

Most regions radically differ from their respective countries. National and global trends are not felt the same way in all regions. While some regions lead, some others lag behind these trends, i.e. there are regions maintaining low unemployment rates despite a global downturn. As a result, the disparities between regions are far greater than the differences between countries. The ability of regional economies to withstand competition and to manage change is related to their capacity to innovate.

The Regional Programmes of Innovative Actions are seen as a knowledge laboratory that gives regional actors the opportunity to try innovative actions that are often deferred. It is particularly important for the least-developed regions, such as, among others, the majority of the thirteen Greek regions, that they are presented with a chance to experiment in fields outside the norm of their structural funds programmes in addition to developing greater co-operation and networking with other more developed regions.

One feature of these programmes which is particularly pleasing to the regions is the fact that the entire region is considered eligible for co-funding in contrast to the detailed Objective 1 and Objective 2 zoning. In addition, many regions have remarked that the Regional Programmes of Innovative Actions gave them the first ever chance to co-operate on a region-wide basis with the EU. Both features helped the regions to better learn and sustainable grow in a knowledge based economy era.

It is equally important to note that the year of the publication of this book – 2006 – has been proclaimed by the Chinese government as the starting year of fifteen years strangle for the metamorphosis of China into an innovation-oriented economy. The Chinese President reaffirmed the wish of his government to embark to a new path of innovation with Chinese characteristics.

The fourth publication of the Greek Regional Programmes of Innovative Actions, entitled **Showcasing Innovative Greece**, presents both first and second generation of programmes with particular emphasis to their categorisation according to different typologies. The Greek Regional Programmes of Innovative Actions have become the Innovative Energy Boost of the Greek regional Economies, while their accumulated experience could serve as a lighthouse for other regions on how remote and with less favourable conditions regions, could set up the foundations for building a better future.

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