

# Industrial relations for a green economy

Innovative bargaining processes for a sustainable growth and a quality employment



Project VS/2014/0405 co-founded

by

DGESAI - DG EMPLOYMENT, SOCIAL AFFAIRS and INCLUSION

## Case Study No 3: Green Tourism – Greece, Chalkidiki

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## PRESENTATION (IDENTITY CARD OF BEST PRACTICE)

### ▪ **Name of the best practice**

The best practice concerns in the preparation for and the certification of some tourist accommodation facilities in Chalkidiki region of Macedonia, Greece with the EU EcoLabel.

### ▪ **Short description**

The reason this case study was selected was the fact that leads the way and sets an example for tourism which covers a wide part of the Greek economy to produce Green tourist services aiming both external and internal markets. In addition, the case was selected because of the trade union's role in the transformation procedure. ShMILE 2 project "*from experimentation to dissemination of the EcoLabel in the Mediterranean*", a European project with primary objective to contribute to sustainable development and to the reduction of environmental impact in the Mediterranean Basin through the promotion of sustainable tourism, was a tool for the preparation of tourist units towards EU Ecolabel award. Actors from six (6) countries participated in the project: France, Greece, Italy, Egypt, Tunisia and Jordan.

### ▪ **Geographic, territorial, sectorial localization,**

Chalkidiki is a region of Macedonia and forms the geographical edge of Central Macedonia in the Aegean Sea; it is a large peninsula, since it is washed by the Aegean Sea and only at the N-NW it is united with the body of Macedonia through the region of Thessaloniki. In its southern part there are three peninsulas which from west to east are: the peninsula of Kassandra, the peninsula of Sithonia and the peninsula of Athos. Administratively, Chalkidiki belongs to the region of Central Macedonia and is divided in the Chalkidiki division with Polygyros as its capital, which is located in the geographic middle of the division and has about 11.000 inhabitants; and in the autonomous monastic state of Mount Athos with Karyes as its administrative center. The northern part of the peninsula belongs to Thessaloniki region.

### ▪ **Period of activity**

The ShMILE 2 project was funded by the Mediterranean program «ENPI CBC MED» with lead actor the Côte d'Azur Chamber of Commerce, Nice, France and was successfully implemented from January 2012 and for twenty four (24) months. It is a continuation of the ShMILE 2004-2007 project, which was co-funded by the LIFE-Environment, with lead actor ADEME, the Agency for the Environment and Energy Management of France, (to which other actors were added when it evolved into the ShMILE 2 project). Their main objective, in the first form, was to evaluate the criteria and procedure for the certification of a tourist facility with the European EcoLabel.

### ▪ **Players / promoters**

Chalkidiki Hotel Association, Institute of Tourism Development of Macedonia (I.T.A.M), the Region of Central Macedonia (Chalkidiki division), Alpha MENTOR ltd (consulting firm), Trade union.

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- **Players/ partners involved, their main functions**
  - The Institute of Tourism Development of Macedonia (I.T.A.M) is an institute of vocational training which was founded by the Chalkidiki hotel association and for this project plays the part of training and informing tourism professionals to participate.
  - Alpha MENTOR ltd, coordination of the project.
  - GSEE’s representative member of the Competent body awarding the EU Ecolabel having an advisory role.
  
- **Types of Beneficiaries (direct/indirect):**
  - 150 hotels are now more informed in matters of environmental management.
  - 21 young scientists are now trained to offer their services to the tourist accommodation businesses, for new certifications.
  - 35 hotels supported and participating in almost every activity of the “ShMILE 2” project in Greece.
  - 14 hotels from Chalkidiki that worked trying to keep pace with the criteria of the EU EcoLabel.
  - 5 hotels on the way to the EU certification (they have successfully passed the first level of control).
  - Dozens of hotel division executives are now more informed and trained in responsible environmental behavior.
  - Dynamic representation in outreach activities of the tourist product of Chalkidiki, in 10 major exhibitions in Europe and in events (symposiums, conferences, business meetings, etc.) in areas such the project partners in Nice, France, Sardinia, Tunisia etc.
  
- **Human resources involved in the bargaining process and their competencies**
  
- **Indicators for monitoring and evaluating activities**

## **DESCRIPTION of best practice**

- **Starting point of the initiative/project/intervention as related to the territorial context (societal, economic, political)**

See presentation of the case.

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- **Description of the socio-economic, territorial, corporate context in which the initiative is based.**

Chalkidiki has been a popular summer tourist destination since the late 1950s when people from Thessaloniki started spending their summer holidays in the coastal villages. By the 1960s, tourists from abroad started to visit Chalkidiki more frequently. Since the start of the big tourist boom in the 1970s,

the whole region has been captured by tourism. In this environment, the initiative is very likely to set an example.

- **What problems/ general needs the intervention is trying to address? What the specific ones are?**

General: The need for “greener” services.

Specific: Especially in the Chalkidiki area with the huge number of tourism facilities and the hazardous mining activity, the need to lower the environmental effects of the tourist sector is bigger than ever.

- **What goals/ends the intervention is trying to achieve? What bargaining dynamic had been in place?**

- Support tourism professionals, in particular tourist accommodation services and help them to reach new markets for the future: sustainable tourism.
- Develop a regional cooperation between Southern and Northern Mediterranean countries to ensure a sustainable development of the tourism sector and strengthen political and economic links.
- Ensure environmental sustainability (sustainability) of the first economic sector in the partner regions

- **What activities and instruments the intervention is operational through?**

The best practice is realised through training of the tourism professionals by experts and through the renovation of their buildings and the total renewal of their businesses using EU funding as a tool.

- **How can the actions increase knowledge and support overcoming specific problem?**

- **As concerns the territorial context what the most innovative aspect of the initiatives is? Why?**

- **What the “internal quality factors” of the initiative are? (Sustainability, internal efficiency, effectiveness?)**

The initiative aims and achieves in a very large scale to promote sustainability in the tourism sector.

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- **Is it possible to transfer the initiative in other context?**

The initiative can very well be transferred in other contexts in terms of making businesses of other divisions of the economy more environmentally friendly.

- **Is the initiative reproducible in different contexts?**

Same as above.

- **Are joint monitoring instruments involving also the stakeholders contemplated?**

- **Please point out communication instruments (website, documents, booklets) concerned with the initiative.**

<http://www.shmile2.eu/shmile2-en.html>

<http://www.halkidiki-hotels.gr/>

- **Please write your final considerations.**

- The certification of a tourist facility with the EU EcoLabel is a green policy award that can be used to control activities of a tourism unit, such as the energy flows and the quality of provided services, and to optimize the quality of the provided services. The
- EU EcoLabel, itself provides a comparative advantage for tourism businesses that acquire it at the level of approaching customers, promotion and advertising.
- The EU EcoLabel offers increased flow of customers mainly from "advanced" countries and of higher educational level, who consider environmental awareness of a tourism businesses to be more important and are not restricted only to a lowest-price research, regardless of the quality of services offered, since they are seeking at a tourist facility what they choose in their everyday lives. However, many times, a targeted add per country is required in order for the needs of approaching the customers to be met.
- The process of alignment with the requirements of the EU EcoLabel is tedious, costly and unmanageable since there is a lack of a clear description of the procedure but the required changes-requirements lengthen the life span of the business. In practice, however, despite the fact that the certification targets tourist accommodation establishments in general, regardless of their size, the benefits of the program can be reaped by larger companies with availability of resources for external support.
- Green tourism can provide with jobs in fields of the economy that relate, on the one hand, with tourist industry itself and on the other with the process of the certification with the EU EcoLabel, such as energy and waste management, renewable energies, etc., but can also revitalize fields facing serious problem at the time such as the construction sector (through building renovations etc.),

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livestock, fish farming, and other fields peripheral to tourism, through synergies. It will also help the specialization and training of personnel in the tourism sector, since these new procedures require training. It is for this reason, after all, that within the ShMILE 2 project, training seminars were organized for tourism staff and professionals.

- The current legal framework needs to be improved as it is largely suspensory.
- There are many and promising prospects for green tourism as the markets are increasingly looking for environmentally certified groups; this fact combined with factors such as legislative pressures towards adopting green economy practices,
  
- Competitive advantages derived by the implementation of such practices by a business but, on the other hand, the capability or not of the businesses to follow these trends, leads to an overall positive component. These prospects are:
  - More and more tourist units to be certified with the EU EcoLabel throughout Greece,
  - More and targeted advertising and promotion to be claimed,
  - Efforts to be made so as goods of the primary and secondary sectors of the economy to be added in the tertiary sector of tourism, therefore creating links between more jobs and thus: increasing family income, increasing GDP, reducing unemployment and targeting specialization,
  - Larger piece of the tourist market to be claimed,
  - To build on the results of the project and disseminate them nationwide,
  - To use expertise from third countries,
  - Specifically in Chalkidiki region, organization of strategic planning of promotion that illustrates awards and certifications (UNESCO, NATURA 2000, BLUE FLAGS, GREEK BREAKFAST etc.).

## ▪ The role of the trade union

The GSEE<sup>1</sup> has played since the very beginning, early in the '90's when the EU regulation of Ecolabel came into force, a very active role as a member of the Competent body awarding the EU Ecolabel, which operates under the umbrella of the Ministry of Environment, Energy and Climate Change.

In the Greek Competent Body for EU Ecolabel participate also employer's organization (SEB), relevant ministries representatives, NGO's. It is a consultative body of the relevant stakeholders to environmental certification. Since 2003 when criteria for tourist accommodations were introduced, GSEE' s representative participates constantly in seminars of information, raising awareness and training in EU Ecolabel awarding. The initiative of Tourism Development of Macedonia (I.T.A.M) described in the present case

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<sup>1</sup> GSEE: Greek General Confederation of Labor

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study was an opportunity to promote EU Ecolabel and to exchange experiences with other countries from Mediterranean Region, and that's why GSEE supported it.