

OPERATIONAL PROGRAMME "THESSALY – STEREA ELLADA- EPIRUS"

The Total Co-funded Budget from the E.U. amounts to EUR 1,473,995,714, of which EUR 1,105,000,000 is from Community Resources and EUR 368,995,714 from National Resources. In addition to this amount, it is estimated that National Resources amounting to 349,290,000 will be earmarked to cover the cost of projects that are not co-funded by the E.U., such as expropriations, (larger than a certain percentage of the project's cost) anticipated earnings, etc. Private Funding reaching EUR 210,500,000 is also expected to be earmarked for the realisation of these projects.

The total sum is estimated to amount to EUR 1.823.285.714.

Moreover, further funds have been committed from three other Operational Programmes that are co-funded by the ESF. In this Operational programme are two Convergence Regions and one Region subject to the Objective 'Regional Competitiveness and Employment' (Phasing in).

DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY FOR THESSALY – STEREA ELLADA – EPIRUS

The Strategic Goal for the Thessaly, Sterea Ellada and Epirus Region for 2007-2013 consists of boosting competitiveness, appeal and the outward orientation of the economy by improving regional and social cohesion and adopting sustainable models for development of productive activities and sound management of the natural and built environment. This goal will be achieved by dynamically utilising the Region's comparative advantages in a new environment, in which investments in knowledge, quality, innovation and networks will play an increasing role over the years. The urban centres will be the dynamic pillars supporting the entire development effort.

The Development Objectives for the Thessaly, Sterea Ellada and Epirus Region are to:

1. Improve competitiveness, outward orientation, quality and the innovation strength of enterprises.
2. Improve accessibility through the creation and upgrading of infrastructure, as well as intraregional and interregional transportation networks.
3. Develop human resources.
4. Sustainably manage of the natural and built environment, as well as natural resources.
5. Strengthen intraregional economy and social cohesion.
6. Increase interregional cooperation.
7. Benefit from tourism and cultural heritage for sustainable development.
8. Promote digital convergence.

PRIORITY AXES OF THE OPERATIONAL PROGRAMME THESSALY, STEREA ELLADA AND EPIRUS REGION

The OP comprises 12 Priority Axes (4 Priority Axes for each Region concerning interventions in infrastructure and accessibility services, sustainable development

and quality of life, digital convergence and technical support for its implementation).

Accessibility Infrastructure and Services

The general goal is to improve accessibility in order to promote regional cohesion, create a competitive economy, improve quality of life and support sustainable development. Specifically, the creation of modern transportation infrastructure at all levels, as well as power grids and telecommunications networks, is deemed necessary for further improving the accessibility and appeal of that region as a key investment hub and quality of life area. Furthermore, bipolarity is expected to be reversed, through the equitable distribution of economic resources, namely the phasing out of internal intraregional growth inequalities, mainly those marking the divergences between the most developed regions compared to the inner mountainous and underdeveloped areas.

Priority Axis 1: Accessibility Infrastructure and Services in Thessaly

Priority Axis 2: Accessibility Infrastructure and Services in Sterea Ellada

Priority Axis 3: Accessibility Infrastructure and Services in Epirus

Sustainable Development and Quality of Life

This section seeks to safeguard the natural and built environment as well as the quality of life of those living in that region, for the benefit of sustainable growth. In that framework, it also serves innate growth goals, which have not yet been achieved. Moreover, this section contributes towards the achievement of the goals included under the Lisbon Agenda, but primarily of the more relevant Gothenburg Strategy. It aims at developing an environmental and social capital that will guarantee conditions for sustainable development.

Priority Axis 4: Sustainable Development and Quality of Life in Thessaly

Priority Axis 5: Sustainable Development and Quality of Life in **Sterea Ellada**

Priority Axis 6: Sustainable Development and Quality of Life in Epirus

Digital Convergence and Entrepreneurship

This section aims at promoting innovation, research and technology, in order to achieve their integration into in the productive fabric as permanent growth - renewal – competitiveness engines. Moreover, it aims at achieving the ability to integrate the most suitable technologies for the establishment of a culture of innovation, capable of adapting the innovations generated to local needs and producing adequate research and development (R&D), thus covering the R&D shortage in relation to the country's average output. Furthermore, it seeks to achieve high competitiveness through restructuring of the productive fabric and the upgrade of sectors and industries towards higher added value – quality – environmental awareness, to multiply outward orientation and successfully rise to the challenges posed by the expansion of the European Economic Area and ongoing liberalisation of the economy. Finally, it aims at fostering the equitable contribution of all sectors and industries to development, leveraging private resources, productively mobilising local funds and attracting direct foreign investments, as well as establishing all the right conditions for liberalisation – technical infrastructure – support structures – development tools to local business communities, in conjunction with safeguarding consumer rights.

Priority Axis 7: Digital Convergence and Entrepreneurship in Thessaly

Priority Axis 8: Digital Convergence and Entrepreneurship in Sterea Ellada

Priority Axis 9: Digital Convergence and Entrepreneurship in Epirus