



54ème colloque
ASRDLF

15th conference
ERSA-GR

5-7 juillet 2017, Athènes, Grèce



Les défis de développement pour les villes et les régions dans une Europe en mutation

POVERTY AND INEQUALITY IN THE GREEK REGION

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Référence à la session / reference to the session

B1 - Public Infrastructure and Services

Résumé / Summary

The global economic crisis found the Greek economy completely vulnerable and unprepared, fact that resulted in painful consequences in both the nation's economy and people. By the middle of 2010, Greece was on the verge of bankruptcy and sovereign default, due to its lending from markets with favourable interest rates in order to fund the current budgetary deficit and refund the debt. Hence, the Greek economy had a direct need for help and support, and was forced to turn to support mechanisms, which resulted in the Greek government signing the First Memorandum.

The adoption of an extremely difficult austerity programme in 2010 and the resulting downturn that followed, initiated a number of studies assessing the impact of the crisis on poverty in Greece. Leventi et al. (2010) compared the 2009 and 2010 adopted policies. They applied the multinational model of tax benefit microsimulation EUROMOD (model of tax benefit microsimulation for tax benefits for the EU countries, which permits the calculation of tax and benefit effects in household income and in employment-related motivation for the population of each member-state, but also for the European Union as a whole), in order to study the way that each political austerity measure affected poverty and inequality. According to their results, the implementation of austerity policies, in 2010, led to 2,4% reduction of the average income in Greece and to 2,7% increase in the poverty percentage which namely reached 23,1%. They equally observed that the persons affected more are the elderly, the unemployed and the households with lower work tension.

In their study Matsagganis & Leventi (2013) analysed the anatomy of poverty in Greece with the use of the EUROMOD, on the basis of the EU-SILC 2010 (for the 2009 incomes) and they presented the poverty percentages with the use of a variable and stable poverty line. According to their findings, relative poverty in Greece (60% threshold) has increased in 2013- though less than expected by the assessment in the study by

Leventi et al. (2010)- and reached 22,3% from 19,4% in 2009. They also found that during the period 2009-2013, the poverty percentages increased more for men than for women.

The present paper pertains to the study of economic inequalities and poverty in Greece during the period of economic crisis, as well as the resulting problems in the present society. Furthermore, the role and the position of regional administration towards the phenomenon of poverty is examined, while, in parallel, the side of the citizens is investigated.

The paper comprises a case-study, for which both qualitative and quantitative methods are used. Initially, interviews with the Prefect of the region of Central Greece were conducted along with the competent officers of the Prefecture, wherein the actions and the objectives of the Prefecture have been registered.

The preparation of a questionnaire followed, which was distributed to citizens of the city of Lamia electronically. 1.037 questionnaires were answered in total and their process was made through the statistical programme IBM SPSS Statistics 24.

The findings of the study showed that the regional administration failed to protect the vulnerable population groups and that the phenomenon of absolute and relative poverty in the period of crisis rose. The demographic data affect the factors of absolute and relative poverty.

Cutting down on public expenses for the social protection and care of citizens results in the reduction of social services. Regional administration cannot support social structures in terms of both personnel and resources. The latter leads to social exclusion, malnutrition and rise in poverty. This specific rise is fought with redefinition of human needs and social solidarity.

Keywords: economic inequality, poverty, region, regional authorities, Sterea Ellada.

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