

THREE MILESTONES FOR URBAN AND REGIONAL PLANNING IN GREECE IN THE LAST 50 YEARS

The most significant spatial planning interventions (since 1965) up to today, in Greece, are the following :

1975. Article 24 of the New Constitution on Spatial Planning and environmental protection

After the establishment of the 3rd Greek Republic and the consequent adoption of a new Constitution of the country, Spatial planning, through the provisions of the article 24, became an exclusive obligation /competence of the state. This enhanced the legislative framework and generated (during the period 1976 - 1981) a series of laws concerning city and regional planning which influenced to a certain extent the 'production' of space in the country.

1982-1985. "Urban Reconstruction Operation": A great moment in Greek planning history

The launching and start-up of the so called "Urban Reconstruction Operation" constitutes a great moment in Greek planning history. The objective of this unique and ambitious initiative was to achieve a more balanced and uniform development and pattern of growth with the aim of acquiring better life conditions according to the values, aspirations and expectations of local societies.

In the framework of this Operation there has been a tremendous effort in order to elaborate (through participatory processes) the General Urban Plans (i.e. the local structure plans) for 350 small and medium sized cities and towns as well as the detailed plans for the extension (urban development) of the built-up areas of these urban agglomerations. At the same time, a parallel project, for the elementary spatial organization of the 11.000 rural settlements throughout the national territory, was launched by the Ministry of planning and managed by local administrative authorities. Furthermore, there have been elaborated and approved, for the first time, the Master Plans (for urban development and environmental protection) of the two metropolitan areas of Athens and Thessaloniki.

At sub-regional level there has been another project for the elaboration of the «structure plans» in the 49 districts, the preparation of which needed a tremendous effort of all bodies involved with procedures ranging from staff meetings on ministerial level to residents' meetings at local level. This operation was a task that had to be accomplished simultaneously in all parts of the country and within a short time period of two years ('82-'84). In comparison with similar operations in other more developed countries, it represented a large amount of work which in addition was carried out in the absence of a specific statutory planning framework. It must also be noticed that this operation led to a nation-wide mobilisation of all ministerial services, public and private agencies and local authorities.

1997-1999. The modernization of planning legislation towards the 21st century: The adoption of two important institutional laws based on the article 24 of the Greek constitution and the related documents a) the European Spatial Development Perspectives (ESDP) of EU and b) the Guiding Principles for the Sustainable Spatial development of the European Continent (GPSSDEC) of the Council of Europe. The first of these laws referred to the “Sustainable urban development” (1997) and the second to “Spatial planning and sustainable development” (1999). Thanks to this new institutional framework there have been elaborated and approved the spatial plans for all regions of the country as well as the National Framework for Spatial planning and other Special (thematic or sectoral) National Plans (for tourism activities, industrial activities, renewable resources installations, aquacultures etc.).