

The Management Organization Unit aims to strengthen the management capacity of authorities implementing EU-funded programs. The exchange and transfer of know-how with European regions is among its top priorities.

MOUs inject know-how, avoid inflexibilities

Over the 25-year course of Greece's accession to the European Union and due to the need for better management of assistance delivered through Structural Funds, substantial changes were introduced in the country's public administration. Since 1986, the European Union has financed thousands of projects in Greece, either through the Integrated Mediterranean Programs or the successive Community Support Frameworks (CSF). During this period of EU interventions various weaknesses were identified — namely structural inefficiencies of public bodies, bureaucratic procedures, lack of specialized staff, as well as serious technological gaps. Some of the above were tackled by granting a greater role to the private sector, by deconcentration of decision making and by introducing a sound management, audit and control system. This effort was reinforced by the creation of government agencies, run under private sector rules and staffed by qualified human resources, aiming to safeguard Community interventions in terms of quality assurance, certification and project monitoring.

One such agency is the Management Organization Unit (MOU) of the Community Support Framework. It was established in 1996 by a joint decision of the Greek government and the European Commission in order to strengthen the management capacity of the implementing authorities of EU-funded programs, to inject know-how from the private sector and avoid the inflexibilities of the public sector, without, however, substituting its tasks.

Identity

The CSF Management Organization Unit is a government agency operating under the auspices of the Greek Ministry of Economy and Finance.

It is governed by a nine-member board of directors and its work force is made up of highly qualified personnel recruited from both the private and public sectors (the vast majority being university graduates, most of whom have postgraduate degrees).

MOU's mission is currently to support CSF managing authorities by providing quality capacity building in the fields of:

- Human resources (selection and recruitment of specialized personnel, training and assessment);
- Management systems and tools;
- Administrative assistance and improvements in infrastructure facilities.

In 2007, MOU obtained the ISO 9001:2000 certification by TUV Rheinland in the area of 'Support of Administration and Implementation of EU

Structural Funds Interventions.'

MOU's role in the 2000-06 period

MOU has played a vital role in setting up CSF management structures. Specifically, the organization:

- Recruited specialists for the staffing of the managing authorities;
- Deployed task forces to support implementing bodies (so-called 'final beneficiaries') with management weaknesses;
- Elaborated systems and tools related to the management of EU-funded projects;
- Carried out intensive training programs;
- Procured state-of-the-art office equipment and modern infrastructure facilities to accommodate the managing authorities;
- Organized, installed and operated the managing authorities' information technology systems;
- Created Internet sites for citizens' information on EU co-funding opportunities (www.info3kps.gr) and promotion of best practices (www.helaskps.gr/bestpractices).

Deployment

MOU's work force to date numbers 1,150 employees, where the majority (approximately 1,000) are seconded to the managing authorities. MOU itself consists of a central unit based in Athens including several task forces which provide direct support to final beneficiaries. These task forces target specifically:

- Remote and island areas;
- European Social Fund projects;
- Minority groups' projects;
- Solid waste and wastewater management projects;
- The CSF Management Information System (MIS); Their support consists of:
 - Management consulting;
 - Technical advice and transfer of know-how;
 - Monitoring of the appropriate regulatory requirements;
 - Project studies assessment;
 - On-the-job training.

Beyond the borders

An area of high priority for MOU is the exchange and transfer of know-how with European regions outside Greece. MOU actively participates in major European networks such as IQ-Net (improving the quality of Structural Funds programming through



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exchange of experience) run by Strathclyde Business School in Glasgow, the INFORM Community network for information officers on Structural Funds run by the European Commission etc. It also participates in exchange of activities, particularly with new member states, which are initiated by government entities and/or the private sector. MOU has participated in such activities involving countries such as Romania, Bulgaria, Poland, Cyprus, Hungary, Slovakia, the Czech Republic and Albania.

The new period of EU structural interventions (2007-2013)

The National Strategic Reference Framework (NSRF) was endorsed by the Commission in March 2007. This strategic document lays out how European Cohesion Policy will be applied to deliver growth and jobs in the seven years to come. Greece is the second member state to have its plan and priorities approved by the Commission.

The Ministry of Economy and Finance, for the drafting of the NSRF, has put in place an unprecedented mechanism for consultation involving all ministries and regions, as well as socioeconomic partners, NGOs and local communities. The new NSRF layout, flexible vis-a-vis the planning but also stringent as to the expected results, provides for seven sectoral and five regional operational programs (total

of 12 against 27 in the current period) with greater emphasis placed on the development of rural and semi-rural areas.

The guiding principles underlying the planning of the new period are:

- A more strategic approach to planning;
- A reduction in the number of Operational Programs;
- Fewer but efficient managing authorities;
- The introduction of central coordination bodies (ex. Inter-Ministerial Committee for Coordination);
- Greater synergies between co-financed interventions and measures funded under the national budget;
- A reliable and effective management and control system with simplified procedures, aiming at improving quality and transparency;
- The introduction of new implementing agencies and intermediary bodies;
- Rationalization in the number of final beneficiaries and enhancement of their technical and managerial capacities (introduction of a National Certification System);
- Prevention of compliance problems with EU legislation;
- Dissemination of accumulated experience and know-how from previous programming periods.

MOU's prospective role

Under a new bill approved very recently by the Greek Parliament, MOU's role is further strengthened and expanded. This falls within the government's policy to press ahead with institutional and administrative adjustments for effective governance of structural interventions.

Adapting to this new regulatory framework, MOU will concentrate on high-added-value areas such as:

- Assisting in the restructuring process of services responsible for managing the EU funds as well as setting up, where required, intermediate bodies and regional development agencies;
- Providing the necessary infrastructures, as well as better and faster networking;
- Ensuring the flow of information on co-financed policies and actions to the wider public by fully exploiting the possibilities of new technologies;
- Developing stronger ties with European partners for the transfer of know-how and exchange of best practices;
- Improving flexibility, speeding up responses and disseminating innovative practices to other public structures.

The strategy set by MOU's management for the coming period is to turn the agency into a center of excellence for EU structural interventions in Greece.