

## Executive Summary

### **“Analyzing the existing social reality: exploring the problems and the developmental prospects of local community: The local professionals/residents point of view”**

The overall purpose of this study was to explore the attitudes towards Evrotas River of professionals- residents of Laconia. Information was collected from people living in Sparta, Krokees, Blaxioti and Skala, Municipalities around Evrotas river. The research method used was interviews with the assistance of a pre-structure questionnaire. The study conducted in ten Municipalities around Evrotas river. A total of 277 questionnaires were held across the ten communities. The sample designed respectively with the population of each town (Sparta 199, Skala 36, Blaxiotis 24 persons, Krokees 18 persons). The interviews took place at the central markets of the three towns and at the shopping centre of Sparta. There were not any refusals. The study was carried out between July 2006 and January 2007 by the Environmental Team IAAK/EKKE.

The interpretation of the findings is divided into three main sections. The first provides an overview of inhabitant's attitudes towards Evrotas river, in which inhabitants state what they consider as river's main contribution and utility. In the second part, the personal relationship in their everyday life with the river is discussed. In the third section the main objective is the expectations of residents-professionals from LIFE-Envfriendly Project.

These were the findings:

#### **1st section: General Opinion about Evrotas River**

According to the opinion of respondents the most fundamental contributions of the river are related to agricultural and economic development. Particularly, a 30 per cent of all participants' concerns “irrigation” as the most important point and a 10 per cent the “aquatic ecosystem”. Also, a significant part of them pointed out “flora and fauna” and its “natural beauty” (23.5%). In all towns where the field study took place residents seem to appreciate the river as a “source of life” and a “place with long history and civilization, a place steeped in tradition”.

Finally, some respondents, mainly those who live in Sparta, referred to the river's contribution to tourist services and also to its draining function, while others, who live in Sparta, Skala and Blaxiotis, characterized the river as a “refuse dump” and as a “ravaged site”.

After the discussion about the general contribution of the river, respondents asked to express what mostly bother them regarding to the river. Particularly, they asked to rank seven pre-structure answers. According to the given responses the vast majority of the total, selected as the major annoyance the ‘refuse material and waste’ around Evrotas (89.0%) and a 69.8 per cent the ‘pollution’. Third, in rank order selection, was the ‘undeveloped potential’ of Evrotas river (54.0%). It is noteworthy that the ‘floods’ as a reason of bother was higher in Blaxiotis (63.0%) and Skala (53.0%) than in Krokees (29.0%) and Sparta (28.8%). In addition, the respondents who live in Blaxiotis mentioned their bother for the solid waste from olive oil production and the Industrial Production taken place the area.

### **2nd Section: Personal relationship with the River in everyday life**

The personal relationship of residents with the river seems to be influenced by the place where they live and work. It seems that there is a limited mobility of inhabitants around the Prefecture since many of the respondents have never visited the spring and the mouth of Evrotas river or they have only few times visited these places.

The personal relationship estimated through some multiple-choice questions. Regarding to the results, respectively for each town, we can see that the main relationship residents of Sparta have with the river is that ‘they see it when they are going to work’ or when ‘they cross the entrance of Sparta town’ (53.6%). The same trivial relationship seems to also have the residents of Skala (57.5%) and of Blaxiotis (67.1%). Only a significant number of Krokees’s residents stated that ‘they use to visit Evrotas in leisure time’ (38.9%) and a small number of Sparta’s and Blaxiotis’s residents 26.5% and 19.5% respectively. Finally some of the respondents’s personal relationship is mainly limited in the irrigation of their land, especially in Skala (30.0%).

On a next stage, respondents were asked if they have ever visited the spring and the mouth of Evrotas, and if so how often. It is notable that the half of the respondents in Sparta has never visited the spring and from those who have visited it the 33.2% have visited it once to five times. The residents of all other towns seem to visit Evrotas’ spring less, since the 75.0% of all respondents in Blaxiotis, the 72.2% in Skala and the 66.7% in Krokees stated that they have never visited it. Almost the same responses we have regarding to the visits on the mouth of

Evrotas, with the 46.7% in Sparta, the 38.9% of all respondents in Krokees, the 27.8% in Skala and the 29.2% in Blaxioti to state that they have never visit the mouth of Evrotas.

Finally, the participants were asked to rank how well they assume that they know the history across Evrotas river (memorials, historical sites etc). The 53.0% of the total number of respondents stated that it knows “few things”, while the 14.8% stated that it knows “nothing”. As a general conclusion we can say that the residents of Sparta seem to know a bit more things about the long history of Laconia. In short, only the 32.1% of the total sample population knows “very well” or “well” the history across Evrotas. It is also an important finding that the majority of respondents have never visited neither the spring nor the mouth of the river.

### **3rd Section: residents-professionals expectations of LIFE-Envfriendly Project**

The last part of the study concerns on one hand the expectations of local communities for a further development of Evrotas river and on the other hand the expectations for the implementation of LIFE-Envfriendly Project.

Regarding to the first part, that is the expectations for local development, the respondents were asked to rank in a scale - from one to five- what consider as the most significant function of Evrotas river. Accordingly, the vast majority consider Evrotas river as “a clean and prosperous water source”. The second, in rank order choice, was the Evrotas river as “a water ecosystem with rich flora and fauna” and the third one was Evrotas as “a place for leisure activities”. It is significant the finding that Evrotas as “a place for attracting tourists” have taken the fourth position.

As a final point, the participants were asked to express their opinion (with an open-ended question) about what and how they believe that LIFE-Envfriendly Project could contribute to a better management of Evrotas river. Furthermore, they were asked to state any related recommendations. In short, the “minimization of pollution” and the “cleanliness” of river water seem to be the major expectations of all participants. Particularly, they mostly desire the cleanliness of river’s mouth and the control of refuse material across the sites of river. Last but not least residents express the willing LIFE-Envfriendly Project and other related projects help to generate “concrete proposals for water management and for conserve water resources”.