

URBAN EMPATHY – Work Package 3, Phase 2

Structured Dialogue

INTERVIEWS - COUNTRY REPORT TEMPLATE

To be filled in by the partner responsible for the structured dialogue in each country

Answers from all the interviews realized in the country should be taken into account to prepare this report. Each interview does not need to be considered separately, but all should be merged in the summaries.

Country: GREECE

Names of the decision-makers and position:

1. Mrs Polixeni Zeikou, Organization of Planning and Environmental Protection of Thessaloniki, President
2. Mr Konstantinos Belimpasakis, Technical Chamber/ department of Central Macedonia, in charge of the permanent committee for spatial and urban planning and development
3. Mr Konstantinos Zervas, City of Thessaloniki, Deputy Mayor

1. Sustainable urban policies in general

Summary of the main ideas developed: global evaluation of sustainable urban policies, including relevant ideas expressed in the questions of this section:

- Problems considered in the agenda
Answers by the national level representative:
 - Air pollution
 - Energy issue
 - Climate change
 - Waste management
 - deficit of water resources for water supply and irrigation
- Answers by the regional level representative:
 - unemployment
 - low income

- the isolation of the area due to restricted transportation links with the mainland, islands and abroad
- low level of public participation in the process of economic design and development – lack of social cohesion
- Deindustrialization of the region and inadequate protection of natural environment.

Answers by the local level representative:

- Unemployment
 - Air pollution of Thessaloniki
 - Pollution of Thermaikos Golf
 - Low household income that in combination with the tough energy policy, leads to reduced ability of households, schools, social services etc to purchase fuel (for heating and transportation purposes)
 - Tough energy policy that leads to reduced ability of schools and social houses to purchase fuels for heating purposes
 - Old building stock that leads to energy losses
 - High density of the city's structure
 - Low environmental consciousness of citizens
- Importance of policy areas

Answers by the national level representative:

1. Economic development
2. Sustainable transportation and urban development
3. Energy efficiency in buildings
4. Architectural/ cultural heritage

Answers by the regional level representative:

1. Economic development
2. Sustainable transportation and urban development
3. Rational waste management
4. Architectural/ cultural heritage
5. Energy efficiency in buildings
6. Lighting

Answers by the local level representative:

1. Economic development
2. Sustainable transportation and urban development
3. Protection of air and maritime pollution
4. Transportation
5. Waste management and lighting
6. Architectural/ cultural heritage

- Priorities of the new programming period
National level:

- Introduction of EU policies that address spatial management in a holistic way; individual components, such as microclimate, desertification etc exist, but there is lack of an integrated approach
- Lack of national policy for urban and periurban landscapes

Regional level:

- Increase mobility and remove obstacles to the transfer of employees and goods, enhancing the means of transportation within the RCM and the wider buffer zone
- Prevention and management of natural disasters (floods, forest fires, earthquakes).
- Strengthen mechanisms to control pollution and illegal construction in protected areas and landscapes of natural beauty.

Local level:

- Improvement of the economic environment retaining and enhancing at the same time the social cohesion
- promotion of local products and initiatives

2. Description of your work

Summary of the main ideas developed: work description, including relevant ideas expressed in the questions of this section:

The Organization of Planning and Environmental Protection of Thessaloniki penetrates vertically all levels of planning: from spatial to urban planning and deals horizontally with the relevant environmental aspects.

The permanent committee for spatial and urban planning and development of the Technical Chamber/ department of Central Macedonia deals with urban planning.

The Mayoralty of Quality of life (City of Thessaloniki) deals with urban design, environmental planning, economic development, transportation and mobility, energy, culture, lighting, waste, social and economic cohesion.

- The on-going main urban developments are:
 - The Master Plan of the greater Thessaloniki area
 - The General Urban Development Plans of the Municipalities
 - The subway of Thessaloniki
 - the completion of the national road and rail network and its association with International – Transnational network
 - "Integrated Monitoring of Environmental Problems in coastal marine areas and ways to overcome them - ICME», which participates as a lead partner in

the Municipality of Thessaloniki and focuses on inventory problems and explore solutions to the problems of water quality at three ports: Thessaloniki (Greece), Trabzon (Turkey) and Poti (Georgia).

- Monitoring of atmospheric and marine pollution
- Information source

Information for policy formulation and prioritization of interventions can be drawn from numerous studies, bibliographic research and specialized research for sustainable development for the Region of Central Macedonia, which have been produced for a corresponding plurality of interrelated actors in the regulation and spatial management.

3. Application of European legislation

Summary of the main ideas developed: European regulation and transposition/ implementation at national and local level

The strategic environmental assessment should be implied at the phase of design of an infrastructure project. Sometimes the implementation of the environmental impact assessment balks the implementation of infrastructure projects. The strategic environmental assessment should be implied prior to the implementation phase, at the phase of design. This gap can be considered as a bottleneck towards the capacity to fulfil the environmental requirements that derive from the environmental assessment during the implementation of infrastructure projects. Also, the strategic environmental assessment should be required at the phase of Master Plan or General Urban Plan.

Additionally, there is no national strategy for the landscape, despite the fact that the regulatory framework for landscapes in national level exists. Thus, during the implementation of certain infrastructure projects, such as ports, airports, renewable energy, dams, the landscape requirements are not considered.

In general, EU legislation is fully transposed into the Greek regulatory framework, which is specialized through the Master Plan and the Regional Plan and finally put into practice during the implementation of projects through the General Urban Plans of the Municipalities.

4. Barriers about sustainable urban policies

Summary of the main ideas developed: barriers, including relevant ideas expressed in the questions of this section:

- Sources of financing
- Unexpected effects

The barriers that affect the implementation of sustainable urban policies are:

- Non-existence of strong political willingness towards the creation of a vision for the cities

- Lack of metropolitan governance – flexibility and cooperation between local and regional administrations (lack of administrative integration)
- Non-implementation (or low implementation) of existing tools for metropolitan governance
- Financial issues (low ability to finance urban sustainability projects in cities)
- Conflicts between national regulations (deriving from different Ministries)
- Inability of regional/ local administrators to formulate/modify the regional/ local regulatory framework and adjust it to the local needs and specificities
- Opposition of some actors, due to conflicts between priorities of different decision makers
- Weak methods to involve, mobilize the citizens
- Lack or wrong policies concerning sustainable development
- Financial crisis that has lead cities to deal with different priorities

Summary of suggestions expressed:

- Enhancement of metropolitan governance and use of the existing tools
- Strengthening of the role of local and regional government, by increasing resources and institutional responsibilities
- Better collaboration of local and regional authorities and replacement of out of date bodies with more flexible schemes
- Continuity and consistency in administration, regardless the changes to persons, through permanent mechanisms to monitor implementation of the agreed projects at national or local level.
- Better coordination – avoidance of contradictions between legislative initiatives of various Ministries.
- Strengthening and establishment of methods for increasing social acceptance of different projects, public consultation, promotion and dissemination of good policies, rewards for effective citizen participation etc.

In terms of financing, the difficulties to its optimal utilization, is: poor administrative coordination between Authorities, slow spreading of information, "tight" deadlines, immature proposals, lack of specialized human resources for timely preparation of proposals. Also the bureaucratic procedures and the institutional and legal framework affect the ability to absorb financial sources. Financial sources come mainly from the EU and from national strategic reference framework program. In local level, financing may also come from reciprocal income or own sources.

No unexpected effects.

5. Needs and expectations about sustainable urban policies

Summary of the main ideas developed: needs and expectations, including relevant ideas expressed in the questions of this section:

- Issues to improve or focus better
 - plan actions and projects according to the needs of the city and the strategic planning of the municipality. This can be ensured by proper management of human resources and constant education.
 - fit the various sub-projects into an overall design for an integrated / sustainable intervention in a specific area or a total area of responsibility instead of being treated as separate and piecemeal interventions (eg parking policy as a subproject that is part of a broader program of actions to support the housing).
- What needs
 - More funding and improvement of the budget flow, more skilled managers, more flexibility in decision making and limited bureaucracy.
- Additional financing
 - the available financial tools so far are conventional and limited. Definitely needed to modernize and enrich them.
- Tools
 - Operational instructions and best practices, design tools, standardized solutions, codified – simplified legislation,
 - Certification of products and engineering firms, construction machinery – health and safety plans in projects and construction sites , quality control tools , geographic information systems.
- Organizational and participative instruments
 - Any initiative that promotes the cooperation between different types of financial institutions is legitimate and should be adopted by our country, within the framework of the overall restructuring of the economy.
- EU and next programming period
 - Projects that enhance the transport of persons and goods, economic convergence and reduce of inequalities in Europe,
 - sustainability and protection of natural and cultural heritage, as projects that improve urban competitiveness for the benefit of European citizens.

Analysis

a) Are there some issues considered as important/ problematic unanimously by the decision-makers (within each decision-making level and including all the levels)?

All decision makers agreed that there is great need for enhancement of the metropolitan governance and common decision making according to a clear vision for the city, better use of the existing financial tools and collaboration between different economic actors for the exploitation of new funding mechanisms.

b) Do you see a link which can be made between the needs/barriers and the results capitalized within URBAN EMPATHY? How could URBAN EMPATHY results respond to these needs and barriers?

1. Metropolitan groups (CAT MED) for the lack of metropolitan governance
2. CAT MED common indicators system (CAT MED) as a tool of systematic monitoring, comparison (benchmarking) and decision making towards the creation of a justified and clear vision for the city
3. Malaga Charter and Platform for sustainable urban models (CAT MED) as a mean to exchange ideas and best practices with other Med cities
4. Policy Paper (ELIH Med) as a tool to influence policies to include energy efficiency in buildings as a top priority in the political Agenda towards the promotion of social and economic cohesion (as energy efficiency increase contributes to lower energy bills of inhabitants, businesses or public authorities)
5. Training seminars on energy efficient public procurement (EFFECT) towards the improvement of competences of authorities employees
6. Selection methodology used to determine the best practices in promotion of high quality landscape. Different organizational and participative instrument and administrative tools to improve partnership and agreements between different actors (PAY MED URBAN), in order to integrate the landscape into the urban planning
7. Summer camp (ENER SUPPLY)

c) What are the expressed ideas you consider should be taken into account in priority in the elaboration of the SUMO tool kit?

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d) Other comments/ suggestions

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