



NATIONAL CENTER FOR SOCIAL RESEARCH
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**-Environmental Friendly Technologies for Rural
Development-**

**TASK 7: Evaluation of Social Acceptance and Dissemination
of Results**

**Deliverable 7D2: Executive Summary and Conclusions of
Evaluation of Social Acceptance and Dissemination of
Results**



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1. Dissemination Strategy Plan

The initial planning of dissemination activities for the Project was elaborated on the basis of four fundamental axes: a) thematic distribution of the activities, b) time schedule, c) definition of target-groups, d) means and methods of dissemination.

A. Concerning the thematic distribution of the dissemination activities content, specific issues addressed were defined as follows:

- Overall local development perspectives.
- Modern methods and practices of integrated agricultural production.
- Alternative tourist activities (agro-tourism, eco-tourism).
- Water resources management (modes and techniques for water consumption reduction and anti-pollution technologies).
- Environmental information and sensitization of the public.

B. The time schedule of the dissemination activities comprised:

- An initial stage, where the goal was to inform the local population about the Project objectives and thus to promote participation of several local agents and to achieve social acceptance of the Project methods and priorities.
- An intermediate stage, where the goal was to provide continuous information about the ongoing progress of the Project, together with enhancing local agents' participation in order to identify local specificities and development perspectives.
- A final stage, where a twofold goal had been put: to propose the final form of proposed measures and to disseminate the final results and the estimated benefits of these measures, through an adequate consultation process. This stage also aimed at the increasing the capacity for future development.

C. For methodological purposes the target groups were categorized as follows:

- Local agencies/Project Participants (staff of the Prefecture of Lakonia, the ERA Municipalities and the Local Organizations for Land Improvement (*TOEB*)).
- Representatives of professional and entrepreneurial associations (Commercial and Manufacture Association, Trade Union, Hotel Owners Association).
- Agricultural and Stock-breeding Co-partnerships.
- Environmental Education Agencies.
- Non Governmental Organizations (Environmental Organizations, Citizens'

Associations)

- Local media.

D. Means and methods of dissemination comprised activities at different scales, such as:

- Regular contacts and meetings with local agents and Projects participants (planning and organization of the Project activities, meetings on specific issues, organization and materialization of public events, participation in public events organized by third parts, public consultation processes and formation of the content of final measures).
- Public events (scientific and informative conferences, participation in conferences and festivals organized by third parts), addressed to the above mentioned target groups.
- Elaboration, production and distribution of imprint and digital informative material (flyers, leaflets, posters, banners, CD, DVD etc.).

2. Transformations according to local specificities and urgent problems (fire disasters, floods, water shortage, recycling)

The initial Dissemination Strategy Plan was shaped according to the Project objectives, the above mentioned methodology and the information obtained by local agents. However, during the materialization process (and even in the stage of its final formation), several transformations appeared to be of crucial importance, due to specific conditions and emerging problems.

- The first surveys in local residents and professionals and in the local representatives of the ERA Municipalities, as well as the preliminary study on 'Social and Economic dimensions – the first approach' revealed the low sensitization on environmental issues and more specifically the absence of any recycling and waste management systems. This condition called for a new survey in the local population and in the representatives of public agencies in order to evaluate existing capacity together with an effort for more sensitization. In this context a review of existing systems functioning at the national level was undertaken, in order to investigate their potential implementation in the PL (currently one of the four less developed Prefectures in Greece concerning recycling). Lists of the different waste management systems were produced and distributed to potential beneficiaries, together with informative material (posters, leaflets). Additionally, the potential recycling of expired drugs was investigated, based on the innovative practice adopted by the Pharmacists' Co-partnership in the Prefecture of Thessaloniki. Relevant material was distributed to the pharmacists of the PL.
- In the first year of the Project severe floods caused extended damages in agricultural land and, in some cases, in settlements. The partners of the Project responded by several means: adequate surveys with representatives and farmers, elaboration of studies on flood prevention, data collection and processing in collaboration with ΕΛΓΑ, organization of local meetings and seminars on flood prevention and restoration measures.
- Water shortage in the area has been observed to increased in recent years, due to reduced rains. This condition called for informative events, in order to discuss the impact on agricultural production and possible methods to decrease water consumption for agricultural and urban use. The example of the water

distribution system established by the Local Organization for Land Improvement in the Prefecture of Serres was used as an indicative good practice, in order to investigate the possibility of similar practices in the ERA. Several relevant meetings with local representatives were organized.

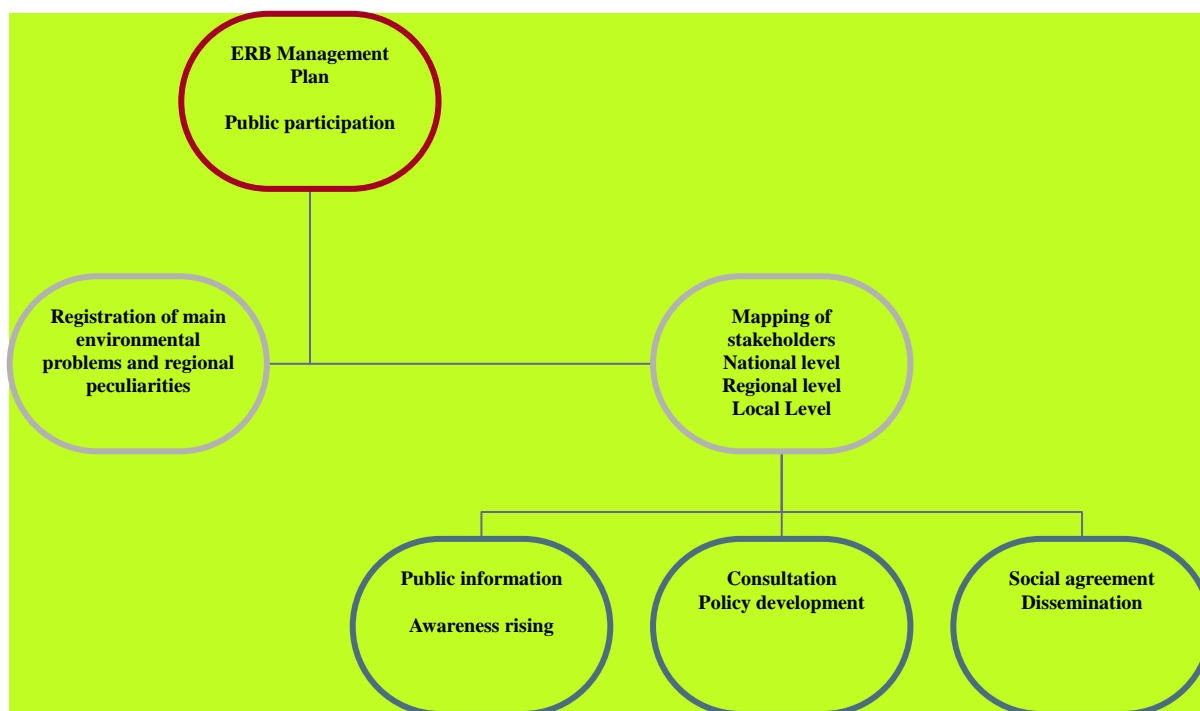
- In the summer 2007 forest fires destroyed a great part of forest and agricultural land in the Region of Peloponnesus and in the mountainous part of Lakonia. The partners of the Project, in collaboration with other agents, responded by elaborating studies on the restoration of the ecosystems, the preservation of the agricultural land and the possible establishment of stock-breeding parks, as in the case of the Municipality of Kyrros in the Prefecture of Pella, Region of Central Macedonia, focusing on the institutional framework and the economic viability.

The emerging transformations were incorporated in the initial Dissemination Plan and the final framework of activities and interventions was adequately informed. The initial definition of the target groups and the proposed means remained the same but the thematic content was enriched, according to the new data.

3. Evaluation Of Social Acceptance/Public Consultation

The comparison of the results of the two socio-economic studies (initial and repetitive) conducted throughout the project implementation (interviews with local electives and residents/professionals) demonstrate the fact that to a considerable extent society in the ERB has adopted the philosophy of the ENVIFRIENDLY project, accepted the need to implement the suggested actions in the field of water resources management and prioritized in similar ways the necessary changes. Local society is now aware of the alternative development perspectives of Evrotas and considers the implementation of ENVIFRIENDLY to have set the framework for the sustainable agricultural development of the region and to have paved the road for the implementation of new development projects in the region.

Public participation is essential throughout the preparation, review and updating of the ERB management plans. Different types of participation refer to different levels of involvement of stakeholders and the public. The implementation of the WFD requires the following forms of participation: a) information supply, b) consultation and c) active involvement. It should be stressed that approaches to public participation should be context specific and adapted to the specific institutional, socio-economic and environmental context of the River Basin within which they are pursued. The ENVIFRIENDLY project organized the public participation process in full consideration of the centralized and hierarchical nature of the Greek state, the limited experience of public and private stakeholders in co-operation and the inexperience of the general public in participatory processes. Thus the project team closely cooperated with the local authorities (prefectures, municipalities and central state departments) in the preparation of the ERB management plan and approached local stakeholders and the public through the authorities.



Public participation took place at:

- 1) **the central level:** with the active involvement of the Laconia Prefecture in the elaboration of the ERB management plans (the Land Reclamation Office specialized in the problem of draught and the adoption of preventive practical measures, while the Department of Hygiene specialized on pollution issues in the Evrotas RB and the riparian areas). The regional Office of the General Secretariat for Civil Protection also actively participated in the elaboration of measures against natural disasters.
- 2) **the local level:** first with the active involvement of the local authorities and the respective local organizations of land reclamation (TOEB) that specialize on water management issues and second with the establishment of an informal information network that includes all local stakeholders (NGOs, professional unions, professionals, civil society organizations) and households.

Public participation was organized along the following steps:

- 1) **Initial step:** upon the starting of the project a timetable and a strategic plan for the project implementation towards the elaboration of the ERB management plan were prepared.

- 2) Intermediate step:** the regional peculiarities, the main pollution sources and the related polluting activities were registered and the water management stakeholders at the national, regional and local level were mapped and contacted. The basis for the management plan was set. Some of the proposed measures have been demonstrated in Evrotas basin, during the ENVIFRIENDLY project, such as for example (1) in "Tzinakos olive mill" the wastewater is stored in evaporation ponds and is used during the summer for the irrigation of a corn field and for compost production, (2)) the management of drainage canals as a low cost agro-environmental measure.
- 3) Final step:** The management plan was presented to the stakeholders and the public in general for open discussion. Different views were presented, comments and suggestions were taken into consideration and the results of the discussion were incorporated in the final version of the management plan.

The analysis of the environmental problems of the ERB indicated the urgency of such problems as the olive mills wastes and drought. These two points were thoroughly addressed by all the participation mechanisms used towards the elaboration of the ERB management plan:

- 1) **Information provision and awareness rising:** information was provided to all the stakeholders (local and regional) in the ERB in order to raise the awareness of stakeholders and the population in general and give them the necessary know-how to participate in the consultation process at a second stage. More specifically, a) printed and electronic material was widely distributed on a regular basis, b) the results of the socio-economic studies conducted in the region were widely distributed and presented in public thematic events, c) environmental education was pursued with the collaboration of local educational institutions, d) information events and workshops were realized in different municipalities and e) information material was distributed and local stakeholders contacted during local celebrations organized for different reasons in at least six municipalities. With reference to oil mills wastes a handbook of 10 alternative scenarios for the treatment of wastes was prepared and a series of information and educational events were implemented with the vast participation of olive oil producers. Similar actions were addressed to farmers on draught and the role of wise agricultural practices.

2) **Consultation:** in May 2008 a series of meetings were organized locally in five municipalities in which local authorities (municipal council), large olive oil producers and farmers and their unions, and representatives of the TOEB reviewed and discussed the environmental and socio-economic analyses' results and the development prospects of their localities. The feedback was then incorporated in the drafting of the preliminary ERB management plan which was presented for **open consultation** in November (21st) 2008 in Sparta, the capital city of the Laconia Prefecture. The outcome of the consultation process and the written contributions were incorporated in the second draft of the ERB management plan which was presented for open consultation in February (26th) 2009. Both consultation events were organized in a similar way. Participants were invited by the prefectural authorities who issued a press release in the local and prefectural press and the local radio stations – personal e-mails were also sent. Participants included representatives of the local and prefectural authorities and regional administration, representatives of the TOEB, large olive oil producers and farmers and representatives of their professional unions, scientists (agronomists, geologists, hydrologists etc.), civil society, NGO representatives and citizens. Written contributions-responses were then considered in the preparation of the final management plan which focused on the Integrated Water Resources Management of the ERB towards environmental enhancement, social cohesion, economic development and improvement of life quality. The goal of the management plan is the implementation of sustainable agricultural practices and the improvement of the chemical and ecological status of the surface and ground waters of the ERB.

4. Issues Of Dissemination Strategy

4.1 Project web site (<http://www.envifriendly.tuc.gr>)

The construction of a web site for the Project had been planned at the initial stage of its implementation. The main objectives of the web page have been to include the research findings and to provide additional ground for dissemination, especially concerning local stakeholders.

The web site is regularly updated and enriched with new emerging material. It contains pages both in Greek and in English.

Its contents include the following thematic units:

- The region
- Local agents
- The Project
- Observatory for Local Development
- Fire effects management
- Environmental education
- News and Events
- Funding resources

Thematic units contain informative material and links with relevant web sites of Ministries, public services and private agents whose activities concern water resources management, agricultural development, ecotourism etc.

During the implementation of the Project the web site proved to be effective for the communication and information exchange among the partners. After the end of the implementation period the web site will continue to evolve under the responsibility of the Observatory, thus consisting an important tool for the constant realization of the objectives of the latter.

4.2 Observatory for Local Development

The Observatory for Local Development was established and operates as part of the Prefecture of Lakonia administrative structure. The function of Observatory institutionalized ordinary by the Peloponnesus region (ΦΕΚ. number 725/16-04-09). Today hand it is primarily a mechanism for collection and dissemination of information on investment and development potential. In the future it is planned to obtain crucial role in the implementation of the Water Resources Management Plan. It is going to coordinate the continuous public consultation process, thus being able to accommodate views from different stakeholders and social groups and to direct them towards a common development perspective.

4.3 Open Farms and Mapping Trails

The aim of the LIFE ENVIFRIENDLY coordinators is for Open Farms to:

- Become educational and information centres for students: acquaint students with the agricultural production procedures, the management and operation of an organized farm, the seasonal problems, the connection between the supply of raw material, production and marketing etc.
- Link the objectives and results of the LIFE project with everyday agricultural practices since the project emphasizes the adoption of the Codes of Good Agricultural Practices, the promotion of organic products and the application of the demonstration technologies in the agricultural field.
- Facilitate the promotion of the local agricultural products, familiarize students with the way local products are produced and inform the public about the advantages of the local agricultural products and their contribution to the local economy.

The list of the Open Farms has been elaborated with the assistance of the Union of New Farmers and other Farmers' Cooperative Organizations, on the basis of specific criteria that seek to attract as many visitors and organized school / educational excursions as possible.

The response and representativeness criteria that the project team used consisted of the following:

- a) The distribution of the farms had to represent the largest and most important part of the local agricultural production. Accordingly olive and orange groves and horticultural farms (as well as a cattle farm) had been selected (traditional local products).
- b) The production way should address the whole of the necessary production procedures. Thus, the Open Farms list included organic farms, traditional seasonal farms and greenhouses.
- c) The geographic distribution of the farms should cover the whole of the Evrotas River Basin. Accordingly, the list included farms in the Municipalities of Elos, Inounta, Krokees, Asopos, Molaoi, Skala and Pellana.
- d) The farms should be easily accessible. Thus, the list included farms that can be easily accessed by schools, tourists and other visitors through the highway or the main regional road network.

According to the initial Dissemination Strategy Plan, the selection of specific farms had

been proposed, as a means to show off the local agricultural production and products and to achieve interconnection with ecotourist activities. Self-consumption and non-market exchange of agricultural products are well-established practices in local social networks. Consequently, instead of constituting a way to integrate the local agricultural market, the basic goal of the 'Mapping of Open Farms' activity (7.M5) was to inform and educate the broader audience.

More precisely, Open Farms:

- can be the ground for educational and informative activities for students who can get familiarized with the local production process. The current school year has been defined as the 'Year for Agricultural Production and Wholesome Nutrition' and several relevant activities are being materialized.
- can contribute to the linkage between the Project objectives and results and the everyday agricultural practice, especially in what concerns the adoption of the Code for Good Agricultural Practice the cultivation of organic products and the use of new technologies for rural development.

Moreover, the mapping of river and mountain trails in the ERA was proposed in the context of increasing possibilities for ecotourist development. Based on the study of the University of Ioannina and in collaboration with the local branch of the Greek Mountaineering Club maps of seven riverside and three mountainous forest zones were produced. Some of the routes of the mountainous area (Eastern Taygetos) are parts of the E4 international trail. Together with a relevant photographic presentation, this material is available at the Project web page.

5. Evaluation Of Dissemination Results

Upon the completion of the project the following results indicate the effectiveness of the public participation tools towards a more active involvement in decision and policy-making:

- 1) The institutionalization of networking with the establishment of the Observatory for Sustainable Development. The amendment of the regulation of the organization and operation of the Prefectural Authorities of Laconia was published in the Official Journal of the Government in April 2009 (FEK 725.16.04.2009, B') establishing the Observatory for Sustainable Development. The Observatory will become operational under the jurisdiction of the Prefectural Authorities and its tasks will include the collection of all information material for the exploitation of the ERB development potential and the collection of feedback from all local stakeholders and citizens, the overall coordination of the development actions and the participation to the resolution of the emerging environmental and broader development problems.
- 2) Following the meetings with the local olive oil producers it became clear that the majority of them were willing to implement the suggested by the ENVIFRIENDLY group waste treatment measures on the condition that they would receive financial support and guidance by the State. Within this framework, the procedures have started for the release of a Local Health Provision with a detailed description of the obligations of the olive oil manufacturers in the ERB.

The implementation of the participation procedures planned by the ENVIFRIENDLY project group has verified the assumption that for public participation approaches to be successful (i.e. produce technical knowledge or social capital) they should be tailored-made to the specific institutional, socio-economic and environmental context within which they are pursued:

- 1) Considering the centralized and hierarchical nature of the Greek state it is no wonder that the Prefecture of Laconia had to operate as a 'leader' in bringing together local stakeholders and the public at large. The inexperience of public and private actors in Greece in participatory procedures necessitated the

assumption of a 'leading' role by an authoritative public institution. Furthermore, in view of the financial considerations of farmers and olive-oil manufacturers, the most extensive participation of local authorities considerably diminished the reluctance of local stakeholders and society at large to proceed with the required alterations of well-established but not sustainable practices.

- 2) Local stakeholders and the public have no experience in participatory procedures and often ignore basic environmental facts. Within this framework, before planning and implementing the consultation procedures it is necessary to spend some time to environmentally educate stakeholders and the public and create the required participatory know-how.
- 3) While implementing the project the environmental conditions underwent dramatic changes with the extreme 2006 draught and the catastrophic 2007 fires. These changes had to be extensively studied by the project team and the results of the relevant studies were introduced in the strategic management plan. The provision of relevant advice to the stakeholders created trust between the project team and the local population and facilitated the participation process in the elaboration of the ERB management plan.