



# SHORT BOOK

## **Development of Sustainable Coastal and Maritime Tourism in Region of East Macedonia and Thrace**

REMTH



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# MAIN FINDINGS RELATED TO TOURISM

The pilot area of REMTH includes two sub-areas with different characteristics.

## **Pilot Area - 1.A - Alexandroupolis-Makri**

Alexandroupolis/Makri is an urban and suburban coastal area with a port next to a Natura 2000 protected area.

Makri is a coastal settlement of the municipality of Alexandroupolis in the regional unit of Evros. It is considered one of the largest settlements of Alexandroupolis with a population of approximately 800 inhabitants and is situated 12km west of the centre of Alexandroupolis. Makri is known for the ancient “Eleonas of Makri” and the main occupation of its inhabitants is traditionally agriculture though in the last decades tourism is considered an emerging economical sector. The main attractions of Makri are the prehistoric tuba and the so-called Cyclopa cave, the hill of Prophet Elias, the church of Agia Anastasia, the surviving Ottoman baths and the old commercial station. Makri is an emerging coastal tourism destination in the summer months with a heavy secondary housing construction status.

Alexandroupolis is the capital of the Evros regional unit in East Macedonia and Thrace. It is situated approximately 14.5km west of the delta of the river Evros, 40km from the border with Turkey, 350km from Thessaloniki and 800km from Athens. The current metropolitan population is estimated at around 70,000 inhabitants. Alexandroupolis is considered one of the most important cities of Evros with a strategic position; it has a commercial port as well as upgraded and multi-modal logistics options being at the centre of land and sea routes between Greece, Bulgaria and Turkey. Sights and landmarks of Alexandroupolis include the city's lighthouse in the port, the archaeological sites of the Mesimvria Zone and Maroneia stretching out to the small port of Agios Charalambos, the city's waterfront and the nearby Evros Delta. The area is characterised by an increase in population and specifically an increase in the ratio of population in coastal parts of the municipality. Regarding tourism development, the area is under substantial tourism development. In particular the following figures for Alexandroupolis and Makri are: 23 Hotels (approx. 2,000 beds) and 1 campsite, 650 people in Alexandroupoli while 1 Hotel (approx. 121 beds) in Makri.

## **Pilot Area - 1.B - Keramoti-Thasos**

Keramoti-Thasos is a coastal area in a Natura 2000 protected area and an island destination with major tourist and coastal activities. The town of Keramoti has a population of 1,438 inhabitants. Keramoti is situated 42km from Kavala and across Thasos island. It is located on a small peninsula which forms a natural harbour near the estuary of Nestos. It was initially a small fisherman's village, though currently it is an emerging tourist resort with heavy infrastructure developments including hotels and rented apartments. Keramoti has a sea freight and passenger port with ferry connections to Thasos. The village of Keramoti is "inside" the Natura 2000 protected area and the port of Thasos is "surrounded" by another Natura 2000 protected area. Keramoti is one the two ports connecting the island of Thasos to the mainland. The island of Thasos is a tourist destination known for its "wild character": rich forest near the sea, combining "sea and sand" and "summer mountain" activities. It is situated 18 nautical miles away from Kavala and 6 miles away from Keramoti and Kavala Airport. Its population is approximately 14,000 inhabitants. Tourism is currently an emerging sector and is considered a heavy economic industry mainly during the summer period. Regarding accommodation and subsistence, the area is an emerging tourism destination and the following figures are reported: 13 hotels (approx. 400 beds), 28 rented rooms (approx. 600 beds) and campsite (450 people). It is highlighted that the tourist season is between May-September and that many accommodations/rooms are not registered thus the actual earnings cannot be calculated.

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*Tourism is and will remain, a big economic force in Greece*

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## **THREATS AND WEAKNESSES**

### **Alexandroupoli-Makri**

The pilot area of Alexandroupoli-Makri faces important threats that mainly relate to:

- Climate change effects;
- Morphological stability;
- Urbanisation;
- Touristic fluxes and carrying capacity;
- Pollution and other anthropogenic pressures affecting ecosystems and the environment;
- Conflicts among different uses on land and at sea and land-sea interaction.

More specifically, the vulnerability of the area to climate change has caused severe erosion to the shoreline and is expected to be aggravated in the future due to the construction of the port and its navigation channel. In addition, increased littoralisation pressures are identified from the city of Alexandroupolis towards Makri settlement, in spite of the planning procedures to orientate urban development towards the hinterland. Coastal protection measures such as sand nourishment and defence mechanisms have been adopted to manage erosion problems, water treatment plans to address overexploitation and salinisation problems of coastal groundwater, studies to estimate needs and cost of port dredging, transport plans to ensure the accessibility to the beach and connect the commercial port to the international highway, governance mechanisms to overcome existing gaps in the national legal and administrative framework.

Tourism in Alexandroupoli/Makri needs to increase in both tourism flows and related infrastructure. Tourism plans and policies seem to focus only on the development of beach and maritime tourism which is mainly attributed to the rich natural resources of the pilot area (e.g. all beaches are awarded with a Blue Flag and have excellent water quality - although lacking infrastructure in some cases). Tourism and land use planning as well as coordinating mechanisms for MSP/ICZM exist but are not always implemented or functioning. The municipality is strongly focusing on increasing coastline protection measures, especially from erosion and coastal flooding.

Data availability is very limited for accurate interpretation and includes many qualitative estimations and spatial inconsistencies. Data coming from official statistical sources is rarely available and in most cases at a municipal level. Data availability at destination level is limited to estimations from municipal authorities, showing important gaps in measuring and monitoring. Moreover, no information is currently available regarding the trends of highly prioritised indicators over the past few years, and satisfaction levels on key issues are difficult to be defined. Even when estimated, they only represent the perspective of official municipal authorities instead of an overall perspective of official authorities, experts, and public and private stakeholders involved in tourism sector.

The key characteristic of Pilot Area 1.A is the diversified needs envisaged between the eastern, urban and western part of Alexandroupoli which are respectively tourism, urban development and environmental management. The eastern part is developed/expanded based on urban control zone planning, the city part is developed based on the urban development master plan and the western part is severely affected by the National Park of Evros River Delta.

## **Keramoti-Thasos**

The pilot area of Keramoti-Thasos faces important threats mainly related to:

- Climate change and morphological stability;
- Littoralisation and urbanisation;
- Conflict among different uses on land and land-sea interaction;
- Coastal protection measures;
- Transport and accessibility (port activities development);
- Governance.

Severe coastal erosion is identified in the Municipality. Additionally, other joint coastal/tourism problems/needs have also been identified. In particular, a set of relevant problems are presented below:

- Sources of pollution and systematic ecosystem degradation related to uncontrolled disposal of waste both in sea and land;
- Lack of infrastructure;
- Lack of coordination between the competent authorities;
- Lack of promotional activities related to the local tourist product.

In this context, the pilot area of Keramoti-Thasos faces important threats that mainly relate to river delta retreat and sea water intrusion, tourism development of the Natura 2000 protected area and future planning of ecotourism activities and low impact economic activities (aquaculture, agriculture etc.).

Furthermore, the increased erosion level of the shoreline has led to significant degradation of the coast, which is expected to deteriorate in the future due to medium estimated sea level rise. Increased coastal flooding events cause important accessibility problems (urban flooding, collapse of the road network) as well as salinisation of the lagoons and groundwater system. The port infrastructure also causes great problems such as traffic, noise, degradation of the road infrastructure and the urban environment, significantly limiting the space and opportunities for tourism activities. The carrying capacity of Keramoti is also limited by insufficient infrastructure for tourism development. Regarding land and sea interactions, the main conflicts identified between tourism and maritime transport as well as tourism and ecosystems protection.

The enabling factors of the pilot area are mostly focusing on ecosystem protection, transport and accessibility and water cycle and depuration. The area is targeting increased quality tourism and tries to shift from the typical “sun and sea” model to eco-tourism activities and diversify its tourism product to eco-friendly activities, water supply management plans and waste treatment plans have already been completed or will be in the near future, plans to move all

commercial marine traffic to nearby ports and transform Keramoti port to a marina are under discussion. In terms of governance factors, the municipality of Nestos and the Managing Authority of Nestos - Vistonis are working together to set common objectives and build common planning instruments. However, in spite of the important threats posed by climate change, no coastal protection measures are currently taken to address them.

Data available is very limited and includes important spatial inconsistencies. Data coming from official statistical sources is rarely available and in most cases at a municipal level. Data availability at destination level is limited to estimations from municipal authorities or existing academic studies, thus showing important gaps in measuring and monitoring.

Tourism plans and policies seem to focus mainly on the development of nature and ecotourism and far less on beach and maritime tourism. This is mainly attributed to the fact that Keramoti is a settlement within a protected area with important natural resources to support the development of ecotourism activities. However, a considerable lack of data is observed in recording and monitoring both sites and species (e.g. state, number and conservation status) within the limits of the protected area in order to fully assess the dynamics of tourism development at the destination. Since most infrastructure activities are restricted by the protection framework of the area, Thasos/Keramoti is mostly focusing on increasing coastline protection measures to prevent erosion and coastal flooding.

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*Coastal erosion is usually the result of a combination of factors - both natural and human induced - that operate on different levels.*

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## PUBLIC CONSULTATION

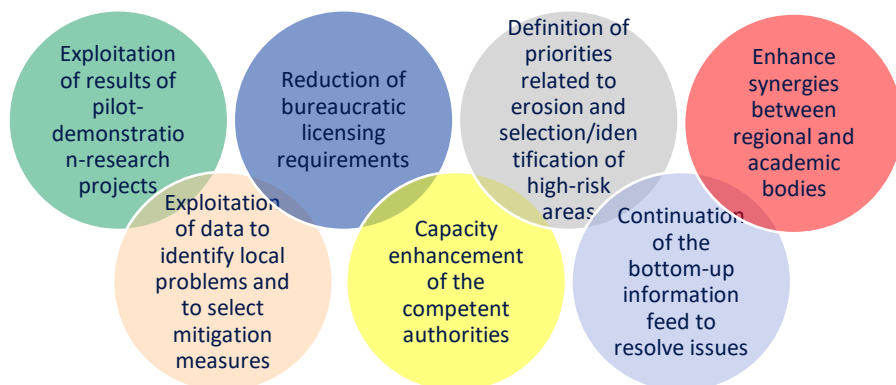
Public consultations and the participatory processes are an integrated part of the ICZM protocol. In this context, one of the first steps is to set-up a process that will lead to the identification of stakeholders. This step has already been carried out and the stakeholders pool update is a continuous process as it is based on the potential of the beneficiaries to influence the selection of measures, the political, technical, scientific and social link with coastal activities and coastal erosion and with the need to include stakeholders from the quadruple helix in order to have a broad acceptance of the proposed measures. Two info-days were organised by REMTH.

The 1st info-day was organised on 5 October 2018 in Komotini. All stakeholders were officially invited by the REMTH Governor. Approximately 40 stakeholders and members from the pilot areas and from the working team participated in the info-day which included 2 sessions. The 1st session focused on the project themes and goals and allowed the stakeholders from the pilot areas to present the current status of the pilot areas, the current pressures and problems occurred and identify possible threats and solutions. The 2nd session of the info-day was formulated as a workshop for the sustainable development of coastal and maritime tourism in the Pilot Areas. The discussion focused on coastal erosion and offshore structures observed in REMTH.

The 2nd info-day was organised on 22 May 2019 in Komotini. Approximately 25 key stakeholders and main members of pilot areas working teams, such as Alexandroupolis Municipality, Port Authority of Alexandroupoli and competent Directorates from the Region participated in the event which was formulated in 2 sessions. The first session concerned a brief presentation of the project, the methodology for drawing up the action plans and the expected results of the consultation in order to determine the context and structure of the dialogue that followed during the 2nd session. The discussions held mainly focused on technical details and contents of the action plans as well as the followed strategy for their implementation.

## PROPOSALS

The participatory process and the results of the 1st and 2nd info-day held in Komotini, facilitated the definition of common problems and shared vision for the Pilot Areas. These results and proposals, presented in Fig. 1, are an integral part of the measures identified and the action plan proposed.



**Fig. 1. Results and proposals extracted from the participatory process (Infodays), regarding Pilot Area 1**



# ACTION PLAN

The territorial scope of the two action plans include the coastal front of the selected pilot sub-areas (namely Alexandroupolis-Makri and Keramoti-Thasos) and concern studying, financing and implementing measures for the proposals presented above. The action plans for both sub-areas include some common and concrete actions (Table 1) as well as one action related to main characteristics and problems arise in each sub-area (Table 2).

ACTION TITLE	SHORT DESCRIPTION
Integrated Management Study of Coastal Zone	The study will be a tool for identifying strategic axes, policy scenarios, decision-making and resource promotion to solve erosion problems and sustainable tourism development in the area.
Investments for the prevention and management of flood risks	The proposed action concerns flood protection interventions. It is a proposed action because specific flood protection projects are a strategic priority for tourism development.
Investments in coastal erosion protection measures	Coastal erosion problems have a serious impact on the environment, human activities, infrastructure and the further development of economic activities related to tourism.
Identification of the organising authorities and the interaction of stakeholders for the definition, adjustment and management of the coastal zone	The proposed action aims to ensure a reduction in licensing requirements, the continuation of bottom-up information for resolving issues related to sustainable tourism development and cooperation between regional and academic organisations.
Results capitalisation for sustainable tourism development and coastal zone management	The proposed action aims at exploiting the results of existing projects and best practices defined from similar initiatives developed at local, regional, national and transnational levels in the wider Mediterranean region.

**Table 1. Common Actions for both sub-areas**

ACTION TITLE	SHORT DESCRIPTION
Establishment of a permanent Erosion Monitoring/ Measuring Mechanism inside and outside the urban area (at the Port Authority of Alexandroupolis, covering the coastal front of the study area)	The proposed action results from the need to collect primary data for the study of the coastal erosion mechanisms in the pilot area of Alexandroupoli.
Support of Protected Areas Management Bodies for the management of the natural environment and biodiversity in the Natura regions of the Region of Eastern Macedonia and Thrace	The action concerns the support of the Protected Areas Management Bodies (NPPs) responsible for the Natura designated areas of REMTH.

**Table 2. Actions related to main characteristics and problems arising in each sub-area**

## WHO WE ARE

CO-EVOLVE is a three-year project that aims at analysing and promoting the co-evolution of human activities and natural systems in touristic coastal areas, allowing for sustainable development of tourism activities based on the principles of Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM)/Maritime Spatial Planning (MSP).

It couples a presently unavailable analysis at MED level of threats and enabling factors for sustainable tourism with local studies of seven representative Pilot Areas, to demonstrate through pilot actions the feasibility and effectiveness of an ICZM/MSP-based planning process.

Finally, CO-EVOLVE contributes to the Strategic Theme 2 (Joint Action 2.1) of the Bologna Charter Joint Action Plan: <http://www.bolognacharter.eu/>.

## CONTACT US

