Regions in action, a country on the move
A selection of successful projects supported by the Structural Funds in Greece
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Cover picture: a metro station in Athens.

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Foreword

Situated in the heart of Europe, Greece is the cradle of western culture and an essential link between western Europe and the future Member States of the European Union, the Balkans, the Black Sea and the eastern Mediterranean.

In recent years, through its development, economic stability and membership of the euro zone, Greece has shown that it is a reliable economic partner in the single market. It has also experienced a considerable increase in wealth and in doing so has closed the gap with the other Member States.

Economic and social development in Greece has been greatly assisted by the Structural Funds and the Cohesion Fund. This support has allowed the country to achieve a number of objectives: to build a modern transport system tailored to the requirements of the European economy, and to implement a number of other infrastructural projects, to develop human resources, to boost the competitiveness of the manufacturing and services sectors, to develop rural areas and agriculture, to improve quality of life, to facilitate universal access to the information society, and to ensure the balanced development of the regions beyond the two metropolitan areas of Athens and Thessaloniki.

Following are some examples of projects that have been implemented in Greece with support from the Structural Funds. The regional partners have also developed a multitude of other initiatives, big and small, in a wide range of areas. All of these projects have had a positive impact on Greece, in terms of both the quality of life of its inhabitants and the competitiveness of Greek businesses. These achievements make it possible to look to the future with confidence.

But these projects also have a genuine Community dimension. The European Union has much to gain from the harmonious development of its entire territory, especially in the context of enlargement to the east and south. It is important that economic and social progress is shared between Europe’s regions. Businesses from throughout the European Union, as well as from Greece, have been involved in implementing the Structural Funds programmes in their own countries, contributing to their success and also benefiting from the emerging market opportunities.

To ensure that the efforts of the European Union and its public and private partners in Greece have maximum impact, the Funds must of course be well managed. This responsibility lies with the Commission and the Greek authorities, who are ultimately accountable to Greek and European taxpayers.

The success of the 2000–06 programmes is essential to ensuring that the capacity for sustainable development is consolidated in Greece, for the benefit of all concerned.

Michel Barnier,
European Commissioner responsible
for regional policy and institutional reform
Instruments of European regional policy in Greece

The aim of regional policy is to facilitate the harmonious development of the European Union by helping to bridge the gap between the developed and less developed regions. Around one third of the Union's budget is allocated to the regions and to disadvantaged communities, via the Structural Funds and the Cohesion Fund.

There are four Structural Funds: the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), the European Social Fund (ESF), the European Agricultural Guidance and Guarantee Fund (EAGGF — Guidance Section) and the Financial Instrument for Fisheries Guidance (FIFG). Their combined budget for 2000 to 2006 is EUR 213 billion. This is used to supplement public and private expenditure in the Member States to support the implementation of economic and social development programmes. Funds are channelled into three priority objectives: helping regions whose development is lagging behind to catch up (Objective 1); supporting economic and social conversion in areas facing structural difficulties (industrial, urban, rural or fisheries-dependent areas, Objective 2) and modernising systems for training and promoting employment (Objective 3). The entire country of Greece is considered to be Objective 1.

The Cohesion Fund (EUR 18 billion for 2000–06) supplements Structural Funds support in the Member States that were deemed to be the least prosperous in...
late 1999 (Greece, Portugal, Spain and Ireland). The Cohesion Fund supports projects involving environmental protection and European transport networks.

To complement the priority objectives, the Structural Funds also support a number of programmes that operate in all the Member States. These programmes, referred to as the Community initiatives, aim to address specific problems that have a particular impact throughout the Union. The Community initiative programmes are **Interreg III** (cross-border, transnational and interregional cooperation), **URBAN** (economic and social regeneration of cities and urban districts in crisis), **Leader+** (innovative actions and integrated strategies for rural development), and **EQUAL** (transnational cooperation to support equal access to training and the labour market). Added to these are the ERDF-funded **innovative actions** programmes, which aim to encourage the emergence of innovative strategies to promote regional competitiveness.

In addition to providing finance, the European Union also assists Member States in drawing up development strategies that take account of Community priorities. In Greece, as in other Objective 1 regions, these strategies are globally defined in documents called **Community support frameworks** (CSF), which are then broken down into more detailed **operational programmes**. The selection and implementation of specific projects is entirely decentralised to the Member States. The national authorities and the European Commission jointly monitor these projects.
Instruments of European regional policy in Greece
Regions in action, a country on the move

Greece: Structural Funds 2000–06: Objective 1 areas

Source: EuroGeographics Association for the administrative boundaries (1997)
European Union regional development aid has already helped to redistribute Europe’s wealth to the benefit of the less prosperous Member States and regions. As a result, Greece has enjoyed real growth in excess of the European average since 1996. Per capita income (gross domestic product — GDP) is now closer to the EU average. In 2001, GDP was 71 % of the average for the current 15 Member States, compared with 58 % in 1989 and 64 % in 1993 (1). This catching-up process continues independently of the overall European growth rate.

This improvement in Greece’s overall economic situation enabled it to join the euro zone on 1 January 2001. Current structural reforms in the capital, employment and product markets will further benefit the country in the future. In addition, disparities between regions in Greece are not as marked as in many other Member States, and even though the country’s geographical situation is peripheral in the context of the current Union, it does provide major prospects for cooperation with the Balkan States and with eastern Mediterranean and Black Sea countries.

However, in spite of these encouraging developments, Greece continues to struggle with a number of handicaps, including inadequate infrastructure (particularly in terms of transport, the environment and urban areas), high unemployment (10.2 % in 2001, compared with an average of 7.6 % for the current 15 Member States of the European Union), particularly among young people and women, and under-investment in new information technology, research and development, and workforce skills have all led to poor productivity.

The Community support framework: focusing on openness and modernisation

With the signing of the Community support framework (1) in November 2000, Greece embarked on an ambitious regional development programme. The objective of this programme is to complete the catching-up process, to finalise the modernisation of the country and to open it up to wider cooperation, based on the seven priorities for which it receives European Union support. The first six priorities, which cover the whole of the country, are as follows.

- Development of human resources and employment promotion (Programmes for ‘Education and initial training’ and ‘The promotion of employment and continuous training’).

Communications (The ‘Road transport, ports, and metro’ programme and the ‘Railway transport, airports, and other urban transport’ programme).

Enhancing competitiveness for sustainable development (The ‘Enhancing competitiveness for sustainable development’ programme).

Rural development and fisheries (The ‘Rural development’ and ‘Fisheries’ programmes).

Quality of life (The ‘Environment and natural heritage’, ‘Culture’ and ‘Health and welfare’ programmes).

Information society (The ‘Information society’ programme).

The seventh priority, regional development, is divided into 13 regional programmes, which are tailored to the specific requirements of Greece’s 13 regions.

Total funding of nearly EUR 25 billion has been allocated to Greece under the 2000–06 CSF, compared with EUR 19.271 billion for the period 1994 to 1996. Greece is also due to receive EUR 3.060 billion from the Cohesion Fund.

It is estimated that during the 2000–06 period, total GDP growth will be 2.2 % higher than it would have been without Community aid, and that this aid will represent more than 8 % of total public and private investment in Greece (1).

### The 2000–06 programmes in Greece: breakdown of the EU contribution (million EUR, 1999 prices)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CSF priorities</th>
<th>Structural Funds</th>
<th>Cohesion Fund</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Human resources</td>
<td>3 280.1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communications</td>
<td>4 501.8</td>
<td>1 660.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Competitiveness</td>
<td>1 976.7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agriculture and fisheries</td>
<td>1 470.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality of life</td>
<td>1 284.4</td>
<td>1 660.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information society</td>
<td>1 702.2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technical assistance</td>
<td>63.7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regional development (13 regions)</td>
<td>7 041.7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total CSF (1)</strong></td>
<td><strong>22 707.0</strong></td>
<td><strong>3 320.0</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(1) Including reserve amounts (1 386.4).

NB: EUR 3 782.4 million in European Investment Bank loans in addition to EU subsidies.

### Regional development (by region)

- **Eastern Macedonia and Thrace**: 733.4
- **Central Macedonia**: 903.4
- **Western Macedonia**: 372.2
- **Epirus**: 436.0
- **Thessalia**: 563.4
- **Ionian Islands**: 244.7
- **Western Greece**: 478.5
- **Central Greece**: 531.5
- **Attica**: 1 120.0
- **Peloponnese**: 457.0
- **Northern Aegean Sea**: 361.6
- **Southern Aegean Sea**: 372.2
- **Crete**: 467.8

### Community initiatives

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Structural Funds (1)</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Interreg III</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>URBAN II</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EQUAL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leader+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(1) Indicative amounts available for Greece.

**Innovative actions**: Available budget for these actions (up to 0.4 % of the total resources of the Structural Funds) has not been allocated in advance per Member State.
Examples of national projects
If any transport route has played a key role in Greece over the centuries, it is the Via Egnatia. This was the ancient Roman road through northern Greece which linked the Adriatic to Byzantium. The present day motorway of the same name recreates the link with this historic route and its strategic importance has made it one of the 14 priority projects in the trans-European transport network.

Under construction since 1990, the Egnatia motorway (680 km long, with two lanes and a hard shoulder in each direction, except in certain mountainous areas) is due to be completed in 2006. Once completed, the journey from Kipi, on the Turkish border, to the port of Igoumenitsa, near Albania, will be reduced to six hours. It will serve seven airports and five major ports. The construction project will include 50 road interchanges, 350 slip roads, 1650 bridges, spanning a total of 40 km, and 76 tunnels, totalling around 50 km in length.

Together with the PATHE motorway (‘Patras–Athens–Thessaloniki’), which runs to the Bulgarian border, the Egnatia motorway will form the backbone of the Greek road network. It will play a central role in developing the country’s peripheral northern regions and in boosting external economic relations with the rest of Europe. In addition to connecting Greece with Turkey, nine perpendicular routes will also link the motorway to the Balkan States (Albania, Former Yugoslavian Republic of Macedonia and Bulgaria).

The main work carried out in the 1994–99 period included the Kavala bypass (26 km), the Komotini–Mesti section in Thrace (31 km), and the Grevena–Kozani–Polymylos stretch in Western Macedonia (62 km). The Komotini–Mesti section required the building of bridges over six ravines, with piers rising as high as 70 m. Due to the presence of geological faults, the construction required the use of special technology. On the Grevena–Kozani–Polymylos section, a 435 metre-long bridge was built over the Lissos River. This required the use of the incremental launching method, the first time this method was ever used in Greece (1). The incremental launching method has a number of advantages over other methods, such as speeding up construction and reducing the environmental impact. Detailed archaeological excavation work had to be carried out during the construction of the Grevena–Kozani–Polymylos section.

Protecting the environment and cultural heritage are an ongoing concern for Egnatia Odos SA (limited company set up by the Greek Government in 1997 to manage the project), which earmarks 8 % of its budget for activities in these areas. This means that all building work is preceded by an impact assessment and construction companies have to comply with certain criteria.

![The Kavala by-pass was a major undertaking.](image)

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1 Procedure that involves pushing the segments of the bridge floor into place, one against the other, on top of previously erected supporting columns.
Gas pipelines to cut pollution

With the lowest emission of polluting substances, natural gas is the cleanest of all fossil fuels. It is also one of the most energy efficient, making it suitable for both reducing the consumption of oil and reducing atmospheric pollution.

The aim of the national ‘Natural gas’ programme, which was undertaken in the 1994–99 period, was to extend Greece’s network of gas pipelines to new regions, to enhance its ability to satisfy consumer needs and to ensure security of supply. At the same time, the Interreg programme aimed to open up new sources of natural gas and therefore reduce Greece’s dependence on gas piped from Russia (1).

Projects to receive European assistance as part of the Interreg programme included the completion of the central gas pipeline from the Bulgarian border (512 km), branch pipelines to Komotini (217 km), Attica (125 km), Thessaloniki/Larissa/Volos (75 km), and two liquefied natural gas (LNG) reservoirs on the rocky islet of Revythoussa. This site, situated in the Megara Gulf, was also chosen to house a storage terminal for LNG shipped from Algeria for re-gasification, making it possible to satisfy peaks in energy demand. It is a technologically advanced facility and meets high safety standards, particularly with regard to seismic risks. Its current capacity of 270 m³/hour will eventually increase to 1 000 m³/hour.

The ‘Natural gas’ programme included the construction of medium-pressure networks (362 km) and low-pressure networks (1 014 km). It also involved establishing above-ground installations, a remote monitoring and remote control system, and cryoplants for the LNG reservoirs.

These projects created a total of 3 000 temporary jobs and led to the creation of 200 permanent jobs. A major project for the 2000–06 period includes the further integration of the Greek network into the European and international natural gas networks (a connection between Greece and Italy and a gas pipeline to the Greek/Turkish border).

Revythoussa island (Attica).

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**Project:** ‘Natural gas’ operational programme and the Interreg II ‘Completion of energy networks’ programme

**Total eligible cost:** ‘Natural gas’ EUR 648 600 000, Interreg II EUR 503 200 000

**EU funding:** ‘Natural gas’ EUR 298 356 000, Interreg II EUR 201 280 000

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(1) The main aim of the Interreg II Community initiative (1994–99) was to support programmes for cross-border cooperation and the development of energy networks.
For a long time now, the renewable power of water has been harnessed for a wide variety of hydraulic applications and it is currently the most common renewable energy source (RES) for the production of electricity. In Greece, hydroelectric power stations produced 3,693 gigawatts/hour of electricity in 2000, compared with a total of 4,145 gigawatts/hour from RESs as a whole (including biomass, wind energy, solar power stations, photovoltaic solar arrays, geothermal energy, etc.). Most of this hydroelectric power is generated by large power stations.

However, the full potential of these large power stations is already being largely exploited, or they are confronting environmental problems that limit further expansion. Even though water is a clean energy, the construction of major dams often requires the flooding of natural sites, disrupting biotopes and resulting in other negative environmental impacts. However, small hydroelectricity power stations have so far been relatively unexploited, and they have a number of potential advantages over larger stations. They do not require the construction of large-scale and expensive infrastructure, they are well suited to the needs of rural areas and, potentially, they have a much lower impact on the environment.

For this reason, the Greek authorities decided to launch projects for small-scale hydroelectric power stations as part of the European Union-supported programme for developing RESs. The private sector, which was given financial incentives to implement the projects, contributed 55% of the total cost. Although projects were planned throughout the country, they tended to be concentrated in regions with high hydroelectric potential. The nine projects that were completed successfully in the 1994–99 period, with a total installed power of 11.5 megawatts, are situated in the departments of Ioannina (Anatoliki, Anthochori, Mikro Peristeri and Distrato), Arta (Theodoriana), Karditsa (Vatsounia), Serres (Agkistro) and Laconia (Selegoudi). The energy targets of these plants have been largely achieved. The construction work created temporary local employment and led to 12 permanent jobs.

The Anatoliki micro-power station in Epirus is fairly typical of these smaller plants. It has an installed capacity of 700 kilowatts, for an output of 460 litres/second, and achieves an annual electricity production target of four gigawatts. Difficult meteorological and geological conditions and obstacles delayed the completion of a connecting line with the electricity mains until late 1999. However, the implementation of these projects, despite the difficulties, has promoted the transfer of experience and encouraged new applications for licences to build and run small hydroelectric power stations.

**Project:** Projects for small hydroelectric power stations  
**Total eligible cost:** EUR 17.19 million  
**EU funding:** EUR 5.8 million  
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The wind is an inexhaustible source of energy that does not require any raw materials and produces neither waste nor greenhouse gases. Successors of the windmills, which have been used since ancient times, modern-day wind turbines are much lighter structures, with excellent aerodynamics. They can also generally be sensitively integrated into the landscape, provided that they are appropriately sited. Technological improvements continue to reduce noise levels of wind turbines, and the minimal damage caused to birds (which mostly tend to avoid them) is infinitely smaller than the damage caused by pollution.

The rapidly expanding wind sector has also become less expensive and more profitable, with production costs only a 10th of what they were 10 years ago. Together with the other renewable energy sources (RESs), wind energy helps to reduce fuel consumption and to increase energy self-sufficiency. By giving local communities the capacity to exploit endogenous resources, wind energy has significant potential in rural areas, as well as in peripheral and island regions.

Blessed by Aeolus, the god of wind, Greece has a considerable wind resource. Although exploitation of this resource has been limited, it still accounted for 451 gigawatts/hour of electricity in 2000, which is equivalent to 135.3 million litres of fuel oil (around 0.3 litres of oil is needed to produce one kilowatt/hour). Having decided to ‘go with the wind’ between 1994 and 1999, the national authorities, with European Union assistance, set up a programme to promote RESs which involved the establishment of wind generator parks. Financial incentives to attract private investors proved to be very successful, with the private sector contributing 60 % of the total cost of the projects.

The proposals were assessed on the basis of a series of criteria relating to technical aspects and the choice of sites. Some of these criteria included exposure to prevailing winds, open location, proximity to a local electricity distribution system, distance from houses, and respect for archaeological heritage and nature preservation. Of the 19 projects approved, 15 have been successfully completed, providing a total installed power of 119.2 megawatts. Although this was a national programme, the regions with the best wind exposure showed the greatest interest and also submitted the best proposals. As a result, 12 projects were located in the department of Euboea, two in the Dodecanese and one in the Cyclades Islands. Inspection of completed projects has shown that in general they have achieved their energy objectives. In all, 21 permanent jobs have been created and a number of temporary jobs for local residents were also created during the construction.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Project: Projects to exploit wind energy</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total eligible cost: EUR 127,993 million</td>
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<tr>
<td>EU funding: EUR 38.4 million</td>
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<tr>
<td>Contact:</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ministry of Development</td>
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<tr>
<td>Autonomous office for managing Community programmes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mesogeion 119</td>
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<td>GR-10192 Athens</td>
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<tr>
<td>c/o Mrs Georgia Laskari</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tel. (30) 21 06 96 95 21</td>
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<td>Fax (30) 21 06 96 94 60</td>
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<tr>
<td>E-mail: <a href="mailto:laskari@ypan.gr">laskari@ypan.gr</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Web site: <a href="http://www.ypan.gr/index_uk.htm">http://www.ypan.gr/index_uk.htm</a></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Windfarm in Euboea (Central Greece).
Although the gods of Olympus and the history of mankind have endowed Greece with an abundance of tourist attractions, the country’s hotel infrastructure is still poorly developed. The standard of service continues to vary greatly and the quality/price ratio is uncompetitive in the Mediterranean context. To address this issue, the Ministry of the Economy and Finance, together with the European Union, co-financed a project to improve the standard of tourist amenities. This included supporting investment in the modernisation of hotels and in the conversion of old traditional buildings into new hotels.

The measures supported focused on improving the quality of basic facilities (bathrooms, air conditioning, etc.), enhancing furnishings and decoration, installing leisure facilities, such as swimming pools and sports areas, and developing services such as childcare, conference rooms and thalassotherapy. Attention was also given to the quality of hotel architecture, not only aesthetically but also from an environmental perspective (energy savings, choice of materials, etc.). By converting old traditional buildings, often situated in old urban centres and listed as historic monuments, into hotels, it was possible to anchor tourist amenities in a cultural context and so foster alternative tourism. Another reason for improving facilities and services was to extend the tourist season to eight months (from the current six) by improving hotel facilities during the cooler season and by organising conferences, seminars, etc.

The project resulted in the modernisation of 85 hotels (involving the renewal of 32,481 beds) and the conversion of 28 traditional buildings into hotels (684 new beds). The modernisation work provided 622 temporary jobs and the conversion work provided a further 218. Further employment was created with the opening of the new hotels.

The project: Qualitative modernisation of hotels and the conversion of traditional buildings into hotels

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total eligible cost:</th>
<th>EUR 175,596 million</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>EU funding:</td>
<td>EUR 32,998 million</td>
</tr>
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</table>

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A Cretan hotel which has benefited from the programme.
Starting your own business can be more difficult if you’re a woman. In general, financial institutions are more reluctant to provide women with capital and, in many instances, friends and family are not very supportive. As a result, female entrepreneurship tends to be under-exploited in Greece, even though the female unemployment rate is very high compared with that of men, particularly in the 21–45 age bracket. This encouraged the Ministry of Development to establish an initiative to promote female entrepreneurship.

The initiative involved the provision of ongoing support to female entrepreneurs (particularly in the start-up stage). This support included advice on economics, financing, taxation, law and management. The aim was to foster both the creation of viable new companies by women and the development of existing companies in which 51% of the share capital belonged to women and where women had an irrefutable share in management responsibilities.

During the programme implementation period (1999–2001), 431 applications for support were received. Of these, 198 were approved and 132 enterprise projects were successfully completed. Thirty-nine of these involved the creation of new SMEs and 93 concerned the development of existing companies. The projects were divided among 33 departments, some in peripheral regions, but with the main concentration in Greece’s two largest cities (59 projects in Athens and 24 in Thessaloniki).

The businesses supported covered a broad range of sectors — 18 in total. The majority were in the publishing and printing industry (21 firms), the food and beverage industry (20) and the clothing industry (18). In order of greatest importance, investments focused on capital expenditure (equipment, software, etc.), product promotion (brochures, videos, participation in exhibitions, etc.) and consultancy.

In spite of difficulties arising from the lack of experience of some of the women involved, the results were largely positive. In addition to the setting-up or development of 132 businesses, the programme also resulted in the creation of 389 new jobs, the widespread application of new information and communication technologies (50% of the women participants have created their own web site) and the acquisition of ISO 9000 (1) certification (quality policy standard) by 30% of the companies involved.


Georgia Karayiannaki established her own publishing business.

| Project: Promotion of female entrepreneurship |
| Total eligible cost: EUR 11.896 million |
| EU funding: EUR 5.948 million |

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The 300 or so ‘public financial services’ (DOYs), whose staff of 15,000 collect and check tax receipts in Greece, were for many years ineffective and poorly coordinated. This made it difficult to process information on a national scale and prevented the central government from properly evaluating and developing fiscal policy. However, this situation changed radically with the completion of the TAXIS project — the largest and most complex computerisation project ever attempted in Greece and one of the biggest in Europe.

With support from the European Union, the Ministry of the Economy and Finance successfully implemented the TAXIS project between 1992 and 2001. The central objective of the project was to install an integrated computer system into all 300 DOYs. But innovation was not confined to technology alone: it also involved the development of a public/private partnership between ministerial departments and Greek and foreign IT businesses. The project included technical training and general up-skilling of staff from the DOYs and the central administration, and the renovation of offices and improvements to the working environment.

All the DOYs have now been computerised and linked to the Ministry’s General Secretariat for IT Systems. The DOYs are also connected to each other, which gives taxpayers access to services located outside of their own district. Since 2000, an online service, TAXISnet, has also been available, which allows public access.

TAXIS offers a range of advantages to both citizens and the administration. It provides citizens with faster and more efficient information and advisory services, cuts down the need for travel, and facilitates compliance with tax obligations. It provides the administration with an effective tool for handling data and combating fraud, creates the possibility for exchanges with other national and European computer system administrators, enhances its public image and, last but not least, provides a means of developing a fairer and more harmonious tax policy.

Taxes made easy

Three hundred taxation offices have been computerised and linked to the Ministry.
Unable to foresee the invention of the metro, the ancient Athenians built their city on a vast underground lake, which lies between 20 and 40 metres below ground. On top of this, with much of the subsoil being comprised of friable schistose rock, it is easy to see why the construction of the Athens metro is technically extremely complex and could be considered a truly Herculean task.

During construction, pumping has been necessary in order to avert flooding and make the infrastructure watertight, and instead of digging below multi-storey buildings, the metro system has had to follow the route of the main streets. Added to this have been delays and route modifications caused by the discovery of numerous archaeological remains at the construction sites.

This ambitious project is certainly no picnic for this city of four million inhabitants, which is also one of the most polluted cities in Europe, suffocating under a nefos (toxic cloud). With 1.4 million vehicles already on the road, public transport had been reduced to one over-ground electrified line (‘Line 1’) and completely inadequate bus services. This public transport system was so poor that the level of usage had effectively collapsed.

However, thanks to European Union funding, and favourable loans from the European Investment Bank, the first two underground lines were brought into service in early 2000. This brought a breath of fresh air to the city, with an estimated drop of 250 000 in the number of daily trips by private vehicles. It has helped to achieve significant savings in time and energy, a better quality of life for residents, a better urban environment, and a better image for the city in general.

The two routes in operation since 2000 are Line 2 (Sepolia–Syntagma–Daphni) and Line 3 (Ethniki Amyna–Syntagma). This includes a total of 18 km and 19 stations. Twenty-eight trains serve over 470 000 passengers per day, in addition to the 400 000 passengers from the former Line 1 (Kifisia–Piraeus). The Monastiraki–Syntagma section, on Line 3, is due for completion in early 2003 and work is also well advanced on the sections to Chalandri (and from there to the new airport via the railway line), Ilioupoli, Peristeri and Aigaleo, which will extend the Athens metro by a further 16 km and 13 stations between 2004 and 2006. Between 2006 and 2008, further planned extensions will add 26 km and 21 stations to the network.

In terms of employment, 4 500 people were involved in constructing the sections currently in service, 3 000 more are working on the new extension, and the public corporation Attiko Metro SA, which manages the new Athens metro system, has created 800 permanent jobs. Attiko Metro also financed the largest archaeological excavation project ever undertaken in Athens, which cost a total of EUR 50 million. Sites covering a total area of 69 000 m² have been explored and more than 50 000 artefacts have been discovered, dating back to between the Neolithic and Turkish periods.

Stations which also serve as windows to the past.
Greece:
Structural Funds 2000–06: Objective 1 areas
Selection of projects by region
Every year, hundreds of exhibitions are staged in Attica. However, until recently, many of these were held at venues not specifically designed for exhibitions, such as hotels, stations and sports complexes. Furthermore, these venues were poorly suited to holding parallel conferences and seminars, which is something many major exhibitions now require. It was to bridge this gap that an exhibition and congress centre was built in Athens under the aegis of the public corporation Thessaloniki International Fair SA.

The new centre covers a surface area of 21,384 m², on five independent levels. Each level has its own services, including delivery area for exhibition material, offices, bar/restaurant, toilets, etc. The centre complies with all relevant standards and is equipped with the most up-to-date equipment, particularly in relation to fire prevention. It employs a permanent team of eight people and dozens of temporary workers during exhibitions. By meeting a significant part of the region’s requirement for exhibitions, the project allows major events to be staged as part of a global and coherent policy for hosting exhibitions. This optimises the impact of such events, not only in terms of informing the business, scientific and technical communities, and the general public about a wide range of topics, but also in terms of international recognition for Greek products and services.

Since it opened in March 2000, the centre has held more than 20 exhibitions per year, in addition to organising a multitude of other activities. It attracts over 300,000 visitors a year for themes as varied as children’s clothing, housing, natural gas, medical equipment, instruments and services for disabled people, organic products, aquaculture, publishing, fine arts, information technology, telecommunications and audiovisual systems, machine-tools for metal manufacturing, and many others. Between the summer of 2003 and early 2005, the centre will host the press service for the Athens Olympic Games.

**Project:** Exhibition and congress centre in Athens  
**Total eligible cost:** EUR 3.368 million  
**EU funding:** EUR 1.684 million  
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Each level has its own range of services.
In western Greece, there was traditionally no educational infrastructure geared to the specific needs of the deaf and hearing-impaired. No infrastructure existed that facilitated full access to education whilst at the same time providing the individual support needed for social integration and normal participation in family life. This issue was addressed when the Patras section of the National Institute for the Deaf was completed and equipped, with European Union assistance.

Comprising three buildings (the school, accommodation and an administrative section), the new institute includes an infant consultation centre, a nursery school, a primary school, a school of lower secondary education and a vocational section. The institute has a capacity for 120 pupils, including 80 boarders. It currently caters for 40 pupils, 18 of which are boarders. Apart from the classrooms, which are designed for small groups of up to eight pupils, the school includes rooms equipped with audiovisual equipment, a logotherapy room, a gymnasium, a library, and a hall with a seating capacity of 100, which can be adapted for various activities and events. In addition, the boarding house provides study rooms, games rooms and guest accommodation for parents.

The teaching approach incorporates the full range of techniques for communicating at every disability level: sign language, oral instruction, written instruction, lip-reading and audiovisual techniques. In the infant consultation centre (children from zero to four years of age), special attention is given to providing family support. This involves collaboration between a special childcare worker and the psychology service and includes weekly meetings, visits to the family home, individual support programmes, meetings of parent and children groups, etc. Although it has been in operation since 2000, the institute is still short of human resources, particularly highly specialised personnel in disciplines such as audiology, logotherapy, and teaching and sign language interpretation. However, the recent adoption of new national regulations for teaching the deaf and hearing-impaired will allow these needs to be met in the near future.

**Project: Patras Section of the National Institute for the Deaf**

**Total eligible cost:** EUR 3.991 million

**EU funding:** EUR 2.993 million

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Sign language, the language of the heart.
The town of Schimatari, on the Chalkida to Athens road, is home to many families that earn their living from the major industrial zones that have developed on this major trunk road. In addition, many housewives also work on farms in the region and, with an increasing number of mothers now working outside the home, there has been an urgent need for childcare facilities.

The Schimatari nursery was built between September 1997 and May 1999. The nursery was built on council land and was funded by the European Union and equipped with funding from the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare. It has places for up to 70 children and its 1,068 m² surface area includes games rooms, a refectory and administration offices on the ground floor, and bedrooms on the upper floor. An outside area of 1,285 m² includes two kindergartens and a sheltered playground. The quality services on offer, and the diverse facilities available, allow the nursery to care for, educate and socialise children in a comprehensive, friendly and modern environment.

In employment terms, the different construction phases required the temporary recruitment of more than 140 workers. The nursery currently employs two full-time childcare workers and two assistants, as well as a cook and cleaner.

**Project:** Schimatari Nursery

**Total eligible cost:** EUR 470,250.64

**EU funding:** EUR 352,687.98

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Selection of projects by region

EASTERN MACEDONIA AND THRACE

Komotini power plant

Greece has high expectations for its rapidly expanding natural gas distribution network, not only in terms of satisfying its energy needs, but also in helping to improve its energy balance. The industrial and domestic use of natural gas has many technical, financial and environmental advantages over oil. It also helps to diversify the country’s energy supply and considerably reduces carbon dioxide emissions (and hence limits the greenhouse effect) when it is burned to produce electricity. However, to make the gas network economically viable, it is vital that gas consumption generates sufficient earnings for the distribution company (the DEPA), particularly in the early years.

One of the four natural gas-powered thermoelectric power stations currently in operation in Greece is the Komotini power station (department of Rodopi), which was built with European Union assistance under the leadership of the public electricity corporation (DEH). A number of Greek and foreign-owned private companies are also involved. Situated in an industrial zone, 10 km from the city, it is a combined-cycle power station that consists of two gas turbines producing a net 476 megawatts of power. With a production of 2 500 gigawatts per year, based on a consumption of 500 million m$^3$ of natural gas, it has considerably expanded energy supplies to this disadvantaged region whilst at the same time consolidating the country’s energy network.

Combined-cycle technology was chosen because of its advantages in terms of energy output, operational flexibility and environmental safety. After the mechanical energy of the two turbines is transformed into electrical power using an alternator, the still very hot burnt gases are transported, not into the atmosphere as with the open-cycle processes, but to two recovery boilers that produce high-pressure steam without consuming any extra energy. This steam operates a steam turbine, which is also connected to an alternator and which provides a second source of electricity. If there are problems, the two gas turbines can operate in open-cycle mode to produce 160 megawatts of power each, or use the fuel oil available in the power station’s reservoirs.

In order to ensure maximum output, limit the drop in voltage during peak-consumption summer months and further reduce the emissions of pollutants, the power station is cooled using not air, but water, by means of a cooling tower. The Komotini power station requires five million m$^3$ of water every year for cooling. This is where the second major component of the project comes in: the Gratini dam on the Amygdalorema River. The dam is 420 m long and 50 m deep, with a water-holding capacity of 12.8 million m$^3$. It is connected to the power station by a 13 km aqueduct and not only meets the power station’s water needs but also those of neighbouring farms, to which it provides up to 2 419 m$^3$ of water per hour in summer.

Construction of the Komotini thermoelectric power station started in 1999 and the station has been fully operational since July 2002. Around 410 people were employed during the construction and 140 permanent jobs were created when the power station became operational.

Project: Komotini thermoelectric power station and Gratini dam

Total eligible cost: EUR 248 million

EU funding: EUR 49.6 million

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The economies of Dendroxori and Ieropigi (two villages in the Kastraki district, in the department of Kastoria) are largely dependent on sheep and goat farming. So much so that, prior to 1999, the barns and their outbuildings were located in the villages. However, this had a number of drawbacks, such as the risk of contagious diseases, traffic problems, aesthetic degradation, odours and so on. This led to a project for transferring and modernising livestock facilities. The aim of the project was to improve the living environment and protect the health of residents, whilst at the same time providing healthier living conditions for the animals. All this was to be achieved without any job losses.

Launched as part of a national policy for restructuring farms, the project started with a major information campaign. This was coordinated by the regional authority and was covered extensively in the media. Thanks to a decision by the district council to give local farmers two plots of land situated outside the villages, free of charge, there was enough space to create 24 modern livestock rearing units. These units comply with Ministry of Agriculture standards, and cater for a total of 4,070 goats and sheep. Each unit includes all of the facilities required for housing the animals (which continue to use the same grazing land as before), including veterinary care, parturition, milking machines, and storage of dry fodder and milk. They also contain facilities for the workers.

The project was supplemented by further projects, also financed with European aid, involving the development of basic infrastructure for the new livestock rearing units (farm tracks and electrification). These measures provide an excellent example of successful projects in the livestock-farming sector, both regionally and nationally.
Health for all at Papageorgiou Hospital

The new Papageorgiou Hospital in Thessaloniki is an impressive facility. It has a wide range of clinics, including pathology and surgery, cardiology and heart surgery, neurology and neurosurgery, and orthopaedics. It also has an outpatient clinic (by appointment) with 60 consulting rooms, in all the specialities, and with the capacity to deal with 1 200 patients per day and 300 000 per year. There is a casualty department with 12 cubicles and the possibility of creating 40 emergency cubicles to cope with a major disaster, thanks to the support of a short-stay in-patient unit. There are 14 central operating theatres, and obstetrics and gynaecology theatres, which carry out 25 000 to 30 000 operations per year. The intensive care units cater for serious cardiology and heart surgery cases, burn victims, new-born and premature babies, etc. Then there’s the radiotherapy section (one of only a few in Greece), two rehabilitation sections (physiotherapy, drug addiction) and a kidney dialysis unit.

The original objective was to address the lack of hospital facilities in the entire western part of the city, as residents in this area previously had to travel long distances to a hospital. This objective has now been more than achieved. Apart from the diverse range of services offered, and its large capacity, Papageorgiou Hospital is also noted for its ultramodern facilities: full computerisation; tele-consultation system; closed-circuit television in the operating theatres, linked to meeting rooms and the lecture theatre for medical congresses; medical imaging equipment (tomography, coronary angiography, angiography, etc.); linear photon and electron accelerators, etc. The building’s bioclimatic architecture reduces energy costs by exploiting natural lighting and regulating the temperature, humidity and ventilation. Furthermore, the floor plan layout has been designed to limit movement.

The project was co-financed by the Ministry of Health, the regional authorities, the Papageorgiou Foundation (a private foundation established to oversee the project) and the European Union. The construction work was coordinated by the foundation and lasted from 1993 to 1997. Some 650 workers were employed during the construction. The first phase came into operation in 1999. The hospital has a total capacity of 750 beds and currently uses 395. In 2002, some 18 500 patients received in-patient care, whilst 180 000 people were seen in the outpatient clinic. When it is fully operational, the hospital will employ approximately 1 800 people. It currently employs 876 staff, including 185 doctors. There are also plans to build a staff nursery, which will be financed by the foundation. Papageorgiou Hospital is currently a general hospital, but could soon also become a teaching hospital.
On the island of Zante, one of the Ionian Islands, the supply of drinking water is centrally controlled by the Intermunicipal Water Distribution Association, of which all the districts of the island are members. This centralised network, which covers 70% of the island, supplies the districts, which then distribute water to private homes via the municipal distribution systems. However, up to now, the association has not had the technical capacity to either cope with the various operational problems (pump breakdowns, pressure drops, leaking pipes, and so on) or to optimise management of the island’s water.

The new system, which was introduced with ERDF aid, is the first of its kind in Greece, except for irrigation networks. Its installation was originally planned in two phases, so that the association’s services would have a chance to adapt to operating the modernised network, and to cope with the practical constraints of control operations. Once the work is complete, this system will continuously monitor the network and immediately detect any problems, identify the damage, and locate and stem leaks. In addition, the project aims to collect and process statistics, limit operating costs and improve the network’s supply/demand balance.

Facilities already in operation since 2001 include a central remote monitoring station and 34 local stations, each equipped with an array of instruments for measuring the level, output, pressure and pH of the water. These measurements are designed according to the functions of the station (catchments, storage or connection). The system electronically monitors hydraulic equipment, protects against lightning, and ensures continuous operation of the installations.

The central station is managed by four permanent staff (including an operator who received one year’s training by the concessionary company to supervise the system) and five or six seasonal workers. Maintenance of the local stations is carried out by a team of plumbers and electricians (from three to seven, depending on the season) who are in radio contact with the central station. Following an assessment in 2003, after the first two years of operation, the second phase of the project will be planned. This will see the expansion of the network to 133 local stations.

**Project:** Remote monitoring and water supply system on the island of Zante

**Total eligible cost:** EUR 2.432 million

**EU funding:** EUR 1.824 million

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Employees of the control station.
Ioannina is the capital of Epirus, which is the most disadvantaged region in Greece, in spite of its superb natural environment. Up until recently, the city did not have the technology required to control the use of plant health products in accordance with European standards, or to control the quality of fresh or processed plant products (in particular to check that pesticide residues in these products complied with European standards). Following a needs assessment in the early 1990s, the Ministry of Agriculture and its regional and prefectoral departments decided to create a regional phytosanitary protection and quality control centre at Ioannina. European aid, combined with Greek public investment, including a contribution from the central agriculture and livestock-farming fund, provided the finance for the project.

The infrastructure was built between 1991 and 1992. This was followed by the purchase of laboratory equipment, which is still ongoing, and the development of the surrounding area. The centre opened for business in 1993, with a team of three employees. It became fully operational in 1999, with the creation of 13 permanent jobs (it now has 18 permanent posts). It also provides seasonal employment for between four and eight people every year. Student trainees and young scientists also have an opportunity to acquire knowledge through a vocational training scheme, which is operated in certain departments.

The jurisdiction of the Phytosanitary Centre extends to four departments in Epirus (Ioannina, Arta, Preveza and Thesprotia) as well as those on Corfu and Lefkas. Its annual activities include monitoring phytosanitary residues in 300 samples of horticultural products, monitoring juice production processes in three specialised farms (yielding a total of 35 000 tonnes per year), and the publication of 10 technical datasheets on plant diseases.

Since Epirus lies close to Albania, it is also planned to build two phytosanitary border inspection posts, at Igoumenitsa and Kakavia.

Project: Regional phytosanitary protection and quality control centre of Ioannina

Total eligible cost: EUR 1.5 million
EU funding: EUR 1.125 million

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This research and development project has made it possible to design and construct two pilot instruments to enhance medical intervention by early diagnosis. The first of these two instruments, the Panego, is an encephalic oedema detector. This makes it possible to predict with certainty the appearance of encephalic oedema in patients suffering from craneo-encephalic injuries. It is particularly useful for road accident victims, many of whom die during hospital treatment or go on to suffer severe permanent disabilities. Effective care is possible only if an oedema is detected at the early stages of its development. Thanks to a method based on a shift in the frequency spectrum of a changing physical system, the Panego is more accurate and reliable than other instruments, such as the catheter, which is widely used for measuring intracranial pressure.

The design of the second device, a non-spherical particle size analyser (NSPSA), was based on the fact that the symptoms of numerous diseases are difficult to identify rapidly because they involve pinpointing changes in the shape, size or physical properties of microscopic particles present in organic suspensions. Unlike other analysers on the market, the NSPSA does not assume that these particles are spherical. It operates by the inverse dispersion of monochromatic radiation, which facilitates the early diagnosis of diseases causing red corpuscle deformations, such as Mediterranean anaemia. It also has biotechnological applications in rapidly defining the size of bacteria and fungi. Compact and easy to use, the NSPSA is also not expensive to build.

Because of their high performance, both of these devices are destined for widespread use in hospitals in Greece and abroad. The project will therefore help to boost the competitiveness of the Greek biomedical industry, as well as bring inestimable benefits in terms of human life and health. This European Union-assisted project was successfully coordinated by the Institute of Chemical Engineering and High-Temperature Chemical Processes in Patras (ICE/HT), whose head offices are located in Crete. The ICE/HT’s partners were the Athens University Intensive Therapy Clinic, the National Technical University of Athens, the University of Ioannina and the company Micrel, which specialises in the development of medical devices.
SOUTHERN AEGEAN SEA

A fishing port on Santorini, come hell or high water

The jewel of the Cyclades Islands, with its crescent moon shape and striking volcanic landscapes, Santorini (also known as Thera) is an island that has always posed problems for the safe anchorage of small vessels, particularly fishing boats. To the west of the island, where a volcano collapsed into the sea following a tremendous eruption around 1500 BC (during the Minoan era), the island’s coastline is sheer and virtually inaccessible. To the north and east, the coast suffers the full force of north and north-west winds. Further drawbacks include the lack of a natural protective harbour and the abundant alluviation, due to silting, which makes port construction difficult everywhere on the island. In bad weather conditions, boat owners on the island have had to haul their boats onto land and in winter they have had to shelter them on neighbouring islands.

The fishing port of Vlychada was built to offset these unfavourable natural conditions. It is located in the Thera district on the south coast, which was deemed to be the most appropriate site on the island. The project, which received European aid, involved excavation work, the construction of a dock and breakwater, the construction of port buildings and access roads, the installation of water and electricity distribution facilities, the development of a rainwater drainage system, the installation of boat service equipment and machinery, the construction of a fuel station, and other elements.

The new port went into service in 1998. With a capacity for more than 200 boats, it has considerably boosted the local fishing sector, which is very important to the island’s economy. The project has greatly benefited the island’s 10,000 inhabitants and also the many visitors who succumb to its charms during the tourist season.

Project: Fishing port de Vlychada (Thera)

Total eligible cost: EUR 2.045 million
EU funding: EUR 1.533 million
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Fishing is still very important in Santorini.
The influx of rural dwellers into the town of Mitilini on the island of Lesbos, and the town’s subsequent expansion into the Chryssomalloussa region, have created major infrastructure needs, particularly in terms of education. To meet these needs, the authorities decided to transfer certain classes from Mitilini to a new secondary school in Chryssomalloussa, which was built with European Union support. These included classes from Mitilini’s lower-secondary school number five, as well as from the music school (lower and upper secondary classes).

The new school, which has a surface area of over 3 000 m², has 15 classrooms, fully equipped laboratories (physical sciences, technical instruction), a multipurpose hall (used for conferences, as a theatre and as a gymnasium) and a library. In addition, there is a 4 000 m² playground and a 1 000 m² sports area. The school is also a beneficiary of a Greek pilot programme for modernising classrooms (1), and is therefore also equipped with a whole array of audiovisual and computerised teaching aids, projectors, computers, etc., which are available to the school’s wide range of disciplines.

A flexible system allows for the optimum organisation of the rooms and timetables to meet the needs of the different classes. The pupils (who have personal lockers in the school corridors) move classrooms depending on the subject. Special arrangements have been made to cater for the specific requirements of the music classes, which have longer timetables (8 a.m. to 5 p.m.), owing to the fact that pupils study music theory and practice in addition to general lessons.

The secondary school in Chryssomalloussa, which opened in 1999, currently caters for 236 pupils from lower-secondary school number five and 51 pupils from the music school. The teaching staff includes 44 teachers, the same as in the former school. Three new positions have also been created. These include two caretakers and a cleaner. The new school has been commended by all the stakeholders (pupils, teachers, parents) and by the local community. The project has not only provided the residents of Chryssomalloussa with essential educational infrastructure, but has also provided the opportunity to upgrade teaching skills and greatly enhance student performance.

Project: Chryssomalloussa Secondary School
Total eligible cost: EUR 2.03 million
EU funding: EUR 1.52 million
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The island’s web site: http://www.lesvos.gr/english/index.htm

(1) The Greek Education Ministry’s SEPPE programme.
PELOPONNESE

Mystras revamped

Rivaling the beauty of its natural surroundings, the medieval ruins of Mystras, five kilometres from Sparta, form one of the most important archaeological sites in Greece. They are also listed as a Unesco world cultural heritage monument. With its narrow streets, high fortification walls, small houses, mansions, palaces, chapels and monasteries, and its fresco-covered churches, Mystras is a unique example of the glorious religious and secular architecture and painting typical of a city from the last Byzantine era (1262–1460). The purpose of the ERDF-funded project was therefore to turn Mystras into an integrated museological complex where visitors could discover all aspects of its culture.

Since many religious buildings had already been restored, the project focuses mainly on the secular remains. The most important among them is the Palace of Despots, with its Byzantine structures and Gothic decoration, tending towards the unification of cultures during this period. One of the main undertakings of the project included reconstructing the big roof of the throne hall in chestnut wood, with double-layered boards and handmade tiles. Apart from the palace, further works of consolidation included the Frankish castle on the summit of the hill, the houses in the upper cities, repairing of the roofs of the Agios Dimitrios Metropolis and the Pantanassa monastery, reconstructing its north and west portico. The work also included repaving streets, installing a water supply system and electrification of the main buildings and part of the site.

Most of the work was carried out between 1995 and 2001. Subsequent work has brought the museum-site project to completion. The entire project created 21 full-time jobs and a total of 63 seasonal jobs. Two architects, a designer, a civil engineer, a chemical engineer, a topographer and an administrative officer were also employed, and a team of three archaeologists were contracted temporarily.

Professors Sinos and Marinou, who supervise the restoration of Mystras.

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Project: Restoration of the Mystras monuments

Total eligible cost: EUR 2.935 million

EU funding: EUR 2.201 million

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In 1986, when the Cultural and Technological Foundation of the Hellenic Industrial Development Bank (PTI-ETBA) became interested in the pre-industrial remains of Kefalari tou Ai-Yanni, 1.5 kilometres outside the market town of Dimitsana (department of Arcadia), the site was in a state of utter neglect. This was mainly as a result of depopulation in the region. However, with its magnificent natural environment in the heart of the Gortynia Mountains, with the nearby Loussios Gorges, the old monasteries clinging to rock, and its unique historical heritage, the region was not lacking in tourist attractions. It was also here that gunpowder was produced for the 1821–30 Greek Revolution. The project to create an open-air hydraulics museum set out to exploit this tourism potential.

Following a study by an architect/restorer, who had received a European prize in 1987, coupled with in-depth research into the local history of hydraulics, work started on the site. The aim was not only to restore, but also to return to working order, water-powered manufacturing facilities that had supported the region's economy for five centuries. These facilities included a tannery, a watermill for grinding cereals and milling textiles, and another hydraulic mill for producing gunpowder. Financed by the foundation until 1994, the project received European funding from 1995 to 1997, which supported the restoration of the tannery, the development of the site and the production of videocassettes and publications. This project created 60 temporary jobs for local residents.

The museum opened to the public in 1997. It is managed and maintained by the former PTI-ETBA, which has now become the Cultural Foundation of the Bank of Piraeus, and attracts over 30,000 visitors a year. However, its success drives not only the mills. Its shop also sells publications on hiking trails and other remarkable sites in the surrounding area. This has given the museum a key role in promoting green tourism activities, which in turn have boosted the hotel, restoration and distribution businesses. This has helped to re-establish some of the economic prosperity that the region once enjoyed.
Problems encountered by employment services in coping with changes in the labour market led the Greek National Employment Agency (OAED) to develop a new approach for dealing with unemployment. The OAED established employment promotion centres (KPAs), which are support structures where the attention is focused on the unemployed themselves and where help and support is provided by properly trained staff operating in modern facilities. Spurred by a political determination expressed in the national action plan for employment, the KPAs aim to match supply with demand and to actively relay the OAED’s initiatives to combat unemployment and encourage social cohesion.

The Larissa Employment Promotion Centre is one of 60 such centres that have been set up in Greece. Its vocational guidance, training and placement services are more than just passive ‘counters’. With the assistance of a vocational counsellor, they provide continuous, proactive support, based on a detailed assessment of each unemployed person’s situation. The counsellor helps applicants to develop a personalised programme, supports them in achieving the programme objectives, acts as an intermediary with companies, finds out details about job offers, helps applicants to write their curriculum vitae and to prepare for job interviews, and follows up after interviews. The unemployed clients are also systematically informed about opportunities for training and participation in subsidised work-placement schemes.

The European Union co-financed the conversion of the building, the purchase of equipment, particularly computing equipment (such as online information services), staff training, and various other aspects of the project. The Larissa KPA was opened in 1999 and employs 21 people (permanent and contract staff). Its activities have already had a significant impact, including better information for the unemployed, faster services, assistance for more people, a larger number of more effective placements, a reduction in long-term unemployment, and many other benefits. The centre helped to place around 167 job seekers per month in 2001, from a monthly average of 489 job offers. Efforts to systematise the KPAs intervention in the local job market continue, in particular by supplying the regional authorities with reliable data on this market, and by introducing an even more personalised approach.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Project</th>
<th>Larissa Employment Promotion Centre</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total eligible cost</td>
<td>EUR 543 507</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU funding</td>
<td>EUR 407 630</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Contact:
Larissa Employment Promotion Centre
Ermogenous 10
GR-41447 Larissa
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Tel./fax (30) 24 10 25 56 06
Web site of the competent ministry: http://www.labor-ministry.gr/
OAED web site: http://www.oaed.gr/
Region’s web site: http://www.thesalia.gr

Tailor-made information and advice for job seekers.
Selection of projects by region
Regions in action, a country on the move
Community initiatives and pilot projects
Greek isolation from the European Union’s electricity production networks came to an end in July 2002, with the official inauguration of the undersea electrical connection between Italy and Greece.

The new link, built with the support of the European Interreg programme, has numerous advantages. By consolidating the single market for energy, it creates new market opportunities for electricity producers in both countries — ENEL in Italy and DEH in Greece. It also contributes to reducing oil consumption, and enables operating costs to be cut by facilitating greater flexibility during peak hours (the two countries can help one another to prevent certain power stations from having to overextend their capacity). In addition, it ensures more reliable supplies to cope with exceptional peaks in demand or fortuitous power cuts (people in Greece still remember the general power failure of late 1988, while in the Italian Mezzogiorno region power failures and drops in voltage have been a frequent occurrence). There has also been a positive impact in terms of local employment creation and the development of technological skills, and new opportunities for the Union to trade energy with eastern Europe and the eastern Mediterranean have also been opened up.

Christened ‘Thetis’ (after the nymph who helped gods and mortals to appease the raging elements), the project has been a major technological feat, in terms of the length of the undersea cable (163 km) and its depth below the surface (up to 1 000 m). The work was shared between Italy and Greece and involved the construction of a converter station in each country, for converting alternating current (AC) into direct current (DC) and vice versa. The use of direct current reduces electricity losses during transmission. From the Italian converter substation in Galatina, a 43 km-long underground DC cable runs as far as Otranto on the Italian coast. From there, the DC cable runs undersea, emerging again at Aetos on the Greek coast, close to the Albanian border. A 110 km-long aerial DC cable links Aetos with Arachtos (department of Arta in Epirus), where a high-tension facility houses the Greek converter substation. From there, two AC aerial cables measuring 104 km and 72 km in length form the connection to the Greek distribution network, via high-tension facilities at Trikala and Acheloos. Most of the work was carried out between 1997 and 2001 and involved a total of 244 000 working hours on the Greek side.

The transmission voltage throughout the connection is 400 kilovolts for 500 megawatts of electric power. Provision has been made for installing a second cable, which would bring the power up to 1 000 megawatts with a bipolar connection.

**INTERREG II GREECE/ITALY**

**Deep sea electricity**

Greek isolation from the European Union’s electricity production networks came to an end in July 2002, with the official inauguration of the undersea electrical connection between Italy and Greece.

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**Project:** Connecting the Italian and Greek electricity production networks (Interreg II)

**Total eligible cost:** EUR 340 million

**EU funding:** EUR 129 million

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The converter substation in Arachtos (Epirus).
Community initiatives and pilot projects
Regions in action, a country on the move

In the town of Volos-Nea Ionia (150 000 inhabitants), in Thessalia, the closure of traditional industrial activities led to the decline of the old historic centre and to a deterioration in its urban and social infrastructure. Derelict land and buildings, high unemployment (in some instances more than 20%), a shortage of schools, marginalisation and insalubrity became a day-to-day reality for the 8 000 people living in the districts of Palia, Agioi Anargyroi and Epta Platania (municipality of Volos), and for the residents of Prosfygika and Tzamaliotika (municipality of Nea Ionia). Between 1996 and 2001, the two municipalities implemented the European URBAN programme to support the urban reclassification and the economic and social revitalisation of these districts. The project was based around the redevelopment of the disused factories and included the conversion of listed industrial site of Tsalapatas, in Volos, into a craft and cultural centre.

This former brickyard is the only remaining industrial site to have a Hoffmann furnace (oval furnace with a central chimney), which is a major testimony to ancient technologies. Today, it houses an industrial archaeology museum and more than 20 workshops and shops where young craftspeople, in collaboration with the Municipal Applied Arts College, make and sell pottery, gold and silverware, and other decorative items. The centre also includes exhibition rooms, a cinema, a theatre, a bookshop and restaurants. The buildings themselves were renovated using bioclimatic techniques, incorporating natural lighting, temperature control and photovoltaic panels on the roofs. Not far from Tsalapatas, an old shed, formerly used to sterilise cereals, now serves as the head office of the Regional Energy Centre of Thessalia.

At Nea Ionia, a former silk works was renovated to create a silk museum and a business incubation centre. It currently accommodates 15 workshops and shops selling tourist and cultural products, including carpets and embroideries, traditional regional food products, restored antiques, icons, and wood sculptures. The new enterprises have access to a shared secretarial and accounting support service. The old factories of Adamopoulou (cotton mill) and Strychnokarpou (pest-control products) have also been restored and now house a sports and youth centre and a service centre for groups with specific disabilities.

Some of the other achievements of the project include the creation of an employment assistance centre for the two districts, training courses in building renovation and other specialised trades currently in demand, social inclusion activities, business support services, the acquisition of abandoned properties to house social services, and nurseries and assistance for single mothers, etc. In addition to the 180 or so direct jobs that have been created, URBAN will also have a positive long-term impact on social cohesion in the old districts of Volos-Nea Ionia.

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**Project:** URBAN Volos-Nea Ionia

**Total eligible cost:** EUR 11.509 million

**EU funding:** EUR 8.632 million

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Weaving is one of the traditional crafts promoted by the Volos-Nea Ionia URBAN programme (Thessalia).
Karditsa embraces rural development

Soaring above the artificial lake of Plastira in central Greece is the staggeringly beautiful mountain landscape of the department of Karditsa, with its mountain pastures, streams, gorges and forest ecosystems dotted with Byzantine monasteries and traditional villages. Visitors to the area are invariably captivated by its natural beauty, and by the hospitality of its inhabitants and the wealth of local traditions.

However, not everything is idyllic in this rural region, which has experienced severe economic and social decline in recent decades. The negative impact of the construction of a lake on some of the area’s most fertile land, poor access, insufficient health and educational facilities, and a general lack of services have prompted many young people, who are disinterested in farming, to leave the area. This has resulted in a falling and ageing population.

The Development Agency of Karditsa (AN.KA SA), which includes the Local Authorities’ Association (TEDK) and the Farming Cooperatives’ Association of the Department of Karditsa (EASK), was created in 1989. Its role is to coordinate initiatives and promote partnerships and networks to revitalise the region. With several years of experience behind it, the AN.KA was therefore well placed to establish and manage the Karditsa area’s Local Action Group (LAG) (1), under the Leader Community initiative programme, from 1996 to 1999. The Leader area had 37,500 inhabitants and included 13 municipalities and 78 districts in the south of the department.

The objective of the Karditsa Leader programme was to reverse the trend of decline by creating viable activities to provide the rural community with additional income, improve their living conditions, and encourage them to stay in the area. The approach adopted was to promote the ‘integrated’ development of the rural area by means of bottom-up innovative measures involving all the partners, as well as the community. These measures covered all areas of activity and exploited the full range of local resources (human, natural, institutional, cultural and other), whilst also focusing on protecting the environment.

The basic guiding philosophy was to transform weaknesses into assets and to focus on discovery and authenticity. The promotion of rural tourism and other alternative forms of tourism was an area of considerable success. This also had a leverage effect and resulted in the development of complementary activities in a number of other sectors. It also contributed to boosting the provision of community services.

Some of the most tangible results included the establishment of 10 hotels with 180 beds, five leisure centres, 12 craft businesses (folk art, iron, woodwork, knitted garments, etc.), 12 agrifood businesses (including meat, organic products, bread and animal feed), two exhibition centres selling quality products, two tree nurseries, a sawmill and two mountain petrol stations. Other outcomes included the restoration of monuments, themed tours, the publication of guides, and training courses (600 hours of theory and practice for 48 beneficiaries on subjects such as tourism, agriculture and livestock farming and the environment). In total, 130 permanent jobs and 120 temporary jobs were created and a further 90 jobs were safeguarded. The success of Leader, and its popularity among the local community, owes much to the role of the AN.KA, which was designed to be a flexible, transparent structure, which would have a close relationship with the community and be free from red tape. Through the Leader programme, the AN.KA has fostered a spirit of initiative and encouraged local innovation.

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(1) The LAG in each beneficiary area of the Leader Community initiative has overall responsibility for implementing the rural development programme and is comprised of public and private economic and social partners.
Community initiatives and pilot projects
Regions in action, a country on the move

Greece’s annual production of bream and sea bass increased from around 100 tonnes in 1980 to over 56,000 tonnes in 2000. Finfish aquaculture now employs 2,500 people in Greece and the country has become the Mediterranean leader in this sector. This impressive leap forward owes much to Greece’s research and development centres and their role in transferring technology to private fish farms. This role has also extended beyond the borders of Greece. A successful example of technology transfer has been implemented, within the framework of the Interactt (1) project, between the three island regions of Crete, the Canary Islands and Madeira.

This cooperation has resulted in the creation of an international network, which links all the interested parties involved in the aquaculture sector (regional authorities, research organisations and aquaculture enterprises) on the three islands. The overriding objective is to break down the barriers between scientists and producers, a major problem in the European aquaculture industry, whilst also fostering contacts between producers themselves.

Traditionally, production in Madeira and the Canary Islands was limited to growing fish in offshore sea-cages, an area in which they had well-established expertise. The requirement for juveniles was generally catered for with imports from continental hatcheries. However, Interactt proposed that local SMEs involved in sea-cage farming produce juveniles themselves by adopting the mesocosm technology. This would give greater independence to, and boost the competitiveness of these enterprises. Based on semi-intensive farming methods, this ‘green’ technology is particularly appropriate for breeding new species and has proven to be well suited to the economic and technical capabilities of SMEs.

Technology transfers were made to a series of pilot sites in order to demonstrate viability, and so far the results have been very encouraging. For the first time ever, these regions are now mass-producing ray, sea bream, blue spotted sea bream and red porgy juveniles, and for less than 30% of the cost of imports. Keen to pass on the benefits of their experience, the Interactt partners now intend to play a key role within a wider network of southern European islands in order to promote their innovative methods of managing marine resources.

ERDF Innovative Actions

Fish and the islands: Greek aquaculture spearheads an international network

Project: Interregional cooperation for the transfer of aquaculture technology between Crete, the Canary Islands and Madeira

Total eligible cost: EUR 2.02 million
EU funding: EUR 1.01 million

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(1) ‘Interregional action for technology transfer’. Interactt was established within the framework of the ERDF’s regional programmes of innovative actions.