

Investigation Of The Real Impact Of Regional Funding From Structural Funds In Specific Municipalities In Greece

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Abstract

Comparative case studies indicate that the practice of tourism operational programming by local authorities has been influenced by the structural resources available from the European Union (EU), the partnership relationship, guidelines provided by the relevant European agencies during the planning of their development programs, and the limited development of program evaluation. The main question that arises relates to the search for the actual results of the financing of regional structural policies for tourism development interventions by municipalities in Greece during the programming period 2007-2013, in relation to the needs and objectives set within the framework of municipal strategic planning. Municipal spatial units are examined through the collective case study method, both as entities recording needs for tourism development interventions and in terms of the possibilities of communicating these needs with higher levels of administration and ultimately funding them through regional structural funds. The research results showed, among other things, that the decision-making model for the design and development of programs funded by EU structural funds for tourism development interventions by municipalities in Greece shows problems in integrating local tourism needs into the plans of administrative levels within the principles of governance and participatory consultation processes and partnership relationships. From the findings, it is inferred that public participation in decision-making processes gradually acquires a decisive role in developmental planning at the administrative levels under consideration.

Keywords: *Regional, Local tourism programming, Evaluation, Structural funds, Effectiveness, Consultation.*

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I. Introduction

The intense theoretical criticisms of the evaluation methodologies applied to assess the effectiveness of co-financed programs, as well as the shortcomings in program design methodologies (Armstrong & Wells, 2006, pp. 23-45; Artelaris, 2009, p. 112; Barca, 2009, pp. 56-78; Boldrin & Canova, 2001, pp. 34-56; Crescenzi & Giua, 2018, pp. 90-110; Davras et al., 2019, pp. 15-30; Ederveen et al., 2003, pp. 100-120; European Commission, 2013, pp. 45-67; Liargkobas & Huliaras, 2018, pp. 60-80; Monastiriotis, 2008, pp. 200-220; Tron, 2009, p. 33), have led to the formulation of strict criticism regarding the ability of development planning to address the needs of local communities (Arnstein, 1969, pp. 45-67; Mitsopoulos, 2007, pp. 120-135; Boronska-Hryniewiecka, 2013, pp. 22-40). The decision-making model (Rowe & Frewer, 2000, pp. 12-34; Rowe & Frewer, 2005, pp. 56-78; COM, 2002/704, pp. 5-25; Komseli, 2011, p. 100; Ladi, 2015, pp. 150-170; Evangelou, 2016, pp. 80-100; Vitsaka, 2018, pp. 200-220; Somarakis, 2020, pp. 33-50; Eriksson, Fredriksson & Syssner, 2021, pp. 110-130) for the design and development of development programs funded by European structural funds involving citizens in tourism development interventions in municipalities in Greece shows problems in integrating local needs for tourism development into the plans of administrative levels within the principles of partnership and multilevel governance (EU Regulation No. 1083/2006, p. 25; Balkan Institute of Public Administration, 2011; EU Regulation No. 1303/2013, Art. 5; Kelemenis, 2017).

The phenomenon of mismatch between the development needs of municipal development operational programs and regions with the actual tourism development needs of their areas is mainly related to the effectiveness or lack thereof of participatory processes and types of consultation (Duraiappah, Roddy & Parry, 2005, pp. 145-148; Amna, 2006, p. 34; Dekker & Kempen, 2009, pp. 56-59; Smedby & Neij, 2013, pp. 78-80; Vitsaka, 2018, p. 12; Kokkias, 2018, p. 22; Somarakis, 2020, pp. 101-103; Kazakis, 2021, p. 45; Eriksson, Fredriksson & Syssner, 2021, pp. 92-95; Boronska-Hryniewiecka & Fromage, 2022, pp. 60-63) during program planning.

Based on the above observations, this paper begins with a brief presentation of part of the literature related to the above issues and the relevant research that has been conducted. Subsequently, the methodology of selecting the municipalities participating in the case study and the corresponding regions to be examined is briefly presented, along with the methodological approach to the issue under investigation and the reasons for choosing the 2007-2013 programming period for evaluation. Finally, the results of the qualitative empirical research conducted are recorded and evaluated, and the conclusions drawn from the findings and results of the research effort are discussed.

II. Theoretical Framework

The problems arising from the uneven distribution of development in space are usually addressed through planning, which is considered a fundamental tool in the development process (Papadaskalopoulos & Christofakis, 2009, pp. 22–23; Papadaskalopoulos & Christofakis, 2016). The beginning of each program period activates planning processes at the national, regional, and local levels, signaling the need for targeted and effective development choices.

Achieving the effectiveness of each program is not easy, and neither is its evaluation. Goals must have "SMART" characteristics (Doran, 1981, pp. 35; Muchemi et al., 2015): they should be Specific, Measurable, Agreed upon (or assignable), Realistic, and Time-related. Every public entity, aiming to operate in terms of efficiency, should set goals using a SMART approach (Poister & Streib, 1999; European Commission, 2004, p. 81; Diefenbach, 2009; European Court of Auditors, 2016), along with evaluation indicators with a definition, a value, and a unit of measurement (European Commission, 2004, p. 81; European Court of Auditors, 2016; Varlamis, 2019).

The European Union recognized the need for planning with goals and terms of effectiveness, believing that these are achieved when the opinions of local communities are heard. This perspective was adopted by national legislative initiatives as well (COM, 2002/704; Law 3422/2005; Regulation EU No 1083/2006; European Commission COM 2008, 158/4; Regulation EU No 1303/2013; Regulation EU No 240/2014; Law 3852/2010, Article 76).

The proposed approach adopted by the European Union involves a set of policies for direct participatory democracy, focusing on making decisions collectively with citizens (COM, 2002/704). The aim is to encourage as much participation as possible from stakeholders by enhancing accountability processes. The Committee of the Regions (CoR) of the EU, at its 80th plenary session (June 17-18, 2009), clarifies the concept of multi-level governance, defining it as "the coordinated action of the Union, Member States, and local and regional authorities, based on a partnership that aims at shaping and implementing the policies of the European Union. This concept entails the mutual responsibility of the individual levels of governance, relying on all sources of democratic legitimacy and the representativeness of the stakeholders."

However, data, as presented by Borońska-Hryniewiecka (2013), indicate that many regional or local governments have not yet developed the necessary institutional capacity for effective networking and information exchange regarding participatory processes related to the EU.

The impact of each program on the domestic economy varies according to existing literature, depending on the data and methodological approaches applied in each case (Barca, 2009; Artelaris, 2009, pp. 246–247). The conclusions of all studies have not been able to draw "clear" results, and most end up with erroneous conclusions, as demonstrated by Ederveen et al. (2001), with numerous limitations being the primary causes. They argued that the implementation of the evaluation of the Union's regional policy and its conclusions should be approached with caution, as the actual impact is highly limited.

At the European level, efforts have recognized significant heterogeneity, leading to indicative conclusions. Sometimes, studies suggested that the design of the examined programs had a positive impact (Ederveen, de Groot & Nahuis, 2006: pp 85-90; Becker, Egger & Von Ehrlich, 2010: pp 212-215; Pellegrini et al., 2012: pp 217-220; Accetturo, de Blasio & Ricci, 2014: pp 102-105; Ferrara, McCann & Pellegrini, 2016: pp 833-836; Cerqua & Pellegrini, 2018: pp 50-53; Percoco, 2017: pp 840-843) in most cases under certain conditions (Cerqua & Pellegrini, 2020). However, other research argued that economic planning did not have a positive impact or had minimal impact (Cappelen, Castellacci, Fagerberg, & Verspagen, 2003: pp. 10-25; Boldrin & Canova, 2001: pp. 50-65; Midelfart-Knarvik & Overman, 2002: pp. 70-85; Ederveen et al., 2006: pp. 95-110). Some studies even contended that the economic evaluation models applied to assess regional development policies could not provide a clear picture of the desired impact of the programmatic designs (Boldrin & Canova, 2001; Ederveen, de Groot, & Nahuis, 2003; Tron, 2009; Crescenzi & Giua, 2018).

In Greece, the assessment of programs and their actions regarding their impact on the represented local communities had a positive effect on convergence processes, according to Syriopoulos and Asteriou (1998), Fotopoulos, Giannias, and Liagkova (2002), Papadas and Efstratoglou (2004), and Liontakis (2012). However, researchers such as Plaskovitis (2007), Saratsis (2009), Monastiriotis (2009), and Artelaris (2022) expressed

doubts about the effectiveness of EU funds in reducing regional disparities, noting significant heterogeneity in the Greek regional development pattern.

Issues related to the evaluation of the effectiveness of European funding and the difficulties in estimating their impact on regional economies have engaged the scientific community and the European Commission since the early 1990s. Overcoming these challenges has proven difficult for various reasons (Gardiner et al., 2005; European Union, 2008; Crescenzi & Giua, 2018). Crescenzi and Giua (2018) argued that the impact of cohesion policy varies from country to country due to factors at the national level. They suggest that the design and implementation of public policies in the EU should be reconsidered, allowing for greater flexibility in decision-making.

Additionally, Greece faces the challenge of domestic economic incapacity to allocate sufficient resources for its development, relying almost entirely on the structural financial policies of the European Union (Liargovas et al., 2015; Oikonomou, 2007; Thoidou, 2009). Consequently, decisions made at the institutional and non-institutional levels at the European level dramatically influence many development decisions at every administrative level (national, regional, local).

Regional economic planning in Greece encounters issues of efficiency and integration of local needs for tourist development into the plans of administrative levels within the framework of partnership principles and multilevel governance. It involves a collaborative relationship shaping regional policy with EU directives, specifications, and control, as well as the selection of projects for national and regional financing.

The methodological framework of this work is primarily based on the analysis of case studies (Huggins, 1998; Ederveen et al., 2003; Evalsed, 2003; Eisenhardt & Graebner, 2007; Evalsed, 2008:98-100; Graebner et al., 2012; Mendez et al., 2021). The assessment of macroeconomic indicators in this study presents reduced utility due to significant restrictive assumptions required (Davras et al., 2019).

III. Method

This pertains to development programs of the 2007-2013 programming period that have undergone a study and evaluation of summative programs (Robson, 2007), referring to the assessment of the Axis Measures of programs that funded public interventions for tourist development with structural funds.

According to Steclebout (2002), the case study methodology is used to assess the social and economic situation and verify how EU funds are utilized. Many researchers, such as Crowe et al. (2011), argue that evaluative case studies systematically and critically examine a program, posing appropriate questions usually related to "how," "why," and "what" to reveal multiple aspects of the program. In this collective case study, cases should be carefully selected, especially when the goal is not generalization of results but similarity and compatibility with other cases. In this study, the multiple case study methodology (Fox-Wolfgramm, 1997; Huggins, 1998; Evalsed, 2003:15-18; Eisenhardt & Graebner, 2007; Robson, 2007; Anisimova & Thomson, 2012; Graebner, Martin & Roundy, 2012; Mendez, Arno van der Zwet, & Borkowska-Waszak, 2021) was applied to explore similarities and differences among municipalities and corresponding regions. The steps followed in this study for implementing the case study methodology are:

1. Justification of the research necessity – questions
2. Selection of sample cases
3. Data collection
4. Data analysis

Criteria for Selecting the Programming Period for Evaluation

The programming period chosen for comprehensive evaluation in this research is that between the years 2007-2013. This period was the first programming phase where planning and management shifted focus from Community Support Frameworks to Regional Operational Programs (Christofakis, 2001p.227, Andreou, 2012p.125). This shift signaled that financing designs were emphasizing regional and local development. The requirements for timely planning and programming increased, and the funding system of this specific period had to emphasize efficiency-oriented controls (Andreou, 2012). The principle of the partnership extended to a broader civil society, environmental organizations, non-governmental organizations, etc., who were deemed essential participants in every stage of planning (design, implementation, monitoring, evaluation). Lastly, the period has been fully completed and evaluated by relevant authorities and institutions, indicating the conclusion of plan implementation and the availability of data that can contribute to the research.

Selection of Municipalities and Regions

The selection of municipalities for the collective case study (multiple case studies) (State, 1994, Halinen, Turous 2005) was carried out using the method of purposive sampling with non-random, multistage sampling criteria. This involved selecting several elements (secondary, tertiary, etc., units) from the initially chosen primary units, both from the primary and subsequent samples. This was done to ensure that the final

sample is a sub-sample of the initial one, not randomly chosen initially, based on specific predetermined criteria. This approach is termed theoretical sampling, as it intentionally selects cases suitable for highlighting the examined municipalities, excluding areas lacking expertise in development planning and programming. These are regions with operational development programs in two programming periods, natural resources, and other resources to develop alternative and specialized forms of tourism based on the Integrated Programs for Rural Development (IPRD) and the Regional Spatial Development Frameworks (Ministry of Environment & Energy, 2003-2004).

The selected regions for evaluating the programs correspond to the municipalities identified as case studies (Abdera/Eastern Macedonia and Thrace, Almopia/Central Macedonia, Karpenissi/Central Greece, Kalamata/Peloponnese, Sitia/Crete) explored as entities for needs assessment and as representatives of local communities during participatory consultation processes in the planning of public tourism interventions.

To make this selection of programs, all available financial resources for tourism interventions of public entities in every level of governance during the programming period 2007-2013 were investigated. Additionally, a recording of the Logical Framework (European Commission, 2006,p.7) of the regional operational programs for the programming period 2007-2013 was done to understand the logic of the interventions. The data on the goals (Strategic Objectives, General, Specific Objectives) of the priority axis measures that funded public interventions for tourism development and the corresponding evaluation indicators of the Logical Framework for the period 2007-2013 were utilized for program evaluation. Furthermore, the needs for financing tourism development activities at both regional and municipal levels were recorded and grouped, along with the funding opportunities for public interventions in tourism development for all public entities in Greece but mainly for the municipalities examined as cases. The data was collected through digital correspondence with the Special Management Services of the programs, relevant municipal services, and the Integrated Information System (IIS).

IV. Results And Data Analysis

For the presentation of results and data analysis, a comparative examination was conducted on the municipalities that emerged based on the set criteria. These municipalities were scrutinized for similarities, particularly in their developmental characteristics, needs for tourism development interventions, structural strategic elements of the programs (goals, evaluation indicators, etc.), and in the processes of planning-programming for their tourism development. Local-level data were correlated with the regional level to assess the significance of homogeneous strategic characteristics concerning regional programming during the 2007-2013 programming period under study.

The municipalities of the collective case study were analyzed beyond needs recording, as designers of local development programs and as representatives of local communities during the planning of Regional Operational Programs (Dijkstra et al., 2011; Allain-Dupré, 2011; Bache, 2008; Borońska-Hryniewiecka, 2011). The usual pursuit of municipalities in Greece is related to their efforts to incorporate their tourism needs into the Regional Operational Programs effectively to receive European funding for tourism development interventions based on the clearly identified needs of local communities in their operational programs.

Local Government Bodies, as developmental spatial units, were not only participants in the planning processes of Regional Development Programs but also constituted a distinct category of beneficiaries for interventions as part of the implementation mechanisms and planning and evaluation actions. The results of the financial opportunities of the municipalities for tourism development interventions were correlated with the number of included projects and budgets, both among the municipalities of the collective case study and with the overall financial opportunities provided.

Through the research, recording, and grouping of the financial opportunities of the examined municipalities concerning the initially set goals for public tourism development interventions, the effectiveness (degree of achieving specific objectives) of measures of the axes of regional development plans was estimated in relation to the targeted needs for public tourism development interventions.

Finally, through the diagrammatic recording of the processes and levels of participatory planning implemented, the Greek development plans of the public sector and how participatory consultation processes were applied during the 2007-2013 programming period were explored.

In conclusion, the general results of the research were presented in the form of conclusions.

Results

The research revealed that the Logical Framework for evaluating developmental programs based on European guidelines for the 2007-2013 period was more focused on the goal of creating indicator systems with a clear orientation towards users at different planning levels. The logic of intervention for the 2007-2013 period involves creating logical connections between developmental needs and the selection of objectives and results (European Commission, 2007, January 1).

The logic of monitoring in the NSRF developmental program for the 2007-2013 programming period was carried out using three categories of indicators (Varlamis, September 2019, pp. 48-49):

- Outflow Indicators
- Result Indicators
- Impact Indicators

Compared to previous programming periods, the differences in evaluating regional programs were the weakening of Impact Indicators and the introduction of Core Outflow Indicators.

In this research, data from Core Indicator 34 were utilized: Number of tourism projects. In the design of the 2007-2013 programming period, emphasis was placed on the need to ensure the effectiveness of European and national resources allocated for implementing cohesion policy.

The programmatic designs of the co-financed programs of interest to this research are the Greek Regional Operational Programs (ROPs), which require reliable evaluations, among other things.

Specifically, regarding the recorded needs of the Axes of ROPs related to the Actions-Needs (AN) of Public Entities for tourism development, they were categorized into the following groups based on data collected after a relevant study in the ROPs of the 2007-2013 period:

AN 1: Promotion of Alternative Forms of Tourism

AN 2: Promotion of Special Forms of Tourism and Theme Tourism

AN 3: Creation and Upgrade of Infrastructure

AN 4: Improvement of Provided Services

AN 5: Linking Tourism with Local Production

AN 6: Linking Tourism with Culture

AN 7: Linking Tourism with the Natural Environment and Sustainable Development

AN 8: Information and Promotion Actions

The results of the analysis of needs for public tourism development interventions are presented in the following table, correlating the General and Specific Objectives (GO, SO) of Priority Axes (PA) of the ROPs that could finance interventions by public entities with the Actions-Needs (AN), as recorded in the planning of the country's ROPs.

Table 1: Actions - Needs (AN) for interventions in tourism development by public bodies per Operational Program (OP) for the period 2007-2013

REGION	PA Descriptive Number	GO Number	SO Number	AN Number								AN SUM by Region	
				1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8		
Attica	2	2	1	+							+		2
North Aegean	8	3	1	+		+	+						3
South Aegean	9	0	0										0
Crete	7	0	1		+	+		+	+		+		5
Eastern Macedonia and Thrace	9	0	0										0
Central Macedonia	7	0	0	+									1
Western Macedonia	8	0	1										0
Epirus	6	0	1		+	+	+		+	+	+		6
Thessaly	4	2	2			+			+		+		3
Central Greece	5	1	0										0
Ionian Islands	-	0	1				+						1
Western Greece	7	1	2		+	+			+	+	+		5
Peloponnese	8	1	0										0 (Report for specialization in future time)
Total AN by type of need				3	3	5	3	1	4	3	4		

Where:

1. PA: Descriptive number of Priority Axis that was supposed to include Measures for funding interventions for tourist development in municipalities.
2. GO and SO: Numbers of General Objectives (GO) and Specific Objectives (SO) designed to address the needs for tourist development of public entities.
3. AN: Actions-Needs for interventions in tourist development of public entities per OP of the period 2007-2013.
1. 4. 1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8: Correspond to the grouped ANs of the ROPs.

Source: ROP of the period 2007-2013 - Own Editing

From the findings, it emerges that most regions corresponding to the cases of the municipalities examined (Eastern Macedonia, Central Macedonia, Central Greece, Crete and Peloponnese) in their Regional

Operational Programs recorded zero needs for tourism development. While most regions described tourism needs during the analysis of the existing situation and SWOT analysis, they did not plan specific objectives.

The sum of values in columns 1-8, representing the Actions-Needs (AN) in Table 1, presents the cumulative participation (correlation) of each Priority Axis (PA) in meeting the specified needs, indicating the prioritization of objectives. The majority of needs were identified for infrastructure, linking tourism with local production, and information and promotion actions.

The sum of row data illustrates how the strategy of regional programs addresses the needs and to what extent, indicating the hierarchy of needs. The distribution of resources in the overall program planning must align with this hierarchy. The sum of rows (horizontally) gives the number and type of Actions-Needs (AN) for tourism development (public plans-needs) that each Regional Operational Program attempts to cover. The high cumulative relationship of needs per region and Priority Axis that funded projects-actions of public entities for tourism development demonstrates the degree of design coverage of the overall identified needs and confirms the magnitude of the needs for tourism development that were recorded.

The majority of needs for public interventions in tourism development at the regional level are located in the regions of Epirus, Crete, and Western Greece.

By concentrating, recording, and analyzing data related to the corresponding needs for interventions of the examined municipalities, we find that the Municipal Actions-Needs (ANm) resulting from the content of the Municipal Operational Programs (MOPs) focus on the following types of needs:

1. ANm 1: Promotion of Alternative Forms of Tourism: 2
2. ANm 2: Promotion of Special Forms of Tourism and Theme Tourism: 2
3. ANm 8: Information and Promotion Actions: 4

Most ANm for tourism development are recorded in the MOP of the Municipality of Abdera, two (2) municipalities (Almopia, Sitia) record two (2) types of ANm, and two (2) municipalities record one (1) need each (Kalamata, Karpenisi).

Comparing the needs for tourism development interventions, we observe a discrepancy in needs between the operational plans of the examined municipalities and the regions to which they belong. In the reports on existing situation needs for interventions in tourism development, the municipalities record three (3) of the eight (8) identified tourism needs for interventions by public entities across all needs of the Regional Operational Programs (ROPs). Most municipalities prioritized "Information and Promotion Actions" (ANm 8), precisely because they considered there was funding possibility for such actions. They did not plan the other tourism needs of the ROP plans, possibly because they did not target ROP financial resources to cover them. Municipalities significantly limited their actual needs for tourism interventions to specific needs in their local development programs. Overall, the budget of measures with tourism goals compared to the total budget of actions of their Operational Program, corresponding to the examined programming period, by municipality was low, ranging from 3.16% for the Municipality of Abdera to 3.19% for the Municipality of Sitia. Therefore, the planned public tourism investments by the municipalities in the collective case study occupy a small percentage distribution, despite the significant needs recorded during the analysis of the existing situation.

The objectives, in cases where operational programs were defined for public interventions in tourist development, did not have all the "SMART" characteristics because they did not indicate what needs to be done, when it should be done, and were not specific, measurable, and time bound. The problem was more significant in the planning of Regional Operational Programs (ROP) and less in the planning of Local Operational Programs (OP) of municipalities.

In general, the municipalities in the case study targeted tourist development interventions under Priority Axis 3 "Local Economy and Employment." In the Municipalities' Strategy, which designed General and Specific Objectives per Measure and Priority Axis, there was a uniform design indicating that the municipalities closely followed the guidelines of the central administration (Ministry of Internal Affairs). The general characteristics of homogeneity examined were:

a) The degree of homogeneity of the characteristics of the operational plans of municipalities for tourist development:

1. Existence of corresponding structures for tourist development planning.
2. Managerial adequacy.
3. Adequate and trained personnel.
4. Administrative changes and decentralization.
5. Allocation of resources at a strategic and operational level for tourist interventions.
6. Correlation of goals (Strategic, General, Specific) for tourist development with the needs and developmental tourism opportunities.
7. Correlation of financial opportunities.

b) The assessment of the importance of homogeneous strategic characteristics in relation to regional programming during the programming period under consideration.

The results of the collective case study of the selected municipalities indicate that they had human resources for planning and programming in terms of technical knowledge. Still, the number of employees per competence for promoting tourist development was minimal. They had managerial adequacy, meaning they were considered administratively sufficient as a whole and had the ability to seek resources. They had urban plans and operational programs with objectives. At the same time, they had the corresponding tourist resources (natural, anthropogenic) for development, while they had undergone administrative restructuring, meaning that two or more municipalities had merged, among other things, to improve their developmental capabilities.

Finally, concerning the financial opportunities of the municipalities in the case study examined for the programming period 2007-2013 for tourist development interventions from co-financed programs, they were very limited. Table 2 presents the budgets for included and completed projects of financial opportunities for tourist development per Operational Program for all municipalities (2nd column), and their budgets for included projects. In Table 2, dashes represent the exclusion (lack of eligibility) of municipalities for the specific program.

Operational / Development Programs 2007-2013 Funding Projects - Actions Of Local Government Organizations For The Promotion Of Sustainable Local Tourism Development	Financial Opportunities For The Tourist Development Of The Operational Program For Local Government Organizations Of The 1st Degree In € (Completed Projects/Programs)	Total Number Of Included Projects By Public Entities, Measures Directly Funding Tourist Development, And Completed During The Research Period.	Municipal Budgets For Included Projects				
			Municipality Of Abdera	Municipality Of Almopia	Municipality Of Kalamata	Municipality Of Karpenisi	Municipality Of Sitia
Rural Development Program 2007-2013 Axis 3 (Areas Of The Integrated Rural Development Program)	159.260,34	1 Municipality Of Visaltia	0	0	0	0	0
Rural Development Program 2007-2013 Axis 4 (Leader Approach)	426.731,67	14	0	-	0 (190.961,47€ 5 Projects, But Were Not Completed)	0 (38.531,79 2 Projects, But Were Not Completed)	0
Nsrf (Sectoral)	14.084.352,00	16	0	0	0	0	138.332,00
Rdp Central Macedonia	1.746.440,00	1 Municipality Of Nea Propontida	-	0	-	-	-
Rdp Eastern Macedonia And Thrace	696.113,00	1 Municipality Of Orestiada	0	-	-	-	-
Rdp Central Greece	1.505.069,00	4	-	-	-	0	-
Rdp Peloponnese	1.184.694,00 (For Tourism Promotion)	1	-	-	45.565,15	-	-
Rdp Crete	3.018.564,00 (For Tourism Promotion)	2	-	-	-	-	125.773,5
Interreg Greece - Albania	1.790.789,40 (For The Total Of Public Entities)	5	-	-	-	-	-

Interreg Greece-North Macedonia	7.025.407,90 (For The Total Of Public Entities)	5	-	0	-	-	-
Interreg Blacksea-Cbc Program (Black Sea Basin) Polycentric Cross-Border	1.716.000,09 (For The Total Of Public Entities)	1 Establishment Of Interconnected Tourism Networks	0	-	-	-	-
Program "Adriatic" Polycentric Cross-Border		5% Of The Projects Of The Total Program, Greece Received A Total Of 19 Projects For The 11 Measures	-	-	-	-	-

Source: Elpasidou, Papadopoulou, Kostopoulou, (2019)

As indicated by the data in Table 2, the financial opportunities for tourist actions/projects from the structural funds were extremely limited, not only for the municipalities in the case study but also for all public entities during the programming period 2007-2013. The total number of projects included by public entities, in the Measures of programs that directly financed tourist development and were completed within the programming period 2007-2013, had modest budgets.

The effectiveness of regional operational development planning is derived from the comparison of the numerical data of the Specific Objectives of Priority Axes that included Measures for tourist development interventions in municipalities, with the numbers of included projects of the municipalities in the case study that were examined and the type of Tourist Actions-Needs (TA), as a percentage of achieving the Specific Objectives (SO) of the Regional Operational Programs (ROP) (Table 3).

Table 3: Effectiveness of the planning for tourism development interventions in the municipalities examined during the programming period 2007-2013

Municipalities / Regional Operational Program (ROP)	ANop (type)	ANo (type)	ANs (number)	SOM (number)	SO (number)	Incorporated Projects of Sample Municipalities (Number)	Effectiveness (% achievement of SOM - Comparison of SOM with the number of included municipal projects)	Effectiveness (% achievement of SO - Comparison of SO with the number of included municipal projects)
Abdera/ROP Eastern Macedonia and Thrace	0	1,2,8	3	14	0	0	0%	-
Almopia/ROP Central Macedonia	1	1,2	2	3	0	0	0%	-
Kalamata/ROP Peloponnese	0	8	1	4	0	1	25%	-
Karpenisi/ROP Central Greece	0	8	1	2	0	0	0%	-
Sitia/ROP Crete	2,3,5,6,8	1,8	2	5	1	1	20%	100%

Explanations for the Table:

- **ANop**: Actions-Needs, concerns the type of needs for public interventions in tourist development in the Regional Operational Programs (ROP).
- **ANo**: Actions-Needs, concerns the type of needs for tourist development interventions in municipalities within the Operational Programs (OP) of the municipalities.
 - **ANs**: Actions-Needs, concerns the sum of needs for tourist development interventions in municipalities.
- **SOM**: Special Objective of municipalities, concerns the sum of the Special Objectives of the Measures of the Axis of the Municipality's Operational Program that provided interventions for tourist development.
- **SO**: Special Objectives, concerns the sum of the Special Objectives of the Priority Axis of the Measures of each Regional Operational Program (ROP) that funded projects-actions of public bodies (municipalities) for tourist development.

Source: ROP for the Programming Period 2007-2013, OP of Municipalities, Own Editing

The findings reveal that, for three out of the five municipalities studied, there was zero percentage effectiveness in achieving the Specific Objectives (SO) of the operational programs, as evidenced by comparing

the SO with the number of included projects of the municipalities. The regions identified needs but did not set specific goals for interventions. The municipalities, out of the total identified needs (8), narrowed down their recorded needs to 3. The paradox of the plans is found in the Regional Operational Program (ROP) of the administrative region of the Peloponnese, where, despite the absence of specific targeting for tourist development interventions by the municipalities of the region, an intervention was ultimately implemented.

The influence of municipal representatives during the planning of Regional Operational Programs (ROPs) was limited because they failed to include part of the targeted needs of their local communities for tourist development interventions in the ROPs of the regions to which they administratively belonged.

In Greece, decision-making centers only provide information to the public or operate in an advisory capacity (Stratigea, 2015). At the regional level, decision-making is more related to the drafting and implementation of programs, with efforts for broad participation of technocrats, organizations, and citizens, etc. Similarly, at the local level, group participation is more extensive and closer to local communities; however, citizens do not have a substantial influence on decision-making due to institutional constraints (Bickerstaff, Walker, 2005, Amnå, 2006, Vesbro 2012, Tahvilra, 2015).

During the participatory processes of the programming period 2007-2013, consultations took place at the regional and sectoral levels with the processing of proposals (conferences, workshops, questionnaires). Working groups for policy development were formed at the ministries and regions, and the Executive Structures of the National Strategic Reference Framework (NSRF) were responsible for their operation. In the following diagram 1, the timetable of actions for the formulation of the development planning of 2007-2013 is presented, showing how the consultation processes were applied within the framework of the partnership relationship.

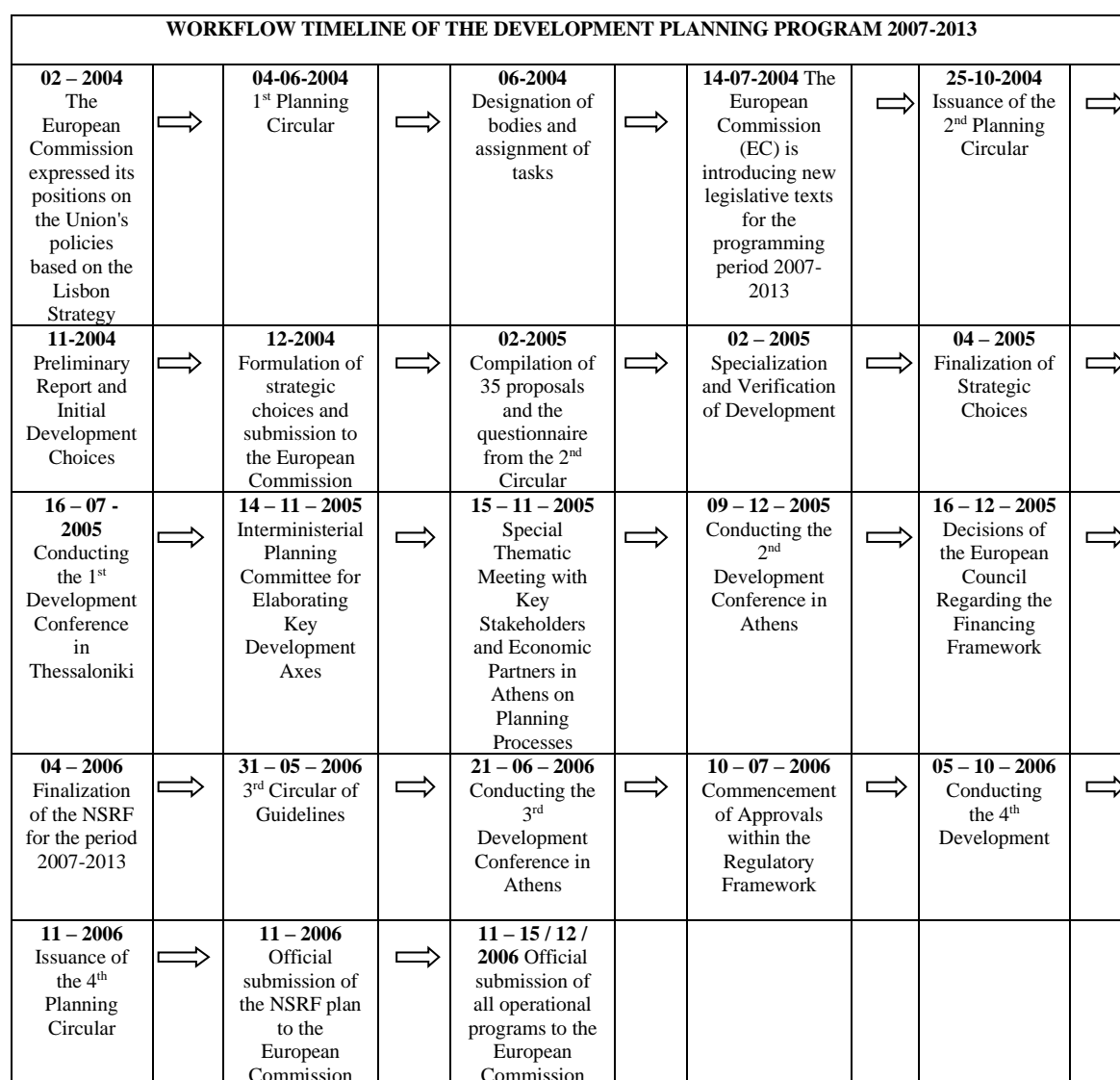


Diagram 1: Timeline of the Planning Workflow for Development Programming 2007-2013

The diagram helps us distinguish participatory actions and processes that took place during the planning of the programs, who the involved parties were, the degree of involvement of representatives of local communities in participatory processes, and the time frame given for each stage of the process. It also clarifies to what extent European planning directives influence the entire process.

From the above process flow diagram, it is easy to understand the limited timeline provided to the competent authorities for the design and drafting of the developmental programming for the period 2007-2013, to consult on the recording of their needs and the implementation of participatory processes (conferences, workshops, questionnaires, meetings among executives and specialists, etc.).

The initial strategic choices were formulated and submitted to the European Commission without any participatory dialogue with local communities or their representatives. Subsequently, developmental guidelines and directives are defined at the central European level and specified at the national level, as evidenced by the above workflow diagram for the planning of the developmental programming for the 2007-2013 period. In cases where participatory consultation processes were implemented by municipalities, based on existing institutional commitments and guidelines, the necessity to limit them to specific institutional consultation procedures allows local communities either to be informed about the proposals developed by municipal institutional bodies or to be guided in the form of instructions by central planning and management bodies of the programs, thus restricting their freedom. Also, when expressing their views in conferences and meetings, they do not participate in the final decision-making, which is undertaken by institutional bodies and councils of local and central administration.

V. Conclusion

The deficiency in the evaluation methodologies of European structural programs as implemented during the 2007-2013 programming period results in a lack of sufficient information on the actual effectiveness of financial resource transfers in the directions of local-level tourism development planning.

The funding of tourism-related public interventions predominantly follows the framework of development planning defined by the European Union. This results in the inability to finance sectors that are crucial for the country but do not fall within European plans and policies.

The general conclusion drawn from the analysis of case study municipality data is that, despite their operational capacity to formulate Operational Programs and their administrative competence in seeking co-financed resources, municipalities seem to largely adhere to centrally determined European and national plans for sustainable tourism development. The influence of EU-level designs, which lacked strategic objectives for public tourism interventions, appears significant. Municipalities had homogeneous operational plans with low target rates for public tourism interventions in the second phase of their operational planning, despite different references in the first phase of their strategic planning when recording the existing situation.

Greek municipalities, aware of the unavailability of financial resources, restricted their needs in specific fields during targeting and did not prioritize public tourism interventions, despite the different desires of their local communities. This is evident from the low tourism target forecasts for operational programs, despite the sector's significant importance for local development. The research indicates that municipalities, as managers of local economic development within the bottom-up approach, failed to communicate their needs at higher planning levels.

Therefore, when examining the real outcome of financing for structural policies regarding tourism development interventions of Greek municipalities in relation to the needs and goals set within the framework of their strategic planning, it can be answered empirically but not substantively. Objectives were not defined, limited needs were recorded, and these were not targeted for coverage, meaning that, in most cases examined, interventions for tourism needs were not targeted or implemented. The needs of local communities, however, are real and reflected in their strategic plans; local and regional plans, however, do not take them into account. The opportunities for resource mobilization with the economic support received from the European Union's regional development programming for the period 2007-2013 were non-existent, or at best minimal, for tourism development interventions of the municipalities studied in Greece. The conclusion, therefore, is that the "financial aid" received from the EU does not have the desired impact concerning the actual needs of local communities.

Despite the low percentage forecasts of municipalities for tourism interventions in their operational plans and those ultimately planned for implementation during the research period, it is not demonstrated that municipalities had many opportunities to participate in programs for tourism development interventions. This is despite the fact that municipalities, at least in terms of expertise, were capable of doing so.

However, evaluations conducted by the EU and relevant national authorities indicate significant positive impacts of structural policies on tourism development. This perspective is not accepted, at least for the tourism sector and the necessary public interventions for tourism development in Greece during the 2007-2013

programming period. The real effects of regional tourism development planning regarding actions taken by public authorities are minimal.

Moreover, the analysis reveals that the rationality and appropriateness of planning, resource distribution, as well as the objectives and evaluation indicators set at the European level, play a critical role in the development process. These factors not only affect the planning cycle of other levels but also play a significant role in the effectiveness of planning in meeting the tourism needs of local communities. In the majority of Regional Operational Programs (69.2%), indicators were not defined, making it difficult to draw conclusions about the effectiveness of planning.

Furthermore, the application of participatory processes related to institutional constraints during participatory planning processes at both regional and local levels appears problematic. The contemporary literature emphasizes the vital importance of implementing participatory planning methodologies and processes for planning efficiency. Historical approaches to participatory planning viewed planning processes from a "top-down" perspective, with public participation existing informally. However, modern approaches involve institutionalizing participatory processes or applying structured methods to democratize planning for the improvement of governance effectiveness and the empowerment of local communities.

It is suggested to explore the possibility of institutionalizing a portion of the goal-setting financial programming as the exclusive responsibility of local communities, even if they do not align with centrally defined European objectives. Further research is proposed to examine the complementary action of the EU in the tourism sector and the limited financial opportunities of structural funds' impact on public tourism interventions in municipalities of other European countries that have similar data to the cases of municipalities and regions examined in this study.

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