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THE EU AND REGIONAL REFORM IN GREECE

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Introduction

Greece is considered a centralized state with some regional structures developing at the moment. The structures developing at the moment are not ones of a lower level of governance as in other European states but such that facilitate decentralisation of central government activities. Only now there are discussions of reforms leading to directly elected regional authorities. These reform initiatives have been attributed to three basic factors. First the EU and its regional policy, second the positive attitude of the governing party in Greece and third demands for decentralisation by some parts of the civil service and local communities. This chapter will focus on the EU and how it has influenced regional reform in Greece.

The main argument put forward is that the EU has played a crucial role in encouraging change in public administration and policy in Greece. It has promoted decentralisation as against centralization in Greece through its regional policy. The EU and particularly the Commission can assist change because it can provide both learning and steering, which are two necessary components for change (Dimitrakopoulos 2001). Learning can be attributed to an agent who, either from within or outside an organisation, deliberately seeks to improve performance (Dimitrakopoulos, 2001). In this case, Greece is the agent, which seeks to improve performance but significantly in the context of EU membership and integration. It seeks to improve performance through drawing observations and inferences from another source, namely the EU with its policies, directives, expertise, bureaucracy, norms, traditions etc. In addition the Commission has the role of gate keeping legality in the EU and this role puts it in the position of a “fixer” (Bardach, 1977:31). According to Bardach the fixer is an actor that can intervene at critical moments in the implementation process so as to steer change in the desired direction (Dimitrakopoulos 2001:608). In the case of Greece, the Commission through its guidelines for implementing Structural Funds has channeled change to its own direction. An example of this can be considered the requirement of the Commission through Council Regulation EEC 2088/85 (Article 5 Title 2) for regional structures for the implementation of the Integrated Mediterranean Programmes (IMP’s). Soon after the Commission’s guideline the Greek state initiated law 1622/86 establishing
13 regions in the country. Therefore the EU by being both a source of learning and having the capacity to steer has the potential to be a catalyst for change in Greece.

The reform towards decentralisation in Greece can be seen as a dual process. On the one hand the EU has set and developed a regional policy, which is implemented according to a number of rules and directives. The essence of the rules is that for Member States to benefit from the policy they should have or develop regional structures. On the other side Greece, since it became a member of the EU is obliged to follow the norms and standards of the EU. Also it had to modernize so as to reach EU standards. Moreover it has to adopt and implement EU policies. For this it has to have the capacity and bureaucratic structures to do so. Unfortunately Greece before joining the EU it did not have adequate structures. As a result the country had to adapt, it had to modernize, it had to Europeanize, through learning and steering (Dimitrakopoulos, 2001). During this process of learning and steering the EU and particularly the Commission, proved critical actors as explained above. Thus, one can claim the regionalisation process in Greece has been part of the europeanisation process of Greece, in which the EU and the Commission have been prominent actors.

The paper will develop in the following way. The first part will provide a brief description of regional structures in Greece and the main steps towards decentralisation in Greece. The second part will study the process of europeanisation in Greece and will suggest that Greece is a case of intended europeanisation. The third part will show how Greek regional authorities have europeanised and the influence the EU had in this process. The fourth part will bring the main points together and conclude on Greek regionalism and the role the EU in the process.

**The Greek region as a policy unit**

This section will examine the greek region as a policy unit. A short account of the administration system of Greece is given first.

According to the 1975/1986 constitutions and article 101 the Greek state is organized along a decentralized administrative system. Regions have general competence over issues within their territories while central government coordinates and controls the
regions activities. Local government issues are managed by local authorities (OTA), which are divided into two degrees of local governance. The first degree concerns the local communities and municipalities and the second concerns the 52 prefectures of the country. The two degrees of local governance have administrative autonomy from the state while their councils are elected by secret and total vote. Central government is responsible for overseeing the actions of local governance—but cannot intervene—and for allocating funds (budget) to local governance (Athanassopoulos 2000:25-26).

By law 1622/86 for “Local governance, regional development and democratic programming”iii Greece was divided into 13 regions. Eastern Macedonia and Trace, Attiki, North Aegean, Western Greece, Western Macedonia, Epirus, Thessaly, Ionian Islands, Central Macedonia, Crete, South Aegean, Peloponnisos and Central Greece. Each region was responsible for the planning, programming and coordination of regional development (FEK A 92, 14/07/1986). The regions in Greece served as parts of central government on a decentralised basis and part of the modernization of public administration process. They were not a level of government as in other countries. Regions also served as a meeting point of central and local government to promote regional and social development. This law although it established the regions and set their role it was not implemented to its full capacity. As a result regions during the second CSF did not operate as expected under the structural funds regulations. This situation was prolonged until 1997.

In 1997 law 2503/97 for the “Organization and management of the regions” was voted as further modernization of public administration and support for regional development. This law concerns the present legal framework that governs the regions today. According to this law and article1 “the region is a decentralised administrative unit of the state” (FEK A 107, 30/05/97).

Role of the region: its objective is to plan, programme and implement policies for its economic, social and cultural development within its territory and within the wider national framework for development (FEK A 107, Athanassopoulos 2000:44). This is to be achieved through development plans as stated in law 1622/86. The development plans are drawn at regional level and distinguished into short term and annual regional development plans. There is an extra category of short term and annual regional
development plans for the region of Attiki as it contains the city of Athens. The short-
term regional development plan is drawn by the regional council after proposals and 
consultation with the second degree of local governance and has to be approved by 
the Ministry of National Economy. The annual regional development plan is again 
drawn by the regional council and does not need to be approved by any other body 
unless one third of the Regional council makes an appeal. In this instance the Ministry 
of National Economy decides. The development plans concerning Attiki are proposed 
by “the Organisation for Athens” and approved by the regional council of Attiki. 
The above regional development plans are funded by the Public Spending Programme 

In order for the region to fulfill its objective certain competences from the ministries 
are transferred to the region by law 2647/98. Those competences concern the regional 
affairs of the ministries and serve to take workload off from the ministries (ibid: 78).

**Institutions of the region**

*The Secretary of the Region*

The region is administered by the General Secretary of the Region and the Regional 
Council. The Secretary is appointed, dismissed and transferred after a Cabinet Office 
decision. The Secretary is a representative of the central government and responsible 
for the implementation of government policies related to the region. Also the 
secretary is the head of all policy division of the region and coordinates, oversees and 
checks their actions while heads all the police, firebrigade and port services of the 
region. All competences transferred to the region belong to the Secretary while he has 
the right to transfer some competences to the heads of some policy divisions of the 
region. Finally the Secretary is an employee of the Ministry of Interior, 
Decentralisation and Public Administration. From the above it can be seen that the 
Secretary is the most powerful actor in the region but without significant decision-
making power to as what direction should policies take. Moreover, since the Secretary 
is appointed (and immediately dismissed) this can constrain his/her and the councils 
ability to press for certain actions.
Regional Council

Each Region is governed by a Regional Council, which consists of:

I. The Secretary as the president of the Council.
II. The Prefect within the territory of the region.
III. A representative from all local authorities within the region.
IV. A representative from the business interests of the region, the technical institute, the geotechnical and economic institutes respectively.
V. One representative from each of the three biggest trade unions.

Some regions like Attiki, Central Macedonia, Western Greece, and North Aegean have extra members in their Regional Councils. Specifically the Regional Council of Attiki also includes:

I. The elected mayors of the cities of Athens and Piraeus.
II. The president of the “Athens Organisation”.
III. One representative from the following: the Commercial and industrial Chambers of Athens, the Crafts Chamber (small industry), the association of industrialists of Athens and Piraeus, the association of professionals and craftsmen of Greece.
IV. Three representatives of the association of local authorities of the prefectures of Attiki.
V. The president of the Prefecture of Athens –Piraeus.

The Secretary and Council do not have competence over certain projects i.e. national projects and projects with a budget of more than 300,000 Euros, projects under the trans-european networks, projects funded by national or EU funds and are under the CSF, Cohesion Fund or Community Initiatives.

The areas of competence for the region and have so named divisions are: planning and development, health, public works, control of construction of public works, environmental and spatial planning, forests and agricultural development, local governance and decentralization.
Council of the Regions

The Council of the Regions was set up to support the work of the 13 Regional Councils and to serve as a forum for communication between the central state and the regions. Its role is to discuss the short term and annual regional development plans and check upon their progress. The Council of the Regions consists of the Minster of the Interior, Public Administration and Decentralisation as the president, the head of the same Ministry, and the 13 Secretaries of Region. According to the issue of discuss a relevant minister can attend the meeting (FEK A 107 art. 4).

Funding for the Region

The funds for each region are allocated by the national budget. The budget for each region is drawn by the respective Secretary. Other source of funding is the Programme for Public Investments. The funds of the region are managed by the Regional Development Fund for each region (Law 2218/94 Article 53). The secretary of the region is also the president of the regional development fund for the region and responsible for making all payments and revenues the region is engaged. The regional development fund manages all the money from the budget, the Programme for Public Investments, the EU and concerns the short term and annual development plan of each region.

From the above a few things can be suggested about the greek regions as policy units and part of the policy process. First, greek regions are decentralised administrative units of the state, thus their work is to manage the regional affairs of the ministries. They are taking workload off from the state and provide a better access to the citizens to the state mechanism. In this sense greek regions are different form the other European regions. They are administrative regions and not so much of a level of governance, which partly limits their ability to play a role in the policy process and promote their regional interests as other European regions do in their context.

Secondly, despite the commitment to decentralisation and regionalisastion through a number of laws the actual implementation shows poor results.. The fragmentation of decision-making and implementation processes impede the process of further development of regional structures. A reason for this is the immaturity of the greek state and political culture to give out power and competence as interview 2 pointed
out. Moreover, clientlistic relations still have a dominant position in the political process and combined with a weak civil society result in not fully exploiting the opportunity presented for viable regionalisation in Greece.

Thirdly, the decentralisation process can be described as a two-step ahead and one back. On one hand the regions are given enough competences especially in the preparation and implementation of regional policy and on the other the Secretary who is the most powerful actor is state appointed. This is a drawback since the region can suffer intervention from the state as to what to do and what not to (interviews 1,2,3). Particularly the case of Attiki is quite susceptible to pressure because it is the prime region of the country and the one closest to the center. As the majority of the interviews pointed out regions suffer intervention from the state on a number of issues i.e. which project to include in the development plans or to be funded by the CSF and which not to. The resolution of the issue depends on how far each Secretary wants to go as they can be dismissed any minute. Also in this way the Secretaries are answerable to the center and not to the citizens, had they been directly elected. Moreover even if the Secretary has the right to draw the budget for its region, it has to be approved by the state, go through the national budget or the programme for public investment which again it is controlled by the state. In conclusion the steps towards decentralisation and viable regionalisation are two ahead and one back. Regions lack political and financial autonomy, which is essential for the viability of regional structures.

However regions are more important policy units and have a more significant role to play in the implementation of EU Cohesion policy. As a result of Commission guidelines the Greek state with law 2860/2000 vested the regions with a role in the preparation and implementation and monitoring of the Community Support Framework (CSF). At this point the role of the region is quite crucial because it carries out the bulk of the work and implements policy on the ground. In the same time monitors the process and makes the necessary controls and corrections. In a way the region is almost responsible for efficiently and effectively implementing the CSF. The role of the Ministry in this case is to oversee and make the controls it has to make. Thus in the CSF policy process the region is important in preparing and
implementing policy. It does not have the power to decide on policies but can influence them through the consultation during the preparation period.

The europeanisation of Greece

Europeanisation is experienced differently by Member States depending on various factors like the domestic structures of the state, the patterns of policy making, the balance of power between state and society on one hand and national and sub-national governance on the other. It also depends on the expectations and the role they have assigned to the EU and the integration process. The case of Greece is as follows.

Greece has considered EU membership as a means towards economic and political modernisation and the establishment of a stable democratic political system in the country (Ioakimidis 1998:48, 2000:74). It also constitutes a means for redefining the relations between state, society and economy. Furthermore, for Greece the europeanisation process does not only entail the incorporation of laws and procedures into the domestic system, but also desires the spillover effect of the integration process and its impact on organizational behaviour, functional and structural operation of society at both political and economic levels (Ioakimidis 1998:48).

Ioakimidis (2000) distinguishes europeanisation process in two basic types: 1) responsive europeanisation and 2) intended europeanisation (Ioakimidis 2000:74). Responsive europeanisation refers to the cases where there is little conscious effort is being made by the political actors to transfer to logic, norms or dynamics of the EU into the political system. Europeanisation occurs spontaneously as a result to the pressures and the penetrative impact of European integration upon the political system. Furthermore, in this case europeanisation does not equal modernization and change and it is not portrayed as such by the political actors (Ioakimidis 2000:74). In this case europeanisation is the result of the interactive osmosis between the national political system, institutions and administrative and political elites on one hand and the EU system and process on the other (ibid).
Intended Europeanisation is totally different in the sense that here Europeanisation equals modernization and change (ibid). Thus there is a conscious effort by the political actors to transfer into the political system the logic, norms, and dynamics of European integration. Intended Europeanisation has a much broader scope of implications in terms of territorial and thematic penetration (ibid: 75).

EU membership is considered to have had the following implications for Greece. First, a redefinition of state-society relations according to European integration model at a functional, institutional, regulatory and territorial level (Ioakimidis 1998:50, 2000). Second, the before mentioned redefinition of state – society relations, ultimately strengthens civil society in Greece in four basic ways: a) by creating new institutions and strengthening the autonomy of social institutions b) giving more opportunity for pressure groups and interests to participate in the policy formulation process (ibid: 50) c) weakening party control over society and the growth of clientelism and d) weakening the “Athens” control over the regions through a process of regional decentralisation, largely spurred by EU membership (Ioakimidis 1998:50, 2000:79). Third implication is considered the intensification of the conflict/dispute between the modernisers (pro Europeanists) and the traditionalists (Ioakimidis 1998: 51).

To analyze the impact of EU membership on Greece the following paragraphs will study the impact of membership in redefining state-society relations at a regulatory, functional, territorial and institutional level.

Redefining the regulatory regime

The impact of EU membership upon the economic life of the country has manifested in two basic developments: firstly, it has fostered a considerable reduction of the states economic activities and it’s gigantic state apparatus. Secondly, it has altered radically the regulatory pattern of the Greek economy from a tightly controlled state into one conforming to EU’s regulatory regime (Ioakimidis 2000:80). The most drastic EU intervention on the Greek economy was the adoption of the Maastrichtic Treaty and the obligation to fulfill the “convergence criteria”. In order to reach the convergence criteria the economy was subjected to tight macroeconomic discipline
through the implementation of the convergence programmes prescribed and supervised by the European Commission. EU membership gradually led to the liberalization of the banking sector, previously tightly controlled by the state. Also legislation was passed securing transparency in transaction between the state and public enterprises. This was matched with numerous directives underpinning the internal single market, the banking sector liberalization, the reduction of the economic role of the state and the establishment of a more competitive regulatory regime for the whole of Europe. This resulted in establishing a new competitive regulatory regime for the Greek economy equivalent with that of the wider European economy and the single market (ibid 82).

Redefining state functions and competences

Most european integration literature suggests that EU membership primarily involves a transfer of competences and functions from the national level to the European level and consequently the EU erodes the state’s powers and functions (Andersen and Eliansen, 1996). The Greek case though suggests that there is also a case of down-flow of competence from EU level to national level (Ioakimidis 1998,86-87). This occurs as follows. The EU acquires new competence in policy areas or establishes new policy areas through the Intergovernmental Conferences on the revision and expansion of Treaties. This does not necessarily mean that competence is taken away from all member states because some states may not have developed at all a certain policy or competence. Environmental policy is a characteristic example. The EU assumed competence in environmental policy in 1987 through the SEA as a concurrent power shared between the EU and the member states. At that time Greece had not developed an environmental policy and as a result there was nothing to be transferred to the EU level (Ioakimidis 2000, 83). On the contrary Greece was obliged to develop such a policy and consequently the Greek state was given competences to this direction.

Environmental policy was not the only case for Greece. Empirical research shows (Ioakimidis 1998,85-128) that the Greek state because of EU membership had to adopt new initiatives in at least six policy areas as a direct response to the need to adjust its performance to the EU’s policy aquis. These policy areas were: structural
policy, environmental policy, research and technology policy, vocational training policy, consumer protection policy and a policy for cross border cooperation. Before entry to the EU Greece either had no policy at all e.g. environmental or if it did it was fragment and incoherent e.g. structural policy. This indicates that the Greek state was led by EU’s impact and dynamic to assume competence and functions that otherwise it might not have developed at all. Further without the EU pressure the Greek state may not have gone so far to shape and develop the above policy areas (Ioakimidis 2000, 83-84). The Greek experience indicates a downflow of policy competence and functions from the EU level to the national level. In this case the EU gave competence to the state to form and implement policies and not only assume competence from the Member State as is usually argued. Lastly, even if the member state refuses to develop a policy in the above context it really cannot do so. This is because a) decisions are taken by Qualified Majority Voting (QMV) and b) because EU law is above national law (Ioakimidis 1998,87). Thus, the member state even if it refuses to adopt a policy it has no other option but to adopt it as a consequence of the manner that the EU operates. In conclusion EU integration redefines state functions and competences not only by assuming competence at EU level but it also by allocating new competences and functions to the member states as a result of it dynamics. As a result of these new competences in cohesion policy the greek state was obliged to establish a cohesion policy according to EU requirements, which in turn had considerable consequences for the organisation, administration and institutions of the state (Ioakimidis, 1998:100). These consequences were mainly reforms towards establishing regional structures in the country and a territorial redefinition of powers as will be seen in the following section.

Territorial redefinition of powers

When Greece entered the EU it was considered one of the most highly centralized states of the EU. Twenty-two years of participation in the European integration process and the territorial impact of the europeanisation process is evident. EU membership has contributed to the altering of territorial distribution of power, political activities and resources (Verney and Papageorgiou 1993, Ioakimidis 1996). The EU has redefined the relation between the central state and the periphery mainly through the implementation of its cohesion policy starting from 1984-1988 and the
implementation of the Integrated Mediterranean Programmes (IMP’s). The IMP’s were designed to spur development in the Mediterranean regions of Greece, Italy and France with a budget of 6.6 billion ECU for seven years (Maraveyas 1995:422). The IMP’s were embodied in EEC Regulation 2088/85 along with the rules for their implementation. The rules included the submission of Regional Development Plans (RDP’s) within the context of EEC and CAP. The RDP’s would have to be implemented by the relevant regions mobilizing all endogenous resources and the implementation of the RDP’s would have to be coordinated with all the Structural Funds to achieve results in more than one policy area (Maraveyas 1995:423, EEC 2088/85). Greece submitted 6 RDP’s covering the wider regions of the country and one sectoral programme for the development of information technology. The total cost for all Greek IMP’s was 3.2 billion ECU of which the 1.8 was from Community Funds for 1985-1992 (Maraveyas 1995:424). The implementation of the IMP’s can be considered the first attempt to implement EU regional policy in Greece.

The IMP’s has proved to be a pivotal point in the further development of decentralised policies and a key source of pressure by the EU on the Greek state. The implementation of the IMP’s proved to be extremely difficult due to the centralization of the Greek state and the non existence of regional structures adequate enough to materialise (RDP’s). This exposed the weakness of the Greek system due to centralization and the necessity of reform towards establishing 13 regions in Greece (Papageorgiou and Verney 1993:345-347). Partly the negative experience of the IMP’s provoked the establishment of the 13 regions with Law 1622/1986 (Papageorgiou and Verney 1993:345-347, interviews 1,3 and 5).

At this point it should be noted that the EU influence on the territorial redefinition of powers and the pressure towards decentralisation became more evident in the 1990’s as EU cohesion policy itself experienced a boost in development. From the 1990’s and onward EU cohesion policy was used to legitimise the introduction of reforms concerning the regions organization and their role in the policy process. Such reforms were embodied in Law 2503/97 for the regions organization and transfer of competences, Law 2218/94 for the second degree of local governance ( prefectural

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1 This numbering refers to Greek laws and not EC law, e.g. Law 2503/97 is law number 2503 of the year 1997. European Laws are clearly marked with EEC....
level). During the 1980’s any reforms (mainly Law 1235/1982) towards redefining the territorial relation between the state and the regions was inspired by domestic party political factors. Entrance to the EU coincided with the accession of the Pan-Hellenic Socialist Movement (PASOK) to power in 1981. The new government had campaigned on a radical reform including regional decentralisation and it initiated a process of local government reform aimed at decentralizing the state and its functions. In general terms the PASOK government had (and continues to be) been in favor of decentralisation. Any reform during the 1980’s did not seem to be influenced by the EU, which at that time it did not have a coherent regional policy as it did in the early 1990’s (Ioakimidis 1996:348).

The 1996 round implementation of EU cohesion policy, as in other European states, generated the dynamics, presented the opportunities and conditions for introducing a systematic policy of regional decentralisation and reinforcing the powers and autonomy of the regions but most importantly has provided the regions with a role in the policy process. Greek regional structures are the result of the above opportunities.

As most interviews suggest the implementation of EU cohesion policy through the programming and partnership principles which stipulated the active involvement of regions the in policy making process, forced the Greek state to cede considerable powers, resources and discretion to the region so that implementation of EU cohesion policy is achieved to a high as possible degree (interviews:1,2,3,4,5, 2002). More specifically the regions gained significant financial resources as a result of implementing EU Cohesion policy. The Greek state having to implement 13 RDP’s within the CSF allocated funds to the Greek regions that it had not done before. Between 1989-1993 the 1,454 million ECUs out the total 2,380 million ECUs was a Community contribution (Ioakimidis 1998:195, interview 2: 2002). Next, the preparation and implementation of the RDP’s gave real meaning to the regions day to day policy agenda and the opportunity to deal with issues of wider developmental and social interest (Ioakimidis 1998: 196, interview 1: 2002, interview 5: 2002). Also, through the implementation of Cohesion policy the regions gained access to policy making at national and supranational level, established communication channels with

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2 This Law concerned the establishment of the prefectures and their councils as a first effort towards decentralisation.
the institutions of the EU and other counterparts regions in other states (Ioakimidis 1998: 197).

Redefinition of the institutions

Until now literature suggests that europeanisation tends to strengthen the executive and bureaucracy of a political system and weaken the parliamentary institutions and legislative process and that challenge the democratic bases of the political process (Andersen and Eliassen 1996). The Greek case though can suggest that the europeanisation process can play a decisive role in strengthening democratic institutions and widening the scope of democratic process by bringing into it new actors. It also strengthens the autonomy of public and social institutions. For example the Bank of Greece which used to be controlled by the state gained almost full institutional independence in shaping monetary policy by being forced to comply with EU rules in the context of convergence programme to join EMU (Ioakimidis 2000). Another institution influenced by EU membership is that of public administration and civil service, which now it is more directly, involved with EU policy vis-a-vis the government and the political parties. By having to manage EU policy agenda the recruited workforce had to be highly skilled, have technocratic knowledge and expertise. This meant that the recruitment of these officials has to become more transparent and based on objective criteria rather than patron-client system and party control (Tsinisizelis 1996).

From the above study of the four key areas one can understand the influence of the EU and the integration process on the Greek state and its relation to Greek society. Thus a general conclusion can be that EU membership has triggered a significant europeanisation process redefining state society relations, strengthening civil society and weakening the tight control of the Athens centered state against the highly centralized background of the country. As result of europeanisation, enough space has been allowed for the regions to participate in the policy process and other social actors and institutions to reach policy-making arenas. It should be recognized that the balanced of power between the center and the periphery has not altered. However now
there is a compromise from the side of the center and new dynamics towards decentralisation have developed (interviews 1,2: 2002). The most important tool for this dynamic towards decentralisation has been the europeanisation of activities of the greek regional authorities and the implementation of the EU’s Cohesion policy. This will be analysed in the following paragraphs.

**The europeanisation of Regional policy**

During the period between the 1950’s and 1985 regional policy in Greece was fragmented into small projects with no coherence or aspect of productivity, quality or sustainability and the provision of financial incentives. Also there does not seem to be any control and management system of the projects or any significant involvement of the EU through Community guidelines. The regional structures of the period were either non-existent or did not seem to play any role in the policy process (Konsolas et al: 2002). The turning point for Greek regional policy has been the implementation of the IMP’s in1985. From that point and on Greek regional policy gradually coincides with EU Cohesion policy with the Commission and the CSFs as planning instruments eventually replacing all other forms of development plans (Getimis and Paraskevopoulos 2002). Further more, the austerity policy of the 1990’s coupled with the implementation of the convergence programme for EMU prevented any other development policy outside the CSF and the EU policy (ibid). As a result Greek regional policy became totally dependent upon Community funds and guidance as well as exposed to a europeanisation process.

John (1994) and Getimis and Paraskevopoulos (2002) identify four stages of europeanisation of regional authorities. The first is characterized as minimal europeanisation and refers to information related activities. Specifically, information involving the implementation of EU directives and regulations, managing information about developments and opportunities for the regions in Brussels and communicating this information to a number of local actors (John, 1994:12). In the case of Greece, this sort of europeanisation of Greek regional policy has occurred but not to the same degree as in other European states. Only one region out of the thirteen -that of Epirus- has established an office in Brussels. The rest of the Greek regions depend for
information on the latest developments either on the Ministry of national economy or
the technocratic abilities and skills of the person responsible for information update
within each region (interview 6: 2002).

The second stage is referred to as financial europeanisation and concerns the regional
authorities ability to gain access to EU funding and use those funds to promote local
economic regeneration (John, 1994:12). At this stage the greek regions have made
some progress since funds for their economic regeneration have increased
significantly as a result of the CSF’s and the structural funds. The regions may not
have the ability to directly lobby for funding at an EU level but they do so through the
national government by preparing policy and the RDP’s which later turn into
Community co-funded projects. Thus their search for funding is Europe oriented.

The third stage is that of the development of network linkages with other local
organizations through their joint involvement in EU programmes or initiatives (John
1994:12). The structural funds programmes constitute a strong incentive for private
sector involvement in development projects jointly with public agencies. Such
network linkages within Greece are sporadic with some evidence of such in the South
Aegean Islands (Getimis and Paraskevopoulos, 2002). The reason for not such
activity in network linkages is the low quality of social capital, which sometimes sees
things on a narrow local basis, the unskilled people involved, the culture of center
dependency and not of collaboration and cooperation at the nearest level.

The fourth stage is that of full europeanisation, which involves the shift from the
reactive to the proactive policy approach towards the EU. It is substantiated by the
participation of subnational institutions in trans european collaborative networks and
the creation of advisory channels to the Commission to influence the policy making
process and the launching of European style initiatives at the local level (John
1994:12, Getimis and Paraskevopoulos 2002:3). At this stage, only a minority of
greek regions is participating in trans-european networks. Also there aren’t any greek
advisory channels to the Commission and if there are they are working for the
national representation and not for the regions per se.
In conclusion it can be suggested that the level of europeanisation of regional authorities plays a significant role in their economic regeneration and local development. A high degree of europeanisation can result in increased funds and promote the creation and establishment of inter, intra and transnational networks and cooperation with other European counterparts (Getimis and Paraskevopoulos 2002:3).

By comparing the progress of the greek regions with the above four stages of europeanisation of regional authorities one can suggest that greek regions have taken incremental steps towards europeanisation of their role and activities. The regions have been exposed to minimal europeanisation and a very significant increase in their resources as a result of the CSF. On the other side though they have not managed to create and participate actively in intra-national or transnational European networks, let alone to influence policy and lobby for funding at a European level. The opportunities and funds have been provided by the EU but the lack of adequate social capital, commitment by the executive, involvement by the ordinary people and not substantial regionalisation have impeded the potential created by european integration.

**Conclusion**

This paper has attempted to examine the role of the EU in promoting regional reform towards decentralisation in Greece. By regional reform was meant moving away from the centralized state organisation of Athens towards a more decentralized organization where the regions have more scope in the policy process. Also it has meant some institutional building in this direction e.g. establishment of regional structures.

The main argument put forward is as follows. Yes, the EU has been a significant actor in the decentralisation process in Greece. It has influenced the process through the europeanisation process EU membership initiated for Greece and the implementation of its Cohesion policy. This is not to suggest that a total change in the balance of power between the state and the regions has occurred.

The europeanisation process has influenced state society relations at a regulatory, functional, territorial and institutional level. It has strengthened the weak civil society
of Greece and intensified the debate between pro Europeanists and traditionalists. The most profound influence has been articulated at the territorial level of state society relations and particularly at the balance of power between state center and the regions/periphery.

Greece is a case of intended europeanisation for which the EU meant modernization and stable democratic regime. During the twenty-two years of membership a process of regional decentralization has been initiated and still continues. In the early 1980’s until 1985, the introduction of the relevant laws promoting decentralisation through the strengthening of the prefecture councils were the result of the Socialists party commitment to decentralisation, while there was no sign of influence by the EU or in response to the EU integration process. This holds true for the following two reasons. First the EU itself did not posses in the 1980’s such a coherent and dynamic policy to influence member states arrangements as it did in the early 1990’s. Second the Socialist and governing party (PASOK) at that time was opposed to EU membership on ideological grounds. Thus until the mid 1980’s any decentralisation process or Law was the result of domestic ideological and party politics factors with almost no influence from the European integration process. This situation changes from the mid 1980’s with the implementation of the IMP’s.

The centralization of the Greek state made the implementation of the IMP’s very difficult. This resulted in exposing the country’s weakness and the need for reform towards regional decentralisation. Also the Commission’s requirements for regional structures so that policy could be implemented correctly resulted in Law 1622/1986 establishing the 13 regions of Greece. During the 1990’s more laws strengthening regional decentralisation were passed. These were the result of requirements for the implementation of EU cohesion policy and EU pressures for modernization. At this point it should be noted the positive attitude of PASOK towards regional decentralisation. However the progress towards regional decentralistion has been incremental as literature suggests. The reason for this is the strong embeddedness of centralization on the Greek state and society. Further civil society has not been as strong and coherent as in other state so that it seeks reform, neither has social capital in Greece. Despite the recognition of the political elites to follow the norms of European integration and the recognition of the need to reform, the reforms add up to
being two steps forward and one backward. The central state still has a dominant position in the process but it also has ceded significant powers to the regions.

On the other side of the argument, society has become more comfortable with the idea of decentralisation and there has been more support for the reform process. If this process continues then there could by a dynamic from the bottom upwards aspiring to regional decentralisation. Such a trend has merely started to develop in the last year or two and it is reflected in the discussion for an elected regional secretary and regional council. Again in regard to this process it can be argued that the EU has played a critical role in awakening the periphery to its potential.
ENDNOTES

i The first part represents the law number and the second the year in which the particular law was introduced.

ii By democratic programming the citizen has the right to participate in the programming period through the various committees existing at all levels of government (local, prefectural, regional).

iii Institution which assists the development of the city of Athens through research, projects, reports etc.
REFERENCE


FEK A’ 92/1986 Law 1622/1986


