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COUNTRY FICHE

GREECE [EL]

Three types of Territorial Delivery Mechanisms were in place in Greece during the 2014-20 period. The most prominent were the Sustainable Urban Development Integrated Territorial Investment strategies (SUD ITI), with 54 strategies implemented across the country through Regional Operational Programmes (ROPs) combining funding from the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and the European Social Fund (ESF). This instrument accounted for the largest share of overall spending on Territorial Delivery Mechanisms and involved delegating powers to Urban Authorities. A smaller number of non-SUD ITIs (15) were implemented in polycentric areas, also using the same funding streams. Finally, 16 multi-fund Community-led Local Development (CLLD) strategies were executed across several Greek regions, though with much smaller budgets.

POPULATION	STATE TYPE
10.76 million	Centralised

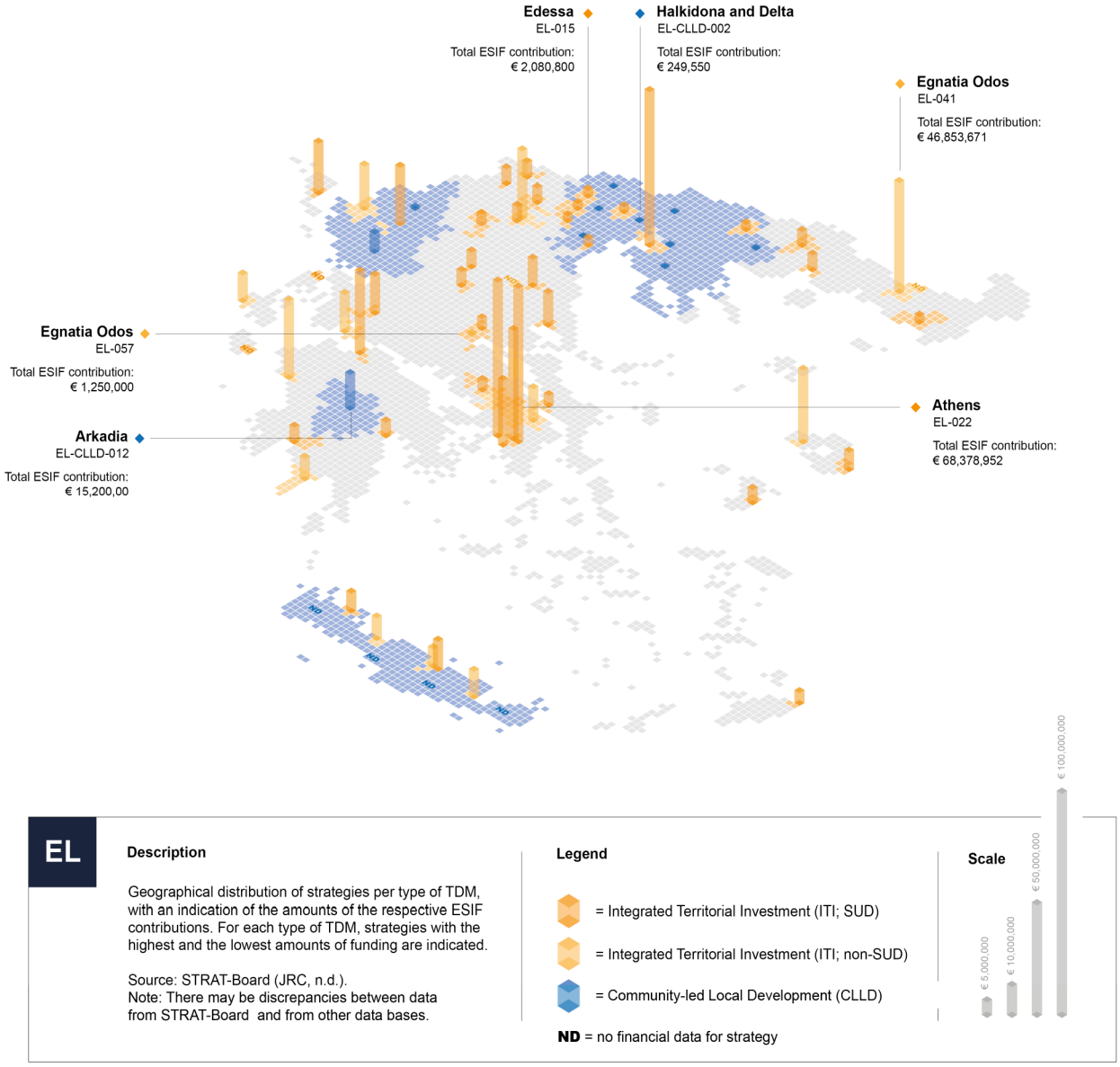
NATIONAL ESIF BUDGET	
EU Contribution (EUR)	€ 25,158,761,875.00
National Contribution (EUR)	€ 4,965,657,852.00
Total Contribution (EUR)	€ 30,124,419,727.00

Note: including all ESIF - ERDF, ESF, EAFRD, YEI, EMFF
Source: Cohesion Open Data Platform (European Commission, n.d.)

Territorial Delivery Mechanism type	No.	ESIF type	Share of ERDF /CF allocation	Share of decided allocations spent (end 2022)
SUD (Art. 7) Operational Programme	0	-	-	-
SUD (Art. 7) Priority Axis	0	-	-	-
Integrated Territorial Investment (ITI; SUD)	39	ERDF,ESF	2.3%	19%
Integrated Territorial Investment (ITI; non-SUD)	15	ERDF,ESF	1.3%	28%
Community-led Local Development (CLLD)	16	ERDF,ESF, EMFF, EAFRD	0.1%	13%
TOTAL	**70**		**3.5%**	**-**

Source: allocations and spending based on Cohesion Open Data Platform (European Commission, n.d.), remaining items on STRAT-Board (JRC, n.d.).
Note: STRAT-Board data is self-reported by strategy holders. There may be inconsistencies between the data reported in STRAT-Board and other databases, such as the Cohesion Open Data Platform.

Figure 1: Geographical distribution of Territorial Delivery Mechanisms (TDMs)



GOVERNANCE CONTEXT

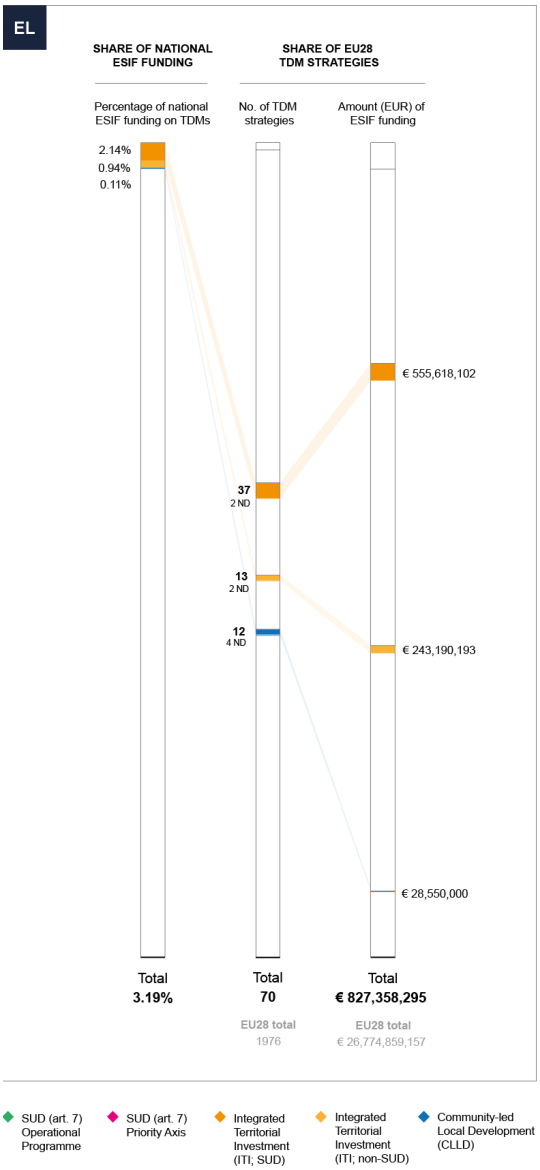
The territorial governance system includes municipalities and regions in a decentralised administration, but the central government tends to exert substantial influence via the funding system and national legislation. The 13 administrative regions are vested with a range of responsibilities, such as regional planning, transportation and infrastructure development, and the management of EU-funded Regional Operational Programmes (ROPs). Municipalities, the local tier of government, play a pivotal role in service provision, including urban planning, public services, infrastructure, and cultural activities. Moreover, in parallel to the administrative regions, there are also seven decentralised administrations without elected authorities, headed by an appointed Secretary-General. They group several regions and provide a linkage between the central government and the regions, performing some functions of territorial governance on behalf of the central government.

COHESION POLICY CONTEXT

In the 2014-20 Cohesion Policy period, the policy was implemented via 7 sectoral Operational Programmes (OPs) and 13 multi-sectoral, multi-fund (ERDF, ESF) regional programmes. Each ROP was managed by a Managing Authority (MA) headed by the Regional Governor. The Greek Sustainable Urban Development (SUD) Integrated Territorial Investment (ITI) strategies were aligned with urban plans, improving strategic quality and strengthening synergies between Cohesion Policy and domestic policies. The Thematic Objectives (TO) for Cohesion Policy in Greece were shaped by the crisis's repercussions, and therefore the European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF) supported strategies that targeted degraded and deprived neighbourhoods, urban regeneration, tourism and cultural activities, compact spatial development, and social infrastructures.

FEATURES OF THE TERRITORIAL DELIVERY MECHANISMS

Figure 2: Types of Territorial Delivery Mechanisms (TDMs) used, amount of strategies and the corresponding shares of ESIF* contributions



Source: STRAT-Board (JRC, n.d.). Notes: On the first vertical bar from the left, the percentage of all ESIF funding for that country allocated to TDM strategies is indicated with colour. The whole bar represents all ESIF funding for that country. On the second bar (middle), the number of each type of TDM strategy implemented in this country is indicated with the corresponding colour, with the whole bar representing all TDM strategies implemented across the EU28 (1976 strategies, as indicated in grey below the bar). On the bar on the right side, the amounts of ESIF funding for the TDM strategies are indicated with the corresponding colour. The bar represents the total allocation of ESIF for TDMs in the EU28. Please note that there may be inconsistencies between the data reported in STRAT-Board and Cohesion Open Data Platform.

Sustainable Urban Development Integrated Territorial Investment

SUD strategies are implemented within the framework of the 13 regional operational programmes, using ITI as the implementing mechanism. Triggered by the repercussions of the crisis, Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) and citizens' groups have become more actively involved in strategic planning, and most cities have launched broad and substantial public consultations to define their SUD ITI strategies.

Urban Authorities (municipalities) were substantially involved in the implementation of the Greek SUD ITI strategies. They were responsible for drafting and submitting the proposed strategies, as well as for project generation, while also being involved in the selection of individual projects to receive funding. The municipalities often commissioned experts to support them in drafting the strategies, but in some cases, they were developed entirely in-house.

SUD ITI strategies were aligned with the urban development plans, providing a good example of boosting strategic quality by strengthening synergies between the EU-funded and domestic initiatives. At the same time, the establishment of Intermediate Bodies with delegated competences, as was done for instance for ITI Piraeus, ensured proximity to local stakeholders and better targeting of local development needs. Connectivity and urban mobility, competitiveness, and environmental degradation were the predominant focus of SUD ITI strategies. Explicit links to domestic regional development strategies and other supra-local frameworks, such as smart specialisation strategies, were pursued to help define the logic of intervention and strategic objectives.

Urban Authorities were given significant autonomy in demarcating territories for the SUD ITI strategies. A number of cities, such as Piraeus, chose not to collaborate with neighbouring municipalities to focus investment within their own municipal borders and avoid the administrative costs of collaboration across municipal boundaries. In some other cases, such as those of Western Athens and Southern Athens or Thessaloniki, ITIs were proposed by coalitions of municipalities.

A key challenge in all cases was the lengthy process of drafting and approving the strategies and the lack of a prioritised project pipeline from the Urban Authorities, with enough eligible and mature projects to allow for reasonably rapid absorption of funds. Overall, Urban Authorities lacked the capacity to manage the funds effectively.

Non-Sustainable Urban Development Integrated Territorial Investment

Beyond SUD strategies, the ITI instrument was used for 13 territorial strategies across 9 regions. In many of these cases, the main focus was on a portion of territories with specific features and with the aim to promote touristic and cultural valorisation of these areas. The Non-SUD ITI strategies focused predominantly on rural areas and territorial challenges facing a region or its specific part. An example of such a strategy was the Epirus ITI, based in the eponymous region in Greece, focusing on the development of a cultural route connecting ancient theatres located across four municipalities. Some challenges in administrative capacities among the municipalities were noted; however, the strategy's implementation has been instrumental in developing collaboration among stakeholders in the region.

* In order to reflect the contribution of various funds to TDMs, this graph includes all ESIF funds (ERDF, ESF, CF, EAFRD, EMFF).

Community-led Local Development (CLLD)

Overall, 16 CLLD strategies were implemented across Greece. An interesting feature of the use of CLLD in this country was the exclusive funding via ESF in all but one case (Arcadia CLLD also used ERDF). In most cases, ESF funding was used to support additional ESF-eligible actions in areas already covered by a CLLD funded via EAFRD/EMFF. This reflected a practical response to issues of capacity and available resources: pre-existing CLLDs already had an institutional set-up with the necessary experience, and therefore only in Arcadia was a new institution set up to manage the CLLD. Another characteristic of the Greek approach to CLLD, which also concerned other Territorial Delivery Mechanisms in Greece, was the development of specific indicators by each MA.

Governance innovation triggered by Non-SUD strategy in Epirus

The ITI strategy for the Epirus Theatres involved setting up a Destination Management Organisation (DMO), a dedicated institution in charge of various tourism-related actions, striving to take advantage of the tourism development opportunities created by the implementation of the ITI strategy, while providing a point of contact for the local stakeholders. The DMO ensured that the strategy supported the consistent development of a local tourism product extending beyond the programming period and effectively coordinated stakeholders' activities via the Stakeholder Council, involving 20 local organisations with a stake in the ITI strategy.

IN SUM

The implementation of Territorial Delivery Mechanisms in Greece has improved strategic quality and targeting of local needs through close collaboration with local stakeholders in participatory processes, organised by intermediary organisations in the case of ITI strategies. The ITI strategies were also well-integrated with domestic strategies and plans. However, the potential of ITIs to trigger innovation in terms of strategic planning for functional areas was not fully utilised, due to the focus of some ITIs on single cities and administrative capacity issues. Likewise, the integration of ERDF and ESF funding remained too complex at the operational level. Finally, the implementation of the ITIs helped to improve coordination among local non-state stakeholders and boosted their involvement in regional development policy via the coordination activities of the intermediary organisations at the local or functional area scales.

References

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