



# Background paper

Peer review cohort of Autumn / Winter 2023

## Lines

The background paper aims at explaining the context and main features of the city's Sustainable Urban Development (SUD) strategy to the experts and the peers. It acts as the basis for the discussion of the peer review session. It will be distributed before the preparatory webinar (at least one week in advance).

The template for the background paper was adapted with gratitude from the one produced by the Joint Research Center (JRC).

For each section, a proposed list of content is proposed. The city's representative is not expected to provide an exhaustive description of each topic; such points are intended as suggestions to better tackle the issues faced by the city under review.

The background paper will be adapted into a PowerPoint presentation to be presented during the peer review. This presentation will be shared to EUI PS one week before the peer review.



Co-funded by  
the European Union



Peer review: [Thessaloniki, 28-29 June 2023]

City under review: [Metropolitan area of Thessaloniki]

Sustainable Urban Development Strategy under article 11:  
[Strategy of Integrated Sustainable Urban Development ITI-SUD of Thessaloniki]

## Summary of characteristics

<b>Territorial Delivery Mechanism</b>	<i>Choose between: ITI -SUD</i>
<b>Territorial focus</b>	<i>Choose between: 1. Functional Urban Area</i>
<b>Population</b>	<i>Insert total number of inhabitants:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• covered by the strategy – Metropolitan area of Thessaloniki <b>1.041.661</b></li><li>• of the city (if different) – 12 municipalities<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Ampelokipi – Menemeni - 49.674</li><li>2. Delta - 45.628</li><li>3. Thessaloniki - 317.778</li><li>4. Thermaikou - 45.450</li><li>5. Thermis - 55.238</li><li>6. Kalamaria - 92.238</li><li>7. Kordeliou – Evosmou - 105.426</li><li>8. Lagadas - 37.072</li><li>9. Neapolis – Sykeon - 80.851</li><li>10. Pavlou Mela - 99.969</li><li>11. Pylas – Hortiatis - 72.223</li><li>12. Oreokastro - 40.114</li></ol></li></ul>
<b>Type of funds &amp; amount</b>	<i>ERDF: 210.000.000 € at the moment no ESF are included</i>
<b>Overall budget</b>	<i>Insert total budget for the SUD strategy</i>
<b>Policy objectives</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. a more competitive and smarter Europe</li><li>2. a greener, low carbon transitioning towards a net zero carbon economy</li><li>3. a more connected Europe by enhancing mobility</li><li>4. a more social and inclusive Europe</li><li>5. Europe closer to citizens by fostering the sustainable and integrated development of all types of territories</li></ol>

**SUD strategy under article 7 (2014-2020)**

*Did your city implement a SUD strategy under article 7 (2014-2020 ROP<sup>1</sup>)? If yes, please state the name of the SUD strategy.*

***Strategy of Integrated Sustainable Urban Development ITI-SUD of Thessaloniki***<sup>2</sup> (policy objectives:

*2. Enhancing access to, and use and quality of, information and communication technologies*

*3. Enhancing the competitiveness of SMEs*

*4. Supporting the shift towards a low-carbon economy*

*5. Promoting climate change adaptation, risk prevention and management*

*6. Preserving and protecting the environment and promoting resource efficiency*

*8. Promoting sustainable and quality employment and supporting labour mobility*

*9. Promoting social inclusion, combating poverty and any discrimination*

*10. Investing in education, training and lifelong learning)*

## **1. MOTIVATION FOR PARTICIPATING TO THE PEER REVIEW (MAX1/2 PAGE)**

Possible content may be:

➤ **How you think you can benefit from the workshop**

**Networking and Collaboration - Participating in peer review enables us to establish connections and collaborations with other policy makers and experts. Engaging in peer review exposes us to a wide range of ideas, methodologies and findings for the same problems and opportunities, such as lack of green areas and at the same time urban brownfields, the green transition, the local mobility plans that usually don't consider the continuous of space .**

**Feedback and advice while we are still in the process of planning our SUD strategy (milestone - update of the Strategy on 15 July.)**

➤ **How you think the other peers can learn from your experience**

➤ **New Governance Model for delivering SUDs.** As a Metropolitan Urban Authority that belongs to the Region of Central Macedonia and covers administratively to-date twelve Municipalities of the metropolitan area of Thessaloniki, we have set up an internal working structure since 2017 (Monitoring Committee of the Urban Development Strategy of Thessaloniki Metropolitan Unit), in order to initiate the dialogue and the broad engagement of the local authorities. At that time, the Metropolitan Urban Authority covered administratively eight Municipalities. Still, it was the first time that an innovative model of metropolitan administration had been introduced and is effectively implemented

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<sup>1</sup>[https://ec.europa.eu/regional\\_policy/in-your-country/programmes/2014-2020/el/2014gr16m2op002\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/in-your-country/programmes/2014-2020/el/2014gr16m2op002_en)

<sup>2</sup> <https://thma.gov.gr/our-strategy/?lang=en>

to-date, to address chronic problems (and upgrade degraded areas. This innovative model of metropolitan administration:

- a) has been included as a good practice in the European REFORM program of INTERREG Europe
- b) has been awarded the “Bravo Governance” award of the BRAVO institution, which is an institution of dialogue and promotion of initiatives that promote Sustainable Development, supporting the creation of Greece of tomorrow (this is an initiative organized by the “QualityNet Foundation ” in the framework of the Initiative “Sustainable Greece 2020”
- c) has been included as a model of metropolitan administration for the Sustainable Urban Mobility Plans in the new ELTIS guide of the new period.

## 2. DESCRIPTION OF THE STRATEGY (MAX 2 PAGES)

### 1.1. CONTEXT OF THE STRATEGY

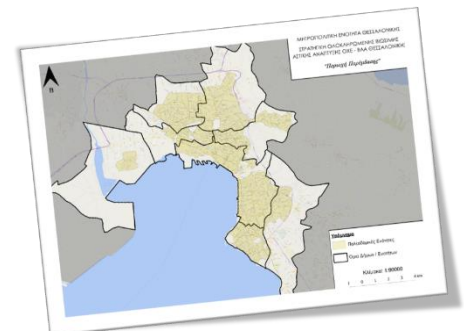
Possible content may include spatial, social, economic and environmental information about the area in addition to details about the strategy, such as:

- A map with the localisation of the city within the country and region



Region of Central Macedonia

- A map of the intervention area for the new period



Intervention area of the SUD 17-23



Intervention area of the SUD for the new period.

## Summary of the urban context.

Thessaloniki is the second-largest city in Greece and serves as the capital of the region of Central Macedonia. The **metropolitan area of Thessaloniki** encompasses the city itself and the surrounding municipalities, forming a complex urban system<sup>3</sup> that includes the compact urban area (Thessaloniki Urban Agglomeration<sup>4</sup> - 6 Municipalities) - with a population of approx. 800,000 people and a network of satellite towns (populations varying from a few thousands to 25,000 people – 6 Municipalities) which that finally add up to a population of about **1,050,000 people**. The between space is covered mostly with commercial, industrial (manufacturing), recreation and agricultural uses. As the Metropolitan area of Thessaloniki evolves the creation of the mosaic of urban uses is a complex and dynamic process influenced by many interrelated factors, for example: a. transportation infrastructure and connectivity, b. economic activities, c. community and cultural factors.

### ➤ Explanation of the logic for choosing the intervention area.

For the area of Thessaloniki (under any definition: urban complex, metropolitan area, greater area, total urban Municipalities, Metropolitan Unit, Functional Urban Area) there was no institutionalized integrated development strategy, which could comprehensively address the specific challenges for which a Sustainable Urban Development Integrated Territorial Investment (ITI) is defined: economic, social, demographic, environmental and climate change.

The definition of the area of the Strategy for the period 2017-2020 was determined from a set of criteria (multi-criteria analysis). The main criterion was the continuity of the urban fabric and the relatively high population density, in order to ensure that the urban challenges apply to a relatively similar intensity throughout the region and consequently there are similar needs to address. As a result, the strategy included 8 Municipalities in the greater area of Thessaloniki.

As for the new period it has been already decided at the Regional Operational Program 2021-2027 to include this time the “functional area” of Thessaloniki that includes the city of Thessaloniki, along with the surrounding municipalities and nearby areas that have strong economic, social, and transportation ties. The exact delineation of the functional area may vary depending on the specific context and administrative boundaries. The functional area of Thessaloniki includes 12 Municipalities that form a cohesive urban and economic system: Ampelokipi – Menemeni, Delta, Thessaloniki, Thermaikou, Thermis, Kalamaria, Kordeliou – Evosmou, Lagadas, Neapolis – Sykeon, Pavlou Mela, Pylias – Hortiatis, Oreokastro. The 6 of these Municipalities (Ampelokipi – Menemeni, Thessaloniki, Kalamaria, Kordeliou – Evosmou, Neapolis – Sykeon, Pavlou Mela), which are characterized as urban due to their high population density and diverse land uses. These urban municipalities exhibit a mix of residential, commercial, and industrial areas. Additionally, 3 Municipalities (Delta, Thermis, Pylias – Hortiatis,) are considered strongly peri-urban, primarily encompassing suburbs with high population density. These peri-urban areas serve the city by accommodating shopping centers, logistics facilities, and highways for efficient accessibility. Although these peri-urban municipalities exhibit diverse land uses, they are designed to support the urban core. Lastly, 3 Municipalities (Thermaikou, Lagadas, Oreokastro) have a more rural character. Despite hosting suburbs with high population density, these rural municipalities still maintain significant agricultural activities throughout their entire territory.

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<sup>3</sup> Thessaloniki metropolitan area has witnessed urban expansion to accommodate its growing population and economic activities. This expansion has included the development of new residential areas, commercial zones, and industrial parks on the outskirts of the city.

<sup>4</sup> Western Thessaloniki metropolitan area tends to have a more industrial character, with a greater concentration of manufacturing and industrial zones. As a result, there is a different socio-economic landscape, a greater emphasis on industrial activities, and potentially higher employment rates in these sectors. Eastern Thessaloniki metropolitan area, on the other hand, may have a more diverse economy, with a mix of commercial, educational, and service.

The implementation of a comprehensive and holistic approach, considering the entire functional area of Thessaloniki, is aimed at effectively addressing the economic, social, and environmental dimensions. This approach facilitates a coordinated and integrated development strategy that acknowledges the interactions and interdependencies among the municipalities, ultimately fostering sustainable growth and prosperity for the entire area.

However, the extension of the functional area raises an important question – (guiding question 2) *How to deal with heterogeneous priorities for urban and peri-urban areas within the same strategy?*

The initial approach adopted aimed to address the emerging challenges of the suburban areas, which are gradually experiencing similar issues as the urban areas. These challenges include for example the inadequate provision of green spaces and the absence of modern, environmentally friendly lighting in streets and parks, the need of electric vehicles etc.

➤ Information about the target area in relation to the wider territorial context.

The Metropolitan area of Thessaloniki is a port city and centre of economic and administrative “life” of Northern Greece specialised in logistics, agro-food, tourism and commerce. It is also a major educational and cultural centre, where four Higher Education Institutions, with more than 70.000 students, operate. With this base the last 15 years, Thessaloniki is investing to develop and promote its role as a major R&D and Innovation Centre and an economic gate of the South-East Europe. Briefly in SWOT analysis:

<i>Strengths</i>	<i>Weaknesses</i>
<p><i>Strategic Location:</i> prime location as a major transportation and logistics hub in the region, connecting with ? Europe</p> <p><i>Economic Diversity:</i> encompassing sectors such as manufacturing, commerce, services, tourism, and education</p> <p><i>Educational and Research Institutions:</i> Thessaloniki hosts 4 universities, technical colleges, and research centres, High-skilled human resources.</p> <p><i>Cultural Heritage:</i> rich historical and cultural heritage, attracting tourists and providing opportunities for cultural events and festivals.</p> <p><i>Infrastructure:</i> port, airport, road networks, public transportation systems (metro under construction), and modern amenities.</p>	<p><i>Traffic Congestion:</i> lack of an Integrated Sustainable Urban Mobility Strategy.</p> <p><i>Limited Green Spaces:</i> Low Green Index per inhabitant affecting the overall quality of life</p> <p><i>Environmental Challenges:</i> pollution, waste management, and the need for sustainable development practices</p> <p><i>Economic shrinking and de-productivism</i> High levels of unemployment.</p> <p><i>Housing Affordability:</i> rising property prices (land and houses)</p>
<i>Opportunities</i>	<i>Threats</i>
<p><i>Innovation and Entrepreneurship:</i> research and development initiatives and creating a favorable business environment.</p> <p><i>Sustainable Development Initiatives:</i> promoting renewable energy, enhancing public transportation systems, and improving waste management</p> <p><i>Tourism Growth:</i> promote tourism by improving visitor experiences, developing niche tourism segments, and expanding accommodation options.</p>	<p><i>Economic Instability:</i> global economic fluctuations and political uncertainties can pose challenges</p> <p><i>Competition from Other Cities:</i> big concentration of funds in the capital city, Athens</p> <p><i>Natural Disasters and Climate Change:</i> the risk of natural disasters and the impacts of climate change, requiring preparedness and adaptation strategies.</p> <p><i>Skill Mismatch:</i> aligning educational programs with the evolving needs of industries and</p>

<p><i>Urban Revitalization:</i> revitalizing and redeveloping underutilized areas, promoting mixed-use developments and enhancing the urban environment</p>	<p>promoting development of skills <i>Segregation of responsibilities</i> both in spatial planning and implementation of projects</p>
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## 1.2. STRATEGY DEVELOPMENT AND TIMEFRAME

Possible content may be:

- At which stage is the strategy: Design, Implementation, etc.

The SUD for the period 2014-2020 was designed by the Metropolitan Unit of Thessaloniki with participatory and open processes, reflecting eight Municipalities located in the greater Thessaloniki area. The design phase of the SUD started on September 2016 and lasted until February 2017, in collaboration with citizens, civil society, technical chamber & chamber of commerce & industry & the two levels of local authority governance: municipalities and region. It is applied to this day.

Following the instructions of the national authorities, we, the planning and evaluation team of the Metropolitan Unit of Thessaloniki, have started updating the SUD for the new period 2021-2027. Currently, we have entered the stage where a preliminary draft plan has been established, and consultations are underway to facilitate participatory processes. We have already gathered proposed projects from the 12 municipalities to consider for the Sustainable Urban Development (SUD) plan. Until the 18<sup>th</sup> of June, we will have collected the outcomes of these participatory initiatives, which will serve as valuable input for the finalization of the plan. Furthermore, as the planning and evaluating team, we have arranged a comprehensive workshop series with stakeholders to delve into specific subjects in order to get feedback for the SUD. These workshops will focus on the following topics: 1. Innovation and Enterprise, 2. Sustainable Urban Mobility, 3. Cultural Plans, and 4. Wellness of the Citizens Plans. These workshops will provide a platform for in-depth discussions, allowing us to incorporate diverse perspectives and expertise into the plan.

Throughout this phase, we will diligently incorporate proposed projects, suggestions, and improvements, ensuring that the final plan reflects a well-informed and comprehensive approach to sustainable urban development.

At the Peer review workshop, which is taking place at Thessaloniki, on 28-29 June, we will present the final version of the SUD and we hope that we will take advantage of the event (considering the proposals) to finalize the Strategy on July 15<sup>th</sup>.

## 1.3. STRATEGY DESCRIPTION

The overall vision of the strategic plan concerned the **“Renaissance of the city and the formation of a sustainable living and working environment for the inhabitants”**.

Our vision is to build the Metropolitan Thessaloniki of 2030, a modern, smart, green and human city cooperating all together. Modern with new investments, with dynamic and extroverted entrepreneurship, with a strong primary sector and a modern infrastructure network that supports exports, trade, tourism, supply chain, extroversion. Smart with a high level of research in universities, with innovation as a strong growth pillar, with space for creation and jobs for young people, with digital services to better serve all citizens. Green, with more free spaces, parks and green spaces in every neighbourhood, with energy autonomous buildings and modern infrastructure for environmentally



friendly transportation. Human, with equal access of all citizens to hospitals and schools, with the support of the family, with social solidarity, care and care for our most vulnerable fellow citizens.

The vision of the Strategic Plan of Sustainable Urban Development of the Metropolitan area of Thessaloniki, harmonizes with the objectives of the Operational Programme of the Region of Central Macedonia, which includes actions on the 5 policy objectives supporting growth for the period 2021-2027: 1. a more competitive and smarter Europe, 2. a greener, low carbon transitioning towards a net zero carbon economy, 3. a more connected Europe by enhancing mobility, 4. a more social and inclusive Europe and 5. Europe closer to citizens by fostering the sustainable and integrated development of all types of territories.

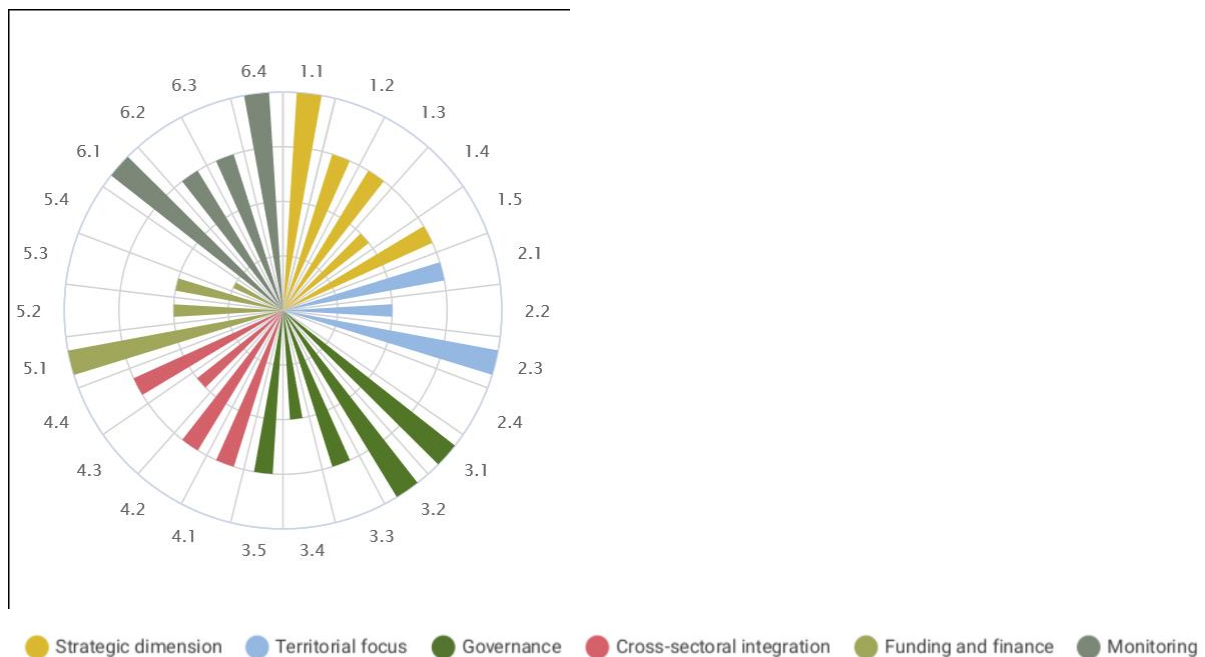
The Sustainable Urban Development (SUD) plan for the Metropolitan Area of Thessaloniki entails an investment of 210 million euros in national and cross-regional projects. These projects are designed to address the actual economic, environmental, climate-related, and social challenges faced. Through SUD we take full advantage of existing resources and human capital in the city, demonstrating a decisive and dynamic approach to achieving its goals. The updated Strategy is organized into five axes:

- **1. Thessaloniki, competitive and innovative – 10%**
  - Strengthening innovative competitive entrepreneurship in the fields of tourism, culture, environment, creative industry and blue growth
  - Strengthening the capacity of sectoral bodies to provide targeted support to businesses
- **2. Thessaloniki, cohesive and participation – 10%**
  - Promotion of social cohesion, equality and participation - improving the quality of life of vulnerable groups through actions to strengthen urban infrastructure
  - Upgrading and promotion of tourist and cultural resources
- **3. Thessaloniki, green and attractive – 40%**
  - Improvement, protection and expansion of the natural and built urban environment
  - Improving the quality of the soil, the water cycle and strengthening the ecological continuity of the urban space
- **4. Thessaloniki, resilient to climate change – 30%**
  - Improving adaptability to the effects of Climate Change
  - Promoting Sustainable Mobility
  - Promotion of clean transport
- **5. Thessaloniki, effective – 10%**
  - Ensuring the efficiency of the administration and modernizing the organization of local operations
  - Promoting cooperation in support of development
  - Support the regulation of spatial development

### **3. SAT4SUD RESULTS AND GUIDING QUESTIONS (MAX 2 PAGES)**

#### **3.1. SAT4SUD RESULTS**

Please include the spider diagram from your SAT4SUD results.



Please select your score (high/low and specific score) for each statement of the SAT4SUD carried out.

- **Strategic Dimension**

- .1. The strategy sets clear objectives that responds to the development needs and potential of the area while at the same time contributing to the objectives of the supporting operational programme(s). [HIGH/LOW], [4, HIGH]
- .2. The strategy builds on a baseline situation derived from high quality analysis and up-to-date evidence (e.g. territorial, social and economic analysis and studies, monitoring and evaluation reports, etc.). [HIGH/LOW], [3, HIGH]
- .3. A detailed action plan demonstrating how objectives and expected results are translated into actions exists. [HIGH/LOW], [3, HIGH]
- .4. The strategy describes links and synergies with the Sustainable Development Goals, and any other (international, national, regional or local) agendas and policies that are relevant to its performance. [HIGH/LOW], [2, LOW]
- .5. The strategy assesses and takes into account the capacity of the local authority and relevant stakeholders to perform policy functions (design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation) and envisages capacity building measures, if needed. [HIGH/LOW], [3, HIGH]

- **Territorial focus**

- .1. The chosen territorial focus is pertinent to address the development needs, potential and objectives set in the strategy. [HIGH/LOW], [4, HIGH]
- .2. The strategy area, the targeted areas and population for the planned actions are clearly identified following an evidence-based methodology. [HIGH/LOW], [3, HIGH]
- .3. The strategy area is defined taking into account functional linkages, even across administrative boundaries. [HIGH/LOW], [4, HIGH]
- .4. The target areas are integrated into the larger territorial context and, where relevant, the strategy takes into account urban-rural linkages. [HIGH/LOW], [1, LOW]

- **Governance**

- .1. The responsible local authority or body has the necessary capacity and political support to implement the strategy and ensure the alignment of projects with objectives. [HIGH/LOW], [4, HIGH]
- .2. Processes and mechanisms to ensure coordination among the local authority, the Managing Authority and other public agencies are in place, and roles and responsibilities are well defined. [HIGH/LOW], [4, HIGH]
- .3. The strategy describes how relevant stakeholders (from the government, the knowledge sector, the private sector, the third sector as well as citizens) are identified and involved in the policy cycle (design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation). [HIGH/LOW], [3, HIGH]
- .4. Active participation of citizens is ensured throughout the policy cycle, through effective and eventually innovative methods and tools (e.g. surveys, community meetings, workshops, participatory planning, co-decision processes, etc.). [HIGH/LOW], [3, HIGH]
- .5. When a strategy targets a functional urban area, specific governance arrangements ensure cooperation among different territorial bodies. [HIGH/LOW], [4, HIGH]

- **Cross-sectoral integration**

- .1. The strategy envisages an integrated response considering the economic, social and environmental dimension of the challenges identified in the analysis, fostering sustainable urban development and the transition to the productive, just and green city. [HIGH/LOW], [3, HIGH]
- .2. Cross-sectoral integration is pursued throughout the actions of the strategy triggering complementarities and synergies between them. [HIGH/LOW], [3, HIGH]
- .3. The strategy takes advantage of contributions from different departments, agencies and stakeholders in order to overcome policy silos, even in case the strategy has a main thematic focus. [HIGH/LOW], [3, HIGH]
- .4. The strategy indicates which bodies/departments are responsible for the implementation of each action and provides mechanisms for coordination among them. [HIGH/LOW], [4, HIGH]

- **Funding and finance**

- .1. The strategy provides specific details on how and where EU Cohesion policy funds (and, where appropriate, other funding sources) will be allocated. [HIGH/LOW], [4, HIGH]
- .2. The strategy benefits from the coordination between different funding sources (European, national, regional and local, including financial instruments). [HIGH/LOW], [2, LOW]
- .3. The involvement of private investors in funding the strategy is envisaged. [HIGH/LOW], [3, HIGH]
- .4. The use of innovative funding approaches like Green City Bonds or Social Impact Bonds and participatory budgeting, as well as financial instrument is considered. [HIGH/LOW], [1, LOW]

- **Monitoring**

- .1. The strategy foresees a monitoring system that follows the logical framework, moving from needs (what has to be addressed?), to objectives (what is the desired change?), to indicators (how can this change be measured?). [HIGH/LOW], [4, HIGH]
- .2. The monitoring system includes a set of related output and result indicators specific to the targeted geographic area(s) and population (with a quantified baseline and target values), it details how to obtain timely data and the department/unit responsible for monitoring activities. [HIGH/LOW], [3, HIGH]
- .3. The monitoring system collects a combination of quantitative and qualitative information to capture all outcomes, including the effects of the integrated approach. [HIGH/LOW], [3, HIGH]
- .4. Alignment with operational programme's objectives (as well as other sustainability agendas) is strengthened by using a number of indicators clearly linked to programme priorities. [HIGH/LOW], [4, HIGH]

## 3.2. CHALLENGES IN THE SUD STRATEGY (MAX 2 PAGES)

Following the SAT4SUD results, please provide an explanation for each low score (1-2) of your SAT4SUD analysis. You may also explain any high scores that you consider to be important for explaining the context of your strategy and the guiding questions that follow.

- **Strategic Dimension**

The overall vision of the strategic plan concerns the “Renaissance of the city and the formation of a sustainable living and working environment for the inhabitants”. Our vision is to build the Thessaloniki of 2030, a modern, smart, green and human city cooperating all together.

The ROP's of Central Macedonia **priority 5. Europe closer to citizens by fostering the sustainable and integrated development of all types of territories** ( Air quality and noise reduction measures, Clean urban transport infrastructure and promotion (including equipment and rolling stock), Cycling infrastructure, Territorial development initiatives, including territorial preparation strategies)

The previous phase primarily emphasized achieving specific indicators outlined in the Regional Operational Program (ROP). However, the current phase adopts a more flexible approach, envisioning the establishment of comprehensive connections and synergies with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), as well as other pertinent international, national, regional, and local agendas and policies. This broader perspective ensures that the plan aligns with and contributes to various frameworks, enhancing its overall performance and impact. This is linked to our guiding question #1 **“How to link strategies to EU and global agendas and deliver the green transition?”**]

Furthermore, it is imperative to emphasize the significance of aligning the strategy with EU and global agendas to facilitate the green transition. This is particularly crucial due to the simultaneous existence of multiple programs and calls for stakeholders to participate in. By establishing stronger linkages, stakeholders can more effectively deliver projects for these new calls while simultaneously combining efforts to achieve their transition goals. This approach streamlines the process for stakeholders, enabling them to navigate and respond to various funding opportunities in a cohesive manner, ultimately accelerating progress towards their objectives.

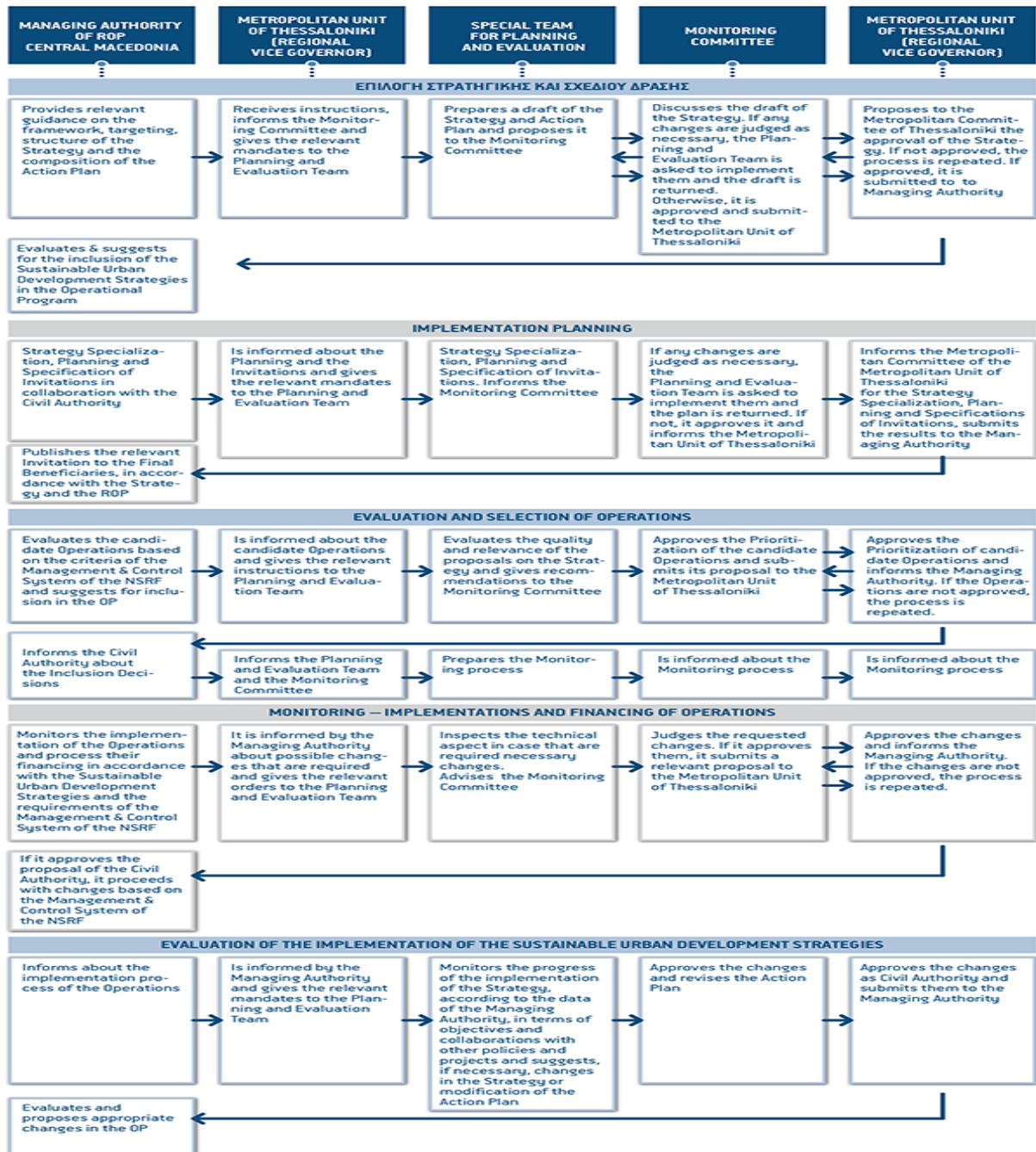
- **Territorial focus**

The criteria used to define the functional area of the Metropolitan area of Thessaloniki were similar to those used for defining Functional Urban Areas in the EU. The main criterion was the continuity of the urban fabric and the relatively high population density, to ensure that the urban challenges apply to a relatively similar intensity throughout the region and consequently there are similar needs to address them, so we had more homogeneous picture. In the new period we have to expand the area and add the peri-urban area and the settlement satellites that are affected and affect the city, the area now shows more heterogeneity. This new image is a need we would like to discuss at the peer review.

- **Governance**

The great benefit from the previous period is the establishment of the Urban Authority an internal working structure (Monitoring Committee of the Urban Development Strategy of Thessaloniki Metropolitan Unit).

## SYSTEM OF GOVERNANCE - RESPONSIBILITIES OF STAKEHOLDERS



- **Cross-sectoral integration**

By embracing cross-sectoral integration, sustainable urban planning aims to overcome the fragmented and siloed approaches that have often characterized urban development. It fosters collaboration, knowledge exchange, and coordinated actions to create more liveable, resilient, and inclusive cities that address environmental, social, and economic challenges effectively.

We can say that we have achieved some key aspects of cross-sectoral integration in our SUD:

First of all, Collaborative Governance: Cross-sectoral integration requires collaboration among different levels of government. Secondly sustainable urban planning emphasizes an integrated approach that considers the interdependencies between various sectors. That's why we already had been involved at local SUMPS and we examine at this period to combine them at the metropolitan/regional level. Moreover effective cross-sectoral integration relies on the availability and analysis of comprehensive data related to urban systems. Data on demographics, energy consumption, transportation patterns, environmental indicators, and social indicators can inform evidence-based decision-making process, that is the reason we created and we will continue maintaining the Urban Observatory of Thessaloniki. Analysing and sharing data across sectors can reveal patterns and relationships that facilitate integrated planning and implementation and also there is the possibility to test future scenarios. Last but not least, cross-sectoral integration in sustainable urban planning involves engaging a diverse range of stakeholders in participatory processes. Inclusive and transparent participation ensures that the voices and needs of various groups, including marginalized communities, are considered.

In the upcoming period, we have devised a plan to capitalize on successful examples in order to emphasize the cultural and tourism aspects and showcase the comparative advantages of our region. This strategic approach aims to enhance the visibility and attractiveness of our area as a destination, while leveraging its unique cultural heritage and strengths. By capitalizing on successful examples, highlighting the cultural and tourism strengths of our region, and promoting collaboration among stakeholders, we aim to position our area as a prominent cultural and tourist destination. Through these efforts, we aspire to attract a diverse range of visitors, stimulate economic growth, and establish our region as a recognized leader in cultural heritage and tourism experiences. In order to pursue this goal more effectively, we have included our **guiding question # 3**. -

- **Funding and finance**

The updated Strategy is a prerequisite for the use of funds from the Integrated Territorial Investment facility. The budget for the strategy amounts to 210 million euros from the ERDF. Although it is a significant amount the needs already recorded far exceed this budget, with a total of 450 million euros. In the current period, we have the particularity of ongoing and transferred projects which are already estimated at 40% to 45%. These projects are projects that started and did not complete or projects that we chose to give the advantage to start to address the problem of delays. The allocation of ESF in the updated strategy is unknown.

Throughout the previous implementation period, several challenges have been faced that contributed to delays in projects implementation. One notable challenge is the time required from the inclusion of projects to their actual commencement, often attributed to various procedures such as tenders, assignments, and contract arrangements. Although these procedures may not fall directly under the responsibilities of the intermediate body, the planning team of the SUD, we are committed to finding solutions to overcome these difficulties by sharing good practices and exploring avenues for supporting beneficiaries.

To address these challenges, we recognize the importance of knowledge sharing and the exchange of best practices among stakeholders. By facilitating dialogue and collaboration, we can identify successful approaches and strategies employed by other projects or organizations that have effectively navigated

similar procedural hurdles. These insights can inform the development of streamlined processes, reduce unnecessary delays, and enhance efficiency in project implementation.

Furthermore, we are exploring ways to provide support to beneficiaries throughout the project lifecycle. This support may involve offering guidance on navigating administrative procedures, providing capacity-building initiatives to enhance project management skills, or facilitating access to resources that can expedite the implementation process. By actively engaging with beneficiaries and understanding their specific needs, we can tailor support mechanisms that address the challenges they face and help them overcome procedural obstacles more effectively.

It is important to note that while the Strategy may not directly control all aspects of project implementation procedures, we are committed to collaborating with relevant stakeholders, such as government agencies and administrative bodies, to advocate for improvements and foster a more efficient and streamlined process. By leveraging our collective influence and knowledge, we strive to create an environment that encourages timely and effective implementation of projects within the functional area of Thessaloniki.

Ultimately, our goal is to identify and implement solutions that mitigate delays and ensure the smooth progression of projects. By promoting the sharing of good practices, providing targeted support to beneficiaries, and advocating for procedural improvements, we aim to overcome challenges and achieve successful project outcomes that contribute to the overall goals and objectives of the Strategy.

- **Monitoring**

The process of monitoring and reporting on the implementation of the Strategy is carried out using indicators from the Operational Programme of the Region of Central Macedonia. In addition to the standardized indicators, we want to add indicators used for Sustainable Development Goals for better monitoring of implementation for our assessment. This is once again, linked to [guiding question 1](#).

Our plan entails further development of the Urban Authority Observatory, which was established in 2019, to effectively monitor the implementation of the updated Strategy for the functional area of Thessaloniki. This enhanced observatory will enable us to closely track the progress of the Strategy, ensuring that it remains aligned with the defined priorities and goals that are responsive to the evolving needs and conditions of the area.

The expanded Urban Authority Observatory will serve as a vital tool for data collection, analysis, and reporting. It will enable us to gather relevant information on various aspects of urban development, including economic indicators, social dynamics, environmental factors, and infrastructure developments. By systematically monitoring and analyzing this data, we can assess the effectiveness of the Strategy, identify areas that require adjustments or interventions, and make informed decisions to optimize the outcomes.

Furthermore, the Observatory will facilitate the regular evaluation and reporting of the Strategy's performance. It will provide a comprehensive overview of the progress made towards achieving the defined priorities and goals, highlighting areas of success, as well as challenges that need to be addressed. This information will be valuable for stakeholders, policymakers, and decision-makers, providing them with the necessary insights to make evidence-based decisions and guide future actions.

Through the continued development and utilization of the Urban Authority Observatory, we aim to foster a culture of evidence-based planning and decision-making. By having access to up-to-date and accurate data, we can ensure that the Strategy remains dynamic and responsive to the changing needs and conditions within the functional area of Thessaloniki. This will enable us to effectively monitor the

implementation progress, identify areas for improvement, and ultimately achieve sustainable and inclusive urban development.

### 3.3. THE THREE GUIDING QUESTIONS (MAX 1 PAGE PER QUESTION)

Please indicate the following information on the three guiding questions to be addressed during the peer review. The three guiding questions should build on the SAT4SUD analysis and identified weaknesses.

**Guiding question #1: [How to link strategies to EU and global agendas and deliver the green transition?]**

**WHY/ Context:** Linking strategy to the EU and global agendas is crucial for delivering the green transition because it ensures alignment with broader policy frameworks and collective action. We believe that by connecting strategy to these agendas, countries and organizations can leverage shared goals, resources, and expertise to drive sustainable development on a larger scale.

It is well known that the green transition requires coordinated efforts at the global and regional levels. Linking strategy to EU and global agendas enables collaboration, pooling of resources, and sharing of best practices, leading to a more significant and coordinated impact. There were made several steps from the local authorities at this direction but we still have a lot to do. There were made several steps from the local authorities and the municipalities at this direction but we still have a lot to do. By linking strategies, we gain access to funding mechanisms, technical assistance, and capacity-building initiatives provided by the EU and international organizations. This support can accelerate the implementation of green initiatives.

**Why is it relevant:** It is crucial to take advantage from all the previous period and involve relevant stakeholders, including government agencies, civil society organizations, businesses, and academia, in the development and implementation of strategies. Consultation and collaboration foster buy-in, knowledge-sharing, and innovation, ultimately enhancing the chances of success.

+ mention your timeline, that you are in the consultation process with your SUD etc.

What has been done (and how did it work so far):

Implemented measures	How they worked so far
New Governance Framework. The Monitoring Committee of the Urban Development Strategy of Thessaloniki Metropolitan Unit was established, with representatives from the territorial units that are part of the current ITI	Commitment at political level First experience of collaboration Dedicated staff from the Thessaloniki Metropolitan UA to ensure the facilitation of the MA
Collecting data from different sources (collected automatically in some ways)	

What has not worked:

- The commitment at technical level. We are at the first stages of cooperation there is still work to do.
- We believe that in order to achieve their commitment we have to give them feedback from this peer to peer exchange, accessible data, indicators.



- Almost all the municipalities need data for several reasons (their reports, participate in other European projects...) so if we achieve the linkage with other strategies, it will be easier to participate because they could use more the data.

**Guiding question #2:** [How to deal with heterogeneous priorities and conflict between various funding lines for urban and peri-urban areas within the same strategy?]

Slightly modified. Previously, it was: **How to deal with heterogeneous priorities for urban and peri-urban areas within the same strategy?**

**WHY/Context:** Adopting an integrated approach that considers both urban and peri-urban areas within the same strategy allows for a comprehensive understanding of the entire region's dynamics. This approach helps prevent isolated or conflicting policies that may negatively impact one area while benefiting the other. We have no experience we have no experience from the previous period and we want to face this challenge.

An integrated approach should consider both urban and peri-urban areas within the same strategy and allow for a comprehensive understanding of the entire region's dynamics. This approach helps prevent isolated or conflicting policies that may negatively impact one area while benefiting the other. While addressing heterogeneous priorities, it's essential to strike a balance in resource allocation between urban and peri-urban areas. Considerations should be given to factors like infrastructure development, service provision, environmental conservation, and social equity.

What has been done (and how did it work so far):

Implemented measures	How they worked so far
Rural areas face mounting pressures stemming from adjacent urban areas, resulting in various challenges and distinct needs. Specifically, the encroachment of urban infrastructure and shopping centers rapidly consumes the physical space of rural regions. Additionally, rural areas contend with unique issues, such as inadequate internet networks, limited water supply, and the lower prioritization of essential amenities like parks and playgrounds due to the perceived abundance of available space.	The initial approach adopted aimed to address the challenges emerging in the suburban areas, which gradually started to experience similar issues as the urban areas. These challenges include for example the inadequate provision of green spaces and the absence of modern, environmentally friendly lighting in streets and parks, the need of electric vehicles etc...
Moreover, financing poses a significant hurdle for rural and peri-urban areas, primarily due to the project implementation approach through local action groups or leaders. Combining diverse sources of financing for such projects often proves to be a complex undertaking, further complicating the ability to meet the specific needs and aspirations of these areas.	
Addressing these challenges necessitates strategic planning and concerted efforts to safeguard the integrity and vitality of rural regions, ensuring equitable access to essential services, preserving natural resources, and	

promoting sustainable development in the face of urbanization pressures.	
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What has not worked:

Lack of opportunities - rural areas are only connected to Leader in order to get funding – conflict of funding opportunities.

Lack of coordination between different funding strands.

**Guiding question #3:** [How could the integrated sustainable development strategy be utilized to enhance cooperation between a municipality, civic society, and businesses, in order to promote coherent local and regional action plans for a given sector (e.g., tourism)?]

**WHY/ Context:** Thessaloniki is investing to develop and promote its role as a major R&D and Innovation Centre and an economic gate of the South-East Europe and also as a tourist destination. Greece's second-largest city has always been referred to as the country's gastronomic capital but it also proudly became the first Greek city to join UNESCO's Network of Gastronomy -as reported by Greek City Times - recognized for its rich culinary traditions, vibrant gastronomic community, and delightful local delicacies. This distinction is adding to the dynamic presence of Thessaloniki, a city that features 15 UNESCO World Heritage Sites and has the potential to grow further and stand out as a tourism and cultural destination. So we want to enhance cooperation to promote coherent plans for tourism. We believe that we can use the good practice from the SUD planning and implementation to create a framework that should emphasize the importance of sustainable development and the benefits of cooperation.

Encourage partnerships and networks among businesses, civic society organizations, and the municipality. This can involve creating platforms for knowledge-sharing, promoting joint initiatives, and facilitating resource pooling. Building strong relationships among stakeholders enhances cooperation and allows for the exchange of best practices.

What has been done (and how did it work so far):

Implemented measures	How they worked so far
National, regional and local organisations for tourism/cultural promotion	n/a
In order to promote cooperation and achieve greater success in cultural and tourist development in Thessaloniki, it is crucial to establish common goals and a shared vision among stakeholders. Foster Collaboration and Partnerships Identify Shared Values and Priorities Stakeholder Engagement Continuous Communication and Feedback	

What has not worked:

Fragmented dialogue and action, too many authorities around tourism from different levels, lack of coordination to put forward action on tourism – bringing down silos.

Lack of calls that can put forward cooperation / lack of incentives



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