

ACT SOCIAL

Sustainability and Transferability Report

Actions for the Support and enhancement of Social entrepreneurship at Local level

*WP 6, Del. 6.3.4
Sustainability and Transferability Report
August 2019*

ASSOCIATION EUNI PARTNERS

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| <i>Project Title</i> | <i>Actions for the Support and enhancement of Social entrepreneurship at Local level</i> |
| <i>Project Acronym</i> | <i>ACT SOCIAL</i> |
| <i>Project Duration</i> | <i>03.10.2017 – 03.10.2019</i> |
| <i>Project Partners</i> | <i>LB (PB1) Municipality of Thermi (GR) PB2 Association of South Western Municipalities (BG) PB3 Sdruzhenie Yuni Partners (BG)</i> |

The ACT SOCIAL Consortium

| Partner Name | Role | Country |
|---|--------------|----------|
| Municipality of Themi | Lead Partner | Greece |
| Association of South Western Municipalities | Partner 2 | Bulgaria |
| Association Euni Partners | Partner 3 | Bulgaria |

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Executive Summary

The capitalization strategy plan of the project “Actions for the Support and enhancement of Social entrepreneurship at Local level” presents methodologies as well as an active promotion strategy for optimal exploitation of the project, which aims to achieve the maximum impact for sustainability of the project results according to the needs of the participants and the stakeholders of the project and relevant audiences.

This plan ensures that all possible channels and opportunities are used for the projects outcomes in order to reach as many potential final users as possible. Thus, the capitalization plan pays special attention to the enhancement of the results impact on regional level through direct involvement of local and regional policy makers, stakeholders and social enterprises.

1. Introduction

1.1 Project Description

The project “ACTions for the SuppOrt and enhancement of SociAl entrepreneurship at Local level” is part of the Priority Axis 4: Cross-border area without social exclusion and in particular in the Investment Priority 9.c "Support to social enterprises" of the European Territorial Cooperation Operational Programme: Greece-Bulgaria 2014 – 2020 covers eleven (11) Greek and Bulgarian regions and sets the vision of "turning the cross-border area into a competitive, innovative, sustainable, climate-friendly, better interconnected area without social exclusion. The project is co-funded by the European Regional Development Fund and by national funds of the countries participating in the Interreg V-A “Greece-Bulgaria 2014-2020” Cooperation Programme, with a total budget of the project is **540 833,90 €**.

The ACT SOCIAL partnership consists of experienced members - municipalities and NGO’s, who can provide the necessary knowledge and competences. The consortium covers 2 countries as follow:

- Municipality of Thermi (Greece)
- Association of South Western Municipalities (Bulgaria)
- Association Euni Partners (Bulgaria)

The aim of the project is to promote the social economy at local and cross-border level by supporting the creation, operation and development of social enterprises, disseminating the idea of the social economy and consolidating it through permanent networks of cooperation and local agreements. Within the framework of its implementation, two structures for supporting social entrepreneurship are created (one in each country) with the form of One

Stop Shop Help Desks. These Structures along with the tools provided will focus on the implementation of large scale social economic development actions: counseling, education, business development services, networking of social enterprises, publicity and dissemination of the idea of the social economy.

The overall objective of the project is to expand social entrepreneurship and to contribute to raising employment rates in the Cross Border area.

Specific sub-objectives of the project are:

- To increase knowledge and skills in establishing and managing the social entrepreneurship entities,
- To measure and strengthen and increase the social impact of social enterprises in terms of unemployed integration in the CB area
- To deliver tools for developing the entrepreneurial competence in the field of social economy,
- To identify the best practices in the field of social entrepreneurship,
- To increase the awareness of the benefits from the social entrepreneurship sector for society and economy.
- To improve the entrepreneurial competences of human resources of social enterprises and people planning to run business in the field of social economy, piloting in tourism and food sectors

Project results:

The project has achieved significant results in establishing a lasting partnership among Local Authorities in the cross-border area, available human capital and other actors of the social economy in the cross-border area. The main innovative activities and tools of the project, which will have a long-term operation and impact, are:

- the established Support Structures - Help Desks for SE and the Webplatform E-Help Desk.
- the developed and distributed training and guidance material through the project website on a permanent basis.

The results of the project are listed as follows:

- local development and social cohesion
- linking economic activities to the local needs
- generating social capital, social services of general interest, social innovation
- rectification of the three major labour market imbalances: unemployment, job instability, social and labour market exclusion of unemployed people

The specific results from the implementation of the project can be measured through the following indexes:

- The number of unemployed people that will make use of the services of the Help Desks and the E- Help Desk
- The increase of the number of social enterprises
- The number of SEs and unemployed people that will be satisfied by the services offered by the Help Desks and E- Help Desk
- The number of new employment positions created in Social Enterprises.

1.2 Partnership

| Partner Name | Role | Country |
|---|--------------|----------|
| Municipality of Themi | Lead Partner | Greece |
| Association of South Western Municipalities | Partner 2 | Bulgaria |
| Association Euni Partners | Partner 3 | Bulgaria |

Municipality of Themi, Greece is the Leading partner and is in charge of the overall coordination of the project. The Municipality has drafted, implemented and managed many EU projects focused on improving education, promoting social inclusion and environment and resource efficiency, competitiveness of SMEs. The municipality also implemented and manages many national projects and funds for improving the urban environment such as: repair maintenance of school buildings and facades, upgrading playgrounds of Themi, asphaltting of rural roads to improve access to agricultural land and livestock farms, water supply system in Themi and etc.

Some of the projects are listed below:

Social Inclusion project:

- Community center - Provides support to the inhabitants of the Municipality through a network of services aiming at combating poverty, social exclusion and all forms of discrimination as well as promotion in employment

Environment & resource efficiency projects

Combating Climate Change - Protecting biodiversity at NATURA 2000 sites and other protected areas from natural hazards through a certified framework for cross-border education, training and support of civil protection volunteers based on innovation and new technologies (eOutland)

Upgrading of Energy Savings for a compound in Livadi, Municipality of Thermi

Reforestation and rehabilitation of burned communal areas of Thermi

Currently, the Municipality is the LP of the ETCP GREECE-BULGARIA 2007-2013 project “Open protocols and tools for the edUcation and Training of voLuntary organisations in the field of Civil Protection, against nAtural Disasters (forest fires) in Greece and Bulgaria – OUTLAND”.

Association of South Western Municipalities (ASWM), Bulgaria is a nongovernmental association with non-profitable activity. The members of the Association are 25 municipalities of South Western Planning Region– Bansko, Belitsa, Blagoevgrad, Boboshevo, Garmen, Gorna Malina, Gotse Delchev, Dolna Banya, Dragoman, Elin Pelin, Ihtiman, Kochernovo, Kostinbrod, Kresna, Petrich, Razlog, Rila, Sandanski, Satovcha, Svoge, Simitli, Slivnitsa, Strumiyani, Treklyanovo, Hadzhidimovo. The ASWM has a background of active participation in actions supported by European Integration Fund, a long experience of transnational cooperation. Across the policy levels dealing with local governance, ASWM operates with a wide and well established network of partners and stakeholders such as: “The Foundation for Local Government Reform”, National Association of Municipalities in the Republic of Bulgaria, all regional associations of municipalities and professional associations of municipal employees, agencies for economic development, commercial and industrial chambers, and many others.

Association Euni Partners, Bulgaria is a non-governmental organization, which works to encourage and expand the cooperation among the academia, business, institutions and educational organizations. The association is also consulting local authorities, schools, higher educational institutions, businesses and NGOs in the planning, developing and implementing EU funded projects and initiatives in the fields of sustainable development, tourism, education, culture, and entrepreneurship. The team has vast experience in the organization of international events, trainings and internships, as well as in project management and implementation and works in close partnership with organizations, institutions and professionals from all over Europe, aiming at encouraging the international cooperation in the fields of science and education, culture and arts, tourism and sustainable development.

2. Capitalization Plan

The main goal of the present capitalization plan is to establish suitable actions in order to make Act Social project sustainable. This plan is based on the communication and dissemination strategy of adopting the most appropriate dissemination tools and channels developed so far in order to exploit the results achieved during the project implementation. Additionally, it provides an overview of the designed dissemination materials to exploit the accomplished results and outlines the exploitable components.

2.1 Responsibilities

As a leading partner of **Del.6.3.4**, Association Euni Partners is responsible for the elaboration of the current capitalization plan. All project partners have to contribute to further develop this deliverable and implement all relative actions.

2.2 Capitalization objectives

The capitalization plan illustrates a specific strategy for the sustainability and transferability of the project results during its final stage and after the completion of the project.

The objective of the current plan is to identify and contribute to the overall approach to exploitation of the results of the project aiming to achieve the maximum impact for sustainability according to the needs of the target groups and relevant audiences. In general, the plan provides specific ideas for streamlining the impacts of the Act Social project to potential beneficiaries by:

- Sustainable use of results

- Optimizing the value and the impact of the ActSocial project
- Creating awareness and a vast range of stakeholders, which will lead to increasing the project's results.
- Developing a strategy to sustainably exploit the project results.
- To shed a critical and analytical eye on the past and current situation impact of social enterprises on the tourism and agri-food sector in the cross-border region.
- Efficient use of the right resources

2.3 Target groups

Beneficiaries and end-users of the project's outputs and results will be:

- Unemployed people and vulnerable groups in the CB area,
- Existing social enterprises
- NGO's operating in the field of social entrepreneurship,
- Municipalities
- Individuals in the cross-border area, willing to expand their knowledge regarding the potential benefits of social entrepreneurship
- Local and regional public authorities & policy-makers in the field of tourism and agri-food sector
- Local and regional stakeholders – schools, universities, training and career centers, the regional labour office, other centers devoted to the promotion of social entrepreneurship and etc.
- Tourism and agri-food business operators in the cross-border area aiming at:
 - increasing their awareness on the project activities, tools and results, which they can benefit from in the agri-food and tourism sectors.
 - developing a new product or a new service or addressing a new customer's group

- Other interested parties

Project results should reach a wide range of the public on a regional and national level. For that reason the consortium will choose the tools for supporting the dissemination effect. After the end of the project, each project partner will reach these target groups, so as to ensure the widest possible dissemination of the project's results.

3. Capitalization Strategy

3.1 Indexing the users and exploitation of the partner's network

Project partners will identify specific organizations and individuals in the cross-border region belonging to the target groups and a database containing the contact information of the relevant organizations and individuals will be developed. With the determination of the key users, project partners from both countries will be able to transfer project results more easily and carry out more focused exploitation activities. During the implementation of the project, end-users, institutions, organisations and all relevant stakeholders will be reached through the consortiums' network of contacts, their mailing lists and websites and the developed index of all related institutions, end-users and stakeholders.

This in turn will lead to increasing the chances for disseminating the project results among the target groups and will be done in connection with the dissemination activities.

4. Capitalization tools

The following tools are expected to be utilized for the promotion of the project and its results after the completion of the Act Social project:

Project website

The project website will contain all information regarding the project, its activities during its implementation and available results. All studies will be available online through the website of the project. The website of the project will remain active for at least 5 years after the end of the project. All the project outputs will be easily transferred and disseminated to other organisations also outside the CB area as they concern reports and material about social economy, which could easily be used and can also serve other organisations interested in social economy. Each partner will provide a link of the ActSocial project website on its organization's website so that all possible visitors can access it.

Project web platform E-Help Desk

The project web platform will provide free access to all current and future social entrepreneurs, institutions, end-users and all stakeholders for technical information, business guidance, counseling. Social enterprises (SE's) and unemployed people from all over the cross-border region will be direct beneficiaries of these services. The project web platform will remain an active tool for the facilitation of SE's and unemployed people from all over the CB area, also after the end of the project under the responsibility of MOT.

Support Structures - Help Desks for social enterprises

Two Support Structures - One Stop Shops for Social Entrepreneurship are established in both countries (one in Thermi, Greece and one in Blagoevgrad, Bulgaria). These centers operate

as support mechanisms for unemployed people, social economy organisations (cooperatives/social enterprises, mutual societies, associations, foundations), NGOs and relative stakeholders active in the field of social economy who want to start a business in the field of social entrepreneurship. The One Stop Shop Centers's services include the provision of technical information, business guidance, counseling. Social entrepreneurs and unemployed people, from all over the cross-border region are direct beneficiaries of these services.

Creation of contact lists:

During the first phase of the project, lists of stakeholders, policy makers, institutions, NGOs, local businesses working in the field of the examined sectors – tourism and agro-food sector were created for the purpose of the conducted research in both countries. These lists include contact details, such as name of organisation, email, phone number. This in turn will allow every member of the target groups to be approached by e-mail, phone or any other available means of communication.

Brochures and promotional materials

All promotional materials – brochures, leaflets have been sent to partners' local network in order to attract their interest and to raise awareness. Three Guidebooks "Coding and Analyzing the Legal Framework", "Guidance for pre-start-up" and "Scaling up the development of SE's" are available in the Support centers. These guidebooks are distributed among local institutions, the local Labour Offices, centers for career development and organisations operating in the field of social entrepreneurship.

Social media

The consortium uses social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter for general dissemination.

Supplementary dissemination material

Project posters and brochures, and other promotional materials were given to different institutions, centers and other stakeholders, which distributed the materials in their offices or other areas, where they can be seen by more people. Dissemination material is also available in project partners' offices in areas accessible to visitors.

The Association of South Western Municipalities has informed its network, including 25 municipalities of the region, about the project results, has presented the platform and the other electronic tools elaborated within the project. Respectively, these municipalities have disseminated all the outcomes of the project to their networks and stakeholders.

Market analysis:

The market analysis has been managed by EUNI and MOT including “Research on social economy sector exerts impact on Greek and Bulgarian tourism and agro-food sector” and mapping the current situation of tourism and agri-food sector in Greece and in Bulgaria. The analysis can serve as a base for future initiatives, which have as objective the rectification of the three major labour market imbalances: unemployment, job instability, social and labour market exclusion of unemployed people.

5. General Capitalization Action Plan

The main goal of the present Action Plan is to establish actions to make Act Social a successful and sustainable project. Here will be presented some measures to enhance its visibility.

| Project objective | Project activity/results coherence | Comments |
|---|--|--|
| <p>Improve the entrepreneurial competences of human resources of social enterprises and people planning to run business in the field of social economy, piloting in tourism and food sector</p> | <p>Handbooks and supporting training materials Support structures Project web platform</p> | <p>The 3 handbooks “Coding and Analyzing the Legal Framework”, “Guidance for pre-start-up”and “Scaling up the development of SE’s” and all supporting training materials, along with the Support Structures and the project web platform are designed and implemented according to the needs of the target groups of the project, in order to ensure sustainable development. All participants will continue using the project’s outputs and will also promote them to their</p> |

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| | | <p>personal and professional networks.</p> <p>The support structures will provide services for existing and future social entrepreneurs, as well as other institutions working in the field of social entrepreneurship offering consulting services. The dissemination materials, elaborated within the implementation of the project will be available for free in these structures.</p> <p>The project web platform will serve as an electronic support center (E-Help Desk), where all teaching materials and guidebooks used during the mentoring course for social entrepreneurship will be accessible free of charge.</p> |
| <p>Increase knowledge and skills in establishing and</p> | <p>3 Handbooks</p> | <p>The handbooks developed through this project will</p> |

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| <p>managing the social entrepreneurship entities</p> | <p>Project website</p> <p>Mentoring course</p> | <p>continue to be used on national and cross border level, after the end of the project. They are available online on the project web platform (E-Help Desk) and provide information about how to establish and run a social enterprise, as well as what are the stages, procedures and policies in establishing such business.</p> <p>The project website provides specific information for social economy sector in the cross-border area and is also oriented to stakeholders, potential social enterprises, end-users, etc.</p> <p>The mentoring course provides all the basic information necessary both to potential and existing social entrepreneurs. It contains up-to-date</p> |
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| | | <p>information and step-by-step guide for establishing and managing a social enterprise. After successful completion of the training course the knowledge and skills gained are validated and each trainee is provided with a certificate.</p> |
| <p>Measure, strengthen and increase the social impact of social enterprises in terms of integration of unemployed people in the CB area</p> | <p>Research Mentoring course Business plans</p> | <p>The developed training and guidance materials will be distributed through the project website and will be used in specialized workshops and training seminars in both countries on a regular basis.</p> <p>All tools are presented to the regional Labour offices. Thus, unemployed people are directed to the E-Help Desk and the One Stop Shop Help Desks where they will be able to acquire the needed knowledge and skills. The course offers a great</p> |

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| | | <p>opportunity to the unemployed people not only to communicate the project's results, but also to start a long term relationship with companies, governmental/non-governmental organisations and stakeholders, in an effort to address the issues related to social entrepreneurship.</p> <p>40 business plans for establishing social enterprises have been developed for unemployed people. This is itself a great prerequisite for establishing 40 successful social enterprises in the field of tourism and agri-food sector in the cross-border area.</p> |
| <p>Delivery of tools to develop the entrepreneurial competence in the field of social economy</p> | <p>Handbook "Coding and Analyzing the Legal Framework"</p> <p>Handbook "Guidance for pre-start-up"</p> | <p>All elaborated materials during the project (handbooks, teaching materials, research papers) are free of charge. They have</p> |

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| | <p>Handbook “Scaling up the development of SE's”</p> <p>Training materials</p> <p>2 Researches, developed during the 1st phase of the Act Social project</p> <p>Project web platform</p> <p>Project web site</p> | <p>been disseminated to different stakeholders, such as business incubators, chambers of commerce, centers for career development and etc.</p> |
| <p>Identify the best practices in the field of social entrepreneurship</p> | <p>Survey in the cross-border area for the social economy sector exerts impact on tourism and agri-food sector</p> <p>Project website</p> | <p>The research presents data on the impact of social entrepreneurship on the tourism and agri-food sector in the cross-border area. Best practices in the field of social economy for successfully operating enterprises are presented in the report. The research papers are available on the project website.</p> |
| <p>Increase the awareness of the benefits of social entrepreneurship sector for society and economy</p> | <p>Open events</p> <p>Joint event</p> <p>Final events</p> | <p>Through these events the consortium informed the general public and institutions, responsible for policy-making in the field of social entrepreneurship on local and regional level about the project results and the</p> |

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| | | <p>opportunities they provide. All events bring together the relevant institutions, shareholders and the end-users (unemployed people, current and potential social entrepreneurs, etc.).</p> <p>The public events reached the broad public and raised citizens' awareness of the impact and potential of the social economy.</p> |
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The dissemination and capitalization of the project results will continue after the lifetime of the project. In order to ensure the proper dissemination of the project results after its completion, the consortium has planned the sustainability measures listed below:

Mailing list

Use of lists of relevant stakeholders to provide information about the project, its results and future actions, asking them to disseminate the information through their communication channels. As described in previous section the index of organizations and stakeholders lists will enable a targeted, customized and wide exploitation of project results.

Sustainability of the cross-border support structures:

The establishment of the One Stop Shops for Social Entrepreneurship will guarantee access to the information gained during and provided through the “Act Social” project for every

individual or organization interested. Users can benefit from three thematic guidebooks, leaflets, brochures, posters, presentations, as well as counseling by an expert in the centres. All materials will be available both electronically and on paper for free.

Additionally, the social enterprises founded with the aid of the business plans, counseling or other means of support provided by the “Act Social” project will exist further and will continue to improve the economic dynamic, employment situation and quality of life in the cross border area through their services. Furthermore, the founding of new social enterprises is supported through the information gained and disseminated through the project.

Sustainability of the cross border cooperation:

In order to ensure the sustainability of the project over time, it is essential to maintain a good and effective cooperation in the cross-border area.

In this sense, the 3 project partners from Bulgaria and Greece will maintain continuous and efficient communication and cooperation even after the end of the project.

Maintenance of the online tools:

The tools implemented during the project are essential for the sustainability of the project. In order for the online tools (Web platform and website) to be well maintained, there will be:

- regular updates

- update of the information related to social entrepreneurship, policies and activities on local, regional, national and EU level
- update of the information related to unemployment in the concerned sectors if needed
- a performance optimization: page speed goes hand-in-hand with the website visit flow. Thus, ensuring a good performance of the online tools over time.

The project E-Platform and the website will remain active for at least 5 years after the end of the project. To make this sustainability possible, MOT will keep a group of experts in charge of the platform, which will be available to manage the maintenance and update of it.

Attractiveness of the project :

The project benefits social entrepreneurs, unemployed and vulnerable people of the cross-border area. In order for it to be useful over time, it is necessary to find ways to keep on promoting the project and its tools on the long term to the target groups. To do so, the supplementary dissemination material (USB sticks, leaflets, brochures, posters) were distributed during local and international events.

Institutionalisation and transferability of results:

The municipality of Thermi as well as the Association of South Western Municipalities, which consists of 25 Bulgarian municipalities, have the means to institutionalize the project results on a local or regional level by presenting the platform and the other electronic tools elaborated within the project. Respectively, these municipalities can disseminate all outcomes of the project to their networks and stakeholders.



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EUni Partners, being an established entity in international cooperation, can ensure the transferability of the results to stakeholders beyond the CB and therefore increase the impact of the project even further.

6. Sustainability Strategy

The sustainability strategy aims at promoting the project outcomes to stakeholders outside the direct beneficiaries and target groups.

Moreover, both MOT and ASWM will continue enhancing the development of the social economy through the One Stop Shops located in Thermi and Blagoevgrad. All partners will provide the materials generated during the project to the interested parties in order to enable even more people to benefit from its results. Especially EUNIs experience and wide professional network will be useful for transferring the project's results.

As a result of the project on cross border level synergies and collaboration have been enhanced among the project beneficiaries, current and potential social entrepreneurs, businesses from the tourism and agri-food sectors, local authorities and citizens. At a local scale, municipalities and local stakeholders will be able to use the project outcomes and will be able to support the development of the social economy and to empower citizens from vulnerable groups.

7. Post funding programmes

7.1 Erasmus for young entrepreneurs

7.1.1 Introduction

Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs is a cross-border programme facilitating the exchange of entrepreneurial and management experience. The exchange is implemented by a stay of a newly established or potential entrepreneur with a well-experienced entrepreneur running a small or medium-sized enterprise (SME) in another country. In the last five years, more than 2,500 pairs of entrepreneurs have benefitted from the programme.

Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs is a project initiated by the EU. It aims at helping new entrepreneurs to acquire relevant skills for managing a small or medium-sized enterprise by spending time in an enterprise in another EU country. It contributes to improving their know-how and fosters cross-border transfers of knowledge and experience between entrepreneurs. Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs comes under the Small Business Act for Europe which considers this project a key contribution “to create an environment within which entrepreneurs and family businesses can thrive and entrepreneurship is rewarded”.

7.1.2 Programme area

The programme is accessible to all European new and host entrepreneurs who have their permanent residence in one of 28 European Member States, Albania, Armenia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, the Republic of North Macedonia, Iceland, Montenegro, Moldova, Serbia, Turkey, Ukraine and Kosovo.

Entrepreneurs from the EU outermost regions and the Overseas Countries and Territories (OCTs) are also eligible to participate.

7.1.3 Who can participate?

- New Entrepreneurs (NE)

NEs are defined as entrepreneurs in the early stages. This includes both nascent (i.e. “would-be”) entrepreneurs, who are firmly planning to start their own business based on a viable business plan, and entrepreneurs who have recently started their own business (i.e. been in operation for not more than three years). Whether planned or already existing, the business can be in any sector. NEs should be interested in contributing to the development of the HE’s business and making available their own business skills, as well as gaining useful know-how for their own business. NEs must demonstrate a sound educational and vocational background and a viable business idea.

- Host Entrepreneurs (HE)

Host entrepreneurs are successful and experienced entrepreneurs (ideally owners of a micro or small enterprise) or individuals directly involved in entrepreneurship at SME board level with more than 3 years of entrepreneurial experience (not as employee), applying the EU definition of micro, small or medium sized enterprise³. HEs want to share their entrepreneurial experience and to benefit from the concrete contribution which an NE from another country will make to their business. HEs must be committed to work with the NE towards developing his/her entrepreneurial skills and know-how.

7.1.4 Who is facilitating the programme?

- Intermediary Organisations (IOs)

Intermediary organisations have been officially appointed to establish contacts between NEs and HEs. They are involved in promoting entrepreneurship at European, national or sub-national level. IOs are organised in European partnerships, bringing together several partners from different EU Member States. Each partnership cooperates with its counterparts all over the EU. Their main task is to facilitate successful relationships between NEs and HEs and to offer match-making services (such as promotion, information, induction,

validation of applications, arranging contacts, issuing contracts, logistical support, etc.). Every relationship between an NE and an HE needs two IOs - one as the contact IO for the NE and the other as the contact IO for the HE - as the NE and HE must be from different countries.

- Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs Support Office (SO)

A Support Office (SO) established at European level and cooperating closely with the Commission and the IOs ensures consistency in the work done by the IOs and enhances the pan-European dimension of the mobility scheme.

7.2 Interreg Balkan-Mediterranean cooperation program

7.2.1 Introduction

The “Balkan-Mediterranean 2014-2020” is a new cooperation Programme, deriving from both, the split of the [“South East Europe 2007 – 2013”](#) and the strong will of the “Balkan-Mediterranean” participating countries to promote cooperation in the area.

This program aims to strengthen cooperation in the area, capitalising on experiences and results achieved so far. Accordingly, the Programme supports the know-how and experiences’ sharing, improvement of the public policies and networking, between national, regional and local authorities and other territorial actors of the whole Balkan-Mediterranean cooperation area.

The BalkanMed Programme is co-financed by the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) with 28.330.108,00 Euros. The total support from the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA) fund accounts for 5.126.138,00 Euros. Therefore, the total budget of the Programme, including national contribution, is 39.727.654,00 Euros.

7.2.2 Program area

The Programme brings together five (5) countries, three (3) EU member states (Bulgaria, Cyprus and Greece) and two (2) candidate countries, Albania and the Republic of North Macedonia.

7.2.3 Eligibility of Partners

Eligible partners under the Balkan Med Programme are as follow:

- Public bodies (national, regional or local public authorities)
- Bodies governed by public law
- Non-profit Bodies governed by private law

Projects selected shall involve beneficiaries from at least three (3) participating countries, at least one (1) of which shall be from an EU Member State. The partnership scheme must consist of at least three (3) partners and not to exceed a maximum of eight (8) partners, including the Lead Partner.

7.2.4 Priorities in the Balkan Mediterranean Area

BalkanMed is focused on addressing two key challenges: territorial competitiveness and environment. Accordingly, the Programme is built upon the following two Priority Axes:

- **Priority Axis 1: Entrepreneurship and Innovation**
 - Competitive Territories: Stimulating business performance and extroversion through transnational linkages, clusters and network
 - Innovative Territories: Unleashing territorial potential to improve the transnational innovation capacity of the business sector

- Territories of Knowledge: Entrepreneurial learning and knowledge transfer for more competitive SMEs

- **Priority Axis 2: Environment**
 - Biodiversity: Promoting ecological connectivity and transnational ecosystems' integration Sustainable Territories:

 - Fostering transnational cooperation for resource efficiency and climate change resilience

 - Delivery on environmental legal framework: Improving transnational governance capacities

7.3 Interreg V-A Greece – Bulgaria

7.3.1 Introduction

The cooperation Programme “Greece-Bulgaria 2014 - 2020” was approved by the European Commission on 13/12/2016 by Decision C(2016)8708.

The programme Interreg V_A Greece – Bulgaria aims to increase entrepreneurial activity in the eligible area and to improve SME capacity to expand beyond local markets, to improve cross-border cooperation and to develop and promote the border area’s cultural and natural heritage for tourist purposes. Finally, the program aims to expand social entrepreneurship in the border area and leading to increased employment in social enterprises and increased delivery of social services to communities with poor socio-economic indicators.

The total budget (ERDF and national contribution) for the European Territorial Programme “Greece-Bulgaria 2007-2013” is €130,262,835.00. The total financing consists of €110,723,409,75 (85%) ERDF funding and €19.539.425.25 (15%) national contribution.

7.3.2 Programme area

The eligible area of the Programme consists of the Region of Eastern Macedonia and Thrace (Prefectures of Evros, Kavala, Xanthi, Todopi and Drama) and the Region of Central Macedonia (Prefecture of Thessaliniki and Serres) in Greece and the South-Central Planning Region and South-West Planning Region (District of Blagoevgrad, Smolyan, Kardjali and Haskovo) in Bulgaria.

Regions

- Bulgaria
 - YUGOZAPADNA I YUZHNA TSENTRALNA BULGARIA
 - Yugozapaden
 - Yuzhen Tsentralen
- Greece
 - Anatoliki Makedonia, Thraki
 - Kentriki Macedonia

7.3.3 Financial information

Total OP budget: 130,262,835.00 €

Total EU contribution: 110,723,408.00 €

7.3.4 Priority axes:

The programme’s priorities are:

Priority axes 1: A Competitive and Innovative Cross-Border Area

Priority axes 2: A Sustainable and Climate adaptable Cross-Border Area

Priority axes 3: A Better interconnected Cross-Border Area

Priority axes 4: A Socially Inclusive Cross-Border Area

Priority axes 5: Technical assistance