

**Action Plan on the intensification and enrichment of cooperation
between the Hellenic Republic and the Republic of North Macedonia,
as provided for in the Prespa Agreement**

The Hellenic Republic and the Republic of North Macedonia, hereinafter referred to as the Parties,

Focusing on their shared ambition of building a neighborhood of peace, prosperity and stability and in full accordance with the need to further strengthening cooperation in South East Europe,

Taking into account that the Hellenic Republic is a member of the European Union,

Building upon the status of the Republic of North Macedonia as a candidate country for accession to the European Union,

In line with the Stabilization and Association Agreement between the European Union and the Republic of North Macedonia,

Recognizing the importance and mutual benefit deriving from the Prespa Agreement, signed at Prespes, in the Hellenic Republic, on the 17th of June 2018 (hereinafter referred to as “the Agreement”),

Looking forward to enhance their cooperation in a variety of fields,

The two Parties hereby adopt and sign, in accordance with article 9 paragraph 1 of the Agreement, the present Action Plan with a view to promote their cooperation under articles 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14 15, 16, 17 and 18 of the Agreement, and enhance their political relations, fruitful economic cooperation and close people-to-people relations.

Cooperation Priorities

- 1. Diplomatic Relations**
- 2. Cooperation in the context of International and Regional Organizations and Fora**
- 3. Political Cooperation**
- 4. Cooperation on EU matters**
- 5. Economic Cooperation**
- 6. Cooperation in the fields of education, science, culture, research, technology, health and sports**
- 7. Police and Civil Protection Cooperation**
- 8. Defence Cooperation**
- 9. Treaty Relations**

1. Diplomatic Relations

With respect to Article 10 of the Prespa Agreement for the mutual upgrading of the existing Liaison Offices and Offices for Consular, Economic and Commercial Affairs to Embassies and General Consulates respectively, the Parties will be pursuing the relevant procedures for the full implementation of this provision as soon as possible.

2. Cooperation in the context of International and Regional Organizations and Fora

Stressing their commitment to promote multilateralism and a rules-based global order, and building on their already positive relevant experience, the Parties will intensify their efforts to mutually support candidatures in the context of International and Regional Organizations in which they participate.

The Parties value their participation and cooperation in regional organizations and institutions and fora, as well as cooperative initiatives, such as the SEECP and the Thessaloniki Quadrilateral Cooperation Meeting, and will promote their collaboration in the context of other regional and multilateral organizations, institutions and initiatives, as appropriate.

3. Political Cooperation

a. High-Level Cooperation Council

The Parties hereby establish in accordance with article 12 of the Agreement, a High-Level Cooperation Council (HLCC) of their Governments, jointly headed by their Prime Ministers, which will oversee and control the proper implementation of this Action Plan **as well as the correct and in good faith implementation of the Prespa Agreement**. The HLCC will take decisions and promote actions and measures for the improvement and upgrading of the overall cooperation between the Parties. The HLCC will convene at least annually, alternately in the territory of each of the Parties.

b. Consultations

The Parties will reinforce and further develop their political relations through regular visits, meetings and consultations at high political, diplomatic and experts levels. In addition to the visits and meetings of their political leaderships, the General Directors of the Ministries of Foreign Affairs will meet and discuss, at least annually, on a variety of thematic areas, including European Union matters and the Balkans. Political thematic consultations could be also held at the level of heads of Directorates of the Ministries of Foreign Affairs.

c. Cooperation in the field of diplomatic training

Acknowledging the important role of cooperation in the field of diplomatic training for further strengthening relations between the respective Ministries of Foreign Affairs and taking into account the successful completion of the "Training Programme on EU Affairs" hosted in Athens in January 2019, the Parties agree on the need, especially with regard to training on EU issues, to further implement the

Memorandum of Understanding between their Ministries of Foreign Affairs on Cooperation the Field of Diplomatic Training done in Skopje on the 8th of August 2017.

To this end, a meeting between the Directors of the Diplomatic Academies of their Ministries of Foreign Affairs will be held before summer 2019 with the aim to agree on the upcoming steps of cooperation.

4. Cooperation on EU matters

The Parties will sign a Memorandum of Cooperation between the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Hellenic Republic and the Secretariat for European Affairs of North Macedonia, with the aim to support the Republic of North Macedonia in its European integration process. The said Memorandum will provide the framework for cooperation in most of the Chapters of the Enlargement Negotiations and cooperation in joint approach to the EU Funds available.

To this aim, the Parties will set up a Joint Committee in view to exchanging ideas and proposals, design specific support and assistance in the transposition of EU Acquis, harmonization and development of institutional infrastructure, and capacity-building in the civil service through exchange and assistance of experts, training programs, joint studies and research.

The Parties will also envisage the Detachment of official(s) of the Administration/ Government of the Hellenic Republic to the Government of North Macedonia (competent Ministries or Services) for assisting in the adoption and implementation of the EU acquis in selected areas. This would entail by preference sectoral Ministries, to be agreed between the Parties, following proposals by the Republic of North Macedonia, agreed by the Joint Committee to be established under the MoC between the two parties.

The Parties will explore possibilities in order to benefit, to the maximum extent possible, from their cooperation in twinning and TAIEX programs, as well as from cooperation in the WBIF with a view to jointly promoting projects of common interest in the connectivity agenda.

Partnership between the two parties will be extended through joint approach, cooperation and consultations in using other EU instruments and Funds, including INTERREG, ESI, National IPA allocations and IPA Multi-country programmes, especially those strengthening our cross-border and regional cooperation, including Balkan-Mediterranean Programme and Adriatic-Ionian Strategy. Common promotion of joint actions and partnership on all levels under the Union programmes is also a potential to be used by both parties.

5. Economic Cooperation

a. Joint Ministerial Committee

The Parties hereby establish, in accordance with paragraph 9 of article 14 of the Agreement, a Joint Ministerial Committee (JMC), in order to attain the best possible cooperation in the following sectors of economic partnership, including through the organization of joint business fora. Convening at least once a year, the JMC will steer the course of bilateral economic cooperation, the comprehensive implementation of the relevant sectoral actions, agreements, protocols and contractual frameworks as well as all future relevant agreements.

b. Steering Committee on Economic Cooperation

A Steering Committee on Economic Cooperation will be established with the participation of governments officials and institutional representatives of the private sector, in order to to accomplish and to promote the economic partnership between the Hellenic Republic and the Republic of North Macedonia. For this purpose a Memorandum of Understanding will be signed by the competent Ministries.

c. Trade & Commerce

The Parties will enhance their efforts to further increase the volume of their bilateral trade and they will also support the cooperation between the business communities. To this end, business fora and B2B meetings will be organized, on a regular basis, by Chambers of Commerce in both Parties.

Both Parties will ensure and protect the intellectual property rights of the respective Parties in accordance with their respective national legislations and international obligations.

They will encourage and ensure a policy of active consumer protection in accordance with EU law and any relevant UN guidelines on consumer protection.

They will negotiate MoU between Central Markets of both Parties to strengthen trade flows in agro food industry.

They will negotiate a Bilateral MoU in order to provide and experience regarding Business Register – interconnection of Business Registers Interconnection System.

They will ensure cooperation of competent Auditing Authorities against illegal trade, in particular in cross-border transactions.

Research and technology are key sectors to be enhanced by promoting innovative entrepreneurship and interconnecting start-up ecosystems.

Both Parties agree to support the work of the international group of experts consisting of representatives of the two States in the context of the European Union with the appropriate contribution of the United Nations and ISO, to be established according to the Article 1, para 3, (h), of the Agreement.

d. SMEs, Industry & Business Innovation

Both Parties underline the importance of Small and Medium Sized Enterprises (SMEs) and entrepreneurship for the economy, taking into account their contribution to growth, job creation and social cohesion and expressed their willingness to encourage cooperation in this field to the mutual benefit of the two Parties, with the aim to increase business and investment opportunities. Such cooperation could be envisaged in the following areas:

- Strengthening networking and exchange of information among appropriate public authorities and promote joint events, such as workshops, B2Bs, matchmaking events.
- Identifying ways of interconnecting the start-up ecosystems of the two Parties, given their role as drivers for entrepreneurship and business innovation, including by means of dedicated digital collaborative platforms, such as the “StartUpGreece”.

- Analysis of the business environment and evolving trends in SMEs development in the two Parties and exchange good practices in the area of SME support policies.
- The Hellenic Republic is ready to provide know-how regarding the regulatory reform underway in the Hellenic Republic on the simplification of licensing procedures and supervision of economic activities, towards a more business friendly environment.
- The Hellenic Republic is ready to provide information regarding governmental initiatives on facilitating SMEs access to finance and promoting SMEs participation in EU programmes, interregional and cross-border initiatives.

In the field of Industry and with a view to creating favorable conditions for the development of technological cooperation and eliminating technical barriers to trade, the two Parties will consider broadening their cooperation in the areas of standardization, accreditation, certification, metrology, laboratory testing and conformity assessment.

The Hellenic Republic is also willing to provide expertise in the field of Business Innovation in line with European policies regarding in particular the following topics:

- Digital transformation of Industry
- Circular Economy as business opportunity
- Intellectual Property Rights
- Promoting the participation of enterprises in Value Chains

e. Customs and Tax Cooperation

The Parties undertake the following actions:

- Negotiation of an Agreement for the Avoidance of Double Taxation
- Cooperation between the Ministries of Finance, Tax Administration Authorities and the Customs Services of the two Parties
- Exchange of visits of officials of the Ministries of Finance and Tax Administration Authorities of both Parties, to further enhance the implementation of the recommendations of the twinning project which took place in 2016-2017
- Exchange of information in various fields (specific fields could be defined by signing a Memorandum of Understanding on Cooperation)
- The Hellenic Republic undertakes efforts to provide expertise to the Ministry of Finance, Tax Administration Authority and the Customs Administration of the Republic of North Macedonia under a twinning project, respecting the corresponding EU regulations.

f. Agriculture

The Parties undertake the following actions:

- Strengthening trade relations in agricultural sector
- Providing know-how regarding rural development issues, design and application of rural development measures for the sustainable management of natural resources, different forms of income support for farmers, as well as implementing reforms within the EU's common agricultural policy framework
- Sharing knowledge and know-how gained from CAP-supported projects to develop employment opportunities and revenue-generating activities

- Deepening cooperation on agricultural research and innovation through the relevant EU policies and instruments
- Implementing joint local development programs
- Establishing a network between producer groups
- To assist with relevant Technical assistance the Republic of North Macedonia institutions to apply food safety and animal and plant health measures (sanitary and phytosanitary or SPS measures) in line with respective national laws and EU regulations

g. Investments

Both Parties will encourage joint ventures and take all necessary measures to boost investments, with an emphasis on the cooperation between companies, businesses, and industries of each Party.

Both Parties will encourage contacts between Enterprise Greece and Invest in the Republic of North Macedonia that would serve as an adequate platform for promoting investment in specific sectors.

A Protocol of Cooperation will be signed between Enterprise Greece and Invest North Macedonia, Agency for Foreign Investors and Export Promotion of the Republic of North Macedonia, aiming at the exchange of know-how and best practices, achieving synergies at regional and international level, co-operation in European and international projects, providing expertise and training regarding International Trade Fair participation, as well as the licensing procedure for Strategic Investments.

h. Infrastructure and Transport

Both Parties will intensify cooperation in the areas of infrastructure, transport and logistics, as well as communication connections.

The Parties will strengthen the interconnectivity of railway and road networks, putting emphasis on the upgrading of the (Piraeus) Thessaloniki – Skopje –(Belgrade) railway and road connections that will provide South East Europe with efficient connections between the ports of Piraeus and Thessaloniki and the Central European markets, via the Republic of North Macedonia, to the benefit of multimodal transport and the overall people and trade movement in the region. They will also set again in operation the railway connection Florina-Bitola which will contribute to the cross-border regional economic cooperation and development.

The Parties agree to set, renew and update all the agreements relevant to the transport sector (rail, road, air) on a basis of reciprocity and mutual respect. Priority will be given to the rail cross-border cooperation, the international road freight and passenger transportation, as well as the cooperation between the Civil Aviation Authorities in accordance with the multilateral agreement ECAA between the European Community and its member states and, amongst others, the Western Balkan Countries.

i. Energy

Both Parties will strongly support initiatives towards the diversification of energy sources, routes and fuels enhancing energy security and energy connectivity in the region, in accordance with the EU acquis and the third Energy Package.

Both Parties will strengthen their cooperation in the field of energy, through the construction, maintenance and utilization of natural gas and oil pipelines interconnections, as well as through the transfer of good practices and exchange of expertise between relevant bodies and corporations.

The Parties strongly support the planned interconnection of their national natural gas systems and welcome the coordination and cooperation efforts between the two competent National Natural Gas Transmission System Operators. This support could be further detailed in a relevant Intergovernmental Agreement.

Additionally, the Parties urge for the restart of the operation of the VARDAX oil pipeline for the benefit of both of them and its possible expansion to South East Europe. In this respect, both Parties encourage a swift settlement of the longstanding dispute.

The Parties will also enhance their cooperation in the electricity sector through the establishment of technical working groups among the relevant Independent Power Transmission Operators. The upgrade of the existing electrical interconnection as well as the possibility for investments in the Republic of North Macedonia electricity market by IPTO/ADMIE will also be examined.

A special focus will be given on cooperation in renewable energy sources and the increase of energy efficiency, taking into account the strong willingness of both Parties to contribute to the design and implementation of climate change policies with regard to the energy sector. In this respect, cooperation areas may include:

- Decarbonisation technologies (photovoltaic, solar, wind, hydroelectric energy production and biomass utilization)
- Energy planning (including assessment of RES potential)
- Energy efficiency in the building, industrial and transportation sector
- Introduction of innovative technologies and training of professionals
- Energy poverty policies' design and implementation
- Financing schemes

Further MoUs between research institutions with expertise on the above themes will be signed to accelerate the implementation of the Action Plan.

j. Environment

Both Parties will promote sustainable development, natural resources management, the protection of cultural and natural heritage, and encourage contacts and exchange of know-how and successful practice among industries and competent authorities, with focus on the opportunities offered by the transition to a low-carbon, circular economy.

The Parties will take measures to ensure the protection of the environment and the preservation of natural habitats in the trans-border water bodies and the surrounding areas, and will cooperate in seeking to reduce and eliminate all forms of pollution. They will strive to develop and harmonize strategies and programs for regional and international cooperation for the protection of the environment.

In particular:

- Transboundary water management, water pollution prevention and water quality monitoring: Both Parties will cooperate for the sustainable management of transboundary waters in accordance with applicable international agreements and requirements of EU law. In this context the Parties will strive to develop a joint management and monitoring Plan for Dojran/Dojrani Lake and a coordinated River Basin Management Plan for the Vardar/Axios River Basin, to

improve water quality across the river in both Parties and in the recipient water bodies (Thermaikos Gulf).

- Nature protection and biodiversity in transboundary areas: Both Parties will cooperate for developing joint programmes for the conservation and management of the Prespa Park, to achieve biodiversity conservation and support local economic activity, in line with sustainable development objectives.

- Climate change (mitigation and adaptation): Both Parties will promote the exchange of knowledge and good practices with a view to implement commitments under the Paris Agreement, and for reducing climate risks and adapting to climate change.

- Air pollution prevention measures: Both Parties will actively take measures to prevent transboundary air pollution from industrial sources, the transport sector and from urban areas. The exchange of know-how, particularly for air pollution monitoring will be pursued, to achieve requirements of international agreements and protocols and of the EU acquis.

- Forest policy, exchange of know-how, forest and land use maps

- Adaptation to European legislation/EU acquis: Exchange of know-how and good practice in the fields of waste management, environmental licensing/permits, water management and wastewater treatment can be pursued by both Parties.

k. People to people ties

The Parties are willing to implement projects for the development of local economies, such as the opening of new border crossing points (i.e. Laimos – Markova Noga and Promachoi- Majden), as well as twin towns or sister cities and cooperation between municipalities, using, wherever possible and available, also the potential of cross border cooperation EU funds.

l. Tourism

The two Parties acknowledge the importance of tourism (traditional, thematic and Special Interest Tourism) for their economies and the potential for cooperation in order to maximize the multiplier effects of tourism development to their mutual benefit.

They will work together to further increase bilateral tourist movement and facilitate cooperation in tourism. In this respect, they will launch promotional activities in order to make their tourism product increasingly known and spread the benefits of tourism all year round. They will encourage the cooperation between the private travel and tourism sector of the two Parties.

They agree to share information and exchange know-how in the field of tourism education and training. They will also explore the possibility to intensify cooperation between their respective tourism educational institutions in the field of tourism training.

m. Digital policy cooperation

Both Parties will support e-government initiatives and develop e-governance awareness-raising programs, implemented in both counties.

Providing know-how on the:

- Electronic Exchange of Public Documents – Security of Information Systems of the Public Sector
- Digital Transformation of the agricultural sector by using innovative technologies (such as navigation systems and a variety of sensors) to improve production efficiency through the collection of data (yield mapping and harvest documentation)
- Integration of e-services in the fields of cultural tourism, information and communication technology (tailored-made information/profiling, interactive maps, booking service “one-stop shops”, and consumer-generated content)
- They will strengthen cooperation in face of cyber-security and cyber-crime threats.
- Exchanging experience and know-how in the implementation of health e-solutions.
- Exchanging experience and know-how in integration of e-services in the field of business operations and employment.

6. Cooperation in the fields of education, science, culture, research, technology and innovation, youth, health and sports.

a. Education, science

The Parties will explore ways of enhancing their cooperation in the field of education by promoting synergies (at all educational levels) between Schools, Universities and Research Institutions, by providing scholarships and by supporting the participation of academics and students in bilateral and international scientific conferences. To this purpose, the Parties will examine the possibility to work on finalizing an Agreement on education.

b. Culture

Acknowledging that culture is a major contributor to our societies' rapprochement and to improving their mutual understanding, the Parties will place special emphasis on the development of their cultural relations and people to people contacts, having particular regard to arts, dance, cinematography, music and theatre. The Parties will join efforts, in the framework of UNESCO, to counter illicit trafficking in cultural property.

c. Research, technology and innovation

The Parties will explore ways of enhancing their cooperation in the field of research, technology and innovation;

- Joint research work on the basis of jointly agreed projects in the field of science and technology, i.e. climate change, precision medicine in oncology etc.
- Exchange of scientists and experts in various areas of common interest
- Exchange of scientific and technological information, i.e. for the management of a portfolio of natural hazards, seismic, climate data and the climate change in the region.

Contacts and cooperation on innovative technologies among academic teams, research centers, institutes and other scientific organizations from the Republic of North Macedonia and the Hellenic Republic.

d. Youth

The Parties shall support all forms of youth cooperation in order to tighten the bonds and foster relations between young people in both countries;

To this effect, both Parties will invest efforts to establish a “Greece – North Macedonia Youth Office” as a body/platform that will work on improving ties between young people in both countries, strengthen their mutual understanding and promote, encourage and facilitate meetings and exchanges between young people;

e. Sports

The Parties will support the organization of sports events in mutually popular games such as football, basketball, handball etc, ski games and other winter sports as well as water sports.

f. Health

The Parties will seek to strengthen cooperation in the health sector, encouraging bilateral training, scientific programs and exchanges, between Universities, hospitals and other health facilities.

Common areas of interest to exchange knowledge and to pursuit common projects:

- Mobilizing EU structural funds, notably Interreg funds, for the implementation of cross border projects in the health sector.
- Providing expertise in the fields of mental health (deinstitutionalisation, community mental health services, psychosocial and vocational rehabilitation) and drug addiction, (prevention, substitution therapy, "dry" programs, and psychosocial rehabilitation).
- Cooperation in the fields of communicable diseases (especially on vector-borne diseases) and public health issues, as well as the system for emergency medical assistance.
- Providing expertise and technical support in the provision and management of blood intended for transfusion, including serology and molecular testing.

7. Police and Civil Protection Cooperation

a. Police Cooperation

Building on the cooperation between their Police Forces already under way, the Parties will encourage contacts of Police officers at all possible levels in fields of common interest, provision of training and participation of both Parties in joint educational programs and seminars. The cooperation between the Parties will especially cover:

- Promotion of the cross border cooperation trough establishing Joint contact center for police cooperation;
- Fight against cross border (organized) crime;
- Tackling with migrations.

b. Fight against terrorism

Strongly condemning terrorism in all its forms, the Parties believe that combating the threat of terrorism requires a comprehensive strategy involving all international partners and a wide anti-terrorist agenda, also focusing on the root causes of radicalization leading to violent extremism. Information sharing and exchange of best practices are essential in our efforts to counter this threat.

The Parties will enhance in particular their cooperation in preventing terrorists from exploiting any resources to secure financial support for their actions.

c. Cooperation in civil protection

The Parties will promote cooperation in the field of civil protection in the following areas: a) exchange of experts in areas of common interest, b) planning and conducting joint exercises and c) organization of workshops/seminars regarding natural and technological disasters.

The Parties will enhance their cooperation also through the Union Civil Protection Mechanism.

d. Cooperation in seismology

The Parties support the development of cooperation between seismological agencies in order to advance science, technology and capacity building in the fields of seismology, engineering seismology, earthquake engineering, seismic hazard and microzonation and the protection of urban areas against seismic disasters.

A special objective of this cooperation is seismological and strong motion data exchange in real-time that will improve the seismic monitoring in the cross border region and the Balkans.

The Hellenic Republic will also make available seismic waveform data and metadata from seismological and strong motion stations to the Republic of North Macedonia, through its dedicated data centers, to secure visibility and accreditation for the Republic of North Macedonia from the EU scientific community and civil protection agencies.

e. Cooperation in meteorology

The Parties support the development of cooperation between national weather services and related agencies such as academic institutes, research centers etc to advance operation service, science, technology and capacity building in the fields of mutual interest such as meteorology, climatology, early-warning systems and protection of urban and rural areas against weather-related natural disasters. In the frame of this, the Hellenic Republic will assist on a variety of related areas such as observations, forecasting, information technology and technical assistance.

8. Defence cooperation

The Parties will exchange views and discuss their priorities in EU CSDP Missions and Operations in the framework of the 2012 Agreement of the Republic of North Macedonia with the EU. The Republic of North Macedonia has been invited to join HELBROK, the EU Balkan Battlegroup that the Hellenic Republic leads.

Officials of the Ministries of the two Parties can determine the domains in which assistance can be provided to the Armed Forces of the Republic of North Macedonia, in order for them to meet NATO's standards in organization, standardization, interoperability and training, while also discussing how to reinforce bilateral defence cooperation.

The two Parties will sign an Agreement on Defence cooperation, which will constitute the legal basis of their future cooperation.

9. Treaty Relations

The Parties will pursue the discussions already undertaken in 2016 as part of the Confidence Building Measures, according to which the Legal Departments of the two Ministries of Foreign Affairs should examine the agreements concluded between the Hellenic Republic and the Socialist Federative Republic of Yugoslavia, in order to decide, which of these agreements could apply, in addition of the agreements already mentioned in article 18 of the Agreement between the Hellenic Republic and the Republic of North Macedonia.

The Parties will also examine the bilateral agreements signed between them before the entry into force of the Prespa Agreement, in order to decide which of these agreements should enter into force after proceeding to the necessary adjustments.

The Parties should also consider the possibility of concluding new agreements in the fields of common interest.

Done in on 2019, in two originals in the English language, both texts being equally authentic.

For the Hellenic Republic

For the Republic of North Macedonia

Alexis Tsipras
Prime Minister

Zoran Zaev
Prime Minister