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“Technical Assistance on Institutional Enhancement for Local Governance in Greece”

## **STRATEGIC MUNICIPAL PLANNING IN GREECE**

### **FINAL REPORT**

#### **EUROPEAN UNION – COUNCIL OF EUROPE TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE PROJECT ON INSTITUTIONAL ENHANCEMENT FOR LOCAL GOVERNANCE, GREECE**

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**CENTRE OF EXPERTISE  
FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT REFORM**





## ABBREVIATIONS

<b>BPG</b>	(Greek) Municipal Business Planning Guide
<b>CoE</b>	Council of Europe
<b>EETAA</b>	Hellenic Agency for Local Development and Local Government
<b>EU</b>	European Union
<b>Mol</b>	Ministry of Interior
<b>SMP</b>	Strategic Municipal Planning
<b>SWOT</b>	Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats analysis

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report analyses the application of principles and practice of Strategic Municipal Planning (SMP) in Greece. The objectives of this review are to:

- 1) Compare the framework and practice of SMP in Greece, with international practice, as reflected by the CoE toolkit for SMP;
- 2) Identify development needs in local authorities in SMP and learn lessons in addressing them through pilot municipalities;
- 3) Recommend priorities for the further development of SMP in Greece.

The review recognised that SMP forms an important segment within ‘the EU-CoE technical assistance project for institutional enhancement for local government in Greece’, in relating to the implementation of CoE good governance principles<sup>1</sup> and Council of Ministers recommendations<sup>2</sup> regarding:

- Enabling long-term orientation and sustainability in strategic planning by municipalities;
- Encouraging openness and transparency by municipalities;
- Enhancing municipality efficiency and effectiveness;
- Addressing the right for civil participation in the affairs of a local authority;
- Enabling the participation of users in defining, regulating and managing local services;
- Focusing on addressing the degradation of disadvantaged areas; and
- Capacity building at local level.

It is worth stressing that Greece has an established municipal business planning guide (BPG), which is similar in purpose and methodology to the Council of Europe’s (CoE) framework toolkit for SMP. In order to avoid overlaps with existing practices and capitalise on the expertise available in Greece, this activity was implemented with the support of the Hellenic Agency for Local Development and Local Government (EETAA), the Greek leading institute on business planning.

Following a public conference held in September 2017, five municipalities were actively involved in piloting the CoE SMP toolkit: Domokos, Kavala, Preveza, Thermi and Tripoli.

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<sup>1</sup> Centre of Expertise for Local Government Reform. 12 Principles of Good Governance. Available at: <https://www.coe.int/en/web/good-governance/12-principles-and-elope>

<sup>2</sup> See <https://www.coe.int/en/web/good-governance/standards> for details of relevant good governance standards, including recommendations of the Committee of Ministers. The appropriate standards are outlined in section 1.2 below.

A number of workshops and coaching meetings allowed the Centre of Expertise to identify development needs in two main sectors: (i) participatory methods for stakeholder engagement (ii) development of Action Plans.

The review recognises the considerable progress that Greece has made in SMP. Although there is the potential for Greece to become a best practice country for SMP in Europe, there is room for improvement in development and application of BPG.

#### **What works well?**

- Greece has a well-established statutory process for Business Planning.
- Greece has a well-planned and comprehensively documented process for Business Planning developed through EETAA.
- There has been considerable progress in implementing BPG; five years ago, business planning was unknown in Greek municipalities and now most municipalities have a Business Plan.
- Planning staff in Greek municipalities are well motivated and committed to Business Planning.
- Almost all larger municipalities have a Business Plan.
- Business plans are available on the website of the Ministry of Interior.
- Local municipalities are keen to learn from European experience in Business Planning, as well as from other local authorities in Greece.

#### **Areas for improvement:**

- There is a perception of lack of ownership of the municipal planning process by the Mol that needs to be addressed.
- Mayors and other local politicians are not always supportive of Business Planning, or recognise its value to the municipality.
- As a result, there may be a discontinuity in practice between the Business Plan of the municipality and political priorities as activated by the Mayor. This may mean that the Mayor's vision is not appropriately reflected in the Strategic Plan.
- There is still a top down culture of consultation; a tendency towards informing rather than active participation in the development of Strategic Plans.
- As a result, action plan does not always match the specific needs of the community at stake. In fact, no needs analysis is carried out to support the development of action plans. These are only based on subjective indicators of the local authority.
- Because the Business Planning process is so comprehensively documented, it may only be accessible to Planning staff and not understood or appropriately appreciated by local politicians and departmental senior staff in the municipality.

- There is no short easily accessible guide on Business Planning (e.g. outline of process and its benefits) for Mayors and senior municipal staff.
- There is no simplified version of the Business Planning process for smaller municipalities.
- Municipalities have reported back their perception that the Ministry of the Interior (MoI) could communicate stronger ownership of the effective implication of business planning, through encouraging municipalities to establish business plans.
- The planning process could be digitalised to enable performance monitoring and a regular update during its implementation.

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1. About the report**

This report presents a review of the application of SMP in Greece. Section 2 compares the CoE SMP to BPG. Section 3 describes the SMP work programme in Greece. Section 4 presents the conclusions and recommendations of the project:

Greece has, since 2011, instituted a statutory framework for municipal business planning (BPG) under which all Greek municipalities are required to prepare a five-year Strategic Plan and an annual Action Plan, which must be registered with the Ministry of the Interior.

In this context, the Council of Europe was requested to pilot the Strategic Municipal Planning toolkit by the Ministry of Interior with a view to:

- Compare the framework and practice of SMP in Greece, with international practice, as reflected by the CoE toolkit for SMP;
- Identify local development needs in SMP and learn lessons in addressing them through pilot municipalities;
- Recommend priorities for the further development of SMP in Greece.

### **1.2. CoE principles and recommendations**

SMP is significant to the 'EU – CoE technical assistance project on institutional enhancement for local government in Greece'. This is because SMP enables implementation of CoE principles of good governance and Committee of Ministers' recommendations in relation to strategic and business planning by municipalities in the following respects:

- Enabling long-term orientation and sustainability – The development of a broad long-term perspective about the future of the local community, along with identifying a clear sense of what is needed for such development. In doing so, ensuring that sustainability (i.e. the

needs of future generations), together with understanding the historical, cultural and social complexities of the community, are appropriately reflected in the municipal plan.<sup>3</sup>

- Openness and transparency – The principles of openness and transparency and the opportunity for the public to contribute to follow and contribute to the work of the local municipality are addressed through public and stakeholder participation in formation of the strategic plan.<sup>4</sup>
- Efficiency and effectiveness – Strategic municipal plans contribute to the best possible use of resources available to the municipality through performance systems to evaluate and enhance efficiency and effectiveness in identifying spending priorities and implementing the action plan.<sup>5</sup>
- Right for civil participation in the affairs of a local authority – Citizen and local stakeholder participation in the preparation of the municipal plan reflects the right to active involvement and consultation to participate in the affairs and political decision-making of a local authority.<sup>6 7</sup>
- Users' participation in defining, regulating and managing local services – Ensuring that a needs analysis is carried out on the provision of local services based on community expectations and cost/quality analysis.<sup>8</sup>
- Focus to address degradation of disadvantaged urban areas – Seek to understand the range of situations existing in disadvantaged urban areas and provide focus for improving the quality and accessibility to services in these areas.<sup>9</sup>
- Capacity-building at local level – Recognising that skills and process of developing a strategic municipal plan may contribute towards building local political leadership and qualified human resources, through the development and application of appropriate strategic management methods and in engaging the local population in the democratic functioning of the municipality.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Centre of Expertise for Local Government Reform. *12 Principles of good democratic governance*. No. 9. Available at <https://www.coe.int/en/web/good-governance/12-principles-and-elope>

<sup>4</sup> Centre of Expertise for Local Government Reform op cit. No. 4.

<sup>5</sup> Centre of Expertise for Local Government Reform op cit. No. 3.

<sup>6</sup> CETS No. 207. 2009. Additional Protocol to the European Charter of Local Self-Government on the right to participate in the affairs of a local authority. Available at: <https://www.coe.int/en/web/conventions/full-list/-/conventions/treaty/207>

<sup>7</sup> Council of Europe, 2017. *Guidelines for civil participation in political decision making*. Adopted by the Council of Ministers, 27 September 2017. CM(2017)83. Strasbourg: Council of Europe. Available at: [https://search.coe.int/cm/Pages/result\\_details.aspx?ObjectID=09000016807509dd](https://search.coe.int/cm/Pages/result_details.aspx?ObjectID=09000016807509dd)

<sup>8</sup> Council of Europe, 2007. *Recommendation CM/Rec(2007)4 of the Committee of Ministers to member states on local and regional public services*. Strasbourg: Council of Europe. Available at: [https://search.coe.int/cm/Pages/result\\_details.aspx?ObjectID=09000016805d6b5e](https://search.coe.int/cm/Pages/result_details.aspx?ObjectID=09000016805d6b5e)

<sup>9</sup> Council of Europe, *Recommendation Rec(2003)2 of the Committee of Ministers to member states on neighbourhood services in disadvantaged urban areas*. Strasbourg: Council of Europe. Available at: [https://search.coe.int/cm/Pages/result\\_details.aspx?ObjectID=09000016805e0c0b](https://search.coe.int/cm/Pages/result_details.aspx?ObjectID=09000016805e0c0b)

<sup>10</sup> Recommendation CM/Rec(2007)12 of the Committee of Ministers to member states. 2017 On capacity building at local and regional level. Available at: [https://search.coe.int/cm/Pages/result\\_details.aspx?ObjectID=09000016805d5271](https://search.coe.int/cm/Pages/result_details.aspx?ObjectID=09000016805d5271)



## 2. COMPARING STRATEGIC MUNICIPAL PLANNING TO BUSINESS PLANNING IN GREECE

### 2.1. Introduction

This section introduces the CoE SMP and BPG. It also provides a summary comparison of the two strategic planning methodologies.

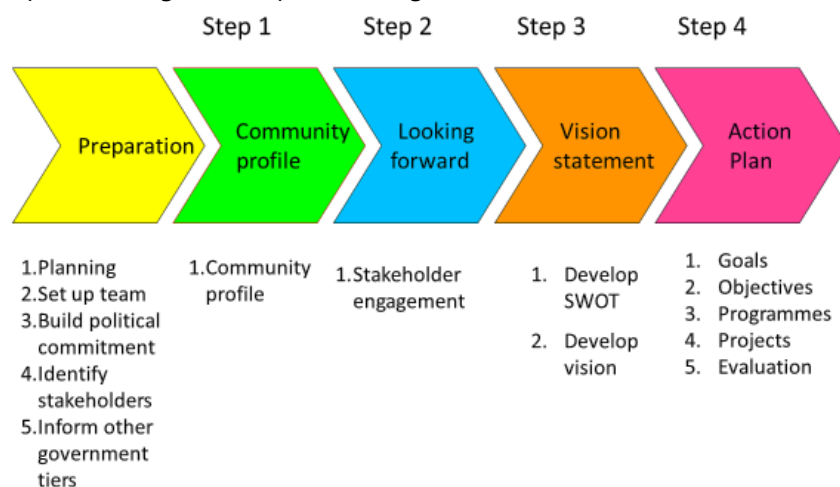
### 2.2. Strategic Municipal Planning

The Council of Europe has developed a toolkit for SMP,<sup>11</sup> as a framework to be adapted and adopted within the 47 CoE member states, recognising that local municipalities need to plan for their community's future. This should be through a participative process involving local communities and other stakeholders in the future of the municipality. The development of a strategic municipal plan addresses two key roles performed by a municipality:

- 1) Municipality as a service provider - Municipalities, as democratic institutions, are accountable to their electorates and wider community for the quality of services that they provide. A municipal plan will enable them to better understand how to design and deliver services that reflect the needs and aspirations of local people, as well as achieve better value for the resources that they spend.
- 2) Municipality as a 'community leader' – Municipalities also have a wider responsibility to promote the economic, social and environmental well-being of their communities, in a context where there are constantly local consequences of global change (e.g. migration, deindustrialisation, climate change) in an inter-dependent world.

The SMP process involves five key steps that are illustrated in figure 1, with the main activities under each step described in figure 2.

*Figure 1 – Key steps in Strategic Municipal Planning*



<sup>11</sup> Centre for Expertise for Local Government Reform. Toolkit IV on strategic municipal planning and performance management at local level. Available at: <https://rm.coe.int/16807470ea>

*Figure 2 – Main activities undertaken under the key steps of developing a Strategic Municipal Plan*

SMP Steps	Main activities
<b>Step 1: Preparation</b>	Preparing to undertake a SMP process by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Writing a project plan to set out milestones, project structure, allocate responsibilities and cost the project.</li> <li>• Set up the planning team.</li> <li>• Confirm political commitment of municipality to the project.</li> <li>• Identify stakeholders to participate in planning process.</li> <li>• Brief neighbouring municipalities (and the region) on the planning project.</li> </ul>
<b>Steps 2: Community profile</b>	The collection and analysis of the current economic, social and environmental situation of the municipality: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Data selection – choosing data and sources for collection</li> <li>• Data analysis – analysing data to identify key trends about the municipality</li> <li>• Data comparison – Compare with other (neighbouring) municipalities.</li> <li>• Prepare community profile report summarising key economic, social and environmental characteristics of the municipality.</li> </ul>
<b>Step 3: Looking forward</b>	Developing and implementing a strategy for stakeholder engagement: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Make use of list of stakeholders prepared in Step 1</li> <li>• Develop programme for stakeholder participation, selecting appropriate methods for engagement</li> <li>• Undertake programme and prepare short report.</li> </ul>
<b>Step 4: Vision statement</b>	Developing a SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats) analysis and developing a Vision for the municipality: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use community profile and consultation results to develop a SWOT analysis.</li> <li>• Use SWOT analysis to prepare Vision statement.</li> </ul>
<b>Step 5: Action plan</b>	Developing an action plan to implement the strategic municipal plan: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify key goals, objective, programmes and project to deliver vision.</li> <li>• Define budget, monitoring and evaluation indicators.</li> </ul>

### 2.3. Business Planning in Greece

Business planning was introduced in Greece in 2007. EETAA supported the Ministry of Interior in the creation of the institutional framework, elaborated a detailed toolkit for business planning, organised seminars for municipalities' staff and created a help desk. A municipality's Business Plan should collectively articulate, through a process of collaboration among the municipality's elected politicians, staff and local community, its five-year strategy and annual action plan. The strategic plan should convey the current situation facing the municipality and its vision, strategy and priorities going forward. An outline of the steps involved in BPG is provided in figure 3 below.

*Figure 3 – The Business Planning process in Greece*

	Steps	Description
<b>Strategic Plan</b>	Step 1	Preparation and organisation
	Step 2	Brief description and evaluation of current situation: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• General profile of the municipality</li> <li>• The community profile; social policy, health, education, culture, local economy and employment, environment</li> <li>• The municipality's internal environment, organisation, staff, processes, ICT and finance.</li> </ul>
	Step 3	Definition of the vision and the strategy
	Step 4	Collaboration with neighbouring municipalities and the region
	Step 5	Approval of the strategic plan (by the Council) and organisation of consultation procedures
<b>Business Plan</b>	Step 6	Drafting of action programme
	Step 7	Budget and financial planning
	Step 8	Identification of monitoring and evaluation indicators
	Step 9	Final approval of the Business Plan
<b>Monitoring and evaluation of 5 year action plan</b>	Step 10	Interim and final evaluation report with the use of effectiveness and efficiency indicators
<b>Annual action programme</b>	Step 11	Elaboration of annual action programme and annual budget
<b>Monitoring and annual report</b>	Step 12	Quarterly and final report

## **2.4. Benefits and success factors in Council of Europe Strategic Municipal Planning (SMP) toolkit and National Business Planning Guide (BPG)**

Reflecting CoE principles and recommendations, as outlined in section 1, together with international experience,<sup>12</sup> the potential practical benefits to a municipality from developing a strategic plan potentially are:

- Building community – Participation of local citizens, community organisations and the business community in developing a strategic plan, strengthens local sense of community and enhances the democratic accountability of the municipality.
- Better informed decisions – The municipality is more likely to make better informed decisions if the views of local people are listened to by the municipality.
- Building trust and transparency – Strengthening channels of communication between local political leaders and citizens helps build trust and transparency in local institutions.
- More appropriate solutions – Testing plans for delivery of municipal services and infrastructure investment through consultation, is likely to enhance their relevance and appropriate use of limited resources in meeting community needs.
- Additional investment – A strategic plan (or business plan) is an asset for making a case to national government and international funders (e.g. EU programmes) that the municipality has a well-considered plan to improve the social, economic and environmental wellbeing of its community.

From international experience,<sup>13</sup> key factors for successful strategic plans (or business plans) are:

- Political leadership – It is essential that the Mayor and political leadership of the municipality is openly and fully committed to the SMP process.
- Planning and preparation – Thorough planning and preparation is undertaken at the beginning of the SMP process.
- Community participation – A well organised and bottom-up process of citizen/stakeholders' consultation informs the strategic municipal plan.
- Communication – There are effective channels of communication within the municipality between departments and politicians and external to the municipality with citizens about the SMP process, for example, including by use of social media.
- Clarity, relevance and realistic – That the vision and planned actions arising from the SMP process are clear, relevant and realistic in relation to the situation and ambitions of the municipality for its community.
- Implementation – Success in implementing the strategic municipal plan should be measured and evaluated.

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<sup>12</sup> Centre of Expertise for Local Government Reform, 2011. Toolkit IV on strategic municipal planning and performance management at local level. Strasbourg: Council of Europe. Available at: <https://rm.coe.int/16807470ea>

<sup>13</sup> Centre for Expertise for Local Government Reform, 2011, op cit.

## 2.5. Similarities and differences between the CoE SMP and BPG

This section introduces the SMP and BPG methodologies and provides a comparison between the two strategic planning methodologies. Given that the BPG draws on international practice in SMP, it is not surprising that there are close similarities in the methodologies underpinning both CoE SMP and National BPG. However, there are also differences. These largely relate to the CoE SMP toolkit being designed as an international framework for local adaptation within the CoE 47 member states. By comparison, BPG was designed for implementation in the specific context of Greece.

### Similarities

- Both methodologies provide a framework for developing a municipal long-term Strategic Plan and annual Action Plan.
- Both approaches follow similar steps in the planning process.
- Key elements of developing a 'community profile', 'community participation', 'SWOT analysis' and municipal 'vision' are integral to both approaches.

### Differences

- The guidance manual for business planning is more detailed and prescriptive than the toolkit for SMP, where the emphasis is in providing an outline framework that may be adapted in different national situations.
- Observed outcomes from the application of municipal business planning guide (BPG) in pilot municipalities is that business plans tend towards being technical and quantitative documents, whilst the emphasis for strategic municipal plans is on clarity of vision and communication of how the vision is translated into action. Although vision and strategy is a crucial part of BPG, the description of current situation is usually extensive for documentation reasons.
- The BPG is written to be used by Planning staff in the municipality. Given its detail and length, it is not a guide that is readily accessible to other municipality staff or to the Mayor or other politicians. By comparison, the shorter CoE SMP toolkit is written to be accessible to a more broadly-based audience. Many municipalities have elaborated shorter executive summaries for communication reasons.
- BPG is likely to place focus on the direct service role of the municipality, whereas the SMP approach equally emphasises on the municipality's community leadership role of influencing change through partners and stakeholders in the municipality. This presents a challenge since in visited municipalities, Mayors articulated visions that required the attainment of community leadership aspirations as well as service objectives.
- The SMP toolkit places emphasis on the vision, goals and objectives of the strategic plan, being informed by community participation. This aspect of planning appears not to come to the fore at present in BPG.

- Whilst CoE SMP provides an overview framework, BPG emphasises:
  - The importance of municipalities' administrative capacity;
  - The elaboration of a five-year financial plan; and
  - Monitoring and evaluation of the five-year Business Plan.

As indicated above, the two approaches follow similar key steps and include many of the same elements that are standard in international approaches to strategic planning by municipalities. Where there are differences, they reflect the more detailed and prescriptive nature of BPG for a Greek context, compared with the more international CoE SMP Toolkit. This may result in a more technical and quantitative analysis than is likely through the SMP methodology, where the emphasis is placed on developing a widely owned vision and the communication of how it is translated into action. Examples of Strategic Plans observed in pilot authorities tend to focus primarily on direct services delivered by the municipality. This may result in a lack of alignment between the objectives of the municipal Strategic Plan that are serviced-based and the more 'community-based' vision as articulated by the Mayor. Whilst this is also important in the SMP process, the municipality's community leadership role is equally stressed.

### 3. STRATEGIC MUNICIPAL PLANNING WORK PROGRAMME IN GREECE

#### 3.1. Introduction

This section outlines the work programme undertaken for SMP in Greece and comments on outcomes from each of the 5 stages.

#### 3.2. Implementation of Strategic Municipal Planning in Greece step by step

##### Stage 1 – Fact finding to scope content of the project – June and September 2017

###### 28 June 2017 - Pre-planning meeting with EETAA and attend Steering Group Meeting

Meetings with Mol and EETAA, to scope out SMP project, design the work programme and identify the position of business planning in Greece. This provided useful information about BPG and how it compared with CoE SMP methodology.

###### 19 September 2017 - Visit to municipality of Kifissia

Fact-finding visit to the municipality of Kifissia in advance of the first SMP workshop. Meetings with the Mayor, the Director of Planning and staff were held to establish lessons from the municipality's experience on business planning.



During the interviews it was pointed out that whilst the municipality had a strong and well led planning team reflected in a detailed five-year strategy and annual action plan, there were challenges with regard to developing a culture of full ownership by the Mayor, Vice-Mayors and departmental directors. This proved to be a common issue amongst the pilot municipalities for this project. In other words, there is a gap between skills and enthusiasm for business planning within Planning Department officer teams and political ownership of BPG.

##### Stage 2 – Workshop on SMP, EETAA Athens – 20th September

Following an open call to all local authorities in Greece, the first SMP workshop was held at EETAA's offices in Athens to provide local government with technical and practical guidance on how to develop a strategic municipal plan. Over 100 participants attended from 59 municipalities from all over Greece, the Mol and researchers.

In addition, it provided the opportunity to:

- Share practical experiences across Greek municipalities on the development of a successful Strategic Plan;
- Present and discuss the five key steps in developing a strategic municipal plan and illustrate these through practical and real examples;
- Discuss similarities and differences between the statutory Business Planning requirement for municipalities in Greece and the CoE SMP.



Participants actively contributed to the debate and praised this interactive training for its inclusive approach to business planning. It was pointed out that this workshop was the first opportunity for most of the participants to engage in peers' discussions about concrete issues. Participants shared the main challenges they face in developing effective business plans and affirmed that regular dialogue and consultation among colleagues would enhance their capacity to overcome challenges.

### **Stage 3 – Selection of pilot authorities and assessment of development needs – September to November**

#### *October - November - Selection of pilot authorities and development of needs analysis*

At the end of the 30 September workshop, participating local municipalities were invited to present a short case for selection as pilot municipalities. Eight municipalities applied and five were selected to participate: Domokos, Kavala, Preveza, Thermi and Tripoli.<sup>14</sup>

Bilateral meetings with representatives of the five municipalities were held in Thessaloniki to listen to their aspirations for the programme and to diagnose training and development needs. During the interviews, local representatives of the five municipalities identified two areas for capacity building assistance:

- Participatory methods for stakeholder engagement;
- Development of action plans.

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<sup>14</sup> The applications of Heraklion, Serres and Rethymno did not comply with the scope of the SMP action and/or the necessary capacity to undertake this activity in the timeframe allowed by the project.



#### **Stage 4 – Skills development workshops – 9th and 10th January 2018**

In response to the needs assessment, two workshops were organised and held at the EETTA offices in Athens on 9 and 10 January 2018:

- Participatory methods – Methods and their application to improve the involvement of stakeholders in strategic planning;
- Action plans – How to effectively develop an action plan that is relevant and appropriate to the distinctive circumstances of their own municipality and how to monitor and evaluate its implementation.



At the end of the workshops there was discussion about further actions that would reinforce and build upon what was learnt at the workshops.

#### **Stage 5 – Action learning and participation – 26th February to 5th March**

##### *26th February to 2nd March 2018 - Coaching in action planning at Preveza and Tripoli*

This involved a visit to the municipalities for Preveza and Tripoli for meetings with the Mayor and staff to review progress and implementation of Action Plans.

##### *26th – 17th February 2018, Preveza*

On arrival, a pre-meeting and briefing took place with the Planning Officer. The following day began with a meeting with the Mayor, followed by plenary meeting with senior staff of the municipality and a series of roundtable meetings with senior staff of the municipality, together with Directors of municipal companies (Port Fund, Sewage and Water, Public Benefit Organisation). This was an opportunity to explore how business planning was addressed in the municipality and how they might take it forward.



From these discussions, strengths and challenges/opportunities for the municipality were identified as:

### *Strengths*

- The municipality has five-year Strategic Plan (due to run out with next Municipal elections). This follows the EETAA guidelines for business planning (BPG). In doing so, it is a detailed and quantitative document, stronger as a technical rather than as a communication document.
- The municipality has a Planning Officer with responsibility for business planning in the municipality. There is other capacity through a Departmental Head who previously headed the Planning Department and through the Finance Department.
- The 30 September workshop in Athens had encouraged the Planning Officer with other colleagues in the municipality to rapidly progress their Action Plan. They had also felt empowered to seek advice from EETAA.
- There was a strong sense of community in the municipality and support for the business planning process from the Mayor.
- There was feedback that the day of meetings would help the Planning Officer and colleagues maintain momentum, given an understanding that business planning is a continuous process, involving collaboration across departments.

### *Opportunities and challenges*

- There is the possibility to improve the vision for Preveza so that it is more clearly centred on its unique qualities as a place to live, work and visit, with an emphasis of achieving quality rather than quantity in its agriculture, tourism and urban environment.
- The current strategic plan is detailed and quantitative, comprehensively covering every activity managed by the Council. A future version might be simplified by focusing on those actions most critical for the realisation of the vision and goals of the municipality (i.e. paying attention to the Pareto Principle).
- A differentiation may be made between the 'service delivery' (e.g. education and lifelong learning, waste collection and recycling) and 'community leadership' (e.g. promoting the local economy through enhancing the quality of agriculture and tourism) roles of the municipality. The latter role involves influencing change through partnerships with the private sector and NGOs, as well as cooperation with Regional Government.
- Given that the different municipal companies (Port Fund, Municipal Sewage and Water, Public

Benefit Organisation) make a significant contribution to the municipality, their key outcomes and investment decision might be better reflected in the strategic plan.

- The municipality might consider producing a more public version of the strategic and action plans to communicate the vision, goals and actions of the municipality.
- Preveza would both benefit from and contribute to being part of a wider learning network of municipalities eager to improve municipal business plans.

#### 1st – 2nd March 2018, Tripoli

Meetings were held with the staff of the planning department, Departmental Heads and other staff of the municipality. The first day aimed at finding out more about how business planning was addressed in the municipality and how it might be taken forward. On the second morning a review session was held with the Mayor, Vice-Mayors and some of the departmental heads.



#### *Strengths:*

- Tripoli has a strong team, responsible for coordinating the planning process within the municipality.
- Tripoli has a five-year Strategic Plan, an annual Action Plan and a shorter summary version of the Action Plan.
- BPG is strongly integrated into coordinating the work of the municipality.
- There is strong teamwork and cooperation between the Planning Department and the senior staff of other departments in the municipality.
- As in Preveza, there was feedback that the day of meetings would help the Planning Officer and colleagues maintain momentum, given an understanding that business planning is a continuous process, involving collaboration across departments.

#### *Opportunities and challenges:*

- The vision for the municipality has changed over the period of the current strategic plan. The Mayor explained the vision of centring Tripoli's future around their unique culture and way of life. There is an opportunity to build on this more fully in the next version of the Strategic Plan, with an emphasis on building on the municipality's community leadership role.
- There are challenges in balancing rural and urban development of Tripoli, in the context of rural to urban migration. Despite this, the two principal economic sectors of Tripoli are agriculture (80 per cent of the economy) and tourism (around 20 per cent), which are largely located in the rural areas. There is service and industrial (manufacturing companies largely related to agriculture) in Tripoli.
- A stronger differentiation may be made between the 'service delivery' (e.g. education and

lifelong learning, waste collection and recycling) and 'community leadership' (e.g. promoting the local economy through enhancing the quality of agriculture and tourism). The latter requires influencing change through partnerships with the private sector and NGOs, as well as cooperation with Regional Government.

- The municipality might consider producing a more public version of the strategic and action plans to communicate the vision, goals and actions of the municipality.

#### 4 and 5 March 2018 - Workshop on stakeholder selection methods

A two-day training programme on civil participation in decision-making was held for the pilot municipalities of Domokos, Kavala, Thermi along with representatives of Orestiada and Drama. This training was provided in response to the need expressed during the workshops of 9th and 10th January to reinforce local skills to engage citizens in the SMP process.



A large majority of participants pointed out that the toolkit<sup>15</sup> provides them with new and unexpected insights. The stakeholders' analysis tool was deemed particularly useful to increase the efficiency of their endeavours, in initiating and managing civil participation processes in their local community.

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<sup>15</sup> Centre for Expertise for Local Government Reform. Toolkit in Civil Participation in Decision Making. Available at: <https://rm.coe.int/civil-participation-in-decision-making-toolkit-/168075c1a5>



### 3.3. Feedback from participants

Representatives from Preveza described the workshops “entirely enlightening”. The mission carried out on the spot allowed members of different departments to be personally involved and contribute to the enhancement of the business planning process in an inclusive way.

At the end of the activity, participants realised that SMP is not only one of the numerous tasks and a mere obligation. It needs constant care and all directorates should dedicate appropriate time to work on it. As said by elected representatives of Tripoli, this activity made clear to them that the business plan is “the image of the municipality provided to external observers.” Its development and efficient implementation lead to the improvement of the whole municipality, including how citizens and other stakeholders perceive it.

Overall, participants from Preveza and Tripoli affirmed that this pilot project helped them to:

- raise awareness on the positive impact of strategic planning among local staff and elected representatives;
- reflect on each directorate’s objectives;
- learn how to “measure” objectives, setting clear indicators;
- understand the importance to cooperate with colleagues and involve bodies and social partners
- consider action plans as communication tools, which can enhance transparency, accountability and civil participation to decision-making process;
- change their attitude towards business plans and understand that more concise action plans could be easily shared with stakeholders;
- recognise the need to create a department responsible for the continuous and systematic support of the municipality’s Services involved in all phases of business planning;
- value the use consultation methods in order to grasp and utilise the opinion of stakeholders and citizens.

The group of municipalities which undertook the training on civil participation expressed very positive feedback as well. As stated by Kavala representatives:

*“After the completion of the 3 seminars, what has Kavala gained compared with its previous status?”*

*First thing is that right after first seminar (Athens 20/9/17) we have updated our vision statement using the SWOT analysis provided by the Council of Europe expert. Using the tool has resulted in a considerable change in the vision since new areas of development were revealed. Now we are in the process of updating the strategic plan in order to fit again with the vision.*

*The most important asset from the second seminar (Athens 9/1/18) was the World Cafe tool as a public participation method. We already knew the methodology, but getting to know the tool through an interactive process, actually made a difference. Now in the context of the Planning Department projects, we have already concluded to use it in the forthcoming participatory events.*

*Third seminar had the most significant impact. Not only for the actual toolkit but also for the whole workshop context. Council of Europe experts managed to put things that we have heard before in a meaningful order. Subsequently, we are already preparing to use the toolkit in two cases. The first case is the community evaluation and stakeholder mapping of Kavala's innovation ecosystem (...) and the second case is the stakeholder mapping and analysis for the "New uses for old tobacco warehouses of Kavala" project that we are preparing with Kavala Urban Centre.*

*All in all, it has been a substantial capacity building series of seminars/workshops for Kavala. The city was already a leading Local Government Authority regarding civil participation and strategic municipal planning, and now has the confidence to move forward, towards strengthening even more the democratic processes in decision making. Our goal is to further build on the gains of these seminars by developing relevant project proposals.*

*Another positive side-effect from the seminars was having the chance to know people that are now part of our extensive network (...)."*

## 4. CONCLUSIONS

The work programme addressed the three project objectives. The workshops and visits provided an opportunity to compare the framework and practice of SMP in Greece with international practice, as reflected by the CoE toolkit for SMP. These comparisons are reflected in the discussion in this and the previous section of the report. The selection process of pilot authorities and the workshops offered insight into development needs of local authorities in SMP. In consultation with the trainers, the pilot authorities identified development needs in action planning and stakeholder selection methods. These were addressed in the workshop and visit programme to pilot authorities. Finally, as an outcome of the project, actions for the further development of BPG have been identified, as described below.

At the inception phase of the programme, the Council of Europe acknowledged that Greece has a wealth of knowledge and experience in strategic planning. Furthermore, it was observed that the statutory municipal business planning process designed by EETAA reflects both the principles and key steps contained within the CoE SMP toolkit. Indeed, the experience on business planning provides an opportunity for Greece to develop best practice in SMP in Europe. There was considerable interest and enthusiasm for the SMP programme, as reflected by the high turnout at the first workshop on 30th September 2017. This was followed through in the pilot programme of workshops and municipal visits.

A summary of key similarities and differences between the CoE SMP and BPG was provided in section 2. In summary, these found that whilst BPG follows the same key steps and reflects similar principles, overall it:

- Is underpinned by more detailed and prescriptive guidance designed for Greece, compared with the CoE SMP toolkit which provides an outline framework that may be adapted in 47 different national situations.
- Leads municipalities to focus on the presentation of technical and quantitative elements within their strategic and action plans, rather than clearly communicate how the municipality can progress the achievement of its vision and goals.
- Focuses on service delivery and less on the community leadership role of the municipality. This is even though the attainment of the vision of the Mayor (and municipality) may relate just as strongly to the municipality's community leadership as its service delivery role (e.g. see examples of Preveza and Tripoli above).

Overall, the Greek government, EETAA and Greek municipalities should be commended for the real progress that has been achieved over recent years in the development and implementation of municipal business plans. The framework adopted is sound. However, as this review has shown above, there are areas in which the municipal business plan could be improved to add value to the present scheme. This is by improving its relevance as a communication tool, relating it more clearly to the vision of the municipality, engaging Mayors more centrally in the planning process and enhancing the quality of citizen and stakeholder engagement in the SMP process. Both EETAA and the MoI have a leading role to play in addressing these conclusions with municipalities in Greece and the CoE is ready to support Greek municipalities to follow-up and capitalise on what was learnt throughout the pilot activity .

