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SPATIAL PLANNING POLICY IN GREECE: TOWARDS A NEW ORIENTATION ?

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Résumé / Summary

Spatial planning policy in Greece is undergoing a transitional phase as a result of the ongoing fiscal crisis and the constant needs for facilitating all procedures that will lead to the desirable - regional and economic - development of the country. Given this context, over the past years, a series of laws and legislative acts, keep reforming not only rules and guidelines for the spatial development of the main economic sectors of the country, but also the spatial planning system itself, so it can easily adapt to current or future needs for development.

Starting in 2010, legislative framework and building regulations for most types of economic activities and infrastructure were reformed, so that local and foreign investors and entrepreneurs would become more interested in investing in the country and thus, contribute to the recovery of the Greek economy. Among the most important new legislation, bringing about substantial changes to the development of Greek economic sectors, are: Law 3894/2010 (regrading fast track procedures for strategic investments), Law 3982/2011 (for the development of all kinds of entrepreneurial parks and industrial areas), Laws 4002/2011, 4179/2013 and 4276/2014 (for tourism resorts and facilities), Laws 4203/2013 and 4414/2016 (for Renewable Energy Sources investments), and so on.

Under these circumstances the spatial planning system, too, had to undergo several adjustments, leading to a double reform of the institutional law for spatial planning (in effect since 1999). First to be adopted was Law 4269 in June 2014 (for the reformation of urban and regional planning) and then – just in December 2016 – Law 4447 came into force (for spatial planning and sustainable development), replacing the former.

The main changes that Law 4269 introduced in 2014 regarded the delimitation of spatial plans per level, so that implementation was facilitated. In this case, Master Plans for metropolitan areas of Greece were abolished, whilst plans at the lowest level (implementation plans, street plans, etc) were unified and simplified so that their approval was accelerated. Further reforms were also made in governance issues as well as in land-use patterns, regarding both the rural and urban space. However, reformations regrading land-uses were soon abolished, resulting in the return to the previous law provisions, valid since 1987. The latest, law

4447 of December 2016, although taking a step further regarding governance and policy issues, mainly focused on the reform and simplification of spatial planning at the national level, as well as on the improvement of planning procedures at the lowest levels.

However well-intentioned all the above reforms were, most of them signalled a turn of the spatial planning system of Greece towards a more neoliberal approach. In fact, repeated changes of the planning legislation, resulted in a series of delays in the approval of already finished plans and in the assignment of new ones. Most importantly though, continuous reforms resulted in a confusion to planners (professionals, practitioners and academics), as well as an entrepreneurial hesitance, despite the neoliberal orientation of most changes introduced so that economic projects and investments were facilitated.

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