

**Rural development agencies in the EU Framework: The case of the development organisation of Temenos and Pediada - Crete - Greece (OATEP SA)**

**Charalambakis G.**

*in*

Baourakis G. (ed.).  
The Common Agricultural Policy of the European Union: New market trends

**Chania : CIHEAM**  
**Cahiers Options Méditerranéennes; n. 29**

**1998**  
pages 153-157

Article available on line / Article disponible en ligne à l'adresse :

<http://om.ciheam.org/article.php?IDPDF=CI020506>

To cite this article / Pour citer cet article

Charalambakis G. **Rural development agencies in the EU Framework: The case of the development organisation of Temenos and Pediada - Crete - Greece (OATEP SA)**. In : Baourakis G. (ed.). *The Common Agricultural Policy of the European Union: New market trends*. Chania : CIHEAM, 1998. p. 153-157 (Cahiers Options Méditerranéennes; n. 29)



<http://www.ciheam.org/>  
<http://om.ciheam.org/>

## RURAL DEVELOPMENT AGENCIES IN THE EU FRAMEWORK; The case of the Development Organisation of Temenos and Pediada - Crete- Greece (OATEP S.A.)

*G. Charalambakis,*

*Gen. Director of OATEP S.A.*

---

**Keywords:** *Development plans, Development strategy, Development agencies, Agricultural development.*

### 1. GENERAL INFORMATION

The Development Organisation of Temenos and Pediada (OATEP S.A.) is a non-governmental organisation created because of the need of the municipalities and communities of the districts of Temenos and Pediada (in the hinterland Prefecture of Heraklion) for a flexible organisation able to undertake and implement development projects and, on their behalf, effectively assist in the formulation of regional policies in the area.

The Company was created in 1989 and initially included 4 villages and towns of the area, but it was later enlarged to include at present 20 municipalities and communities. It is expected to expand further by the end of 1996 to include more than 60 participants and cover most of the inland areas of the Prefecture. Apart from the local authorities, the two largest agricultural co-operatives and Associations of the area (namely those of Peza and Archanes) also actively participated in the creation of the Company in its recent form.

All participating organisations hold a number of shares and they are accordingly represented at the General Assembly and the Administrative Council of the Company.

The headquarters of OATEP S.A. is located in the town of Archanes, 15 km from Heraklion.

The main objectives of the Company may be summarised as follows:

- To contribute to the multisectorial and integrated socio-economic development of the area and improve the quality of life of its inhabitants and visitors, by planning and carrying out local and/or regional projects in close co-operation with the authorities and institutional organisations in the area, and making effective use of local forces and infrastructure.
- To design strategies, draw up programmes and actions and set targets to encourage the endogenous development
- To propose and support measures and undertake actions aimed at the protection and upgrading of the natural environment and to promote development approaches which respect the natural resources and aim at their sustainable use
- To ensure that the private or public development projects realised in the area are compatible with the principles of environmental protection
- To create the appropriate infrastructure and networks capable of allowing direct and fast access to essential information offered by regional, national or international networks, and

process and distribute it to all interested parties, citizens, enterprises and local authorities. This infrastructure will also assist in the development of databases to support decision and policy makers in the area

- To identify, propose, undertake and carry out, supervise, and assess programmes, projects or studies on behalf of national or international bodies, which are concerned with local or regional development
- To participate with similar or other organisations (educational or research institutions) in wider-scale projects or studies either as contractor, subcontractor or end user
- To undertake projects of vocational training and further education for the citizens of the area and the staff of the local companies, in order to improve local capacities
- To promote local culture and support development activities concerned with tourism
- To promote initiatives which support a spirit of collective solidarity amongst residents of the area, by promoting the common interests, traditions and heritage, as well as the protection of local values, whether natural, aesthetic or humanitarian.

## **2. ADMINISTRATION - INTERNAL ORGANISATION OF OATEP S.A. - LEGAL STATUS**

OATEP S.A. is governed by its General Assembly, a body in which all participating local authorities and institutions are accordingly represented. The General Assembly elects the Administrative Council of the Organization for a period of 3 years. The Manager of OATEP S.A. is assigned to deal with the administrative work of the Organisation and to introduce the issues for decision to the Steering Committee and the General Assembly. The director of OATEP S.A. also co-ordinates its activities and represents the Organisation together with the President of the Administrative Council, depending on the level of representation necessary.

OATEP S.A. is organised internally into five Departments, namely:

*The Department of Strategic Planning for Regional Development*, mainly dealing with long-term planning and the formation of policies, and preparing the various scenarios for the decision-making bodies

*The Department of Environmental Protection and Promotion*, dealing with the projects concerned with the environment and the quality of life in urban, rural or forest areas

*The Department of Tourism and Culture*, which prepares policies and informs the local inhabitants about the possibilities in the field, while it acts as a holiday broker by contacting offices for alternative tourism in Greece or abroad.

*The Department of Agricultural Information*, which disseminates information and assists in the preparation of projects a special interest the agriculture sector.

*The Department of Economics and Financial Affairs*, which follows up the projects carried out by the organisations and prepares the economic reports, while keeping the accounts of the Organisation.

### 3. THE AREA COVERED BY OATEP S.A.

The Organisation extends its activities over a large area covering almost the whole of the Prefecture of Heraklion in Crete. This area actually corresponds to the one for which the "LEADER II programme for the Heraklion hinterland" has been approved. The city of Heraklion also participates in OATEP S.A. The area is inhabited by 65.000 people while Heraklion has a population of 140.000.

The main activities in the area are related to agriculture, the chief products being olive oil, grapes and wine. There is a long tradition in their cultivation, which has been continuously practised since the Minoan era, that is for more than 4.000 years; there is evidence of this fact scattered around the area. Today, the Prefecture of Heraklion is the largest producer of olive oil and raisins in Europe, in proportion to its size. This has certain implications for local economy and culture, as well as for the environment.

The landscape is very diverse and rather mountainous with typical Mediterranean flora and fauna. Main threats to the ecosystem come from the use of agrochemicals, by-products from olive oil extraction, mismanagement of urban wastes and sheep-grazing (although this is not as widely practiced as in other regions in Crete). It is only lately that some efforts have been undertaken to protect and manage certain areas of natural beauty and of importance due to their biodiversity. Problems of severe environmental degradation do not exist, except in limited areas.

The area does not include the tourist resorts developed on the sandy northern beaches of the Prefecture; however it receives quite large numbers of visitors, mainly on day-tours around the island.

Industrial activity in the area is very limited and comprises small factories mainly dealing with olive-oil extraction or, to a lesser extent, with wine production. They are either co-operative or privately owned.

The private services sector in the area is also limited to a very small number of taverns, coffee shops and restaurants while there are negligible numbers of small family-run hotels. The main trading activities take place in Heraklion and in a few small towns in the hinterland.

### 4. THE ROLE OF OATEP S.A. IN THE DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

OATEP S.A. plays a central role in the global development of the area. Governed by a General Assembly where the local authorities are represented, and staffed by a number of highly experienced personnel, it is capable of bringing together the politicians with the know-how which leads to the viable planning of the development procedure. Working as a private company it has the flexibility required to initiate effective projects, some of which have already yielded promising results.

*The main projects currently being run by OATEP S.A. are:*

1. "The renovation of the central part of the village of Archanes". This is a joint project, run in conjunction with the Region of Crete and the Municipality of Archanes from 1995-1997. The budget is 1 million ECU's funded by EU and the Greek state. The project is aimed at the restoration of old houses, creation of urban parks, and restoration of the old town centre. Archanes is a historic town near Heraklion, the capital city of the prefecture of the same name.

2. "The Ecological - Archaeological park of Jouchtas". This a joint project run in conjunction with the Greek Ministry of Public Works and Environment and the Municipality of Archanes, from 1995 - 1999. Its budget is 1,6 million ECUs, funded by EU and the Greek state. The project is aimed at the protection of the natural environment of Mount Jouchtas and the surrounding area, well-known for its habitation by a species of large vulture and a magnificent "island" of preserved Mediterranean biodiversity and scenery in the middle of a widely cultivated land. The mountain was a sacred place during the prehistoric era with a temple, cemeteries, farmhouses and palaces showing the degree of civilisation of the Cretans in the Minoan era (2000 BC). All these elements are brought together in a single project aimed at the establishment of a unified management plan, while certain works are planned for the protection of the environment from fire, grazing etc., the improvement of the areas surrounding the archaeological sites, and to create pathways and viewing points for visitors and establish a small Environment Information Centre and Museum.

3. "The master plan for the sustainable management of water resources in the Municipality of N. Kazantzakis". This is a joint project run in conjunction with the Ministry of Public Works and Environment of Greece and the Municipality of N. Kazantzakis. 1997-1999. The budget is 1 million ECUs funded by EU and the Greek State. The project is aimed at the establishment of a system enabling the Municipality to manage the scarce water resources of the area effectively and have control over them through a central system. This is a pilot project in Crete where water is a key factor governing development.

4. "LEADER II project for the hinterland of the Prefecture of Heraklion", 1996-2000. This is a project costing 5 million ECUs, with an EU contribution of 3 million ECUs. Its main areas are the development of eco-tourism, support to SMEs (small to medium-sized enterprises) active in the field of cultural heritage and the processing of agriculture products of high quality.

When the Leader project was in the preparation phase several thoughts were brought to the discussion table. After a long series of debates the following lines were adopted and presented to the local population.

The area of the LEADER project lies next to the highly-developed coastal tourist zone, therefore efforts should be made to prepare the local population and infrastructure to meet the possible threats from a "tourist invasion". Tourist development should not be excluded but developed alongside the protection of the natural environment, the activities of rural people and the promotion of a large number of cultural sites clearly showing the long presence of people in the area. All these should be presented following certain rules, while projects falling in this category should be in line with a general plan in which local culture and colour should be clearly incorporated. Tourist development should be ecological and cultural in nature, promoting the history of the area and its continuity, as well as local, high quality production.

A second area of intervention concerns the SMEs (small to medium-sized enterprises), either those involved in handicrafts or in the manufacturing of agricultural products. Where handicraft production is concerned, the main goal is to support those enterprises which are mainly seeking to improve their capabilities and produce products characterised by quality, which are typical of the local colour, and to incorporate innovative approaches into their production in order to make



their products more competitive. In the manufacturing sector the main approach is to improve the image of the local agricultural products and to make products with higher added value which can command a higher degree of acceptance in the market.

There has been a certain effort to combine actions and achieve an integrated result. For example, there are three areas which are producing wine of controlled origin. The need to support and promote the local producers has been combined with the efforts to promote ecological and cultural tourism in the area. The creation of a local 'wine road' has been realised as a need for the area and there has been an invitation for proposals to build this project which includes vineyards, small manufactures, cellars and places of archaeological interest. It must be remembered that the most ancient vineyards and farmhouses in the Europe are in the area of Archanes; there are also other wine-making devices dating from the medieval period are also scattered in the area, proving that wine has been continuously produced there for more than 4000 years.

The LEADER II programme has been recognised as offering the opportunity for an exchange of ideas at a European level, especially those concerning the fields of development and promotion of local products and ecological tourism integrated into a master-plan, whose recognisable aim is the promotion of local and unique cultural characteristics.

*The fields of interest of OATEP S.A. for future projects*

The Organisation is oriented towards development projects which have as their central element environmental viability, the promotion of the local identity and culture, and the reinforcement of traditional agricultural activities where long experience in quality production may be the key factor related to their position in a demanding market.

OATEP S.A. would seek to participate in EU projects which are in accordance with the targets described briefly above.

The main fields of interest are related to global environmental planning, taking into account socio-economic considerations so that environmental interventions would manifest itself in the form of profitable activities for the local population.

The creation of the Park of Jouchtas has presented certain problems relating to the management of many different entities which at first glance seem to be contradictory in nature; the natural environment, farmed land, villages, industrial activity, historic sites, and tourist development of all these sectors. In this sense the assistance of highly experienced groups from other EU countries could prove of vital importance.