**Brief description about the region of South Aegean**

The Region of South Aegean is one of the thirteen regions of Greece. It consists of the Cyclades and Dodecanese island groups in the central and south-eastern Aegean Sea. The region was established in the 1987 administrative reform. With the 2010 Kallikratis plan, its powers and authority were redefined and extended. Along with the North Aegean, it is supervised by the Decentralized Administration of the Aegean based at Piraeus. The capital of the region is situated in Ermoupoli on the island of Syros. Until the Kallikratis reform, the region consisted of the two prefectures of the Cyclades (capital: Ermoupoli) and the Dodecanese (capital: Rhodes).

**Dodecanese** includes all the islands, between Samos, Crete and the Asia Minor coast. In 1912 their population was 143,482. Of these, 131,332 were Greeks. The total population of the Dodecanese province reaches 190,071 inhabitants (census 2001) and has an area of ​​2,579,275 square kilometers. In October 2006 the island's islands and islets in the Dodecanese were totally 27.

The most historic, important and well known of the Dodecanese islands is Rhodes, which, for millennia, is the island where the administrative seat of the prefecture is located. From the rest of Dodecanese Kos and Patmos are historically the most important and known islands.

**Cyclades** is an island complex in the Aegean Sea that is generally situated between the 36th and 38nd North Parallel and between the 24th and 26th Eastern Meridians.

The layout of the islands is in two parallel straight lines following Sounion and Euboea, giving the distinction to the Western and Eastern Cyclades, which are the homonymous prefecture of the Cyclades. The total population of the Prefecture is 112,615 inhabitants (2001 census) and its headquarters in Ermoupolis (Syros) which is also the Capital of South Aegean Region.

Their name was given by the ancient geographers because of the circular arrangement around the sacred island of Delos (the birthplace of the goddess Artemis and Apollon).

Besides Syros the two other most known islands of Cyclades are Mykonos and Santorini.

* **Useful links**

**Region of South Aegean -** [www.pnai.gov.gr](http://www.pnai.gov.gr)

**South Aegean European Region of Gastronomy** [-](file:///C%3A%5CUsers%5C%CE%9A%CF%8E%CF%83%CF%84%CE%B1%CF%82%5CAppData%5CLocal%5CMicrosoft%5CWindows%5CTemporary%20Internet%20Files%5CContent.Outlook%5CQ0Y4TEFN%5C-) <http://www.aegeangastronomy.gr/>

* **European experience**

The Region of South Aegean and its associated development agencies have managed a number of projects. In the past years the Region has implemented a large number of projects with a total budget of 89.000.000€. Their main subjects vary from cultural preservation and heritage, civil protection and tourist structures to social and economic development.

Indicative Projects include: Integrated and Sustainable Tourism in Mediterranean Islands – “ARCHI-ISLE” (INTERREG III B-ARCHIMED); CULTURE 2000; CULTURE 2002, FireTouris (INTERREG IIIC EastZone), Mediterranean Cultural Network of cities - stations of the Apostle Paul missionary path- MEDMISSION, (INTERREG IIIB ARCHIMED), Peoples’ Relations in Eastern Mediterranean- PEOPLES, (INTERREG IIIB ARCHIMED), Intelligent System Ports – iPORTS (INTERREG IIIB ARCHIMED), EMERGENCE 2010 (INTERREG IIIB MEDOCC), Sustainable Tourism in Fragile Territories – SHIFT (MED), Innovative Actions for Trade & Enterprise in the Mediterranean – INNOVATE-MED (MED), Mediterranean Intermodal Transit – TRANSit (MED), Sustainable COnstruction in Rural and fragile areas for Energy efficiency –SCORE (MED) and Sharing prior excellence and support for the MED creative asset – Sha.p.e.s. (MED).

The Region of South Aegean was also the **lead partner** of three (3) INTERREG IV Greece-Cyprus projects, one of them being a strategic project: AKTI, Gastronomy-Net and ENERGEIN.

During projects’ implementation emphasis is given on applying the required proceedings from European and national regulatory framework. During the implementation of the above projects, the Region’s employees have acquired important experience in the administration, co-ordination and monitoring of projects co-financed by the European Union and they have been exposed to the administrative procedures, especially in leadership roles.

Studies, works already achieved or in progress; state of existing knowledge:

* The South Aegean Region was the lead partner of the project "AKTI- Configuration and Pilot implementation of Coastal Area Integrated Management Plans on the island of Rhodes (Greece) and Cyprus" under the Greece Cyprus 2007-2013Programme. The project aimed at the enhancement of competitiveness and entrepreneurship in local communities, while protecting the natural environment and improving quality of life for both residents and visitors.
* The South Aegean Region was also the lead partner of the project «Gastronomy Net- Integrated actions for the development of gastronomic tourism through the promotion of local food tradition, the use of local products and by showcasing the local cuisine of the Dodecanese and Cyprus" (Greece-Cyprus 2007-2013 Programme). The objective of the project was to promote and support local food tradition and quality of agricultural products in direct relation and connection with the development of tourism, so that the participating areas could be established as culinary destinations. It also aimed at the development of systematic, coordinated and institutionally framed cooperation / synergy between the primary and tertiary sectors, between agriculture and tourism.
* SAR was also the lead partner of the project "ENERGEIN- Sustainable Energy Development in Regional, Interregional and Transnational Level" in the context of the strategic projects of the Greece-Cyprus 2007-2013 Programme. ENERGEIN strategic project aimed at exploiting the great potential for the promotion of harmonious, balanced and sustainable energy development at regional, interregional and cross-border level.
* The Region of South Aegean, through its Development Agency, participated in the MED project “SCORE: Sustainable construction in rural and fragile areas for energy efficiency”. The main objective was to support the implementation of sustainable energy policies in the construction sector in fragile coastal and rural MED areas with exceptional landscape values, exploiting eco-innovative potential, using traditional building elements combined with innovative green technologies. The transnational cooperation developed a bench learning model, fostered sustainable construction and created transferable innovative tools for energy-efficient building practices.
* South Aegean Region (former Prefecture of Dodecanese) was partner of the Interreg IIIB/ ARCHIMED project “ARCHI-ISLE” - Integrated and Sustainable Tourism in Mediterranean Islands. The aim was to capitalise on experiences for fostering and promoting sustainable island tourism, promote thematic/cultural tourist routes and develop a marketing model. The model will aim to redistribute tourism pressure over an extended season and identify different market segments from local cultural and natural diversity. It will lay the grounds for a “total quality” approach, embracing environmental and strategic criteria for islands’ competitiveness to support balanced economic growth. The Prefecture was responsible for the development of the SWOT Analysis Study and the Marketing Plan, capitalizing on its former experience.
* South Aegean Region (former Prefecture of Dodecanese) was the Lead Partner of the Interreg IIIB/ ARCHIMED project “MEDMISSION”- Mediterranean Cultural Network of cities - stations of the Apostle Paul missionary path. In the context of the project, the Prefecture drew up studies on user need’s specifications, formation of tourist routes, feasibility study for tourist routes promotion and exploitation and also a sustainability study for the further valorisation of the Medmission Network. Two information signs were developed and numerous cultural and tourism activities implemented: tourism seminars, local festivals, and communication packages for the promotion of the tourist route. Information Society technologies, playing a vital role in the preservation and promotion of Cultural Heritage, were used to deliver an e-learning platform with relevant learning content and a Cultural Web Site for the dissemination of the Ap. Paul’s missionary action to the wide audience.
* The Region was also member of the consortium of project “SHIFT” - Sustainable Tourism in Fragile Territories. One of the project’s main deliverables was the development of thematic sustainable tourist routes promoting cultural heritage in an effort to redistribute tourism pressure over an extended season and toward different market segments drawn from local cultural and natural diversity.
* South Aegean Region also formed part of the consortium of a project that belonged to the Operational Programme of Human Resources Development 2007-2013 entitled “Integrated Action Plan of active policies for the Support and promotion of the integration of vulnerable groups in the tourist sector labour market of the Dodecanese”, co-financed by the Greek Ministry of Labour, Social Security and Welfare.

The Region has at its disposal data, useful material, frameworks, tools to analyse tourist demand and supply, tourism products (cultural routes, “packages”, events) which can also be efficiently promoted based on a marketing plan. The supply optimisation through capacity building on informing and involving local SMEs and other tourism stakeholders could be based on the structure of the exploitation and sustainability studies. The Prefecture is very much interested in transferring know-how and experiences gained and in receiving feedback from peers.