion and competitiveness. The action will target individual SMEs or SMEs formations (Clusters) in the Region of Central Macedonia

PRIORITY AXIS 4: Supporting the move towards a low carbon economy in all sectors - more environmentally friendly.

In particular, the following interventions are envisaged:

- ✓ **Increasing energy efficiency and utilizing renewable energy in public buildings and public infrastructures:** Improving energy efficiency by refurbishing public buildings, intervening in the shell, and operating features of the building, giving priority to large, energy-intensive buildings.
- ✓ **Promotion of Sustainable Urban Mobility in the Region of Central Macedonia:** Management of traffic with intelligent transport systems, Promotion of the use of hybrid vehicles, Creation of cycle paths, pedestrian and mild streets, Information and awareness programmes of urban residents on multimodal urban mobility.

PRIORITY AXIS 5: Promoting adaptation to climate change, preventing and managing risks from natural disasters such as floods, fires and earthquakes

In particular, the actions concern:

- ✓ **Strengthening prevention and capacity to deal with natural disasters in high risk areas:** Implementation of flood risk management plans per river basin, flood protection projects in urban and peri-urban areas, river bed formation, torrents, ponds, etc. Supporting Integrated Management Plans Coastal zones, Investments in fire prevention and response, Strengthening structures, infrastructures and equipment of civil protection and risk management bodies related Tai climate change.

PRIORITY AXIS 6: Preserving and protecting the environment and promoting the efficiency of the use of natural resources

Projects and actions are foreseen, as follows:

- ✓ **Improvement of water resource management and development of related infrastructure:** infrastructure for improving the quality and ensuring the quantity / sufficiency of drinking water, actions for the implementation of River Basin Management Plans (RBMPs), etc.
- ✓ **Protection and promotion of the cultural and natural heritage of Central Macedonia:** Interventions in the World Cultural Heritage Monuments, Interventions in archaeological sites and monuments that attract tourist interest, Interventions in emerging new poles of tourist interest, Improvement and expansion of museum infrastructure, Support of events of modern culture etc.
- ✓ **Improvement and protection of the natural environment with emphasis on the protection of biodiversity:** Enhancement of Protected Areas Management Bodies for the management of natural environment and biodiversity in the Natura
- ✓ **Rehabilitation and revitalization of deprived urban areas and improvement of the urban environment:** Promotion of redevelopment projects, urban greening, recovery and exploitation of free space in urban areas, restoration or exploitation of abandoned industrial areas in urban centers, interventions to improve air quality, etc.

PRIORITY AXIS 7: Promoting sustainable transport and removing bottlenecks in core network infrastructures

Projects and actions will cover the following areas:

- ✓ **Completion of transport infrastructure projects related to the TEN-T Trans-European Transport Networks:** Completion of TEN-T road links, upgrading of Thessaloniki's rail link to the road network.
- ✓ **Integration of an interregional road network and interconnection with TEN-T:** Improvement or construction of regional links with TEN-T, Improvement or extension of intra-regional transport networks. Completion of the construction of evolving road works
- ✓ **Gas penetration in urban and industrial areas:** to supply gas to customers closest to the gas transmission network and to existing parts of the distribution network.

PRIORITY AXIS 8: Promoting sustainable and quality employment and supporting labor mobility

Indicative actions:

- ✓ **Increase in the number of young, micro, small and medium-sized innovative businesses:** awareness, encouragement and advice to start small innovative businesses, entrepreneurship education (e.g. organization and administration, business plan, marketing), and incentives to develop innovative business ideas.
- ✓ **Developing new knowledge, skills and competencies in areas of high regional interest:** SME-advised actions by groups of specialist business consultants (such as innovation and technology management, internationalization, cooperation and networking, finance, marketing), training and education SMEs in new technologies and in Information and Communication Technologies (ICT), certification of knowledge, skills and professional qualifications of training and training of entrepreneurs for the necessary structural and technological adaptations

PRIORITY AXIS 9A: Promoting social inclusion and combating poverty and all forms of discrimination (European Regional Development Fund actions)

Indicative actions:

- ✓ **Improving health infrastructure and services and social infrastructure in urban and less-developed areas and facilitating access to these vulnerable social groups:** expanding and upgrading existing structures and health infrastructures, developing, expanding, upgrading social infrastructure, procurement of equipment to strengthen social infrastructure.
- ✓ **Promoting investment by social economy enterprises:** Establishment of social enterprises, strengthening investment by social economy enterprises to produce goods and services.

PRIORITY AXIS 9B: Promoting social inclusion and combating poverty and all forms of discrimination (European Social Fund Actions)

Indicative actions:

- ✓ **Enhancing access to the labor market for vulnerable population groups at risk of poverty and social exclusion:** Provision of child care and hospitality services (children / nursery / nurseries,

KIDAP, etc., Counseling and training for the unemployed and other vulnerable groups, employment (type NUE, NGE) for vulnerable groups.

- ✓ **Improving the access of marginalized communities to education, employment and local social life:** Operation of homeless reception centers with provision for mobile units, Roma inclusion actions, learning of the Greek language in adult Roma, counseling training and acquisition of skills for Roma their access to employment
- ✓ **Limitation of discrimination against vulnerable population groups in the educational process and their daily living:** Creative Employment Centers for children and adolescents with intellectual disabilities and / or disabilities, Integrated Care Centers, Specialized educational support for integration of pupils with disabilities and / or special needs educational needs, Day Care Centers for Persons with Disabilities (Disabled People), Counseling Centers and Hospitals for Abused Women, Roofs Supported discrimination, and support for the social inclusion of vulnerable population groups.
- ✓ **Promoting access of socially vulnerable groups to health / welfare / social care services:** Community Centers (with Roma and Immigrant Access Centers where appropriate), Networking of Structures for the provision of basic goods (social grocery, pharmacies, food structures), Day Care Centers for the elderly, the development of Local Primary Health Care Teams (TOMY), mental health and anti-dependence actions.
- ✓ **Exploitation of social entrepreneurship for the integration into the labor market of vulnerable groups of the population:** subsidies for new institutions of Social and Solidarity Economy, actions for informing, mobilizing, supporting and developing the social economy and social enterprises, networking actions of Social Economy Enterprises.
- ✓ **Integrated local or regional interventions for endogenous local development and the removal of local inequalities and weaknesses.** Social actions will be funded under integrated multidisciplinary interventions coupled with infrastructure and entrepreneurship interventions focusing on meeting the needs of local communities and enhancing endogenous local development in selected spatial entities in the region with significant development deficits

PRIORITY AXIS 10: Investing in education, training and vocational training for skills acquisition and lifelong learning

Indicative actions:

- ✓ **Development of modern training infrastructures:** Creation - improvement or extension of existing building infrastructure at all levels of education; Creation or further development of specific laboratory infrastructures and acquisition of equipment for improvement of skills at all levels of education with emphasis on primary and secondary education and infrastructure vocational training, Promotion of digital infrastructures in education.

Funding Framework

The overall RCM Development Strategy is funded by the Regional Operational Programme and is complementarily supported by the regional legs of the sectoral OPs, the Cohesion Fund, the European Territorial Co-operation Programmes and other relevant initiatives. In the framework of the architecture of the Partnership Agreement 2014-2020 the achievement of the strategic goals of RCM is founded on the effective and efficient development of synergies among all funding sources and their prompt activation and capitalization.

The distribution funds per Thematic Objective of the Regional OP, is made on the basis of synergetic, complementary action with the aforementioned OPs and focuses on the implementation of targeted, region-specific interventions. The total amount (Public Expenditure) of the Regional OP amounts 1.009.936.974 €, of which 807.949.576 € correspond to EC support and 201.987.398 € to the National contribution

The distribution of funds per Priority Axis is given below

Priority Axis	Title	Union's Support	National contribution	Public Expenditure
PA01	Strengthening research, technological development and innovation	18.396.536	4.599.134	22.995.670
PA02	Enhancing access to, and use and quality of information and communication technologies (ICT)	9.024.275	2.256.069	11.280.344
PA03	Enhancing the competitiveness of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs)	83.306.389	20.826.598	104.132.987
PA04	Supporting the shift towards a low-carbon economy in all sectors	26.303.003	6.575.751	32.878.754
PA05	Promoting climate change adaptation, risk prevention and management	59.151.204	14.787.801	73.939.005
PA06	Preserving and protecting the environment and promoting resource efficiency	102.347.878	25.586.970	127.934.848
PA07	Promoting sustainable transport and removing bottlenecks in core network infrastructures	287.131.217	71.782.805	358.914.022
PA08	Promoting sustainable and quality employment and supporting labour mobility	9.794.540	2.448.635	12.243.175
PA09A	Promoting social inclusion and combating poverty and all forms of discrimination - ERDF	24.451.683	6.112.921	30.564.604
PA09B	Promoting social inclusion and combating poverty and all forms of discrimination - ESF	149.384.580	37.346.145	186.730.725
PA010	Investing in education, training and vocational training for skills acquisition and lifelong learning	24.451.683	6.112.921	30.564.604
PA11	Technical Assistance - ERDF	11.791.054	2.947.764	14.738.818
PA12	Technical Assistance - ESF	2.415.534	603.884	3.019.418
TOTAL		807.949.576	201.987.398	1.009.936.974