

Sustainable Development of Greek Islands and European Policy

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1 INTRODUCTION

The present paper intends to investigate how much the policy of the EU contributes in the sustainable development of the Greek islands. In order to achieve the objective mentioned above, prior to anything else, the terms "island" and "sustainable" are clarified and then the basic development problems and the economic physiognomy of islands are described. After that, the basic directions, policies and actions regarding the policy of EU, which aim directly or indirectly at assisting the Greek islands, are determined. This way the contribution of the EU policy in the sustainable development of the Greek islands is pointed out.

By the term "island", a piece of land which is surrounded by sea, is smaller than a continent, is created without human interference and can support residential and economic activity, is described. The EU, aiming at a better implementation of its regional policy, does not always regard as islands those which include state capitals (for example, Great Britain, Ireland etc.). Also, islands that are found too close to the continental country and some without socio-economic interest, or smaller than 1 square Kilometer in surface and population smaller than 50 residents are often excluded.

Attempting the interpretation of term "Sustainable Development", it should be underlined that, the term "sustainable" describes the term "development" and is related to the life and more specifically to the survival of all beings and humans in the environment. A place is considered sustainable when it involves a healthy environment, secures a higher quality of life and better conditions of existence in such a way, that it corresponds with modern requirements, without endangering future generations. Based on what has been mentioned above, an island is considered sustainable when all the factors, environmental, economical, social, cultural, are combined harmonically perpetually, thus ensuring a higher quality of life and social-economic prosperity for its residents both currently and in the future.

Islands, not only in Europe but globally, face sustainability problems that are often due to their inherent island character. They are located in remote areas, relatively to the big economic centers and for this reason they are often called "regional". Because of the marine barrier which surrounds them, their relations with other regions are diminished, the role that they play in economical, technological, cultural and political developments is limited, which puts them on the margins of current developments. Moreover, they are also characterized as "disadvantageous" because of their inherent weaknesses resulting from their limited area which does not allow them to advance easily towards a sustainable development process. Finally, island regions are often some of the most significant, but at the same time the most fragile natural resources worldwide and this is because they are closed regions that lack the ability of regeneration.

The European Union long identified the natural weaknesses of islands and in its effort to develop even the most remote location in its territory, it exercises its policy and the islands are included in its objectives. Through this process, it is clear that the Greek islands are suffering from all of the above mentioned weaknesses. They are also, however, the subjects of the intensifying policy of the EU, and under this scope, they are being researched in the present work.

2 DEVELOPMENT PROBLEMS AND ECONOMIC PHYSIOGNOMY OF THE ISLANDS

As mentioned in the introduction, an inhibitive factor in the development of the islands is their 'Regionality' and Isolation due to the marine barrier that surrounds them. The natural isolation, creates an increased transport cost, the installation of production units is discouraged and this results in either underdevelopment, or one-sided and non-domestically controlled development. The isolation combined with 'regionality' leads to an increased cost regarding the following:

- Financial cost, due to the operational expenses which businesses have to sustain. The cost of living is increased, since transportation to and from the islands, requires the use of a costly means of transport, either by sea or by air, which in its own turn equals to increased transportation expenses. Thus, the transport cost to the islands is often 30 - 40% higher than on the continental regions.

- The cost of works and infrastructure services, due to the negative economics scales which are created. In each island, even if this is not justified by the number of its residents, it is essential that basic infrastructures, necessary for its economic and social growth (for example, energy, transport, telecommunication, health etc.), exist.
- Opportunities cost, mainly for the young who may be benefited less by business, financial, or other opportunities .
- Cost of information, since information reaches these remote regions at slow rates, while at the same time specialized information comes at a cost.

All of the facts mentioned above, often constitute disadvantages and inhibitive factors regarding the process of development of the islands. However, the islands have developed their economic physiognomy, according to their individual potential. As for the primary sector of production, it plays the most important role. Agriculture makes up an important sector of employment, wherever there are suitable conditions (fertile cultivable area). Livestock-farming plays a similar role in the economy of these islands. Furthermore, islands which may have exploitable mines, exploit them ensuring economic resources.

Fishery, as is expected, has traditionally played an important role in the economic growth of most islands. Progressively however, as the piscatorial industry becomes more intense, things become more complicated in this sector and the islands are often faced with problems and competition from big piscatorial harbors of the Continental country. It is pointed out that the threat to the resources of fishermen in small European islands are the ships of the fishing industry which is based in Continental Europe. Nevertheless, in some islands success is being made by shifting the epicenter of production to shellfish farming and the aquaculture.

Regarding the secondary sector of production, things are much harder because of the natural restrictions faced by the islands (transport charges, lack of specialized workforce etc.). Thus, only a few have developed large scale industries, while there are more possibilities for medium-sized enterprises and the EU over the past few years has shifted towards this direction through its regional policy.

The tertiary sector has been faced with more luck in certain islands through tourist development. Of course, some islands profited economically and developmentally, while some others did not capitalize this event. In the islands of the first category, the economy developed and the level of life of their inhabitants was improved. It is not always possible to measure the exact influence of tourism in the local economy, however, it is clear that the tourism yields big profits for many remote island regions.

Of course, there are also negative repercussions in the economy of the islands because of tourism. For example, unplanned tourist activity and its expansion or integration in rural and urban land can have negative effects in the environment and in the ecosystem of island. Also, the additional population that occurs seasonally, increases the problems of water supply, waste disposal etc.

This, is often translated in marine pollution, exhaustion of the already limited natural resources of the islands, such as water and energy etc. On some islands air-pollution and noise-pollution because of the traffic congestion are not negligible, either. . A great danger also lies in the housing pressures that result from tourist installations which are increasing. It is noticed of course, that many islands over the last few years have been presented with a growth in the areas of construction and public works. This is related to the tourist industry (hotel and rural residences) and to the public investment programs that have taken place over the last few the last years.

It is underlined that many of the Greek islands that were developed through tourism, did not always follow sustainable rates. Viability is based on the balanced growth of all three sector of production and tourism itself, is part of the tertiary sector. Nowadays, there are Greek islands which base most of their income exclusively on tourism and little or not at all on other sources of the primary or secondary sectors of production, which puts the viability of their economy in danger

3 THE POLICY OF THE EUROPEAN UNION AND THE GREEK ISLANDS

For many years now, the EU takes into consideration the fact that n its territory includes islands, which as is recorded in its documents, "constitute special geographic units". Their size varies, and if the islands which host member-state capitals are excluded, the important islands of Europe with populations of over 50.000 residents are Sicily, Sardinia, the Tenerife, the Majorca, Guadeloupe, the Martinique, the Corsica, the

Madeira, La Reunion, Isle of Wight, Gran Canaria, Lanzarote, San Miguel, Tenceira, Grete, Rhodes, Hios, Minorca, La Palma.

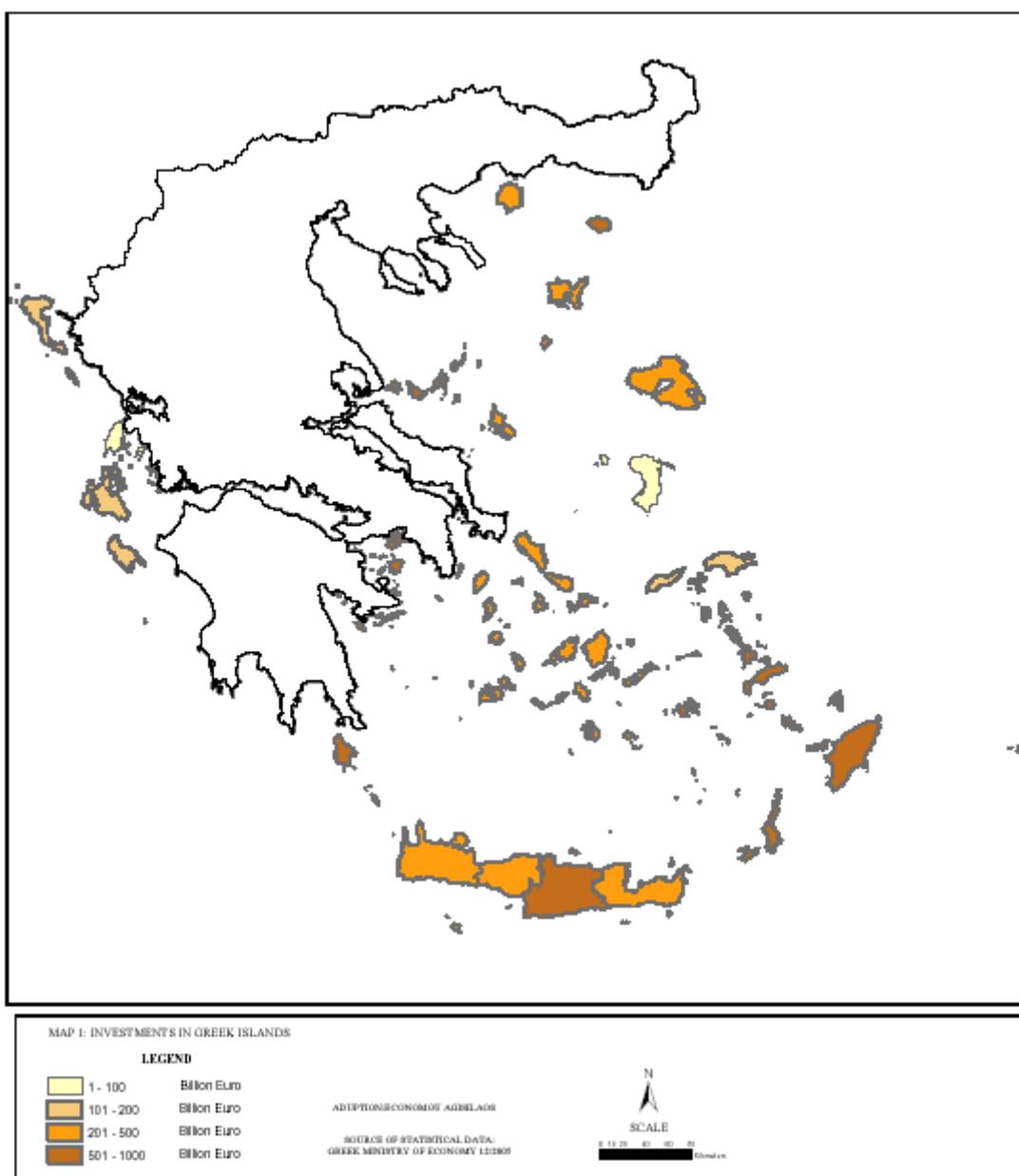
The usefulness of islands is great for the Union, provided that these give it the possibility to reach several seas and oceans, as the Baltic, the Mediterranean, the Indian Ocean, the Caribbean, the North Sea and the Atlantic Ocean. Some member states, because of their islands control marine areas holding significant fish and oil reserves. Also, the islands constitute an important source of tourism for Europe, produce a lot of goods of special interest, while they have rich natural beauty with appreciable geophysical and cultural elements. At the same time, islands are sensitive regions and are parts of the least developed regions of the EU. This emerges from the per capita crude product, demographic, level of education of residents, productivity, employment, invested chapter etc. indexes.

All the above reasons constituted important motives for the development of a European strategy aiming at the aid of island regions. For the last three decades, the Committee of Islands of the Forum of Coastal Peripheral Regions of the EEC (OKRM) deals with the subjects of islands. The OKRM was founded in 1973 by the regions of the then member-states, and had as its most basic demand the establishment of a common regional policy. It is a non-government organization, which tries to expose the problems of the regions found in the remote areas of the Community and are less developed. From 1978 it constitutes an official advisor of the EEC and has two main courses of action, the development of European regions and the sustainable development of coastal areas. The OKRM promotes the exploitation of the possibilities of information technology and telematics in order to create the suitable tool that will allow the European islands to manage the advantages and restrictions of their island nature efficiently.

Today, the EU, aiming at lifting the inequalities between its regions and the social–economic cohesion, exercises its regional policy and aims at a total developmental strategy. This includes the aid for the economic and social infrastructures, the rural growth, the improvement of competitiveness of enterprises, the improvement of the environment, the protection and the appointment of culture, the capitalization and growth of human resources, the rational tourist development, and more generally the improvement of life standards etc.

The above objectives are addressed to and concern the islands, provided that they constitutes disadvantageous regions in the Union. The ultimate goal is the sustainable development in all sectors: economy, society, culture, and environment. A basic action for the strengthening and the lifting of the isolation of islands is the creation of networks. The transport, energy and telecommunications networks, strengthen the remote and isolated regions such as islands, so that they link themselves with the continental country and with each other come out of their isolation.

Regarding Greece, since 1981 when it joined the European Economic Community, Greek regions received significant surges of resources and interventions and Directives, programs and finances were directed through Structural Funds, to the Greek regions. A significant financial support for the country was found in the Integrated Mediterranean Programs (IMP), which had an initial period of implementation from 1984-1989, but was extended until their completion. These programs aimed for the first time at the growth of the Greek regions including all four island regions, of Northern and Southern Aegean, Ionian Islands and Crete.



MAP 1: INVESTMENTS IN GREEK ISLANDS

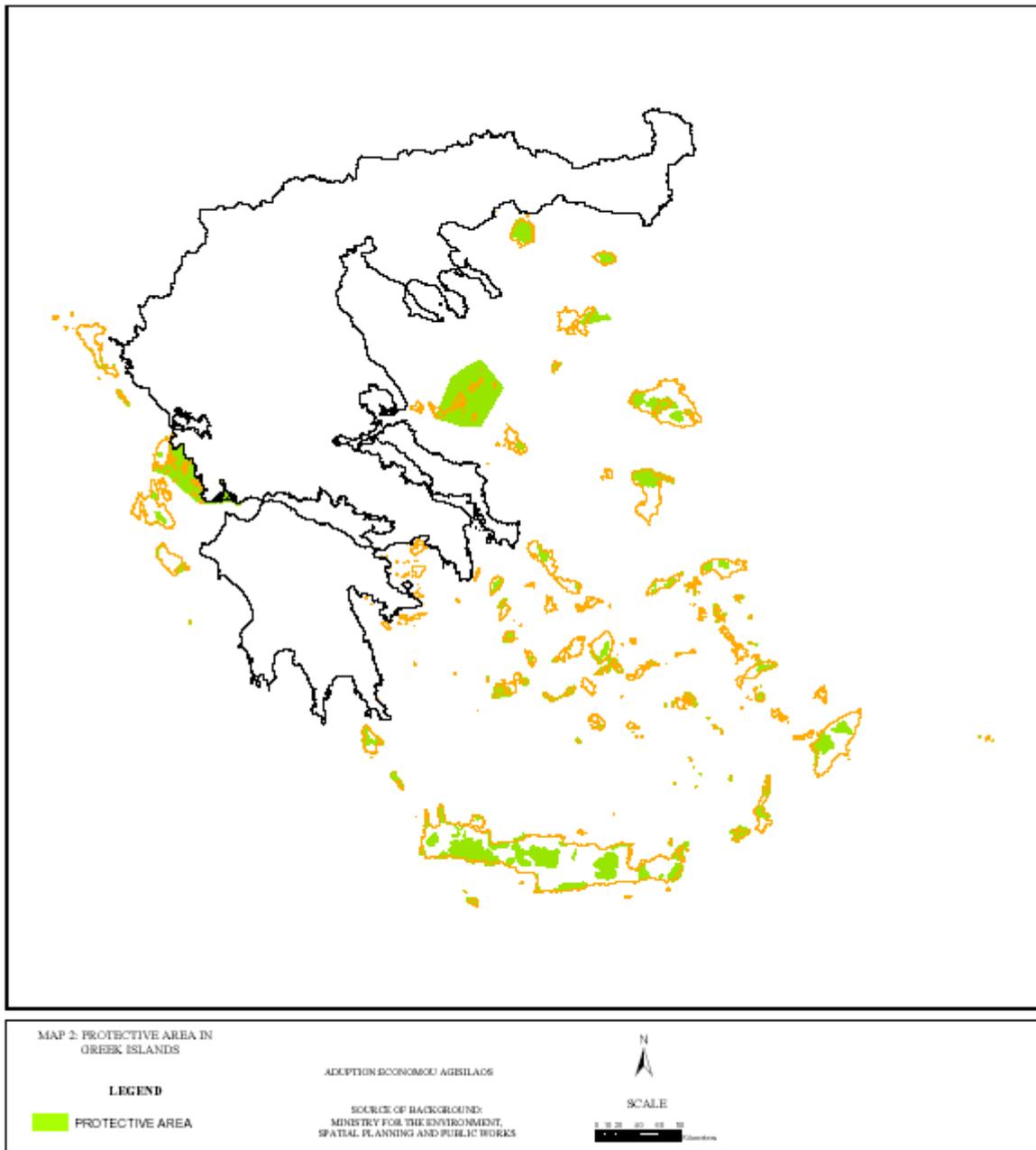
Six out of seven Programs of IMP corresponded with the six areas in which Greece was then administratively divided and the seventh was thematic (IMP of Information technology). The 3 Community Support Frameworks (CSF) also constituted a decisive aid for the Greek regions. The A' CSF or First Parcel Delors (1986-1994), aimed to assist the move towards an internal market and help the weakest economies and regions to face the consequences of the suppression of the internal borders of the Community. The application of this program is distinguished by the big dissemination in infrastructure works concerning the entire Hellenic space.

The B' CSF (1994-1999) was focused more in infrastructure works that contribute in diminishing the regional character of Greece and in the promotion of its internal completion. Its objectives concerned sectors as the environment, the improvement of the health system, urban development, the intensification of international competitiveness, modernization of agriculture and tourism, the reduction of regional developmental inequalities and the lifting of the isolation of Greek regions.

The C' CSF (2000-2006) aims at the completion all these works so that Greece can meet the future conditions of competition in the European and international environment. Its objectives concern the increase of productivity and the essential growth of the country via investments in anthropogenic, human and cognitive capital. A main feature of this period is the development of the country for its integration in the

Economic and Monetary Union as well as the implementation of big infrastructure works in the entire country: Road axes (PATHE, Egnatia Road), harbor, the modernization of Greek railway network, Metro of Athens, energy works (aeolian parks, natural gas), telecommunications, hospitals etc.

Within the framework of the three CFSs two forms of interventions were planned, interventions by sector and regional interventions. Regional interventions concern exclusively the 13 Greek regions, among which are the 4 island regions. At the time of this paper, the C' CSF is in progress and the D' CSF for the period 2007-2013, which sets as its main objective the sustainable economic development through social cohesion via a competitive and dynamic economy in which knowledge and full employment will constitute essential elements, is being prepared.



MAP 2: PROTECTIVE AREA IN GREEK ISLANDS

Moreover as far as Greece is concerned, actual convergence towards the average European standards and cohesion remain two of its main development objectives. The resources that have been proposed for the Policy for the Cohesion during the 4th Programming Period 2007 -2013 (D' CSF) amount up to 336, 1 billion Euros, they correspond to 0, 41% of GNP of the EU of the then 25 member-states. To this resources one should add the funds for the aid of rural growth and fishery in the regions of the so-called "Objective of

Convergence", which have been proposed to be 31,3 billion Euros for agricultural growth and 3,7 billions Euro for fishery.

More generally, as basic contents of the Policy for the Cohesion during the period of 4th CSF, the following are being proposed in order of precedence:

- Innovation and Economy of Knowledge
- Environment and Prevention of Hazards
- Accessibility and services of general Economic of Interest
- European Strategy for the Employment
- Special needs of least developed Regions and Member states (infrastructure, institution development)

Over the last years, Greek islands have been subjected to the above mentioned regional policy of the EU and have been included in the integrated strategic program of growth for the entire country.

Specifically, the objective is focused on tourism, with the simultaneous maintenance and aid of existing remaining economic activities. Tourism constitutes an important source of income, but the encouragement of alternative forms of tourism is set as a parallel goal to mainstream tourist development. For the development of the rural sector, the effort focuses on rural infrastructures, fishery and the promotion of traditional islands products.

The main works that were constructed over the last years are barrages and water supply networks, irrigation works, construction of rural roads, the assistance of live-stock production with the use of programs of genetic improvement, the aid of agricultural production with the financing greenhouse building and the construction of piscatorial shelters. A thrust in the aid of medium-sized enterprises via various motives and the use of human potential through training of the unemployed, was achieved.

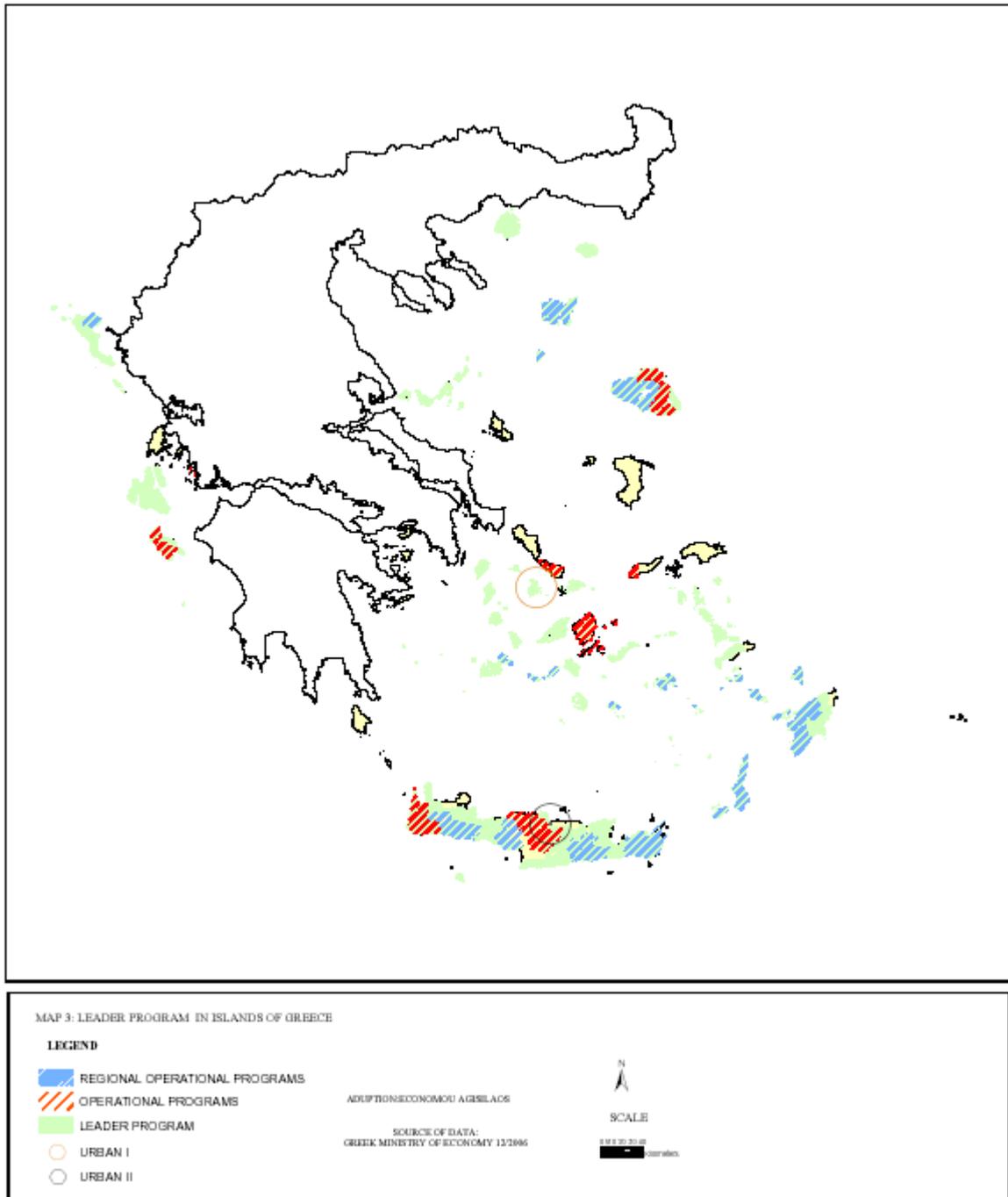
To support the primary sector the construction of shelters for fishing boats, interventions in natural forest regions, opening up or improvement of rural roads, construction of small dams, electrification of rural units, subsidies for the construction of flower-gardens, greenhouses are promoted. Also, the improvement and aid of infrastructures regarding transports (airports, harbors, and roads) as well as aiding mass media , are also goals.

An additional measure is the improvement of the productive environment with the aid of local high added value traditional cultivations and the promotion of such products. For the future, with the 4th programmatic period priorities for the islands are set. A fundamental objective is the creation of infrastructures for the economic growth. In the relative proposals it is reported that priority should be given to the sectors that concern the modernization of infrastructures of basic networks.

The environment, in its natural and also in its structured form, also constitutes a priority for the future. The protection, the safeguarding and the promotion of the natural environment is set as an objective. The structured environment also receives similar care. Thus, the protection of aquatic resources, the organization of land-planning, the completion of infrastructures in the structured environment, along with energy policy, constitute interventions that are programmed to be implemented within the framework of the 4th programmatic period.

Social infrastructures, services and education, are decisive factors for the sustainable development and the standard of life. The maintenance and the aid of infrastructures of services of social security and concern, the support and completion of infrastructures of education, the development of new systems of education as well as the support of infrastructures of health, constitute the most basic elements of priority.

Priority is also given to the human capital. The interventions for the next programmatic period have as an aim the training, upgrade and support of human potential, the support of institutions that deal with the work market, without of course ignoring the sensitive groups of the population. At the same time, the sector of public administration is important. The improvement of administrative capability in the public administration and institutions, is expected to be strengthened by suitable policies over the next period. Finally, inter-state collaboration is a goal for the future.



MAP 3: LEADER PROGRAM IN ISLANDS OF GREECE

Through these priorities the extrovert role of islands will be strengthened. The control of tourist activity, the qualitative upgrade of the tourist and cultural product are some of them. The objectives are the modernization of tourist infrastructure, emphasizing on a small number of alternative forms of tourism, the growth of international relations and cross-border programs, the promotion of culture through the form of experiences, and facing the problem of tourist education.

The improvement of approaching and the accessibility of region are also objective for the next period. The air and coastal links concern in the creation of qualitative land installations, routing of means, rearrangement of lines and political freight. The energy and the communications are a sector that will accept aid in the next programmatic period. Objective is the guarantee of networks capable they cover the current and future needs. The value of information technology has particular importance for regions more with difficulty accessible, as are the islands of South. Aegean, precisely because it offers new possibilities in the enterprises of region decreasing drastically the factor of isolation.

The production of high technology products is a sector that is investigated for the next period. The objective is to set specifications and arrangement studies for the suitable regions of installation for these investments (for example technological parks), to ensure the conditions of their operation (networks of energy, communications, transports, etc.), to promote and publicize the expected positive effects, so as to ensure the attraction of necessary human potential.

To emphasize on information technology, the involvement of local societies in the planning and their information regarding the designed policies in a simple and comprehensible way, to create motives both from the local government and the state so as to attract this type of enterprises and finally to transfer to these enterprises the academic technological experiences.

The configuration of a competitive enterprising environment is also a very important objective for the next period. A basic objective is the competitive planning and the economy of resources, the use of innovative tools in the financing, the planning in the attracting of capital and new enterprises, the emphasis on the quality and the reduction of work-cost, the priority of the economy of knowledge, the mapping of local business dexterity, the encouragement of feminine business dexterity.

For all of the above, efforts will be intensified even more for the support of low economic growth regions. This means, an engagement of resources intended exclusively for actions that will lead to the intraregional convocation and flexibility to the regulations of implementation.

4 CONCLUSIONS - THE CONTRIBUTION OF EU IN THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT OF THE GREEK ISLANDS

Through the apposition of the above mentioned policies, actions and objectives related to the strategic development program for the whole country and islands, it is realized that the Greek islands face important problems that result from their island character and more generally from their geophysical location. A conclusive presentation of the existing development process, of the prospects and the potential of the islands, has been attempted. The basic objective was to investigate the degree up to which the whole policy of the EU can contribute to the sustainable development of Greek islands.

The modern development model that imposed big scale economies and external economies, is an important cause of the current disadvantageous position of many islands. Most of them, due to inaccessibility and the remoteness, did not succeed in living up to modern requirements, as a result of which they fell short of their goals regarding development, were left behind which became evident in all expressions of their socio-economic life. It appeared however, that over the last years, the escalation of the Regional Policy of the EU, aiming at sustainable development and being applied via the CSFs, constitutes an opportunity for the islands.

The first results already have already been seen from the completion of the works built, those in progress, but also those programmed. One of the basic issues regarding the island regions, is that of maintaining their population. The aid that is given via the CSFs in all the sectors can contribute to the increase of the GNP, thus creating motives so much for maintaining the existing population, as for attracting new, provided that employment opportunities for the residents are amplified.

More specifically with regard to the economy and more specifically the employment sectors, (primary, secondary, tertiary), strategic programs are applied and objectives are set. The objective of Sustainable Development requires balanced development of all three sectors of production, so that each place is self-sufficient and autonomous with a minimization of economic dependences on external factors. Nevertheless of course, a steadily decreasing tendency in the employment of the population in the primary sector is being observed, presenting however high levels of specialization. The secondary sector - where it exists - is aided mainly at the level of medium-sized manufacturing enterprises.

A significant percentage of the activities of the tertiary sector is related to tourist enterprises. This percentage varies from region in region, nevertheless it maintains a high percentage in all four Greek island regions. The dangers facing a place which bases its economy entirely on tourism, has been pointed out, from time to time, by many scientists and experts. At the same time however, tourism constitutes an undeniably valuable economic resource for a lot of islands in the Greek island regions, therefore it should under no conditions be neglected..

One of the basic concerns for the Greek islands is to set tourism education and hospitality as a priority. Education is necessary for regions where tourism constitutes a sector of high importance, and the meaning of sustainable tourism should be made known to everyone. At the same time, the independency of tourist activities from the strictly coastal zone and their expansion towards the mainland of the islands, should be set as an objective.

The same must be done with the seasonal tourist assembly during the summer months. Tourism viability means dissemination throughout space and time, for economic, environmental, social and quality reasons and the Policy of the EU contributes, at the highest degree, to this direction. The utilization and promotion of culture and its connection to tourism, is a good example proving that.

The historical value of monuments and their important contribution in sustainable development has been determined. It has become evident that maintaining cultural heritage is necessary, as it sketches out the characteristics of each nation, is necessary for the survival of the past, provides useful information on the built environment of each time period, constitutes an aesthetic value which can also be translated financially.

Thus, with the aid of EU via the financing and the parallel initiatives of Local governments for the protection and promotion of cultural heritage, the extension of tourism through space and time can be aided and as result the sustainable development of islands can be assisted.

Also, it is importance to point out the important role of transportation and communications, and consequently of their proper organization. The islands, possibly without any further delay, will have to pursue a reduction in government interference with the adjustment of every detail regarding transportation. Competition creates a level of prices that in some cases may be lower than current prices. Moreover, the free configuration prices works in favor of the regular customer, meaning mainly the islanders.

Finally, the upgrading of coasting does not involve only new ships but good harbor infrastructures as well. Take into account the new programmatic period, harbors with future prospects should be designed. Coasting companies, as users of these harbors, should take part in this design

At the same time, the environment has already been determined as a central priority for development programs. In the future, still greater effort is required, provided that this constitutes perhaps, the most precious capital of the Greek islands. A serious increase of resources is also required, in absolute terms and relative terms, as a percentage of the total expenses. The success of the new design lies on the promotion of the comparative advantages of the islands and on the promotion and protection of natural wealth, so as to achieve a leap in quality, which will lead to the accomplishment of the objective of sustainable development.

The current policy of the EU via the C' CSF, includes a lot of infrastructure works or actions of social solidarity at a regional level, while others are to be included in the D' CSF. Thus, the efforts of state and local governments to contribute in sustainable, local and regional development of islands regions are supported. The Cohesion Fund, which is an independent from the C' CSF financing source, finances works related to the environment.

At the same time, the Special Management Services that aim at the more efficient management and implementation of the Regional Operational Programs (ROP) are operating in these regions. With regard to the action programs aiming at the growth of regions in all levels (viable, local and regional), appreciable effort from the program LEADER +, which finances investment proposals for the creation of rural farms, with animals, cultivations or trees and which will be open to visitors and provide overnight accommodation, is observed. Some islands have already benefited from all these initiatives. At the same time, as was made clear from the planning of the next period 2007-2013, which will concern the 4th CSF in the future they can benefit even more.

Also, international relations and cross-border programs may constitute a basic priority for the general development activity. This can increase the number of the tourists in Greece. Common tourist packages with neighboring countries such as Italy and Turkey can be created. Moreover, it is a fact that each island makes up an independent tourist destination and the islands' development policy should be coordinated with this event.. Besides, as it was underlines and above, this is the strongest point of many Greek islands, which is unique in Europe and perhaps and the whole world.

The object of the European programs is the improvement of the quality of life of the human potential. We saw that some of the actions that should be undertaken with the new P.E.P. are the development of new

sources of employment, the prevention and reduction of unemployment as well as actions of promotion of equal opportunities for people threatened with social exclusion, the improvement of employment dexterities in all productive sectors of the islands' economies, the growth of innovation aiming at the creation of suitable environment for the growth of productive activities. The positive steps are underway and in spite of the small size of some islands and their remote location from the capital and other big urban centers, these islands have made appreciable efforts to this direction.

It is repeated that all the programs and actions that already has been completed and those which are in progress now, undoubtedly have contributed in the growth of the islands. However, the problems that should be faced are of multiple categories and not one-dimensional. The action programs should aim at all kinds of problems: economical, environmental, social, development, cultural, giving to the islands a thrust for development in all sectors.

With the promotion of all kinds of networking by the EU (transports, energy, communication, and urban networks) a chance is given to the islands to come out of their isolation and to stop being characterized as remote and regional. Beside this, it must not get past us the fact that a lot of islands, in various phases of their history have developed important actions and demonstrated a big economic growth and occasionally constituted cradles of civilization. This constitutes a proof that the problems are not insuperable and that the small size of the islands and their remote nature cannot be considered as disadvantages and inhibitive reasons for their growth. On the contrary, with the suitable utilization of these facts, their current underdevelopment can be overturned.

For the promotion of the sustainable development of the islands, priority be given to the modernization - upgrading of tourist infrastructure the upgrading of dexterities of those employed in the secondary and tertiary sectors, the promotion of competitiveness in the rural sector, the improvement of infrastructure of rural regions aiming at the creation new job openings, the interconnection of rural regions with larger settlements etc should. Through all these, the local economy will be strengthened and developed, and the life standard of the population will improve. In all these, EU policy targeting at viable development, is particularly important.

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