PRO-CHANGE: Innovative Pan-European Structures for Managing Economic Change and Restructuring at the Local Level (Greece)

Summary

The PRO-CHANGE project aims to increase local stakeholders' capacity in dealing with economic changes and anticipating socio-economic restructuring. The project has created collaboration networks at regional and transnational levels in order to transfer knowledge and capitalise on the lessons learnt from past initiatives funded through the ESF, as well as to add value to existing structures and strategies. For that purpose Coordination and Support Structures have been established in the local authorities participating in the project (Thessaloniki, Lucca) that enable better diffusion of good practices and coordinate change management actions more effectively.

The project

Global developments led to economic restructuring at local and regional levels. Throughout the EU, economies are being reshaped. In European regions, particularly in the former manufacturing areas, deindustrialization has resulted in severe job losses, long-term unemployment, neglect, and social degradation. For South and Eastern Europe economic restructuring in response to political change has been especially profound with compounding effects. The PRO-CHANGE project was designed to develop innovative/creative solutions to these specific problems. PRO-CHANGE target groups are: local authorities, trade unions, local business associations, local community based organisations, workers, professional associations, social institutions and NGOs and governmental bodies responsible for the formulation of strategies and policies to anticipate and manage change.

Approach

The project aims to increase the effectiveness of support and guidance provided in dealing with restructuring. Two Coordination and Support Structures were set up in Thessaloniki (Greece) and Lucca (Italy) with the support of social partners and research centres (for example, the London School of Economics). The Structures were tasked with analysing and monitoring economic change in order to enable a rapid and effective response to the challenges and opportunities associated with restructuring. In particular, Structures bring together local and other stakeholders, coordinate ESF actions – especially interventions geared towards change management – and provide information on available initiatives and measures for addressing crucial issues of restructuring.

The Training and Capacity Building Programmes supported the local partners in better coping with restructuring processes as well as improving their ability and readiness to face crises. In particular, two types of seminars were implemented in each local authority aiming to provide guidelines and to strengthen the capacity of two categories of beneficiaries:

Sector(s) covered

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Main sector</th>
<th>Society: restructuring</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Other sectors</td>
<td>Education and Training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Business and entrepreneurship</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Public administration</td>
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http://create2009.europa.eu
• The low-skilled unemployed or those who are at risk of losing their job as a result of economic restructuring;

• The key stakeholders in order to anticipate changes and to initiate local action that will bring / sustain economic growth and social stability (training the trainers).

Finally, the creation of a website helped to inform the stakeholders and end-users on the vital issues concerning the restructuring process and to disseminate good practices at local, regional and transnational levels.

**Element of innovation – the process**

The project supports a proactive and positive view of ‘change management’ through pan-European coordination and supporting structures which are implemented at local levels. The key elements of innovation are:

• **Process-oriented innovation** by developing new methods and tools for engaging with the local stakeholders and providing capacity-building through the exchange of knowledge and good practice across different contexts facing similar challenges;

• **Goal-oriented innovation** by identifying and promoting new economic sectors and employment opportunities, such as social economy and tourism;

• **Context-oriented innovation** by creating new systems that enable local authorities to anticipate the effects and negative impacts of the restructuring process.

**Key successes**

PRO-CHANGE developed Strategies and Action Plans that are currently used by local and regional authorities and other stakeholders to effectively deal with the challenges of restructuring and changing economic structures.

These strategies are based both on the specific characteristics of each region and on the lessons learnt from other contexts. Overall, the project’s activities improved the knowledge of public authorities on restructuring challenges and how to deal with them effectively. The project reached more than 40,000 beneficiaries.

**Transferability and sustainability**

Some of the project’s results proved to be sustainable beyond the European funding period. As far as transferability is concerned, local studies that identify potential multiplier effects of the project’s action in other EU Member States have been carried out.

**Special Highlights**

The project has developed innovative/creative solutions to deal with economic and social restructuring at local and regional levels. The project has prepared and trained local stakeholders to effectively respond to the challenges and opportunities brought by the restructuring process. It has established collaboration frameworks at regional and transnational levels in order to transfer knowledge and capitalise on the lessons learnt from past ESF initiatives.

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**Key characteristics**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>General purpose of the practice</th>
<th>The practice stimulates innovative/creative behaviours in people and implements an innovative/creative solution to society’s problems</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Target Group</td>
<td>Local authority officials and management, managerial staff from enterprises, workers, trade union officials, business association officials, and welfare agencies staff; vulnerable social groups such as long-term unemployed, women and immigrant/repatriating groups of all ages</td>
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<tr>
<td>Type of learning</td>
<td>Formal</td>
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<tr>
<td>Level of implementation</td>
<td>International and Local</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Funding</td>
<td>The approach received EU funding – innovative measures of Art. 6 of the ESF “Innovative approaches to the management of change”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Leading organisations          | • Prefectural Authority of Thessaloniki, Greece (Project Promoter)  
• TREK Consulting SA, Greece  
• OPEN Europe Society NGO, Greece  
• Province of Lucca, Italy  
• London School of Economics - The Economic & Social Cohesion Laboratory, UK  
• Bulgarian Association of Regional Development Agencies (BARDA) – Bulgaria [Observer] |

**Further information**

Website of the Project:  
[www.e-prochange.net](http://www.e-prochange.net)

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