

Technical assistance to Eastern Macedonia, Thrace



Map of East Macedonia and Thace, Greece.

C4T GROUNDWORK was launched by the European Commission, DG REGIO, to support the implementation of sustainability transitions investments funded by ERDF and CF, under Policy Objective 2 (PO2) “A greener, low carbon transitioning towards a net zero carbon economy”.

C4T GROUNDWORK provides eligible regions with tailor-made capacity building and advisory support covering areas such as the energy transition, circular economy, water management, climate adaptation or biodiversity.

The Managing Authority for the ERDF programme Eastern Macedonia-Thrace was awarded a C4T GROUNDWORK Technical Assistance (TA) assignment as part of the third call for applications of the C4T technical assistance programme. The assignment started in May 2024 and was completed in October 2024.

The Region of Eastern Macedonia and Thrace faces complex and multifaceted challenges in water management. A comprehensive, holistic approach is needed to achieve sustainability and resilience across the entire water cycle. Acknowledging the critical importance of an integrated water management strategy, the Managing Authority of the Regional Operational Programme “Eastern Macedonia, Thrace” 2021-2027, has launched an initiative to provide technical support to local water providers in the planning and preparation of water sector projects to be co-financed through their programme.

The primary objectives were to:

- ensure that local water providers design and prioritise water management projects with careful consideration of environmental impacts, long-term sustainability, community needs, and economic viability
- enhance the capacity of local water providers to implement comprehensive projects that address both the specific needs of the targeted project areas and the broader water management goals of the region.

While local water providers have considerable experience in planning and managing water projects, there is an urgent need to expand their knowledge and expertise. This entails moving away from traditional planning methods toward prioritizing and designing projects based on a holistic approach throughout the water cycle, addressing the following key areas of intervention:

- Securing safe and uninterrupted drinking water supply
- Securing sustainable wastewater and sludge management
- Securing sustainable urban stormwater management and flood risk management
- Enhancing digital transformation, modernisation and increased efficiency in the management and operations and water energy nexus



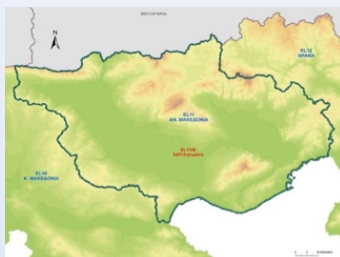
Workshop, Komotini, Greece, 26/9/2024

The Greek Ministry of Economy and Finance, in collaboration with JASPERS (Joint Assistance to Support Projects in European Regions), has launched an initiative aimed at developing sustainable water sector projects that integrate multiple activities throughout the water cycle. This initiative, titled “Water Projects with a Holistic Approach”, aspires to promote a paradigm shift in the planning and preparation of water sector projects. JASPERS is providing independent advisory support during the preparation of these holistic projects, which are intended to be co-financed by the European Structural and Investment Funds. In pursuit of this goal, JASPERS proposed a written conceptual framework (concept note) outlining the approach to preparing holistic water projects in Greece.

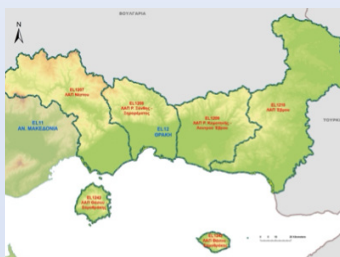
Recognizing the advanced nature and complexity of the concept note, which posed challenges for local beneficiaries in fully operationalise its content, there was a need for simplifications that preserved the core principles and objectives of the holistic approach. Further specifications and adjustments were necessary to ensure the document was tailored to the practical needs of local and regional beneficiaries, while maintaining its integrity.

Therefore, the C4T TA provided support in 2 main phases:

1. **Written guidance on holistic water project preparation approach (May-July 2024):** Following 3 consultation meetings during June and July 2024 with local water providers and the Managing Authority of the programme, written guidance was provided, focusing on the following areas:
 - a. **Analysis of the Current State:** data collection and validation, projections of future needs, and the prioritization of requirements for water-related projects (accompanied by Tables of Contents and file templates).
 - b. **Option Analysis:** Establishing strategic objectives and goals, identifying feasible and non-feasible solutions, and conducting multicriteria analysis for the prioritization of feasible technical solutions (including examples and demonstrations of multicriteria prioritization analysis).



Boundaries of East Macedonia (Greece) Water Divisions and River Basins.



Boundaries of Thrace (Greece) Water Divisions and River Basins.

- c. **Simplified Cost Options (SCOs):** Defining SCOs, outlining the legislative framework, assessing feasibility, detailing application methodologies, and determining selection criteria for various types of SCOs.

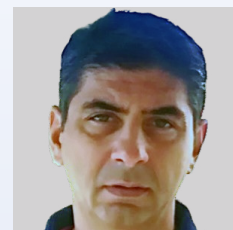
2. **Training Workshop (September 2024):** a one-day training workshop for local water providers and their technical experts was held in Komotini, Greece on 26 September 2024. The workshop focused on the introduction and in-depth analysis of the holistic approach in the design and preparation of water- projects. More than 80 officials and experts attended; the workshop consisted of PowerPoint presentations and Questions and Answers sessions.

The presentations and written guidance (in Greek) have been uploaded to the [official website](#) of the Managing Authority for broader dissemination.



Workshop, Komotini, Greece, 26/9/2024

The “Holistic Approach” introduces a new guideline for the region and the country, regarding the implementation of projects in the drinking water sector. With support from C4T Groundwork, an “Implementation Guide” has been drafted, which is a valuable resource for all stakeholders in designing and evaluating projects that adhere to this concept. Moreover, we would like to emphasize the remarkable, effective, and creative collaboration with the C4T team!



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