

Interreg ABCitiEs Action plan

Municipality of Athens



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Part I – General information

Project: Area Based Collaborative Entrepre-

neurship in Cities (ABCitiEs)

Partner organisation: Harokopio University

Other partner organisations involved: Munici-

pality of Athens

Country: Greece

NUTS1 region: Attiki (EL3)

NUTS2 region: Attica (EL30)

NUTS3 region: Central Athens (EL303)

Contact person: Sophia Skordili

Email address: skordili@hua.gr

Part II - Policy context

The Action Plan aims to impact: Investment for Growth and Jobs programme. Other regional development policy instrument



II.1 Policies regarding entrepreneurial collectives in Athens

Business networks are generally considered to be rather underdeveloped so far. Both the business environment and the way in which businesses have been developed, have in the past not favoured the creation of business clusters. The basic impediments are considered to be the very small size of Greek businesses, the existence of a large proportion of family businesses and the widespread hesitation to become involved into exporting activities, as well as the mentality, the lack of competent executives and the inability of small scale businesses to perceive the nature of external economies associated with clusters.

II.1.1 The role of policies in the creation of clusters in Greek cities

During the last two decades, in the major Greek cities (Athens, Thessaloniki), as well as in medium-sized ones (Patras, Volos, Heraklion), spontaneous business concentrations and pockets of new activities have been forming in the urban space. Indicative examples include: the concentration of intermediary financial services (headquarters of banks and insurance companies) and high technology (mobile telephony companies, dotcom companies etc.) along Kifissias Avenue in Athens Metropolitan Area (from Filothei to Marousi) cultural activities along Piraeus Avenue consisting on the New Benaki Museum, the Foundation of the Hellenic World, the Technopolis in Gazi, the School of Fine Arts, the Bios Gallery and a number of theaters. In Thessaloniki the "Technopolis" business park, with the prospect of accommodating 70-100 companies in the ICT industry or the two private incubators of high-tech firms (4IG, Thermi).

However, these spatial concentrations are characterized by a 'laissez-faire' policy for shaping the new urban environment and a lack of dedicated incentives to enhance their development, while cluster formation has been largely undertaken by private initiative. Contrary to the innovative design of such centers in European cities, in the Greek urban areas a rather indifferent landscape with scattered out-of-the-box constructions is produced. The few exceptions are focal interventions, such as the location of wholesale sites in Attica, which are still incomplete with regard to their planned location settings.

At the same time, the lack of specialized policies for the out-of-town deployment of central urban operations has led to uncontrolled and unregulated development of foreign polycentric commerce and entertainment in both large and medium-sized Greek cities, resulting in intense urban diffusion phenomena and intensified competition with traditional centers cities that are economically, operationally and socially degraded.

Review of the role of policy in cluster creation in Greece

According to empirical studies, micro-enterprises are not easily involved in forms of networking such as clusters, because of limited resources and difficulties in finding the appropriate partners.

In order to overcome these problems and increase the participation of small businesses in clusters, public policies implemented at national level and funded by the Operational Programs of the Community Support Frameworks are foreseen.

State aid programmes have thus far been aimed at encouraging companies to set up and participate in clusters, notably through the financing of the activities of setting up and running networks. Indicatively supported activities include,

- The study and application of modern methods concerning the organization and monitoring of the administrative, financial, productive and commercial activities of the cluster.
- The design, implementation and certification of Network Management Systems, as defined by ISO 9000 (Quality Management System) international standards, ISO 14000 (Environmental

- Management System), Hygiene & Safety, HACCP, etc.
- The acquisition of modern equipment as well as the acquisition and application of specialized know-how.
- The use of new advanced telecommunication services and new technologies.
- Participation in exhibitions and the implementation of promotional and promotional activities (e.g. web site creation).
- The purchase, configuration and equipment of premises in order to concentrate the cluster's business activities (e.g. production, management, sales, etc.) in a common space.
- The set-up cost of the new legal person.

The majority of aid instruments for clusters in Greece, have been focused on manufacturing, tourism and innovation / technology, while the majority services has been largely ignored.

A brief history of cluster policies in Greece

The first coherent cluster policy in Greece was launched in the 2nd Community Support Framework in 1997, through two programs: "Developing Local Initiatives for Research and Innovation for Small and Medium Sized Enterprises" and a program under the "Operational Program for Industry". Although the two programs were positively received by businesses in a number of sectors across the country, the new concept was characterized by deficiencies and weaknesses both in its design and its implementation.

Twenty three (23) clusters involving - mainly - small and medium-sized enterprises, as well as educational and research institutions – were

created, two of which are still in operation to-day. In terms of the evaluation of the initiative, according to the final evaluation report of the Ministry of Development, the programs resulted in the improvement of product quality, increased penetration of new markets, in the transfer of know-how and the adoption of new technologies, as well as the reduction of costs through the achievement of economies of scale in the supply of raw materials. However, problems arose, most notably the lack of communication and cooperation between network members.

The 3rd Community Support Framework 2000-2006 - in particular the Operational Program for Competitiveness (OPC) - and other co-financed Community programs such as the EQUAL initiative gave rise to the majority cluster initiatives. The first such initiative, launched in 2003, was the "Promotion of Clustering" (Action 2.7.2) under the Competitiveness OP 2000-2006, aiming to promote the horizontal and vertical networking of SMEs in the areas of manufacturing, services and commerce, with a focus on achieving specific objectives in the fields of organization, quality, know-how transfer, supply chain, and marketing.

Within the same OP, the program "Promotion of the Networking of Tourist firms (Clustering)" (Action 2.2.3.1) was launched in 2005. The program aimed at enhancing the competitiveness of existing SMEs tourism enterprises through improved organizational patterns, and in particular through their involvement in Clusters. During the same year the Action 2.11.1 "Support of Very Small Commercial firms", the possibility of proposing clusters was foreseen. Overall, the success of the aforementioned programmes was very limited, since only one proposal was financed by the first programme, five clusters

were aided by the second and none by the third programme.

Although the Competitiveness OP was not particularly successful in terms of its cluster policies, the same cannot be said about a number of other initiatives, including the creation of regional innovation poles, innovation incubators, the establishment of the Innovation Zone in Thessaloniki, and in particular the development of the CORALLIA Hellenic Technology Cooperative Formation Initiative, which aimed at creating and developing competitive technological clusters in export-oriented industrial sectors with high knowledge demands. CORALLIA aims at:

- Strengthening knowledge-intensive activities of clusters
- Stimulating export activity
- Showcasing successful cluster examples
- Increasing participation of SMEs, and especially start-ups
- Capitalizing on the strong Greek community (in Greece and abroad) of scientists and engineers in high technology sectors, utilizing and building at the same time the "Made in Greece" brand.

Finally, in the framework of the **Leader +** Community Initiative (2000-2006) the Territorial Quality Pacts in many areas of Greece in the field of agrotourism was promoted with the participation of enterprises of tourist accommodation, catering, alternative forms of tourism, food and beverages production, production of local products and crafts etc.

Within the NSRF (2007-2013), in particular the Operational Program "Competitiveness and

Entrepreneurship" the development of partnerships / networks / clusters remained a key strategic choice to boost the competitiveness of Greek small and medium-sized enterprises.

The relevant actions were part of two priority axes (PA): PA2 ('Enhancing Entrepreneurship extroversion ' included 'focusing the development effort towards clusters, areas and types of business that have the most promising prospects or have the strongest needs '(Special Objective 2.2) and the' extension of networks among industry, trade and services' (Special Objective 2.6), while PA1 ("Promotion of innovation supported by research and technological development") supported actions of new and small and medium-sized enterprises, for the creation of innovative clusters in cutting-edge fields with competitive advantages (eg biotechnology, nanotechnology, etc.).

Finally, the special aid scheme for Synergies and Networking in article 13 of the previous Investment Law (L. 3908/2011) included investment projects submitted by networking schemes and was aimed at implementing programs - joint actions, which would either, exploit the competitive advantages of participating enterprises, and/or build on infrastructures created by national and Community funding, or help to adapt to the modern economic and technological other specific geographically defined productive activities and services.

It should be mentioned that none of the abovementioned programs was specifically targeting the city of Athens or the Region of Attica.

II.1.2 The current period: 2014-2020

During the current period the main instrument targeting clustering activities in the case of Athens is EPANEK, whose main strategic objective is to enhance the competitiveness and extroversion of enterprises, to facilitate transition to quality entrepreneurship with innovation and the growth of domestic added value as the cutting edge. As such, EPANEK covers the whole of the country and appears to lack specific geographical focus. Furthermore, the OP is mainly, although not exclusively focused on the national and regional smart specialization strategy sectors.

In general, entrepreneurial collectives enter the OP vocabulary through the cluster vehicle. Two points are worth noting here: Firstly, clusters are thought to resonate with high-tech or, more generally, innovative activities aiming to integrate Greek SMEs to global value chains², while, secondly, the amounts allocated to clusters ("supporting clusters and business networks primarily for the benefit of SMEs") amount to 57€ mil. (no more than 0,12% of the OP total budget). This leaves much to be desired in terms of cluster support in general, and

¹ The national sectors of focus are tourism, energy, agri-food, the environment, the supply chain, information and communication technologies, health and the pharmaceutical industry, creative and cultural industries, materials – construction

² In should be noted that the only instance of clusters appearing in the 673 pages long OP initial document views them as "..clusters of business and research activities that create new knowledge-intensive islands for the Greek economy, with a global reach" (p. 65)

clusters on more traditional activities in particular.

In terms of the ways entrepreneurial collectives appear in the OP, although in the initial planning of the second round of calls (to be initiated during 2016-2017) there was specific mention about the funding of instruments aiming to support the creation of clusters and meta-clusters as well as local business parks related to the processing and supply chain³, the only instrument announced until mid-2018 concerned the funding of open malls⁴ aiming to strengthen and stimulate economic activity in commercial areas, especially in areas with significant cultural resources and tourism flows. The instrument's budget is 50€ mil. and will fund activities falling into two broad categories: a) upgrading the functionality and aesthetics of the intervention area; and b) organizing the economic activity within this area, with the adoption and use of smart applications. The first round of applications closed at November 2018. With a total budget of € 50 m. and a maximum budget of € 1,9 m. per proposal, a total of 68 proposals were submitted5, none of which in the municipality of Athens. Although the Open mall initiative appears to be in the right direction, a number of concerns arise, which are related to its architecture as mainly a top-down initiative based on existing local actors (trade associations) with questionable capacities in terms of community building, which could explain the failure of the first wave of open malls (circa 2014) to establish lasting effects, as all of the first wave initiatives ceased to exist soon after the program's expiration.

The second relevant OP is ATTICA. The program 'Promotion of entrepreneurship through the creation of clusters of innovation in the Region of Attica' has just been announced and the first round of applications will close in January 2019. The program aims at strengthening innovative processes and / or developing innovative products and / or services from enterprises in the Attica Region through the formation of enterprise clusters and other organizations for the development and dissemination of knowledge in areas included in RIS3 strategy of the Region of Attica, as it has been developed and approved.

The objective is also to improve the competitiveness of enterprises in Attica through the development and promotion of innovation in specific sectors and activities that: (a) direct businesses to high added value products and services; (b) promote and strengthen effective and mutually beneficial partnerships between businesses and organizations for the development and / or dissemination of knowledge and information; (c) exploiting innovation to improve the performance of enterprises in the Greek and International markets.

Finally, a potentially very significant program, specifically focused on the city of Athens is the concept of the Integrated Territorial Investment of Sustainable Urban Development. The program "PROJECT:ATHENS" was initiated during the previous programmatic period (2007-

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http://epan2.antagonistikotita.gr/uploads/20190625_oristikos_pinakas_ake.pdf

2013) and in terms of entrepreneurial development the main instrument was the 'Entrepreneurship Network' of the city of Athens, which was created with the aim of supporting the entrepreneurship and economic development of the city through the participation and cooperation of public organizations, academic institutions, sectoral organizations and the private sector.

Until the end of the first phase of "Project: Athens" and via the Entrepreneurship Network, support groups of 300 new entrepreneurs, 1200 existing enterprises were supported, and 10 clusters were created. In the field of Social Entrepreneurship, 40 groups with entrepreneurial ideas and activity with positive social impact were trained. Finally, Athens has gained 20 seats in the international ranking of conference destinations and has boosted 25% of its arrivals by exploiting strategically B2B channels, developing appropriate tools and services and actively engaging and involving strategic partners in the development of its program.

In the current period (2014-2020) cluster development and support possibilities appear in a number of investment priorities. For instance, priority 1b ("Promoting business investment in R&D") mentions developing "incubators", "startups", creating clusters, developing new products and services in the RIS3 sectors, as some of the most prominent indicative actions. Furthermore, clusters, either as policy targets or aid recipients appear in priorities 2c ("Strengthening ICT applications in e-government, elearning, e-inclusion, e-culture and e-health), 3a ("Promoting entrepreneurship, in particular by facilitating the economic exploitation of new ideas and supporting the creation of new businesses, including through incubators"), 3c ("Supporting the creation and expansion of advanced capabilities in product and service development"), 3d ("Supporting SME capacity to grow in regional, national and international markets, and participate in innovation processes), 8iii – 8v ("Self-employment, entrepreneurship & business creation and Adaptation of workers (businesses - entrepreneurs) to change") and 9i – 9ii – 9iii – 9iv – 9v.

Unfortunately, the recent changes of national, regional and city authorities have brought about a restructuring of the various city's administration, effectively halting procedures relating to the implementation of the policies.

Overall, Greece appears to lack policies directly targeting area based collaborative entrepreneurship. Even if we assume that cluster policies could substitute for more dedicated ABCE policies, existing policies are mainly top-down, resulting in very limited interest, particularly in cases where greater commitment of resources is expected (either human or financial). In addition, current and past policies mainly aim at investment in private or common infrastructure, largely ignoring the priority of support activities (such as networking or community building measures) which are essential for the transformation towards bottom-up policies. The above explain the absence of any type of bottom-up self-financed initiatives such as BIDs. In the quite rare - cases where top down financial instruments managed to create an entrepreneurial collective by financing its initial stages, soon after the assistance stopped, the collective ceased operating (e.g. the quite successful "Pandrosou Str." Initiative).

Nationally administered policies, such as those of the EPANEK OP appear to be less flexible in

designing instruments aimed at support activities, while those designed and managed by local or regional authorities appear to be better suited for the bottom up approaches thought to be essential in promoting ABCEs.

Part III – Details of the actions envisaged

The action plan proposed by the Athens team aims at proposing a small, yet efficient number of concrete policy tools, filling a considerable gap in terms of the City's praxis regarding collective entrepreneurship. This entails a double challenge. On the one hand, there is bound to be considerable institutional inertia concerning a new integrated policy, while on the other hand we are provided with the unique opportunity to 'shape' institutional history. In this sense, the plan must, while remaining as pragmatic as possible, cover at least three lacunae: institutional, cognitive and financial. This will signal the City's commitment in developing community entrepreneurship and, while improving the general sentiment and attitude towards collective management of the urban commons, will provide a small number of tools, which may prove essential in actively supporting initiatives in their first and subsequent steps. Specifically:

- institutional: The action plan will introduce the first specialised institution dealing with collective entrepreneurship
- cognitive: There is a pressing need for change in attitude towards ABCs. In fact, this could turn out to be the main challenge of the Action plan, since it concerns the whole range of stakeholders involved (enterprises, young entrepreneurs, citizens, existing citizen collectives, the municipality, the research community, existing relations etc).
- financial: The action plan acknowledges that there have been numerous financial support tools at a national

and prefectural level, aiming at supporting initiatives which are similar to ABCs, however, not specifically aimed at ABCs. That would require a level of flexibility and adaptability inexistent in schemes supporting larger or more formal initiatives.

ACTION 1: ESTABLISHMENT OF A PI-LOT COLLECTIVES OFFICE

1.1. The background

From the meetings in Athens and Varazdin it became evident that there exist significant gaps between the cities participating in the project in terms of institutional and support capacities. Furthermore, it became evident that there exist two rather distinct approaches towards collectives. In Amsterdam, in spite of the – admittedly quite significant at times - differences in both the typology of forms of collectives, the attitudes around commons and the articulation of policies, collectives are generally understood as one of the building blocks of the local economies, embedded in the productive and social fabric of the Dutch society. Even before the advent of BIDs and BIZs, the country had developed quite significant levels of social capital and institutional thickness, permitting towns where formal collaboration is mature enough to incorporate collective thinking and acting into the mainstream. In the UK, take up of area based collaborations remains weak with some notable top-down cases in big cities. in the eastern and southern partners, for quite different historical and evolutionary reasons, the issues revolving around commons (starting with

the acknowledgment of their existence, on to their management and matters of agency) are only recently introduced, either violently through the influence of the crisis and the ensuing inability of the state to continue managing all types of public and common goods, or via EU implanted prioritization and funding. In any case, one of the common features of Athens, Vilnius and Varazdin is that the institutional reaction to the new phenomenon has taken forms pertaining to project ventures.

It appears that these cities are either hesitant or unconvinced about the need to create permanent institutions dealing with the issues of collectives. Instead, the preferred route is either the assignment of the new needs to existing departments or administration units, unavoidably giving rise to considerable institutional resistance and friction, or creating temporary, project-based structures. Notwithstanding the flexibility of such arrangements, these temporary structures are often marginalized, shortlived and highly dependent on external (usually EU) sources of finance, often competing with other more established priorities for scarce municipal resources. In the case of Athens, the relationship between small businesses and the municipality and central authorities is limited in the exercise of power and control. Small business owners are obliged to go through complex and lengthy bureaucratic processes in order to gain the necessary permits from the municipality, the prefecture and the state to start and operate their businesses. In addition, local and central authorities exercise control on businesses in operation and may impose fines. Hence, the majority of small entrepreneurs feel distant and alienated from the municipality and generally, the state. In fact, the existing twoway flow of information and knowledge between Athens municipality and local businesses is too weak.

The Municipality of Athens has been trying to help SMEs and their collaboration through providing space form SMEs to collaborate and flourish; either in the form of exhibitions in open spaces, which has been a successful practice for over 30 years for horticulturalists, publishers, small artifacts local producers or artists to come together in the city's public spaces, or providing space to SMEs for a certain period of time (Kypseli Market, Merchants' Arcade, Theatre Square etc.). Some of these initiatives from the Municipality of Athens, such as putting in the same space new entrepreneurs to springboard, have given positive results of collaboration in the past for SMEs who have been open to collaborating among themselves; in the instance of the Merchants' Arcade, where newly formed coops had been offered spaces in the same arcade to coexist, the collaboration between shedia art (upcycle paper artifacts) and rokani (upcycle timber furniture) brought up the creation of new, innovative collaboratively designed and manufactured products, made of upcycled timber, plastic and paper.

Based on these good practices that facilitation and communication bring forward, the aim of this action will be the pilot establishment of an office for assisting collectives within the Municipality. This pilot office will act as supplementary in the department for the reinforcement of entrepreneurship/SMEs, whose establishment is also suggested, which will act as the means of curing the mistrust of SMEs towards municipality processes, unify permitting processes and also will communicate with the Municipality the needs of SMEs, so that their role in the city's economy is reinforced.

According to the existing policy instrument, the "Business plan of the Municipality of Athens"6, under Axis 3 "Economic development and employment", Action 3.2. "Improvement of the competitiveness of businesses", Target 3.2.1 "Support of entrepreneurship" is foreseen. More specifically, the Athens Development and Destination Management Agency has undertaken a set of actions for the development and promotion of entrepreneurship within the city, in collaboration with professionals, educators and other actors within the city. The pilot collective office is set under this target, as it aims at facilitating the competitiveness of businesses through the support of collectives, focusing on the enforcement of SMEs through the collaboration among themselves and the facilitation of their interactions with the Municipality.

In addition, the lack of funding provided to collectives is certainly discouraging such initiatives. According to policy makers, most of the funding available to collectives or other types of collaborative entrepreneurship (clusters etc.) in Greece targets mature collectives. Nevertheless, in the case of Athens, the majority of collectives studied are either at the very early stages, or actually failed to take off and were dissolved before the formalisation stage, which could account for the very limited absorption of available funds. Hence, it is doubtful whether during the life of the project some mature and successful collective could require considerable funding, other that the seed funding.

Also, Business Improvement Districts (BIDs) often play key roles in revitalising trade environments and supporting urban regeneration. In Amsterdam, a number of collectives are organized in Business Investment Districts, a geographically demarcated area, such as a shopping street or a business park, in which entrepreneurs and/or property owners jointly invest in the quality of their business environment. In the US and UK members of BIDs are imposed a mandatory tax (known as "levy") to finance their activities (such as street cleaning, security measures and area marketing). In several Northern European countries, the state or the municipality provide the initial funding of BIDs. Apart from that, loans exist for BIDs; in the instance of the UK, BIDs can apply for a start-up loan. The pilot collective office will also try to support collectives by covering considerable lost ground in terms of a) providing seed funding to informal collectives and b) implementing a pilot BID.

1.2. Actions

1.2.1. Establishment of a pilot Collectives Office

The establishment of a pilot office for the assistance and empowerment of collectives that will provide a much-needed institutional stability will be tested in a pilot area of the city. This office should be part of a wider structure in this pilot area, aiming to facilitate the flows of information between the municipality and local business and provide guidance and technical support to small firms. The new office could undertake a

15.pdf and http://www.cityofathens.gr/sites/de-fault/files/2130-16.pdf [in Greek]. The one for the period 2020-2024 is still under construction. More information at: http://www.cityofathens.gr/node/22020

⁶ The full text of the existing policy document can be found at: http://www.cityofathens.gr/sites/default/files/603-76

number of tasks currently dispersed to various authorities, or not administered at all. In particular, the new office will operate as a one-stop shop for most issues related to collectives in Athens, acting as a mediator between collectives and the city. In addition, office staff will be assigned the role of collective facilitator in the case of nascent or non-formalized collectives. Furthermore, the office will either oversee or participate in the implementation of other Actions contained herein. Through monitoring this pilot action, conclusions will be drawn on what exactly should be provided by the Municipality so as to assist the establishment of collectives; the obstacles that have to be overcome and the actions that need to be taken.

1.2.2. Seed Funding

Members of informal collectives undertake several joint tasks (street events, trademark, website, urban space management, etc.) during the initial stages in order to tighten their relationships and promote the image of the collective to a wider public. They are obliged to finance these activities on their own since they do not have access to funding. There are a few funding opportunities by private sector sponsors for formal collectives (society, NGO) mainly intended to formal collectives. Lack of access to funding at the initial stages of collaboration, which may extent to a period of several years, is a problem that can lead to delays, frictions among the members of the group and, often enough, at the early decay of the collaboration. The pilot collectives' office will take actions to make an extensive exploration to funding possibilities for group of SMEs or micro enterprises who wish to proceed to collaborations. Apart from that, this office should make a thorough search to relevant European and private sector funding sources and guide the applicants to the more suitable source to apply.

1.2.3. Pilot BID

We aim to set-up a pilot BID of a neighbourhood collective in Athens to experiment and test this instrument in the Greek context. The contribution of the participating firms, at least at the first years of operation, will be kept to a minimum.

1.2.4. Mapping of collectives

ABCitiEs Athens team made a great effort to make a -small- list of existing and potential collaborations of SMEs in Athens, at the initial stage of the program. This task should be continued in a more systematic way to construct a clear and updated picture about enterprises collaborations, all over Athens. This database will contain thorough information about SMEs collaborations, at various stages of the implementation, and will allow the prioritisation of tailormade interventions on behalf of the municipality. It will be open-accessed to the Municipality, researchers and students and to the whole society of Athens, as an example that encourages the Athenian entrepreneurs to form new collectives or to participate in existing ones.

1.3. Players involved

- SMEs collectives
- Athens Chamber of Tradesmen
- Municipality of Athens
- Athens Development and Destination Management Agency
- Harokopio University

1.4. Timeframe

September 2020 - May 2022

- Gain support from the Municipality administration for the establishment of the pilot office and its respective department
- Conduct extensive consultations between the players involved in view of determining the pilot Office and the respective department mandate
- Assigning facilitators to collectives who are in need and are happy to have one assigned by the Municipality
- Set up a working group with representatives from the various departments of the municipality, Harokopio University and the collectives involved
- Review of the best practices from the other four partner cities and evaluate their transferability to the Greek case
- Implementation of BID
- Designing the structure of SMEs collectives database
- Collecting and entry of data to the data base
- Monitoring and evaluation

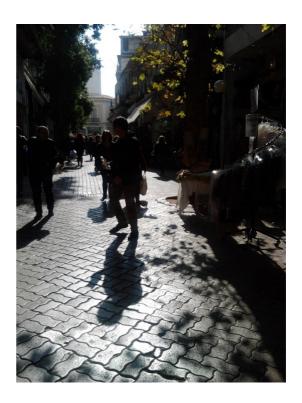
1.5. Costs

Staff costs for the preparation and implementation of actions 1.2.1-1.2.3 are covered from the budget of the City of Athens and of action 1.2.4. from Harokopio University, as well as from ABCitiEs staff costs for monitoring and evaluating.

1.6. Funding sources

Staff costs for the preparation and implementation of actions 1.2.1 - 1.2.3 are covered by the

Municipality's own sources. Monitoring will be covered by the rest of budget from the ABCitiEs project.



Date:	
Signature:	
Stamp of the organisation:	