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Delivering Good Governance in Greece

March 2019 – May 2021

Background

The project was designed at the request of Greece, with the aim to promote good governance at the local level, in particular supporting the development of Inter-Municipal Cooperation (IMC) in the country. Greece has strongly reformed its local government architecture during the last decade, mainly through the “Kallikratis” Law in 2010 and the “Cleisthenes” Law in 2018. Under this framework, IMC can be a powerful tool that strengthens local authorities in delivering quality services to citizens while addressing their

limitations regarding financial and human resources. The project was implemented by the [Centre of Expertise for Good Governance](#) of the Council of Europe, with co-funding from the DG REFORM of the European Commission and in close cooperation with the Ministry of Interior, the National Transparency Authority and the National Center of Public Administration and Local Government. The Centre of Expertise was supported by two national partner institutions specialised in local governance - the Hellenic Agency for Local Development and Local Government, and the Regional Development Institute of the Panteion University.



Picture 1: Workshop on Inter-Municipal Cooperation for Internal Audit (Larissa, November 2019)

Activities

The project was launched in March 2019, with a nation-wide Survey on the IMC situation in the country (needs, challenges, areas of application).

The seven island municipalities of Agathonissi, Astypalaia, Kalymnos, Leipsoi, Leros, Patmos and Tilos, which participated in the previous "[Technical Assistance Project on Institutional Enhancement for Local Governance in Greece](#)", continued working with the Council of Europe experts in order to initiate their Inter-municipal Development Network of the Dodecanese (AIGAIIS).

In addition, five other municipalities were identified for a second pilot IMC agreement, focusing on Internal Audit (IA): Agia, Ellassona, Farsala, Kileler and Larissa. The municipality of Thessaloniki also joined to provide technical support and relevant expertise.

The Centre of Expertise provided support to these two pilot IMC agreements through the organisation of twelve capacity-building workshops, in presence and online, and making use of several of its specialised [toolkits](#), such as those on Inter-Municipal Cooperation, Strategic Municipal Planning, Performance Management, and the Leadership Academy Programme.

These tools were also condensed into a Handbook on Inter-Municipal Cooperation, tailored to the Greek legal framework and the needs of the Greek municipalities.

In addition, upon request of the Ministry of Interior, the Centre of Expertise also conducted a Study on the participation of women in political life at the local level, analysing how could it be strengthened through IMC.

A project for Greece

The feedback received from the project stakeholders and beneficiaries throughout its implementation is a testament to the quality and the usefulness of the results. For example, with regard to the establishment of the Inter-municipal Development Network of the Dodecanese, Mr Dimitrios Diakomichalis, the Mayor of Kalymnos stated that *"At last the Network is a fact, as its Statute has been approved by the Court of First Instance of Kos and thus obtained legal status. Throughout this effort, Council of Europe's role in both guiding and planning was determinant"*.

Similarly, the Mayor of Kileler, Mr Athanasios Nasiakopoulos, stated that *"Inter-municipal cooperation will contribute significantly not only to IA but also to strengthening the administrative and financial capacity of our Municipalities, as it will facilitate the exchange of know-how among them and the adoption of good practices from bodies that have the relevant experience. [...] I would like to encourage all Municipalities to move in this direction for the benefit of all"*.



Picture 2: Workshop with representatives of the municipalities of the AIGAIIS Network (Athens, November 2019)

Inclusive approach

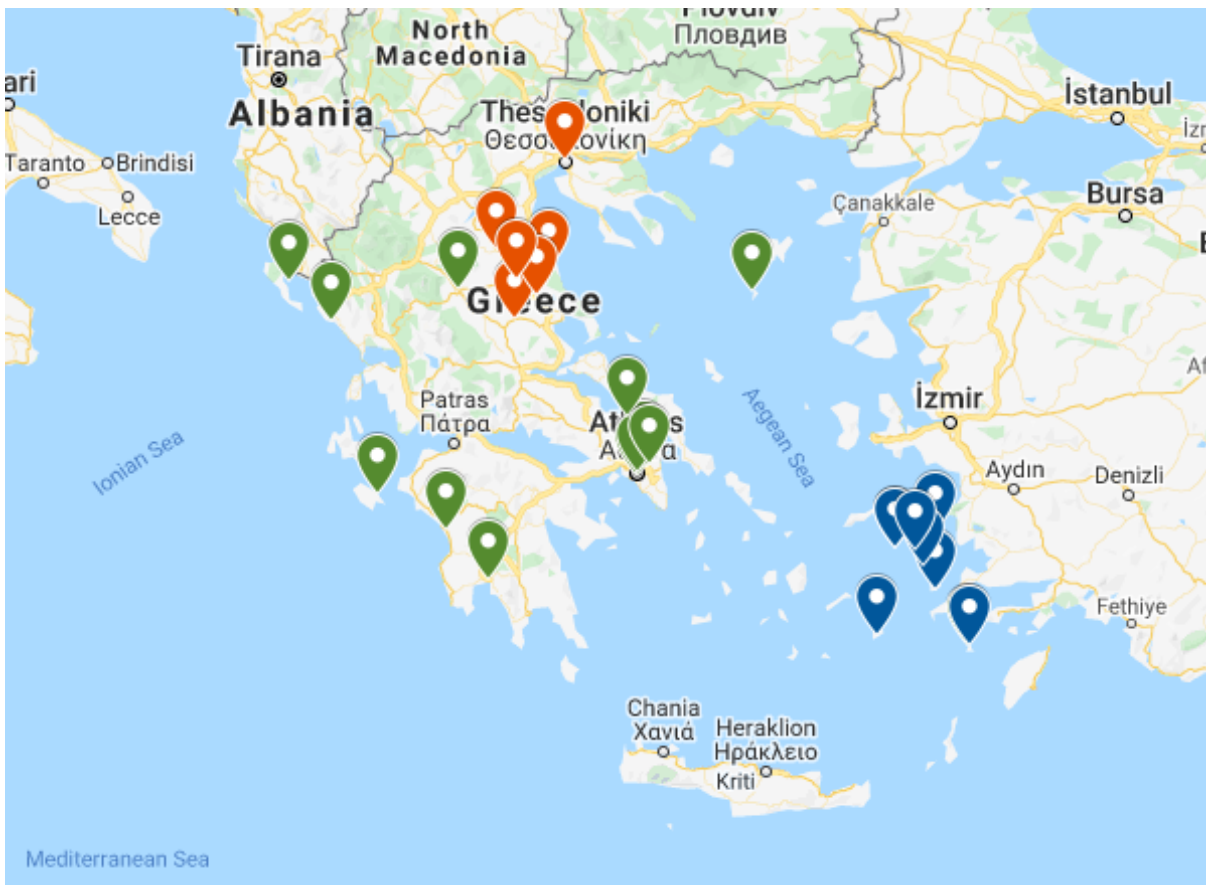
The Centre of Expertise ensured a participatory approach in all activities. The work on the two pilot IMC agreements involved over 30 local authorities - mayors, deputy mayors, heads of units - from 13 municipalities.

In addition, over 120 municipalities (more than 1/3 of all municipalities) participated in the general Survey on IMC, whereas over 700 representatives of municipalities and regions participated to the Survey launched in the framework of the Study.

Furthermore, 34 interviews were conducted with representatives from the national, regional and municipal level.

The map below indicates the municipalities that were mostly involved in the project: in blue the members of the pilot IMC Network AIGAIIS; in orange, the members of the pilot IMC on IA; and in green those who took part in the interviews under the framework of the Study.

Map of municipalities involved in the project – 2019 - 2021



Outcomes

The implementation of the capacity-building activities, workshops, surveys and desk research resulted in the following outcomes:

- The IMC Programmatic Agreement among 5 municipalities in the field of IA was drafted and signed. The municipalities already started their joint capacity-building activities.
- The Inter-municipal Development Network of the Dodecanese (AIGAIIS) for 7 island municipalities was established and registered. The Network will start working mostly on issues related to transportation and interconnectivity but will be able to engage, in the longer term, in more areas, to deliver better services to their citizens.
- For both IMC pilots, an Action Plan and a Risk Management Plan were drafted, to help the municipalities organise their joint activities and monitor the results.
- The project raised awareness on the use of IMC as a tool to deliver better services to citizens at the local level. The [Handbook on Inter-Municipal Cooperation in Greece](#) combines theoretical aspects with a practical focus on the Greek context, including a detailed description of the relevant legal framework, templates and step-by-step guidelines. The Annexes include an IA Charter, a Code of Conduct, and a Protocol to ensure the independence of IA activities within the framework of an IMC setting. The Handbook was presented through a webinar, which attracted over 100 participants. A printed copy was subsequently distributed to all Greek municipalities with an accompanying letter of the Secretary General for Interior and Organisation, Michalis Stavrianoudakis, who stated that *“Cooperation and mutual aid are essential components of success. People evolve and move faster together rather than individually, making a difference in the overall result. Let's make this difference together!”* A series of short videos summarising the main subjects of the Handbook was also developed.
- The project encouraged the debate on participation of women in political life at the local level, through a specific Study that analyses the main reasons for the low numbers of elected women at local and

regional level. The Study contains recommendations and suggestions, in particular on how IMC could be used to boost participation.

- The sustainability of the project was further ensured through the Training of Trainers on the Council of Europe Leadership Academy Programme. 16 Greek trainers from the National Centre for Public Administration and Local Government participated and could lead trainings on leadership and IMC in the future.
- The main outcomes were presented through a final conference, during which the Minister of Interior, Makis Vouridis, noted that the development of IMC is a key goal of the Ministry, as through it *“participants gain mutual benefits and use economies of scale, improving the allocation of resources and adopting good practices.”*

Conclusions

- Greece was just starting to recover from a decade of financial crisis, when the COVID-19 pandemic hit the country and took a significant toll on the capacity of municipalities to work efficiently and deliver quality services to their citizens. IMC offers solutions to allow municipalities with scarce human, financial and technical resources to pool these resources together to jointly improve the delivery of services. The Handbook and best practices of the two pilot IMC agreements of the project provide inspiration and guidance to other municipalities.
- Capacity-building at the local level needs to be further strengthened. Specific training programmes that strengthen the capacities of staff and elected officials at the local level could be developed through the Leadership Academy Programme, which provides useful contents and a flexible methodology.
- The Centre of Expertise for Good Governance is ready to continue supporting Greece to reinforce governance at all levels and improve public administration capacity.