

## GREECE

Quality of life in  
rural areas and  
diversification of  
the rural economy

### Location

Veria, Imathia region

### Programming period

2007-2013

### Axis / Priority

Axis 4 – LEADER

### Measure

313 - Encouragement of  
tourism activities

### Funding

Total budget 286 445 EUR  
EAFRD 107 417 EUR  
National 35 806 EUR  
Private 143 222 EUR

### Project duration

Mar 2011 – Dec 2015

### Project promoter

SME

### Contact

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### Website

n/a

EAFRD funding enabled the creation of an integrated sports and adventure centre that allows visitors to explore nature and also benefit from its environmental education services.

## Summary

The project created an integrated sports and adventure centre aimed at both adults and children. The centre allows visitors to explore nature and benefit from its environmental education services. Its adventure arena comprises a climbing track, archery area, mountain bike courses and a children's playground. Catering meets the specific needs of athletes as well as more general requirements.



The centre stretches over an area of around 25 hectares at an altitude of 600 meters. It is located on the road connecting the town of Veria with the ski centre of Seli, and meets all safety standards.

## Results

The project created a sports and adventure centre, complemented by environmental education facilities and catering services for athletes and visitors.

The centre is expected to increase visitor numbers to the region and improve understanding and respect for the natural value of the mountain area.

Boosting the area's value as a tourist destination will benefit other operators in the region and will improve the local economy as a whole.

## Lessons & Recommendations

- ❑ Seek out and learn from the experiences of similar initiatives to create sports and adventure centres nationally and internationally.
- ❑ Prioritise those aspects of most importance, such as safety and adaptation to the natural environment.
- ❑ Identify suitable partners especially those with technical expertise.
- ❑ Start the authorisation process as soon as possible and foster a good relationship with the competent authorities.
- ❑ Place sufficient importance on pilot operation in order to identify any weaknesses from the start.

## Context

The area around the mountain of Imathia was a prime location for an activity centre to fill in a gap in the current offering for visitors. Though the area was already able to accommodate overnight visitors, the only activity available was skiing, a weather-dependent activity.

Investment in the area could improve its attractiveness to visitors and extend the tourist season by offering activities during the non-peak months of March to October. Such investment would complement other tourist facilities that are currently operating in the area (hotels/lodges and restaurants/cafes).

## Objectives

The project aimed to help Imathia area become a popular, year-round tourist destination. It planned to offer a range of activities for visitors that utilise the natural assets of the region while offering modern conveniences.

Its main objective was to create the company, which offers sports and leisure services (including a restaurant) along with basic environmental education.



## Activities

Excavation work for the new centre took place in late 2010 and early 2011 ahead of the construction of the buildings. Mostly 'natural' materials were used with a view to incorporating the new structures into the natural environment.

At this time, the team visited other centres in Latvia and further afield (Germany) to learn from their experiences and help establish the specifics of their centre.

In the summer of 2013 the construction of the adventure tracks began, in collaboration with two specialist companies from abroad that could guarantee the desired security characteristics of the installation.

The work lasted almost two years, since the altitude and weather conditions do not allow work to be carried out during the winter. The landscaping work and the planting of fruit trees and conifers was completed during this period.

In the spring and summer of 2015, all necessary equipment was purchased and installed, following exhaustive research in order to achieve the best price. The adoption of the statutory licence was acquired from Municipality of Veria in December 2015. The centre was thus ready to receive its first visitors in the spring of 2016.



Additional sources of information

n/a