



EUROPEAN COMMISSION
DIRECTORATE-GENERAL FOR EMPLOYMENT, SOCIAL AFFAIRS AND INCLUSION
Employment and Social Governance, Analysis
The Director

Brussels
EMPL.F.5/ZB/ak(2024)3111625

Dear Mr Skalkos,
Dear Ms Dandolou,
Dear Ms Stratinaki,

Thank you for your reply of 22 March 2024 to my letter of 19 January 2024 regarding the opportunity and legality of taking up several operations prepared by the Ministry of Labour in the area of skills from the previous programming period to the 2021-2027 Human Resource and Social Cohesion programme (HRSC).

Thank you for explanations as well as the additional clarifications provided by your services in a meeting held on 27 March, which we have examined in depth.

- We welcome that having considered the particular risks raised by the Commission, the 7 operations for which the Ministry of Labour is Beneficiary (with a total value of EUR 105 million), are no longer considered for EU co-financing. Yet we understood that they may still be considered for financing under the national budget and would be running in parallel to the EU Funds supported ones and therefore would also call for close coordination.

- As regards the remaining 15 operations proposed to be taken up under the 2021-2027 HRSC Programme with a delivery period until 31.12.2025, they amount to an EU contribution of EUR 196 million. This still represents a sizeable share of allocations for training actions in Priority 2 and particularly Priority 5 of HRSC Programme (9.5% and 25%, respectively but it is lower than the original proposed allocation, with the 7 projects mentioned above, 15% and 35%).

- In this context, we would also like to stress that it is the Member State's and thus Greece's responsibility to ensure that these operations are regular and fall within the

Mr. Dimitrios SKALKOS

*General Secretary for Public Investments and ESPA
Ministry of Economy and Finances*

Ms. Niki DANDOLOU

*Special Secretary for European Social Fund Management
Ministry of Economy and Finances*

Ms. Anna STRATINAKI

*General Secretary for Labour
Ministry of Labour and Social Security*

Commission européenne/Europese Commissie, 1049 Bruxelles/Brussel, BELGIQUE/BELGIË – Tel. +32 22991111

scope and intervention logic of the programme of 2021-2027 from which the managing authority plans to finance them. At the same time, we welcome the intention of the national authorities to consult the Commission services on the draft selection criteria and specialization documents before their approval by the Monitoring Committee.

- We also appreciate that the Ministry of Labour acting as Intermediate Body will provide justification on the compliance of the 15 projects with HRSC as well as their policy relevance to the National Strategies (Active labour Market Policies, Youth Employment & National Skills Development).
- In addition, we invite you to consider establishing a joint steering committee with all bodies involved in the delivery of these 15 actions to ensure a consistent implementation and monitoring process. In order to safeguard the impact of the foreseen measures, providing information to all participants in a coordinated manner as well as tracking of each participant and learning outcomes based on case management are key principles to be observed.
- With regard to the method chosen for the implementation of the concerned operations, we thank you for the additional information on the selection process as well as the quality framework applied. However, we maintain the view that this objective would have been better served by organising a fully competitive call, in which social partners are encouraged to enter consortia on a transparent and qualitative basis to ensure better compliance with the sound financial management principles and strongly advice to follow this principle in the future.

As regards **the new delivery model**, we appreciate the greater detail on the different elements in your letter. We welcome the key reforms that have started or are being prepared to underpin the future delivery model, in line with the commitment set out in the National Strategies that EU funded training actions will be part of an overarching well-coordinated and monitored strategic plan.

- We note in particular the effective reorganization of the public employment services (DYPA), the digitalization of its services, the provision of employment subsidies in a modern way, linked to activation measures, as well as the effective deployment of the Digital Action Plans and Individual Learning Accounts (ILAs) which are significant tools for skills development and training delivery.
- The updated system for certification and registration of training providers creates the premises for further improvements in the delivery of effective training programmes in Greece, more adapted and matching better both the labour supply and demand.
- Lately, we have also seen important progress made in the labour market diagnosis mechanism.
- Overall, it will important to also consider how to apply some of these tools already to the above mentioned 15 operations.

Moreover, to **further develop this overarching well-coordinated and monitored strategic plan and its delivery**, let me highlight several elements that will be key in the future:

- As concerns the masterplan, which will articulate all ESF+ supported measures in HRSC that are under the responsibility of the Public Employment Services (DYPA),

we noticed does not include training operations delivered by DYPA or by other responsible stakeholders in Greece and financed by the ESF+ from other 2021/27 programmes (such as the Just Transition Development Programme, the Competitiveness Programme, the Digital Transformation Programme or the Regional Programmes) or financed by other sources (RRF or National budget).

- We therefore invite the national authorities, on the basis of this masterplan, to develop an overarching implementation plan for all training operations implemented in Greece. It is important that DYPA continues to have the necessary funding to continue providing employment and training services, after the RRF envelope is completed.
- It will be necessary to establish a clear mapping of a) the roles and responsibilities of the bodies involved in the upskilling/reskilling policy development and implementation (Ministry of Labour, Ministry of Education, DYPA, EOPPEP); and b) the roles and responsibilities of the bodies involved in the implementation of the ESF+ financed measures. Based on such a mapping, an effective coordination mechanism of all operations could be set up so that synergies are ensured and clear information provided to all stakeholders and potential participants;
- In addition, Greece should aim to develop a diversified range of continuously available measures, aiming to ensure a large scale coverage when needed (e.g. basic digital skills), but also quality and targeting of specific challenges (e.g. employment and skilling of persons with disabilities).
- Lastly, we rely on Greece to create the conditions of an open competitive environment, where all relevant stakeholders and potential service providers can contribute to the implementation of the National Skills Strategy according to their respective competences and capacities. Therefore, it will be important that our services work together on future calls for proposals. Any such call could already be prepared in 2024 and launched in 2025 to ensure that a pipeline of new projects is available by early 2026 as part of the new delivery model.

Beyond the implementation of the EU funds, this will be instrumental to increase the quality and number of trainings in Greece in line with the National targets for skills and employment under the European Pillar of Social Rights.

We remain available to support you and to continue our fruitful cooperation in order to achieve the best delivery models and results for the upskilling and reskilling operations in Greece.

Yours faithfully,

Electronically signed

Barbara KAUFFMANN