

## GREECE

# Local development

**Location**  
Leonidio

**Programming period**  
2014 – 2020

**Priority**  
P6 – Social inclusion & local development

**Measure**  
M19 – LEADER/CLLD

**Funding (EUR)**  
RDP support 56 014.20

**Project duration**  
2016 – 2017

**Project promoter**  
Municipality of South Kynouria

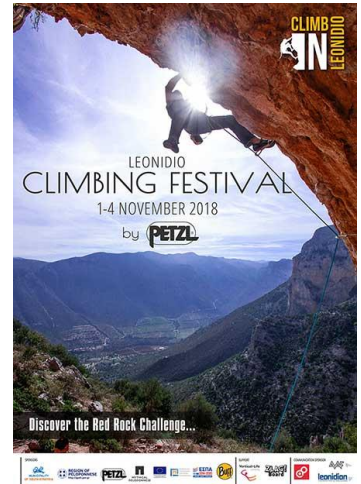
**Contact**  
[hlysikatos@gmail.com](mailto:hlysikatos@gmail.com)

**Website**  
[www.climbinleonidio.com](http://www.climbinleonidio.com)

Using LEADER support to set up a climbing park and create opportunities for diversified local economic development.

## Summary

The economy of the municipality of South Kynouria, Peloponnese, is largely dependent on agriculture and tourism. The recent economic crisis in Greece had a major impact on the area as tourism suffered and unemployment increased, especially amongst young people. In order to support local economic development, the local Regional Development Company of Parnonas helped to set up a climbing park. The project financed activities such as the opening of new climbing routes, the creation of a climbing festival and the production of a climbing guide featuring the available routes.



## Results

There are now almost 600 new climbing routes opened and many more planned.

There is an increased number of visitors beyond the summer season. This benefits the wider region (food and beverage, hotels, camping, renting of houses etc.).

During the last Climbing Festival, which took place in November 2018, there were more than 1 500 visitors.

Two new bars/restaurants have opened which are employing more than 10 people.

## Context

The economy of the municipality of South Kynouria, Peloponnese, is largely dependent on agriculture and on tourism. The recent economic crisis in Greece also had a major impact on local tourism. The number of visitors arriving reduced and unemployment in the area increased, especially among young people. There was a need to find an alternative way to promote economic development in the area.

Climbing in the Leonidio area began in the 1980s. Next to the city stands a large red rock that local people call 'Kokkinovrachos'. The rock is overlooking the city centre and is inextricably linked to the traditional settlement. In 1986 and in 1987 several new routes were opened and gradually, over the years the Leonidio area became a climbing hotspot. The 'Elona' climbing field was created in 2008.

The local Regional Development Company of Parnonas supported a project to set up a climbing park. The project included the opening of new climbing routes, the creation of a climbing festival and the production of a climbing guide featuring the available routes. At the same time, the municipality of South Kynouria started embracing the idea of 'climbing tourism' and opened the additional routes and financially boosts their efforts.

## Objectives

The project aimed to

- Improve the competitiveness of the area by offering an alternative and diversified economic activity.
- Attract an increased number of visitors to the area.
- Create economic benefits, not only for the project itself, but also for local businesses.

## Activities

The Leonidio Climbing Park was implemented through the local development strategy of the LAG PARNONAS. The project was rolled out in two phases through applications which were submitted by the Alpine Club of Athens in cooperation with the Municipality of South Kynouria.

The first application was submitted under the 2<sup>nd</sup> Call for proposals and received €39 900.

The second application was submitted under the 5<sup>th</sup> Call for proposals and received an amount of €56 014.

The main activities proposed under the 2<sup>nd</sup> Call for proposal entitled 'Creation of the climbing park of Leonidio' concerned the creation of a climbing park including carrying out the necessary studies and acquiring relevant licences, opening 140 new climbing routes, the installation of permanent rock collars, the creation of access routes to climbing fields, scoring and stamping of the climbing routes and marking the paths, the publication of a printed climbing guide and the creation of a website. It also anticipated a two-day festival for the promotion of the park including different events and an open boulder race on a special artificial climbing track.

The activities supported under the 5<sup>th</sup> Call for proposals, project titled 'Completion of Leonidio Climbing Park', concerned the creation of 200 additional climbing routes, zoning and equipment of climbing routes with permanent anchor points, setting up appropriate access infrastructure (tracking - improvement of paths, additional marking) and mapping, and designing and producing advertising material.



The following stakeholders cooperated for the implementation, operation and promotion of the project:

- Municipality of South Kynouria
- Alpine Club of Athens
- Regional Development Company of Parnonas
- Leonidio chamber of commerce
- Cultural Association of Leonidio
- Athletic Association of Leonidio
- Speleologists Climbers of Kynourias
- Association of hoteliers in Arcadia
- Local SMEs
- Local population and volunteers

## Main Results

The Leonidio Climbing Park has brought visible economic benefits beyond Leonido to the wider area of the municipality of South Kynouria including an increased number of visitors beyond the summer season, the creation of new jobs and economic benefits for the region as visitors use local businesses for food & drink and accommodation.

The climbing park has also reduced the out migration from the area.

As an alternative form of tourism, the climbing park uses unintrusive infrastructure, that is in harmony with the natural environment.

Thanks to the project there is a dynamic change in the economic activity in Leonidio. Two new bar/restaurants have opened which are employing more than 10 people. A

non-profit cooperative was established, named 'Panjika', which acts as a meeting point for climbers and offers a café, a market with local products, live concerts and art exhibitions and recently a new climbing shop.

There has also been an increase in jobs related to construction which, due to the economic crisis, had been affected significantly. The main reason for this is residents renovating their houses and renting them out to climbers mainly through the AirBnB platform. Now, some more than 200 houses are available for rental.

There is also an increase in volume of the visitors and mainly in the winter, as this is the best time of the year for climbing. During the last Climbing Festival which took place in November 2018, there were more than 1 500 visitors.

Since the beginning of the project there have been almost 600 new routes opened and many more are planned.



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## Additional sources of information

n/a