

WILD LIFE FOR EVER

“Enhancing biodiversity through sustainable management and protection of rare species habitat in Nestos and Ardas rivers and the Rodopi Mountain Range”

Del 4.3.1: Actions Connecting Environment Protection and Local Community

Establishing of a new Quality Label

Deliverable Responsible: Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Xanthi
(PB3)

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Acronym: WILD LIFE FOR EVER

Wild Life For Ever



Extensive study on the definition of local market aspects in order to be incorporated in the rules for the Quality Label, connection with other Labels, guide for local enterprises.

CONTRACTOR :



(Company joint venture)

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Ecotourism

Conceptual approach

The concept of Ecotourism is increasingly evolving as it gains more ground in recent years. In order to define its concept as clearly as possible, its starting point should initially be identified.

Its concept first appeared in the mid-1980s, when a group of ecologists in North America agreed that the intensification of nature tourism can cause damage to the fragile natural environment and that measures to protect and manage tourism development had to be taken. The growing environmental interest combined with an emerging concern for mass tourism has led to an increased demand for experience based on the nature of alternative tourism. At the same time, countries have begun to realize that nature-based tourism is a means of accumulating foreign exchange and providing a less destructive use of resources than alternative resources such as carpentry and agriculture.

In other words, ecotourism includes all forms of tourism that have access to nature and the primary incentive is to put the protected areas in the spotlight. A precondition of the above is the imperative protection of the natural resources of the region, in order to minimize the negative effects on the natural and economic socio-cultural environment. Tourist services must be adapted to the elements and the specifications of the respective area, in order to maintain the identity of the particular environmental elements. Thus, the maximum satisfaction of the local bodies will be achieved as a function of the optimal combination: Quality social prosperity-profit. The expression of ecotourism is strongly intertwined with the concept of sustainable development and it is directly linked to the creation of protected areas. This expression includes social responsibility, an important commitment to nature and the participation of the local community in any tourism intervention or development. Lastly, it includes three different categories of issues, related (a) to the management

and conservation of the natural environment, (b) to local development and (c) to specific forms of tourism.

Ecotourism is tourism that develops in ecologically significant areas, does not exceed the carrying capacity of the area, and promotes the protection and management of the natural and cultural environment - according to legal or other effective measures- while maintaining the cohesion of the fabric of society (National Ecotourism Committee, 2002)

The necessity of Ecotourism today

When local operators and the indigenous population of a geographical area rich in natural resources can and does combine environmental wealth in a novel way, then we are talking about ecotourism. The Prefecture of Xanthi is one of these areas as for a long time it has invested in the development of alternative tourism, establishing an ecological, recreational spirit, but also economically profitable for local society. It is necessary to point out that the quality of the environment is a key pillar for an effective economic project. It is a fact that in recent years, increased urbanization has produced crops that form greater ecological awareness and demand. The idyllic, peaceful landscapes, possibly, cannot be replaced by extensive green parks or zoos, so the people of the cities are pushed into more alternative, refreshing escapes. Undoubtedly, ecotourism promotes the cultural identity of the region, which is a long-awaited reminder of the timeliness of national specificities, the customs and customs of the Greek territory. It seems that the reconstruction of traditional areas and their natural products/sites is a key factor in the development of alternative tourism. Alternative tourism is at the centre, as never before. The ecological crisis has led to the need for innovative sustainable solutions that will ensure a better investment decision-making guide.

1. Documentation of the current situation in the WLFE area

1.1 General Characteristics of the Prefecture of Xanthi within the Region of Eastern Macedonia and Thrace

1.1.1 Geographical Data



The Eastern Macedonian and Thracian Region is the most eastern continental point in Greece that was geographically transformed from an "outlying area", to a crossroads and "gate of the country, but also of the European Union". Its designation as a loan to the Eastern Balkans makes it strategic and important geographically and geopolitically for Greece and the European Union. Since 2007 with the accession of Bulgaria and Romania to the European Union, the Region of Eastern Macedonia and Thrace has been an "open space" of commercial and social activities that connects the northernmost and other Balkan countries with Greece. The Prefecture of Xanthi was one of the 51 prefectures of Greece, while since 2011 it is one of the 74 regional units of the country. It belongs to the Region of Eastern Macedonia and Thrace, together with the regional units of Kavala, Rhodope, Evros and Drama.

To the north, the prefecture of Xanthi, borders with Bulgaria, while to the east are the prefectures of Drama and Kavala, to the west the prefecture of Rodopi. The capital city of the Prefecture is which is built at the foothill of the Rhodope Mountains on the slopes of Achladovouno and in the straits of the river Kosinthos. (www.xanthi.gr). The area of the prefecture is 1793 square kilometers. The distance from Athens is 729 kilometers (www.xanthi.gr). Most of the prefecture at 60% is covered by the Rhodope Mountains. Field areas cover 32% of the total area and, together with the semi-mountainous ones are the arable agricultural areas of the prefecture. The plain arable land is about 480,000 acres. (Xanthi Chamber 2016).

The prefecture of Xanthi has the following mountains:

1) Ahlat Chal (Ahladovouni) where it is located at an altitude of 1,402 meters and has a length of 12,272 meters.

2) Egg (Avgo) by Stavros Tsakiris. The height reaches 665 meters and its length 7,359 meters. It is located next to the city of Xanthi. The recorded route is the crossing of Avgo, with starting point and end the city of Xanthi. The ascent to the top passes through Casino, while the descent by the classic path that passes through the Ecclesiastical High School.

3) Watermelon (Carpuzi). Its height reaches 1,284 meters and its length is 7,069 meters. It is located near the village of Kromniko and the straits of Nestos.

<http://www.hellaspath.gr/index.php?p=2&m=1&mntid=4%234>

1.1.2 Access

1.1.2.1 Road network

The approach to Xanthi is mainly through the modern road junction of Egnatia Odos, covering a distance of 736 and 221 kilometers from Athens and Thessaloniki respectively. The Egnatia Odos is a main road axis of Greece and the wider region of the southern Balkans. It is a "breath" project, being the largest highway (A2) in Greece that starts from the port of Igoumenitsa and ends at the Greek-Turkish border, in the Gardens of the Prefecture of Evros, after a course of 670 kilometers. The most important thing, however, is that it is part of the European Route E90 (6,441 km) that starts from Portugal, crosses Spain, Italy, Greece and ends in Turkey. It has a number of vertical axes that connect it with the adjacent cities and neighboring countries.

- 1) Alexandroupolis - Ardanio - Ormenio (135 km),
- 2) Kavala - Drama - Exochi (80 km),
- 3) Serres - Drama - Kavala
- 4) Komotini - Nymfaia - Greek-Bulgarian border (24 km),
- 5) Xanthi - Echinis - Greek-Bulgarian border (48 km).

The national road network at the borders of the Region of Eastern Macedonia and Thrace is as follows:

- National Highway 2 (NR2) connects eastern and western Greece that starting from Krystallopigi, on the border with Albania, crosses the city of Thessaloniki and the Region of Eastern Macedonia and Thrace through Kavala and Alexandroupolis ending at the Bridge of Evros. The coastal areas of all the Regional Units, the airports and the most important ports of the Region are connected with this specific road axis
- The National Road 12 (NR 12) crosses the Region of Central Macedonia (Thessaloniki, Serres, Mesorrachi) and ends in Eastern Macedonia (Drama - Kavala)
- The National Road 14 (NR 14) crosses Eastern Macedonia and Thrace through Drama, Paranesti, Stavroupoli and Xanthi
- The national road 51 (NR 51) is the north-south axis starting from Alexandroupolis, Ardaniot, Didymoteicho, Orestiada, Kastanies and continues through the provincial road Kastania Ormeniou, the three-country point of Greece, Bulgaria, Turkey at the border. This road axis ensures the connection of the Region of Eastern Macedonia and Thrace with Turkey through the Gardens of Evros, Central Bulgaria through Ormeni, and the Black Sea regions through Kastania.
- The National Road 53 (NR 53) starts from Alexandroupolis, crosses Aissimi and Derio ending at the Greek-Bulgarian border.
- National Road 55 (NR 55) starts from Xanthi, crosses Echinis and ends at the Bulgarian border.

- The National Road 57 (NR 57) starts from Drama, crosses Kato Nevrokopi and ends at the Bulgarian border.
- The National Road 69 (NR69) is the national road of Thassos that connects the port facilities of the island.

The degree of access to the tourist resources of the Prefecture of Xanthi in terms of road, rail and air access, has improved considerably in recent years. Nevertheless, according to Karamanidis (2006), access to the prefecture is estimated to need further improvement in order to achieve the arrival of visitors from other parts of the country and from abroad.

1.1.2.2 Railway

The railway line that serves the Region of Eastern Macedonia - Thrace also serves the Prefecture of Xanthi. More specifically, the railway connection that exists is the Ormeni-Alexandroupolis-Thessaloniki line. The total network of about 410 km and the biggest part of it is the Thessaloniki-Alexandroupolis one, connecting the Region of Eastern Macedonia and Thrace with Bulgaria and also extends from the Ormeni Border Station on the border with Turkey. However, it is very inadequate (outdated geometric features and rolling stock, poor quality and infrastructure) with poor quality of services provided, making comparisons with the respective networks of other European countries impossible. The railway could be a very important and special way of access to the areas as on the one hand it connects them with Thessaloniki and from there with the entire Greece and the Balkans, and on the other hand it is an environmentally friendly way of transportation. It is also worth mentioning the special physical and aesthetic value of adjacent sections of the railway line, such as the section that crosses the Straits of Nestos. In recent years, however, due to the lack of management, the line has completely lost its importance.

1.1.2.3 Airport

In the Region of Eastern Macedonia and Thrace there are currently two state airports: The International Airport of Kavala "Alexander the Great" for the units of Drama and Xanthi and the International Airport of Alexandroupolis "Democritus" for the unit of Rhodope. Alexandroupolis Airport is 112 km from Xanthi. Its infrastructure is considered adequate and valuable, but for the role they are called and aspire to play, as an international hub, it is estimated that further upgrade actions are required. Also, despite being an international airport, domestic flights are more than international. The airport "Alexander the Great" of Kavala is the main, international airport, in the wider area of the prefectures of Kavala, Drama, Xanthi and Rhodope. Based on the national and regional planning, it is characterized as a "Wider Regional's Significance" airport (ΥΠΕΚΑ, 2013- Ministry of Environment, Energy and Climate Change). It is the main gateway for foreign tourists to the Prefecture of Xanthi, since in addition to the regular flights, there are also charter flights. In recent years, international charter flights have been developing dynamically during the summer months due mainly to the tourist destination of Thassos, but also to the wider area of Kavala. During the summer months there are weekly itineraries to Kavala from European destinations such as Amsterdam, Warsaw, Vienna, Graz, Helsinki, Cologne, Copenhagen, Larnaca, London-Gatwick, Manchester Munich, Birmingham, Bratislava, Brno, Düsseldorf, Ostrava, Prague, Stockholm, Stuttgart and Frankfurt. It is 42 km away from the city of Xanthi. The infrastructure of the airport can be characterized as adequate.

1.1.2.4 Ports

In the study area and within its vicinity there are four ports with significant development prospects, if their upgrade will be properly organized and implemented.

The port of Porto Lagos (2nd class category) serving the hinterland of Thrace is located 26 kms from Xanthi, on Lake Vistonida which is protected by the Ramsar Treaty as a timeless and natural anchorage. It mainly serves fishing and merchant vessels. It has merchantile infrastructure. According to the Port Fund, the products are mainly fertilizers, timber, cotton products, cereals and petroleum products. Yacht can be moored. The port is open all year round, has about 300 berths and has all the necessary infrastructure such as water supply, fuel, supplies and repair shops. Its strong feature is that it is located in the graphical fishing village of the same and the fishermen are welcoming the visitors, introducing them to the art of fishing. There is also a yacht club in the area.

The port of Keramotj (3rd class category), which is the closest point to Thassos, from where the main volume of passengers and merchandise to and from the island is transported and is used as a shelter.

The port of Fanari (3rd class category) is mainly used as a fishing shelter, serving the needs of professional and amateur fishermen in the area. Fanari is a fishing village that in the summer months attracts touristic traffic from yachts which, in the recent years, has increased.

Finally, the port of Abdera which is located 27 km from Xanthi and serves mainly small fishing boats and yacht. It has about 250 berths and provides the possibility of refueling for the incoming vessels. It works all year round. It is located in the same area as the ancient port of Abdera.

At this point, it is worth mentioning that the depth of the ports in Xanthi is a deterrent to the arrival of large passenger ships. In the Region of Eastern Macedonia and Thrace,

there is one of the largest and most important ports in Greece, the port of Kavala. The port accepts boats such as Ferry Boats, Cruise ships, fishing, and yacht. The capacity in number of boats varies depending on the size. Abroad arrivals can also be made at the port. There are water, electricity, fuel and other supplies. The depth of the port ranges from 5.4m to 10.5m. Its distance from Xanthi is 53.1 km (about 40 minutes)

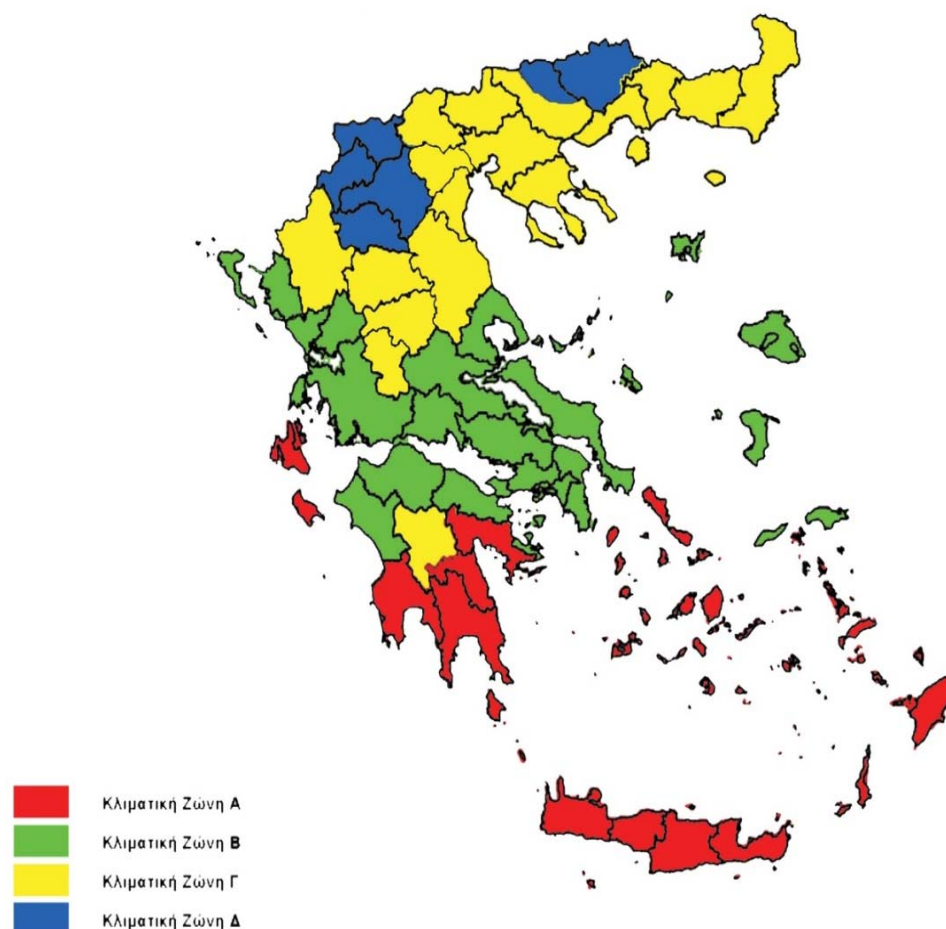
1.1.3 Climate

The climate in Xanthi is Mediterranean just like it is in the rest of Greece, with cold winters and hot summers. According to K.Ev.A.K (Energy Efficiency Regulation of Buildings), the Greek territory is divided into four climatic zones based on the degree of heating days. In the Table 1, there are the prefectures that fall into the four climate zones (from the warmest to the coldest) and then there is an illustration of them in Figure 1. The Regional Unit of Xanthi belongs to Zone C of the climatic division of Greece. Humidity is observed in the evenings, especially in spring and autumn. The temperatures are relatively moderate, with the mountainous zone receiving large amounts of snow in the winter months, with temperatures often below -10 C, but with hot summers and temperatures that during the summer reach 39 to 42 degrees Celsius. The climate on the coastlines is milder and “sweeter” while on the inside it is considered continental (www.xanthi.gr). Humidity remains relatively high throughout the year. Characteristic in the city of Xanthi are the very strong-stormy winds that make their appearance mainly in the winter months and intensify the harshness of winter. The average annual temperature is 15 degrees Celsius while the rainfall is 500mm. (Papadopoulou 2009).

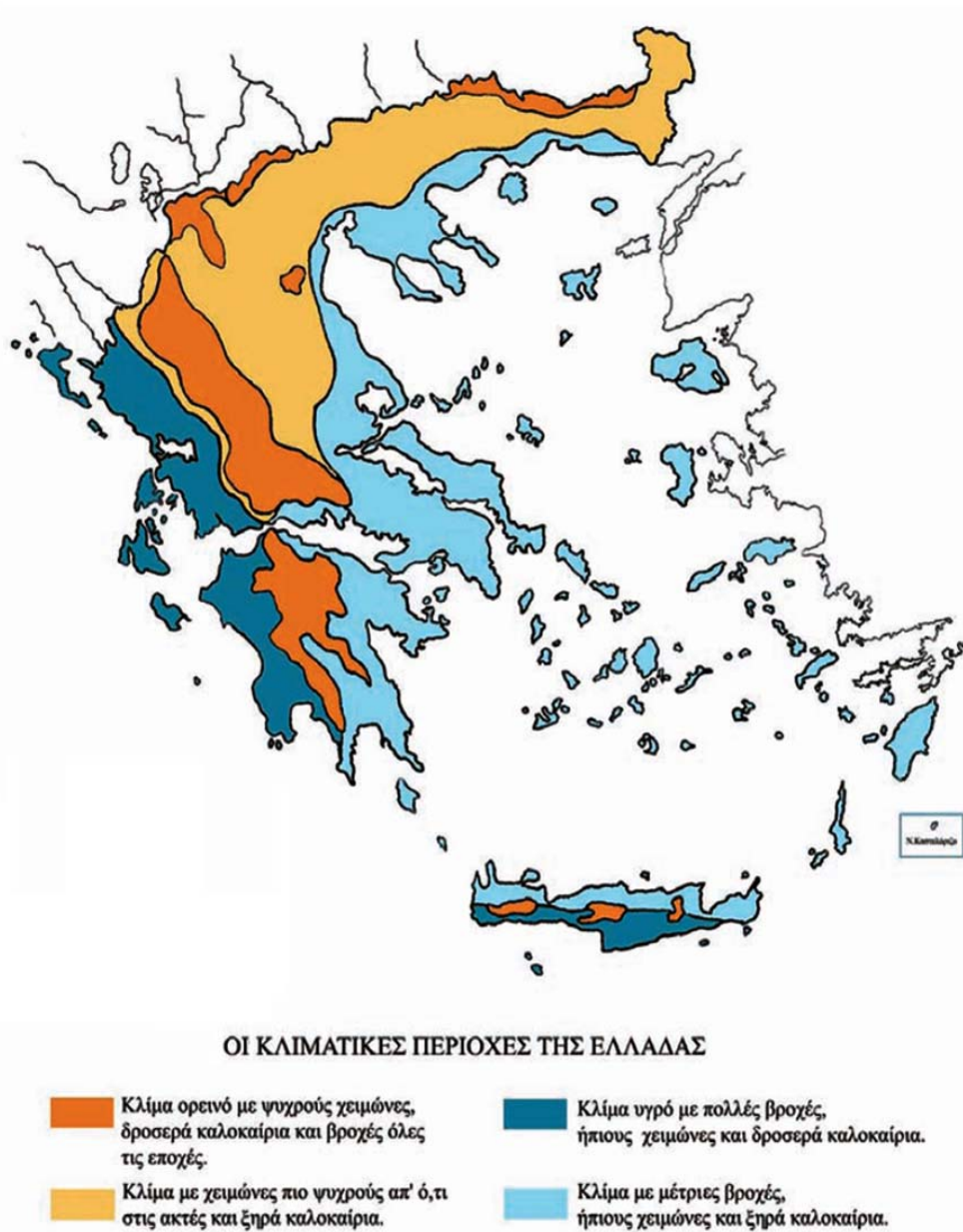
Table 1. Climate Zones of Greece

CLIMATE ZONE	PREFECTURES
ZONE A	Heraklion, Chania, Rethymno, Lassithi, Cyclades, Dodecanese, Samos, Messinia, Laconia, Argolis, Zakynthos, Kefallonia & Ithaca, Kythira & Saronic islands, Arcadia (lowland)
ZONE B	Attica (except Kythira & Saronic islands), Corinthia, Elis (or Ilia), Achaea, Aetolia-Acarnania, Phthiotis, Phocis, Boeotia, Evia, Magnesia, Lesbos, Chios, Corfu, Lefkada, Thesprotia, Preveza, Arta
ZONE C	Arcadia (mountainous), Evrytania, Ioannina, Larissa, Karditsa, Trikala, Pieria, Imathia, Pella, Thessaloniki, Kilkis, Chalkidiki, Serres (except NE section), Kavala, Xanthi, Rhodope, Evros
ZONE D	Grevena, Kozani, Kastoria, Florina, Serres (NE section), Drama

Source: Energy Efficiency Regulation of Buildings, 2010

Figure 1. Illustration of the climate zones of Greece

Source: Energy Efficiency Regulation of Buildings

Figure 2. Climate illustration of the regions of Greece

Source: Energy Efficiency Regulation of Buildings

- Mountainous climate with cold winters, cool summers and rains all seasons
- Climate with colder winters than on the coasts and dry summers
- Wet climate with lots of rain, mild winters and cool summers
- Climate with moderate rains, mild winters and dry summers

Based on the meteorological station of Xanthi, which is located at latitude 24o53, longitude 41o8' and at an altitude of 43m. The basic climatic elements in the area of Xanthi are the following.

Table 2.

JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUNE	JULY	AUG	SEPT	OCT	NOV	DEC	AV. OF THE YEAR
Average monthly 24-hour temperature [°C]												
5,6	6,8	9,6	14,3	19,8	24,1	26,6	26	22,4	16,5	11	6,9	15,8
Average wind speed [m/s]												
1,4	1,3	1	0,8	0,9	1	1	0,9	0,9	1,4	1,3	1,4	1,11
Average monthly temperature during the day [°C], (average temperature for the sunny period of the day)												
6,7	7,9	10,7	15,6	21	25,4	28	27,4	23,8	17,9	12,1	8	17,04
Average maximum monthly temperature [°C]												
9,4	10,4	13,4	18,5	23,8	28,4	31,1	30,7	27,2	21,1	14,5	10,4	19,90
Average minimum monthly temperature [°C]												
-0,3	0,1	2,5	6,8	12	15,7	18,5	18	13,9	9	4,8	1,1	8,50
Average monthly humidity [%]												
73,2	73,7	73,4	73,5	70,1	65,6	61,6	62,7	66,4	70,7	75,3	74,3	70,04

Source: Energy Efficiency Regulation of Buildings

1.1.4 Flora-Fauna

In the context of this study, the environmental resources of the Prefecture of Xanthi are evaluated. The Region of Eastern Macedonia and Thrace includes 11 Special Protection Areas (SPA). It also has 4 out of 17 National Parks (Law No 1650/86) (Evros River Delta, Nestos-Vistonida-Ismarida River Delta, Dadia-Lefkimmi-Soufli Forest, Rhodope Mountains National Park), 2 Aesthetic Forests (Degree law No 996/71) (Straits of Nestos Kavala-Xanthi, Amygdaleona Forest of Kavala), 2 Preserved Monuments of Nature (Degree law No 996/71) (Natural Forest of Central Rhodope, Beech Forest in Tsihla-Haidou, Xanthi), 3 Wetlands of International Importance belonging to the Ramsar Convention (Evros Delta, Ismarida - Vistonida - Porto Lagos, Delta Nestos) and three areas designated as European Biogenetic Reserves (Central

Rhodope natural Forest, Natural Memorial of Haidou Kula Acid Forest, Natural Forest of Paradisos).

The Biodiversity, therefore, that the area of the Prefecture of Xanthi presents is great. More specifically, in the south of the prefecture and especially in Lake Vistonida and Porto Lagos, there is a great variety of birds that nest and winter in the area, but also from other, that are migratory. The bird fauna of the prefecture of Xanthi includes many species with the most important the heron and his main representatives, the grey heron, the little egret and the squacco heron. Other species we encounter are the Pygmy cormorant, various species of duck, including the species of Common shelduck, storks, the Eurasian spoonbill, also the Black-winged stilt, the Dalmatian pelican, the Common tern, the Mediterranean gull and other very rare species. Many species of migratory birds, such as flamingos, gulls, herons, storks pass through the area and stop during their migration, for food and perching.

It is important that Nestos Delta hosts 260 bird species out of the 474 basic species that live in Europe. In the large mammals living in the area, are included the Wild boar, the Roe deer, the great brown bear of Rhodope, the great brown bear of Rhodope.

It is of great interest, the river Kompsatos, which is a refuge for many birds of prey. This wetland can be considered as a single ecological unit with Vistonida and it is protected by the Ramsar Convention. The lagoon of Vistonida, the neighboring wetlands and lagoons of the Delta of Evros, as well as the artificial lakes of the river Nestos, Thesauru and stand out for their many and important natural habitats. These habitats have been identified and recorded through the Natura 2000 program. Moreover, they have awarded with the Blue Flag in the Prefecture of Xanthi: Erasmio, Maggana, Avdira / Porto Molo, Mandra, Myrodato. The vegetation of Rhodope is extremely interesting, because there are many endemic plants. The forest areas of Mountainous Xanthi are 1,150 square kilometers. There are pure forests but also meadows and plains in them. Beeches and oaks dominate (about 80%) but also forest pines, firs, chestnuts and the beautiful spruce and birch, trees of central Europe whose southern borders are in Rhodope. In the area of Koula, between the peak of

Gyftokastro, the highest in Thrace, 1,827m and in the village of Dimario, lives the unique and rare *Pinus peuce*. The region of Eastern Macedonia-Thrace has the fundamental basis because it is a mature and environmentally fertile region that can support alternative tourist attractions.

In the most important areas for biodiversity in the Region have been established National Parks, which are:

1. National Forest Park of Dadia - Lefkimmi – Soufli

Year of establishment: 2006

Total area: about 430.000 acres.

According to her, 229 species of birds are found in the area, including 36 of the 38 species of birds of prey that exist in Europe. Many endangered mammal species are also found. In addition, the presence of 35 species of reptiles and amphibians, which are in danger of extinction, is confirmed. The National Park of Dadia - Lefkimi - Soufli Forest is located in an important biogeographical position for the spread of fauna. For some species this is their last refuge in Greece, for some the last in all of southeastern Europe.

The area has intense vegetation with pine forest, oak forest, evergreen broad-leaved trees, etc. 18% of the area is arable. Due to the special climatic conditions of Thrace, not only the typical species of low altitude forests and maquis shrubland are found in the area, but also species that are associated with higher altitude habitats in the rest of Greece.

A total of 36 of the 38 European diurnal birds of prey have been observed in the National Park area. At least 25 of them have reproduced or nested at least once in the last two decades. A total of **212 different species of birds** are found and more than half of the species recorded in Greece, among which many are rare, such as **9 out of 10 European woodpeckers** etc. 70% of passerines in Greece have been recorded in the habitats of the area, while the presence of the **black stork** with more than 40 pairs

is important, making the National Park the most important breeding area of them in Greece. In addition, 59 species of the area are included in Annex I of the EU Birds Directive (79/409), for which special measures must be taken to preserve their populations and habitats. The National Park and the wider area host **the last population of Cinereous vulture (*Aegypius monachus*) of Greece**. From the 26 individuals and the 4-5 couples that had been recorded in 1979, with the strict protection of nesting areas and the creation of feeders, their numbers have increased significantly to over 70 individuals, with at least 15 breeding couples. Young birds from northern countries, however, appear all year round in the feeders looking for food. Four or five couples of Golden Eagles (*Aquila chrysaetos*) occupy territories in and around the protected area. Their population is stable and has reached the limits of satiety, as determined by the needs of each couple in the living space and the existing food. The largest possible numbers still live in the area for other species such as the Lesser spotted eagle (*Aquila pomarina*), the Short-toed snake eagle (*Circaetus gallicus*) and the Hieraaetus (*Hieraaetus pennatus*) with about 20 couples of each species, as well as the long-legged buzzard (*Buteo rufinus*) with about 10 couples.

Many endangered mammals of Greece are conserved in the area. Large carnivores and the traditional preys are, unfortunately, due to human pressure, in small numbers. The lynx and the jackal have disappeared from the area for several decades, but the presence of the wolf in the area is constant, while the bear also makes sporadic appearances, possibly when moving in the area of the border with Bulgaria. In the Park area there are 53 species of mammals including the wild boar, the roe deer, the wildcat, the hare, the Eurasian otter, the badger, martens, *Vulpes*, the European ground squirrel and many species of rodents. The presence of 24 species of bats in caves that had previously been opened for mining research is also remarkable. (<http://www.dadia-np.gr/>)

2. National Wetland Park of the Evros Delta

Year of establishment: 2006

Total area (land and water): about 200,000 acres

It covers the river delta of Evros in the southern part of the Prefecture and occupies areas within the administrative boundaries of the Municipalities of Alexandroupolis, Traianoupolis and Fera of the Prefecture of Evros. The area is a Special Protection Area (SPA), included in the wetlands of international interest of the Ramsar Convention since 1975 and has been registered in the National List of sites of the European Ecological Network NATURA 2000, in accordance with Community Directive 92/43/EEC. The area is one of the richest wetlands in Europe in terms of the number and population of species found in it. The Delta of the river Evros is developed on the border of two geographical areas with different characteristics. The role of vegetation is important both in the regulation of the region's water resources and in improving the quality of surface and underground water.

The vegetation in the Evros Delta is not directly affected by the climate but mainly by factors related to the soil such as its composition, its water content and its salinity. The type of vegetation is what characterizes the coasts of the northern Aegean. The vegetation in the area is significantly affected by the easternmost areas such as the Black Sea and the Caspian Sea. The flora of the Evros Delta is known from the researches of Babalona (1979, 1981), where about 300 plant species are reported.

Species of the flora of the National Wetland Park of the Evros Delta

- I. Beachgrass
 - *Elymus factus*
 - *Elymus sabulosus*
 - *Eryngium maritimum*
 - *Glaucium flavum*
 - *Diotis maritima*
 - *Centaurea cuneifolia*

- *Cakile maritima*
- II. Salt tolerant
 - *Arthrocnemum fruticosum*
 - *Arthrocnemum glaucum*
 - *Aeluropus litoralis*
 - *Halocnemum strobilaceum*
 - *Suaeda maritima*
 - *Juncus maritimus*
 - *Limonium virgatum*
 - *Tamarix smyrnensis*
 - *Puccinelia festuciformis*
 - *Suaeda splendens*
- III. Aquatic plants
 - *Phragmites australis*
 - *Scirpus maritimus*
 - *Typha latifolia*
 - *Potamogeton crispus*
 - *Zostera nana*
 - *Ruppia maritima*
- IV. Riparian forest
 - *Salix alba*
 - *Populus alba*
 - *Populus nigra*
 - *Platanus orientalis*
 - *Tamarix smyrnensis*
- V. Meadows
 - *Juncus acutus*
 - *Oenanthe spp*
 - *Trifolium spp*
 - *Mentha pulegium*

Rare or endangered plant species of the Evros Delta

- *Elymus giganteus*. Characteristic species of the Beachgrass category that has a limited geographical distribution only in northern Greece.
- *Ammophila arenaria*. Rare in the delta due to the small height of the sand dunes but a characteristic species of the most advanced sand dunes in the Mediterranean region.
- *Centaurea cuneifolia*. Endemic species of Greece and Turkey.
- *Cenchrus pauciflorus*. Species imported from North America. Located in the northern Aegean.
- *Heliotropium curassavicum*. It is a North American species. In Greece it has been mentioned only in Evros and Attica.
- *Artemissia lerchiana*. Eastern species rare in the delta.
- *Fraxinus angustifolia*. Used to form extensive forests in the delta.
- *Alnus glutinosa*. Used to form extensive forests in the delta. Today there are only a few individual species scattered.

The Evros Delta is one of the most important areas in Greece and Europe for the conservation of several species of birds, some of which are classified as rare or endangered. It is also the **most important area in Greece for the wintering of the three species of European Swans (Mute Swan, Wild Swan, Dwarf Swan)**. Significant numbers of rare species of predators are also observed mainly in the winter. In addition to birdlife, the presence of amphibians, reptiles, mammals and fish in the Evros Delta is quite important in both species and numbers. 46 species of fish have been found to live in the river Evros and in the wider area. Several fishes have acquired commercial value for the inhabitants. Seven different species of amphibians live in the Evros Delta. All amphibians, in Greece and in Europe have decreased due to habitat loss (drainage) but also due to pesticide pollution. A total of 21 species of reptiles, turtles, lizards and snakes have been reported in the Evros Delta. Significant reptile populations are found both in water and on land.

3. National Park of Eastern Macedonia-Thrace

Year of establishment: 2008

Total area (land and water): about 726,000 acres

It includes the protected areas of the Nestos Delta, Lake Vistonida, Lake Ismarida and their wider area. The park occupies a large part of the coastal zone of the Regional Units of Kavala, Xanthi and Rhodope. A very important part of the fauna of Greece survives in the Nestos Delta. In the Nestos Delta, they have been recorded, 38% of the national freshwater fish, 69% of the amphibians, 38% of the reptiles, 65% of the birds and 19% of the mammals. These percentages rank the Nestos Delta wetland among the most important in the country. Specifically, 20 species of mammals, 11 species of amphibians, 22 species of reptiles, 30 species of freshwater fish and 277 species of birds have been recorded in the Nestos Delta. The surrounding area is characterized by rich and varied vegetation as well as an impressive number of plant species. In the Delta area there is a real “mosaic of plants” such as: sand dune vegetation, salt tolerant vegetation, reed vegetation (*Phragmites australis*), shrubs, meadows, aquatic vegetation.

The forest areas in the Nestos Delta are divided into two categories:

1. Forests that grow along the river shores where water is constantly flowing or periodically floods these areas.
2. Forests growing in estuaries and deposition cones.

As for the lagoon area of Vistonida, it is characterized by a great variety of habitats and rich flora. The vegetation of the lake consists of beachgrass and salt tolerant plants, meadows, reeds and shrubs.

Finally, in the wider area of the wetlands of the area of Lake Ismarida and the surrounding lagoons, a great diversity of vegetation was formed over the years. Walking around the place, one can distinguish three large vegetation zones:

- Vegetation in the southern locations of Lake Ismarida and the lagoons where salt and sand make their presence clear, such as in brackish water, salt meadows, seashores, sand dunes and sandy beaches.

- The vegetation formed in the environments that are affected by the rivers near their shores.
- Mixed forests, either evergreen or deciduous, as well as the various shrublands.

The Nestos delta is an ideal habitat for nesting, wintering, feeding, and resting for many migratory birds, so it is used as a stopover from about 180 species of birds, an impressive number due to the diversity of habitats.

Greece is the only country on the European continent where one of the rarest birds, the Spur winged Lapwing (*Hoplopterus spinosus*) nests. In the Nestos Delta it is located the 80% of the Greek population of it.

In the riparian forest there is a non-farmed population of the Phasianus colchicus.

This species lives only in West Asia, especially around the Caspian Sea. In Europe there are only two natural populations. In the Nestos Delta and in Eastern Bulgaria.

Endangered species

- *Pelecanus onocrotalus*
- *Pelecanus crispus*
- *Recurvirostra avosetta*
- *Ardea cinerea*
- *Phoenicopterus ruber*
- *Hoplopterus Spinosus*
- *Haliaeetus albicilla*
- *Phasianus colchicus*

Vistonida also has remarkable fauna. There are about 260 species of birds. Of these, 9 species are rare or endangered at international level. These include the Red-breasted goose (*Branta ruficollis*), the Ferruginous duck (*Aythya nyroca*) and eagles such as the White-tailed eagle, the Greater spotted eagle and the Lesser kestrel. One of the rarest bird species in the world, with a population of no more than 13,000 birds worldwide, is the White-headed duck. In Greece we find it only in Lake Vistonida.

There is a great variety of fish that exist in Lake Vistonida, although in recent years they have been limited due to changes in environmental conditions. 62 species have been recorded totally, in the catchment area of the two rivers (Komsato and

Kosynthos), as well as in the lagoons that it includes (Porto Lagos, Lagos, Lafri, Lafrouda).

4. National Park of the Rhodope Mountains

Year of establishment: 2009

Total area: 1.731.150 acres

The National Park is located in the Rhodope mountain range, from the northeastern slopes of Mount Falakro and then north of the river Nestos until the Greek-Bulgarian border and the mountainous area of Xanthi. The area consists mainly of high mountainous (up to 1700 m.) and subalpine (1700-1814 m.) areas. High mountains dominate, covering about 80% of the total area, while the coastlines are lagging significantly behind.

In the National Park of the Rhodope Mountains are found the most extensive and productive forests of Greece. The unique area of the birch forest, the undisturbed natural ecosystem of the Fraktos Virgin Forest, the forest of Tsihla and Haidou (Erymanthos). The variety of vegetation types, the typical forest fauna of the cold forests, the southern limits of the presence of many animals and plants give this mountainous area a special and distinct character. It is estimated that the number of plant species and subspecies exceeds the number of 1000. Of these, the endemic plants of Rhodope are the viola, the lily, the geo (*Geum urbanum*), the soldanella, the paleoendemic haberlea etc. Besides, the area of Rhodope is the southernmost border for the spread of many species of plants in the north, such as the *Abies alba* (silver fir), the spruce, the birch, the five-needle pine, etc. The geographical location of the region is a meeting point of the Balkans, Iran-Caspian and the southern Mediterranean flora and fauna so it is created a high biodiversity there. In addition to endemic species, the importance of the Rhodope lies in the presence of plant species that are found mainly in other phytogeographical regions in northern and colder climates. Many arctic-alpine, northern or central European species have their southernmost spreading point in its mountains. This diverse flora includes local endemic species, Balkan endemics,

plant species rare in Greece, as well as rare plants that are endangered. The forests of the Rhodope, preserved in a better condition in terms of naturalness, structure and composition compared to the rest of the forests of Europe are shelters of a large number of rare species.

It is worth mentioning that five species of predators breed in the area. The area is also the southernmost border for many bird species while large mammals such as bear, wolf, ibex, deer, roe deer, wild boar live and breed in the dense and extensive forests of spruce, beech, oak and forest. (<http://www.fdor.gr/>).

1.1.5 Population

The population of the prefecture of Xanthi according to the European Statistical Service for the year 2018 amounts to 111,885 permanent residents while according to the 2011 census it was among 111,222 inhabitants. The capital city of the prefecture is Xanthi and together with the settlements that belong to it, it has a population of 65,133 inhabitants. (Xanthi Chamber., 2016). In fact, the most complete picture of the population of the Region of Eastern Macedonia & Thrace, during 2013 and 2018 is reflected in its change from 610,102 to 601,175 in percentage size -1%.

In order to have a clearer picture of the Region of Eastern Macedonia Thrace as the Prefecture of Xanthi is a subset of it, we will take into account the data of the entire region. The population, according to the census of the statistical authority of Greece, in 2011, amounts to 608,182 people, 5.62% of the corresponding total population of the country

Table 3. Population Census 2011. Region of Eastern Macedonia- Thrace

Level of administrative division	Description	Permanent Population	Density of permanent population per square kilometer
3	REGION OF EASTERN MACEDONIA AND THRACE (seat: Komotini)	608.182	42,96
4	REGIONAL UNIT OF RHODOPE (seat: Komotini)	112.039	44,06
4	REGIONAL UNIT OF DRAMA (seat: Drama)	98.287	28,34
4	REGIONAL UNIT OF EVROS (seat: Alexandroupolis)	147.947	34,88
4	REGIONAL UNIT OF THASOS (seat: Thasos)	13.770	36,23
4	REGIONAL UNIT OF KAVALA (seat: Kavala)	124.917	72,14
4	REGIONAL UNOT OF XANTHI (seat: Xanthi)	111.222	62,03

Source: Hellenic Statistical Authority (ELSTAT)

The Region of Eastern Macedonia and Thrace maintained its population relatively stable in the decade 2001-2011, while at the same time the population at a national level decreased. In the regional unit of Evros the population has increased over time. The population of the regional unit of Kavala, of Drama, of Xanthi and of Rhodope, followed the exact same path. A fact that testifies an evolving population presence in the Prefecture of Xanthi which is linked to its development prospects.

Table 4. Population Census 2011. Regional Unit of Xanthi

Level of administrative division	Description	Permanent Population	Density of permanent population per square kilometer
5	MUNICIPALITY OF AVDIRA (seat:Genisea Historical seat: Avdira)	19.005	53,98
	Municipal Unit of Avdira	3.341	
	Municipal Unit of Vistonida	10.435	
	Municipal Unit of Selero	5.229	
5	MUNICIPALITY OF MYKI (seat: Sminthi)	15.540	24,54
	Municipal Unit of Thermes	812	
	Municipal Unit of Kotyli	2.158	
	Municipal Unit of Myki	12.087	
	Municipal Unit of Satres	483	
5	MUNICIPALITY OF XANTHI(seat: Xanthi)	65.133	131,55
	Municipal Unit of Xanthi	63.083	
	Municipal Unit of Stavroupoli	2.050	
5	MUNICIPALITY OF TOPEIROS (sear: Evlalo)	11.544	36,94
	Municipal Unit of Evlalo	4.985	
	Municipal Unit of Toxotes	1.845	
	Municipal Unit of Avato	1.078	
	Municipal Unit of Galani	108	
	Municipal Unit of Exochi	1.295	
	Municipal Unit of Erasmio	1.268	
	Municipal Unit of Maggana	635	
	Municipal Unit of Olvio	330	

Source: Hellenic Statistical Authority (ELSTAT)

Another interesting presumption for the population of Xanthi can be found in the table below that lists the age structure of the Regional Units

Table 5. Age Distribution of Permanent Population by Regional Unit

Regional Units (RU)	RU OF RHODOPE	RU OF DRAMA	RU OF EVROS	RU OF THASOS	RU OF KAVALA	RU OF XANTHI
Age Group	112.039	98.287	147.947	13.770	124.917	111.222
0-9	10.487	8.820	14.211	1.298	11.820	13.680
10-19	12.356	10.387	13.961	1.238	12.566	13.460
20-29	15.694	9.681	20.388	1.186	13.318	15.867
30-39	15.356	12.451	20.092	2.225	17.097	16.524
40-49	14.943	14.222	18.387	1.967	18.139	15.454
50-59	14.134	12.642	18.362	1.701	15.944	13.294
60-69	12.525	10.276	16.081	1.706	16.694	10.195
70+	16.544	19.808	26.495	2.649	22.339	12.748

Source: Hellenic Statistical Authority (ELSTAT)

So, it is worth that in the Regional Unit of Xanthi the largest age group (in crowd) is the 30-39, followed by the 20-29 and finally the 40-49. This fact, distinguishes it from the other regions where the corresponding proportion in them shows a large number of the age group of 70+. That is an element that can count favorably in the activeness of the young citizens. In addition, it can bring effective results in the revitalization of the place with the promotion of modern tourist guides, thus keeping pace with the new alternative tourist actions.

However, based on the research, it is also worth mentioning the investigation of the economically active population of the Prefecture of Xanthi and consequently of the Region of Eastern Macedonia and Thrace. According to the Hellenic Statistical Authority (ΕΛΣΤΑΤ), the Region of Eastern Macedonia & Thrace represents 5% of the economically active population of the country, while the percentage of its economically active population in terms of the age group of 15+ was 49% in 2013 and 50% in 2018. Compared to the whole country, the Region of Eastern Macedonia &

Thrace shows a lower percentage of economically active population and one of the lowest recorded for both years.

1.1.6 Higher Education

The Technical University is based in Xanthi and it consists of the Department of Civil Engineering, the Department of Electrical and Computer Engineering, Environmental Engineering, Architectural Engineering and Production and Management Engineering. The Campus is located about four kilometers from the city and has a student dormitory with a capacity of three hundred beds and a restaurant that serves all students living in Xanthi. In total, the Technical University gathers 3.700 students while a large number of students also attend the postgraduate programs of the school.

1.1.7 Economy

Ensuring employment is a key condition for keeping the population in one place and for population recovery. In the Prefecture of Xanthi in the year of 2001 there were 6,989 registered unemployed of whom 3.131 were men and 3.858 were women. The large percentage of the active population employed in the primary sector, reveals the rural character of the area. 650 foreigners of different nationalities live and work in the Prefecture on a permanent basis. The largest percentage of them (60%) is engaged in agricultural activities and the remaining 40% in various other professions. Also, on an annual basis, about 350 foreigners from Bulgaria and Albania are invited under a transnational agreement, for six months of seasonal employment in agricultural crops (tobacco, asparagus, industrial tomatoes). The main crops are cereals, tobacco and livestock plants. Tree cultivation in Xanthi is almost non-existent. The manufacture industry of the prefecture consists of handicraft enterprises for the processing of agricultural products, foodstuffs and tobacco. 45% of the population is engaged in agriculture which is the main source of income for many families. The main products that are cultivated are the tobacco that made Xanthi known all over the world, cotton, wheat, corn, kiwi, vegetables. The prefecture contributes 0.7% to the Gross Domestic

Product (GDP) of the country (ELSTAT). The construction activity is intense despite the signs of decline that shows after 2008. Xanthi is also known for its sweets, such as carioca, soutzouk loukoumia, halva, syrups, and nuts. The area has in the past been included in development laws and has attracted several industries and crafts. In recent years, due to the economic crisis, some units, mainly cooperative factories, are under-operating or have closed.

The **Primary Sector** in earlier times played a leading role for the economy of the prefecture of Xanthi. Therefore, the formation of the Gross Regional Product was affected by the primary sector at a percentage of more than 30. This percentage has decreased taking into account the data of ELSTAT and OAED (Manpower Employment Organization). The primary sector in the prefecture of Xanthi produced 12.5% of the GDP, while at the regional level the corresponding percentage was 16% (Business Plan of the Municipality of Xanthi. 2010). The primary/ agricultural sector, in recent years in the prefecture employes about 28.4% of the active population and contributes to the total product of the prefecture by 11.8%.

– **Agriculture:**

The plain in the southern part of Xanthi is considered one of the richest and most developed in Thrace. Most of the cultivated land is covered by arable crops and secondarily by horticultural land and tree crops.

Table 6. Agricultural Land

XANTHI	2018
Total agricultural land	477,646
Crops and fallow	479,158
Arable crops	428,922
Horticultural	34,950
Tree crops (Total)	7738
Olive grove	2928
Vines	473
Fallow (1-5 years)	7075

Source: Hellenic Statistical Authority (ELSTAT)

Table 7. Crops by categories

	2018	
Main Crops	Acres	Production (in tonnes)
Common wheat	60.699	17.464
Durum wheat	53.629	14.262
Barley	12.885	2.843
Maize (corn)	119.164	112.816
Sugar beet	11.169	53.933
Gossypium (cotton)	74.630	13.265
Alfalfa (lucerne)	26.422	25.309
Tobacco	32.616	3.000
Potato	8.495	15.981
Tomatoes	12.555	45.318
Virginia tobacco	1000	273

Source: Xanthi Prefecture (www.xanthi.gr/index.php?tmp=2&path=1132_1245)

– Animal husbandry

Animal husbandry shows a relative development in the Prefecture of Xanthi, especially in small sheep (goats, sheep) and usually has a domestic or semi-domestic form. Although cattle are not an important branch of local animal husbandry, they contribute almost 67% of local milk production, while the rest comes from sheep (22%) and goats (11%).

Table 8. Holdings and number of animals by species

Animals	2002	2004
Bovidae	22.306	27.523
Sheep	94.505	102.108
Goat	73.592	72.792
Pig	27.366	35.667
Horses, mules, donkeys	3.791	2.064
Rabbit	1.680	1.595
Poultry	1.212.415	1.596.676
Beehives	7.000	6.670

Source: Hellenic Statistical Authority (ELSTAT)

– Forests

The Prefecture of Xanthi is among the 5 to 6 most important prefectures in terms of forestry. Forestry activity extends to about the 2/3 of the area and production covers the 1/3 of the planned entries. Mountain pastures are being exploited as much as possible, as are erections, degraded forest improvements and reforestation.

Table 9. Mountain forest cover

Forests	616,007 acres
Partly forested areas	147,610 acres
Fields	124,180 acres
Bare area	285,135 acres
Barren areas	36,160 acres
Shrublands	4,190 acres
Reforestation	14,023 acres
Total	1,227,305 acres

– Fishing

The sea area is rich in catches and especially in the Vistonikos Bay where the 90% of the coastal fishing is done. The fishing fleet consists of 103 coastal vessels and 2 medium-sized fishing vessels (trawlers). Coastal fishing production is up to 100 tonnes per year and worths 400.000€, while the average fishery amounts to about 200 tonnes and worths 500,000 €. Main products are sea bream, sea bass, sea mullet, carp, eel, sardines and various shellfish.

The **Secondary Sector** (industry-handicrafts) is approximately 26,7% of the active population and contributes to the total product of the prefecture by 44.7%. The industrial and craft sector is limited. Despite the efforts made for decades by the Greek state (subsidies and various facilities) no large units were developed in the area. Finally, the industrial infrastructure that operates in the prefecture of Xanthi is mainly interwoven with the industrial area of Xanthi.

The **Tertiary Sector** (Tourism-Services) employs 39.3% of the active population and contributes to the total product of the prefecture by 43.5%. The Prefecture has 1357 hotel beds and lately presents a satisfactory increase in overnight stays of visitors. The tourist traffic of Xanthi is mainly directed to the city of Xanthi, the area of Echinós and Stavroupoli, the waterfall of Livaditis, Nestos and Vistonida, Avdira and their Museum, its archeological sites and its beaches. A special increase in tourism is observed during the Carnival, the festivals of the Old Town and the festivals of Nestos and Democritus.

A 5.6% percentage did not declare an activity sector.

Below are the revenues of 2016 according to ELSTAT, dividing them into two columns for different financial figures. The idea is presented productively from the total sizes (Greece) to their subsets in order to clearly see the contribution of the Region of Eastern Macedonia Thrace and the Prefecture of Xanthi to the Greek economy.

Table 10. GDP- per capita GDP

2016	GDP (in million €, current prices)	Per capita GDP (in million €, current prices)
Greece	176.488	16,378
Region of Eastern Macedonia and Thrace	6.901	11,432
Prefecture of Xanthi	1.124	10,015

1.2 Tourism in the Prefecture of Xanthi

1.2.1 Tourism Service Trends Indicators

The tourist profile of the Region of Eastern Macedonia - Thrace, is based on the triptych NATURE - CULTURE - PLACE. NATURE is the most important element, including areas with great diversity and contrasts, ecological value and biodiversity, with 16% of the area covered by 28 Natura 2000 areas, while forest systems covering over 50% of the total area. CULTURE covers all human activity historically and gives entity and content to the region. Finally, PLACE connects nature with culture and man with his activity, through history, aesthetics and life.

Below are the main figures of tourism in the Region of Eastern Macedonia and Thrace, such as the number of visits, countries of origin, earnings and overnight stays.

Table 11. Basic figures of tourism in the region of Eastern Macedonia and Thrace

Countries of Origin	Visits (in thous.)	Revenues (in million €)	Nights (in thous.)	Cost/Visit (in €)	Cost/Night (in €)	Average stay
Turkey	523,4	90,1	1.258,0	172,2	71,7	2,4
Bulgaria	2.196,9	100,4	3.165,4	45,7	31,7	1,4
Germany	119,0	36,7	758,6	308,3	48,4	6,4
Romania	310,1	49,6	1.252,1	160,0	39,6	4,0
Other	683,6	162,9	3.736,4	238,3	43,6	5,5
Total	3.833,1	439,8	10.170,6	114,7	43,2	2,7
Of the total %	10,5%	2,5%	4,4%			

Source: INSETE

It is concluded that the tourism of the region is based on the visitors from the neighboring countries. The largest revenues and the most visitors come from Bulgaria, reaching an amount of 100,400,000€. Revenues from tourists coming from Turkey reach 90,100,000 €, while revenues from Romania reach 49,600,000€. Finally, the revenues from German tourists reach the amount of 36,700,000€. Revenues from tourists from other countries are estimated at 439,800,000€.

1.2.2 Main distribution of the hotel units in the Prefecture of Xanthi

International literature recognizes the geographical area as an essential component of tourism activity and a necessary reference framework for a systematic study of the tourism phenomenon. A geographical area participates in the tourist activity as its main beneficiary, while the "image" formed by either the future tourist for his destination or the tourist returning to his homeland, is an essential mechanism-shaper of the tourist market (Avgerinou-Kolonia, 2000). The "tourist area" is composed of the tourist superstructures and infrastructures, the special tourist infrastructures, as well as the corresponding economic and social mechanisms.

In order to define the ability of an area to respond to periods of increased tourist traffic - but not only to them - the supporting infrastructure should be sought. Whether a tourist area is ready to deal with a tourist wave effectively is a key to its successful competitiveness.

The existing tourist activity in the Region is not corresponding to the remarkable natural and human resources that the Region gathers but instead it favors recreation and entertainment. The model of mass, mainly marine tourism that dominates in the country and has penetrated in the Region, has led on the one hand to the development dependence of some spatial zones from the summer tourism (Kavala, Thasos), but on the other hand it is not corresponding to the abilities of the Region for alternative tourism. Alternative tourism, based on the **rich cultural heritage, the natural**

environment and the position of the Region prolong the tourist season and attract **high quality tourism**.

The region's hotel potential is not evenly distributed. There is an over-concentration of beds in the Regional Unit of Kavala (64%) and on the island of Thassos where the supply of beds reaches 50%. This is followed by the regional unit of Evros where 18% of the beds in the Region operate there, of which almost all are located in the area of Evros (14.8%). This fact is mainly due to the presence of a large tourist offer in Thassos and the city of Kavala. In the other Regional Units the percentage of hotel beds is small and does not exceed 7% of the total Region. Xanthi Prefecture operates 6% of the beds in the Region. The tourist supply and demand has become stronger in the island areas mainly due to the "model" of the sun and the sea that Greek tourism adapted from the beginning, creating unequal spatial distributions.

Generally, it is observed:

- a) Geographical distribution of arrivals-overnight stays in favor of the prefectures that have tourist resources of summer vacations, such as the beaches and islands.
- b) Time distribution of arrivals-nights, which burdens the tourist prefectures during the summer months (May-October), despite the expansion trends of this period, which are evident in recent years

EXISTING TOURIST OFFER OF XANTHI PREFECTURE

The table below summarizes the number of accommodation units maintained in the Prefecture by area.

Table 12. Number of units maintained in Xanthi Prefecture by area

Area	Units	Percentage
Xanthi	14	35,89%
Kimmeria	2	5,1%
Ano Karyofyto	2	5,1%
Porto Lagos	2	5,1%
Stavroupoli	6	22,24%
Toxotes	1	3,70%
Likodromio	1	2,5%
Livaditis	3	7,6%
Komnina	2	5,1%
Semeli	1	2,5%
Diaforo	1	2,5%
Drymia	1	2,5%
Mandra	1	2,5%
Pigadia	1	2,5%
Galani	1	2,5%
Total	39	100%

Source: www.hotelsline.gr

* Tourist accommodation units include all types such as: Hotels - Guesthouses - Mansions - Villas - Rooms - Apartments - Studios - camping etc)

Most of the hotels are located in the city of Xanthi, while the region has significant deficiencies, as tourism is served by few hotels and rent rooms. In recent years, with the increase of tourist attendance and development, there is a development in the hotel industry outside the center of Xanthi. This is encouraged by the development of alternative tourism. However, the number of accommodation units in border areas does not seem to correspond to increased tourist periods.

It is therefore worth mentioning that the small number of existing beds (hotel units) is a deterrent to the arrival of organized groups of visitors, especially when it comes to a successful eco-tourism achievement. This is a point that must be particularly taken into account in order to achieve the erection of new hotel accommodation units.

1.2.3 Data on the number of employees in tourism.

The number of employees in tourism is recorded with an increase over time as in 2010 were recorded 15,400 employees in tourism and in 2019 they reached 18,300, increased by 18.8%, a price that was the highest for that specific period of time. The tourism employees were the 8,5% of the total employees, a percentage that is the largest for the period 2010-2019. The importance of the tourism is highlighted by the evolution of the employment indicators during the period 2010-2019.

Table 13. Employment (Region of Eastern Macedonia and Thrace)

Employment in the Region of Eastern Macedonia & Thrace 2010 - 2019 (in thous.)										
	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Accommodation/ Food and drinks services	15,4	13,0	10,1	9,0	12,3	16,7	16,4	14,9	17,1	18,3
Other Sectors	210,2	193,4	187,9	178,4	182,7	181,2	184,2	190,9	196,2	196,3
Total employment	225,6	206,3	198,1	187,4	195,0	197,9	200,7	205,8	213,4	214,6
Total employment in the country	4.389,8	4.054,3	3.695,0	3.513,2	3.536,2	3.610,7	3.673,6	3.752,7	3.828,0	3.911,0
% Services on the Region	6,8%	6,3%	5,1%	4,8%	6,3%	8,5%	8,2%	7,2%	8,0%	8,5%
%Other sectors on the Region	93,2%	93,7%	94,9%	95,2%	93,7%	91,5%	91,8%	92,8%	92,0%	91,5%

Source: ELSTAT Workforce Research - INSETE Intelligence

1.2.4 Sights of the Prefecture of Xanthi

➤ Old Town:



The Old Town of Xanthi reflects a great historical value. The name traditional settlement was born in 1978 and it is one of the best preserved architectural ensembles in all of Macedonia and Thrace. The elaborate architecture, the Bell Epoch, the influences from the Italian Renaissance, the German Romanticism and the Greek neoclassicism are transmitted from the one side of the town to the other. The visitor to the Old Town, crossing its cobble streets, will admire the architectural houses of religion, education and art. Small squares that preserve something from bygone eras, buildings that tell the story of the city. Everything exudes the sense of wealth and beautiful life that those who lived here in the past centuries lived. The Old Town needs time to enjoy the magnificence and narrow beauty of the place.

➤ Bazaar (pazari) of Xanthi



The Bazaar of Xanthi, whose history is lost in the years of the Ottoman period, has managed to survive until now, as one of the most valuable places for the development of outdoor commercial activity, and being a tourist attraction, it attracts thousands of visitors every year. The bazaar revives the elements of social and economic activity over time. In the region of Xanthi are also organized throughout the year various cultural events, which attract many people from the surrounding areas such as: The custom of gynecocracy or “Babo”, the “Dimokritia”, the Thracian Wedding, the bread of Gaia , η the Nautical Week, the Sardine Festival, the Celebration of Net Monday, the custom of Camel or Jiamala etc. (Papakosti, 2007).

➤ **Folklore Museum:**



Boast of the Old Town, founded in 1925 and housed in the mansion Kougioumtzoglou, on Antika (antique) Street.



The building is, an exhibit for its architecture and its wall paintings, it is also a historical testimony to the social and economic life of the city, which was at its peak in the early 20th century

➤ **Municipal Art Gallery**



It is housed in a two-storey mansion at the junction of Pindar and Orpheus, the foundation of which dates back to the middle of the last century.

It is an excellent example of Western Macedonian-Epirus architecture with its main feature being its wood-carved ceilings. The building was purchased by the Municipality of Xanthi in 1993 in the context of rescuing, restoration and preservation of the buildings of the Old Town.



➤ **Metropolitan Hall of Xanthi:**



A typical neoclassical construction of the Old Town, located in Mitropoleos Square. It was erected by Metropolitan Joachim Sgouros in 1897. It is a perfectly symmetrical construction with a monumental staircase and an entrance and a large balcony on the

first floor. Today it is used as the residence of the Metropolitan as well as the administration offices of the Metropolis.

➤ **Tobacco Warehouse:**



The Tobacco Warehouses of Xanthi are a very important chapter for the history as well as for the architectural heritage of the area. The Tobacco Warehouses of Xanthi, located southeast of the old town, were a separate district, clearly separated from the central trade area and the residential area.

Today, 55 tobacco warehouse buildings are preserved, of which 25 are abandoned, 25 operate with new degraded uses, while 5 are houses for cultural or leisure activities.

➤ **Monasteries:**



The Monastery of the Greatest Brigadiers (on the north side of the city, built in the 15th century), the Monastery of Panagia Kalamou (destroyed in the earthquake of 1829 and rebuilt) and the Monastery of

Panagia Archangeliotissa or Samaroviani (2 km north of the city) (Papakosti, 2007).

1.2.5 Activities-Forms of tourism

The alternative tourism in the Prefecture of Xanthi includes religious, archaeological, sports, spa tourism as well as bird watching. The content of those tourist forms is analyzed below:

- **Traditional settlements:** Under the responsibility of YPEKA (Ministry of Environment & Energy), approximately 856 settlements have been classified as traditional. In the Region of Eastern Macedonia & Thrace, 34 traditional settlements are recorded. In the Prefecture of Xanthi we have KATO KARYOFYTON.
- **Archaeological sites:** The number of visitors at the Archaeological sites of Eastern Macedonia & Thrace for 2017 and 2018 is 63,213 and 72,938 visitors respectively. The archeological site of Avdira, the archeological site in the Municipality of Stavroupoli, the Castle of Kalyvas, the ancient Port of Avdira, the Castle of Aeriko and the Polystylo.
- **Museums:** The number of visitors to the museums of Eastern Macedonia & Thrace for 2017 and 2018 is around 45,940 and 51,064 visitors respectively. With the prefecture of Xanthi holding the number 7,563 and 7,673 for each date. The Museums are the following: The Church Museum of Xanthi, the Folk and History Museum of Xanthi, the Historical and Folklore Museum of Avdira, the Folk Museum of Stavroupolis, Academy & Museum of Children's Art "Oikoumeni".
- **Hiking:** The main hiking routes in the Prefecture of Xanthi are:
 - Route 1: Komnina - Toxotes
 - Route 2: Livaditis - Waterfall
 - Route 3: Railway Station Kromniko - Galani
 - Route 4: Galani - Kromniko
 - Route 5: Livera - Stavroupoli

➤ **Mountain Huts:**

- The Livaditis shelter is located in the central part of the Rhodope Mountains, in the northwestern part of the Xanthi Unit at an altitude of 1,220m. It has a capacity of 36 people.
- Kallithea (500m. Altitude),
- Shelter in Drymia
- Scout Shelter of Gerakas (8th km Xanthi - Stavroupolis)

➤ **Climbing Area:**

- The climbing area of Korakospilia is located on the river Nestos and it is one of the most difficult areas. There are 12 routes from VI- to X +, as well as various boulder problems and it is recommended for more advanced climbers.
 - The climbing area of Megali Spilia is located on the river Nestos. There are 34 routes in the field, mainly of a sporting nature. The structure of the rock makes the area interesting and special. The visiting-climber will need a 60 meter rope and 12 to 15 sets. Climbing takes place throughout the day and this area is recommended for climbing on summer days.
 - The climbing area of Platania is located at the beginning of the path of Stena and it has mostly athletic/sporting difficulties. Most trails have difficult points and that is why it is recommended for experienced climbers and it is necessary to use a helmet.
 - The climbing area of Balkoni is located on the west side of the river Nestos. It has 23 routes of a 4b – 7b+ range of difficulty.
 - The climbing area of Damari is located on the east side of Nestos. The area is of a sport character and it has 27 routes of a 3a-7b+/7c range of difficulty.
- **Canoe – Kayak:** In the river of Nestos there are 2 routes: a) Platanobrisi – Xagnado – Stavroupolis that has a 3 level of difficulty and it takes 5 hours to finish it and b) the route Stavroupoli– Livera – Galani that is a the level 1-2 of difficulty and it takes about 5 hours to finish it.

- **Rafting:** : In the river of Nestos there are 2 routes: a) Arkoudorema - Nestos junction to Paranesti which is a 2.5 degree of difficulty and lasts 1 hour and 30 minutes and b) route Platanovrisi Dam to Paranesti which is a degree of difficulty 2.5 - 3 and lasts 4 hours.
- **Thermal healing tourism:** located in the thermal springs of the Prefecture. The thermal springs of Therma, are at a distance of about 40 km from the city of Xanthi.
- **Bird watching:** Birdwatching happens in many parts of the world and millions of people are involved in it. The Nestos Delta is the area inhabited by three hundred species of birds, of which twelve species are characterized as endangered at European level and is the most important area in Greece for the reproduction of the Spur winged Lapwing (*Holopterus spinosus*), as well as the only place in Europe that the Colchian pheasant is in physical condition. (www.xanthi.gr)

1.2.6 Increased Tourism Movement: Cultural events that attract tourism

In Xanthi, due to its position and at the same time due to the existence of educational institutions such as the polytechnic, the form of urban tourism has developed at certain times of the year. (Karamanidis. 2006). Also, the cultural events of the city are a tourist attraction as they gain more and more recognition by promoting the area in a positive way. More extensively:

- **Thracian Folk Festival- Xanthi Carnival.** The Xanthi Carnival with a history dating back to 1966 is considered the leading cultural institution in the region. It has gained a nationwide reputation and the participation of the people is huge. This institution takes place every year during the carnival period and lasts for two weeks. It combines the folklore and the carnival element. Its events include dance, theater, art or other content exhibitions and of course music. On the last Sunday of Carnival, the big parade of carnivalists and chariots takes place with participating tourists from all over Greece and foreigners, The

Festival is closing with the Closing Ceremony and the custom of burning the "Tzaros" (www.xanthi.gr). It is a time when many people are looking for accommodation.

- **Old-Town Festivals.** The festivals of the old town of Xanthi are considered to be the second largest institution in the city, after the Thracian Folk Festivals. They were first organized in 1991 and since then, they take place every year in the first week of September. Most of these events take place in the traditional preserved settlement of Xanthi. During the festivals, people listen to familiar melodies, meet new artists of the area and try local cuisine in local associations. (Kitsos. 2002)
- **Hadjidakeio Festival.** For the last decade, the Municipality of Xanthi and the House of Letters and Fine Arts have been organizing the "Hadjidakeio Festival" in the honor of Manos Hadjidakis, who was born in Xanthi. (www.xanthi.gr.)
- **Youth Festivals.** They are held at the end of spring. They started in the same year with the Old Town Festivals and as their name indicates they are focused on the student youth of the city. During these festivals, the students play a leading role both on stage and in the audience.
- **Nestos Festivals.** They are held every year during the last week of July or the first of August on the banks of the Nestos River in a specially designed area. In the straits of Nestos, the events that take place include concerts, kayaking of Nestos, sports events and many happenings. (www.xanthi.gr)
- **Scientific Conferences.** The Democritus University of Thrace organizes pan-Hellenic and international conferences resulting in the attendance of many discrete visitors. Some of these conferences are the World Conference of Thracians, the Panhellenic Journalistic Conference and the Conference of Foreigners of Thrace. (www.xanthi.gr)
- **The bazaar of Xanthi.** The bazaar of Xanthi survives to this day, as a place where the outdoor commercial activity of local retailers is significantly developing and has now become a tourist attraction where it attracts thousands of visitors all year round. Travel agencies from other prefectures

such as zorpidis often organize excursions, even one-day trips to visit the bazaar of Xanthi.

1.3. Evaluation of Ecotourism programs

Proper management of ecotourism programs should be intertwined under a common veil of organization. Among other things, the basis is to fulfill the purposes of protection of ecologically sensitive areas, to have benefits for the local community and to maintain the special character of each area. In addition, only significant elements of the natural environment such as national parks, NATURA 2000 network areas and other protected areas for which there is an institutionalized management and operation framework should be included in a program.

PLANNING OF ECOTOURISM PROGRAMS

Once the decision on ecotourism development is made, a complete planning, needs to be done otherwise the execution of individual projects should not proceed. There are different ways to approach the design, implementation and evaluation of an ecotourism development program. The appropriate way is considered to be, the listing of the basic steps that the process should include as well as the addressing of the critical issue of carrying capacity.

Basic stages of design, implementation and evaluation of an ecotourism program.

1. Assessment of the situation regarding the ecological importance of the area, the tourist development, the infrastructure and the protection status. Identify strengths and weaknesses.
2. Assessment of social and economic situation. Limitations and possibilities of participation of the local community in the planned ecotourism development. The role of the region, the state and transnational organizations.
3. Determination of the carrying capacity of the place.

4. Determining the desired level of ecotourism development. With a participatory process (participation of representatives of stakeholders) based on the previous notification of the conclusions and proposals arising from the previous stages.
5. Action plan to achieve the desired level of ecotourism development. With a participatory process, based on good preparation with different development scenarios. This plan should be part of the overall development plan of the region.
6. Defining an evaluation system. The evaluation will aim at the qualitative and quantitative assessment of ecotourism development. The main goal is not to exceed the carrying capacity.
7. Defining of a body responsible for the implementation and evaluation of the action plan. Clarity in the distribution of responsibilities for ecotourism management is crucial.
8. Regular review of the plan based on the results of the evaluation.

CARRYING CAPACITY

The cornerstone of an ecotourism development plan is to determine the carrying capacity of the region. The debate and research around carrying capacity is this far as it is the debate over the concept of ecotourism. Admittedly, this is a size that is difficult to determine, because the very concept of carrying capacity is multidimensional and, to some extent, unclear. Today, most ecotourism researchers and practitioners have abandoned the concept of carrying capacity for other related concepts such as "Limits of Acceptable Change" (LAC) and "Visitor Impact Management).

It comes from different definitions that have been given, that the carrying capacity concerns the limits of the natural, social and economic environment. The concept of social environment includes the local community and visitors. Other definitions emphasize the importance of exceeding the biological carrying capacity, others the experience of tourists, etc. depending on the interests of the person or body that drafts the definition. One typical definition is the one of Lindsay:

"The carrying capacity of national parks is defined as the physical, biological, social and psychological capacity of the environment to receive and support tourism activities without degrading the quality of the environment or the satisfaction of visitors."

(Lindsay, J.J. 1986 όπως αναφέρεται στο Martin, B.S. - M. Uysal 1990: 328-329)

This definition is limited to national parks and emphasizes in the activities of tourists ignoring local communities. Obviously this definition is adjusted to the features of the American wilderness with the vast areas of wildlife with sparse habitat. The primary element of interest in these parks is the traveler's experience and the quality of the environment. Therefore, once again we find that in ecotourism the choices depend on the local conditions.

A different definition:

"Carrying capacity includes three different categories: the biological one that concerns the natural resources of the place, the social one that concerns the *experience of the visitors* and the one that concerns the local." (Boo, E. 1992: 9)

Most definitions, like the above, refer to "number of visitors". This size is not easily measurable. It is not enough to count all the visitors in one place at a time. A number of parameters must be taken into account such as:

- The seasonality of the visitors' movement-traffic.
- The concentration of traffic in certain areas.
- Average time of visitors' stay.
- Activities they carry out.
- Characteristics and behavior of the visitors.
- The degree of use of the tourist infrastructure - whether it has reached the saturation point.

1.3.1 The selection criteria for the development of ecotourism areas

Environment: environmental quality

- How important, in terms of natural and cultural wealth, is the region? Does it have features that could attract visitors? The great ecological/cultural value does not always coincide with the attractiveness of the place for the visitor. (***)
- To what extent and how has the region been developed? Has a quality in the structured environment been maintained that corresponds to the concept of ecotourism?
- Is there a notable cultural heritage?
- Are there elements of popular culture (traditional economic activities, arts, customs, etc.) that are preserved and can be of interest to the visitor? (**)

Protection of the natural environment

- Is there a Special Environmental Study?
- Is there a protection regime?
- Is there a management body?
- Is there a management plan?
- Is there the possibility of developing some ecotourism activities and the general demonstration of the environment without threatening the protection of the valuable elements affected (****)
- Does the area belong to Natura 2000?
- Is there another type of protection regime (e.g. Housing Control Zone, Traditional housing) and whether or not it applies? (***)
- Is there a positive climate in local society towards protection?
- If not, is ecotourism likely to contribute to climate change?
- Are there vital environmental needs to be addressed by ecotourism? e.g. creating a favorable climate for the protection, regulation of tourism activities that already exist and are in danger of exceeding the capacity limits of the site, etc. (**)

Economy:

- To what extent does the local economy need stimulus in order to expect that ecotourism will help crucially in this direction? (***)
- To what extent have there been restrictions on economic activities due to the protection regime to justify ecotourism as an alternative? (**)
- Could ecotourism help to maintain mild economic activities or to create incentives for transition to mild economic activities? (E.g. transition to organic farming, promotion of traditional products, etc.) (*)

Society:

- To what extent are “fatigue” and problems of population conservation observed in the region? Are there problems of lack of youth or gender imbalances to be expected that eco-tourism could help to solve them? (***)
- Is there a climate of social isolation (limited access, lack of opportunities for entertainment and creative employment, etc.) to the reversal of which ecotourism could contribute? (**)
- Is there a negative attitude in local society towards a protection regime that ecotourism could be expected to contribute to its reversal?
- Are there (female) cooperatives or other groups whose activities are expected to be enhanced by ecotourism?
- Is there a climate of consensus towards mild growth? (*)
- Is there adequate and sufficient human resources that could take initiatives and action in the development and management of ecotourism? (*)
- Are there strong internal conflicts that make it difficult to communicate with the local community? (*)
- Are there capable and cooperative permanent structures in the local, prefectural and regional administration that will support ecotourism initiatives but also help to achieve the necessary balances? (***)

Development policy:

- To what extent is development policy (at Community / Municipal, Regional and Prefecture level) compatible with mild development? Can ecotourism be harmoniously integrated into this policy or are there development plans incompatible with the logic of ecotourism? (**)
- Is there a positive climate from the local authorities for the development of ecotourism? (*)
- Are there financial resources available for ecotourism? (*)

Sustainability of ecotourism:

- To what extent is the development of ecotourism ultimately dictated by the need to protect the environment and to what extent is it likely to create a dynamic in the region that contributes to mild development? The answer to this question is the general picture that emerges from the answers to all the previous questions.

1.3.2 Ecotourism Reliability Criteria

To be defined, they should be carried out in the following research processes:

- Level of existing tourist traffic in the protected area
- Identification of main categories of visitors
- Detection of increased time travel (e.g. summer) or large gathering of visitors (large number of visitors at the same time)
- Identification of existing forms of tourism in the wider region
- Level of easy access to the area (sufficient transport network?)
- Information infrastructures (Information Centers, Information Kiosks, Environmental Interpretation Routes, etc.)
- Creation of organized visit programs (for groups, individual visitors), is there appropriate marking?
- Accommodation / catering infrastructure for visitors (qualitative and quantitative approach)?

- Are there other "amenities" (telephone booths, rubbish bins, etc.) capable of meeting the needs of visitors within the protected area?

1.3.3 Evaluation Criteria for Ecotourism Actions

The evaluation of eco-tourism programmes in order to be measured effectively and measurably should follow a guide to the implementation of specific steps. The extent of effectiveness is linked to whether the following questions can be answered positively.

- Has a visitor management plan been drawn up for the area?
- Do the bodies implementing the eco-tourism programmes have sufficient experience in implementing the corresponding programmes?
- Does the operation of the information infrastructure cover the requirements of the planned ecotourism programme (staff, infrastructure organisation, information adequacy);
- Are visitors adequately informed of the conditions governing the protected area and the behavior they should have during their visit?
- Is there any staff in charge of surveillance/guarding the area?
- Are the security rules for visitors being observed?
- How or by what means are ecotourism programmes being promoted?

1.4. International Effective Examples of Ecotourism

At this point, in order to clarify the framework within which an Ecotourism business must operate, 2 approaches are given.

1.4.1 Cape Peninsula National Park of South Africa

From international experience, the specific program has been chosen because it is a typical case of mild and sustainable development. According to the definition adopted, the case of South African ecotourism meets its original purpose: the protection of the natural environment (protected area) and the strengthen of the

development of the local community (as social and economic inequalities were still visible after the period of apartheid racial discrimination). The area was officially declared Cape Peninsula National Park (May 1998)

1.4.1.1 Short Description of the Natural Environment

The natural environment of the National Park is worth mentioning at a global level, both scientifically and aesthetically. Mountains, lagoons, coastal areas, canyons, alternate with each other offering a variety of habitats to animals and plants. The National Park covers an area of 60 km, with a width of no more than 10 km (29,000 extent). It includes about 2,285 species of plants, of which 90 are endemic. The climate looks like Mediterranean (in temperature and segregation), but has heavy rainfall. Increased tourist traffic is observed from the end of November to the beginning of April (summer season).

1.4.1.2 Management Body and Description of actions

In all South African National Parks, the central, management body for the organization of the natural environment and the implementation of ecotourism programs is the body: South African National Parks (SANParks). SANParks has achieved one of the most difficult elements of an ecotourism program: coordinating actions and stakeholders. Local agencies, government agencies, local people, NGOs, travel agencies, craftsmen, local cooperatives, small, medium and large entrepreneurs, the media and tourists themselves, operate in the area under the supervision of SANParks, to a gentle and sustainable ecotourism development.

Actions:

- Promotion, information and training events related to the protection of the National Park and the activities that exist and held daily, especially during the summer months, for those interested.
- The tourist infrastructure within the park is the most necessary. Specific and carefully designed to have the least impact on the natural environment.

- The nuisance of wild animals, although inevitable in some cases, tends to decrease, as there is a strong awareness of the local population and information of ecotourists through various means of promotion.
- The increase in energy consumption and waste, which implies the development of ecotourism, is managed with modern methods of production of alternative energy sources, by recycling waste and water, and special bins throughout the park.
- There are demarcated car parking areas in various parts of the Park, some of which have both sanitary infrastructure and drinking water.
- In several parts of the park there are views and recreation stops for visitors with wooden benches, information signs, garbage bin, specially designed so that wild animals do not have access to garbage.
- It is noteworthy that the workers in the cleaning sector of the Park, take care not only of the removal of garbage, but also of the cleaning of paths and beaches from branches and other objects, so as not to alter the image of the natural environment and to maintain the safety of visitors and / or wildlife.
- Under the existing protection zones, there are areas where access is not allowed at all, others that are conditionally free, and others that are fully controlled. In the individual controlled areas there are entrance guards and a guard service of the Park that controls the activities of the visitors, in order to comply with the protection rules established by the management body (for example, cutting of certain plants, feeding of baboons, etc.) is prohibited.
- In the controlled areas there is an entrance ticket, specific operating hours and control of the number of visitors to keep up with the estimated carrying capacity of each zone.

A legal framework around the geographical extensions of the park, which are privately owned and can potentially be included as part of the Park, support and summarize the following:

- Providing security and access control to the areas
- Implementation of controls and management measures for soil erosion
- Outdoor vegetation cleaning work
- Fire safety provision
- Provision of financial facilities (tax exemptions)
- Consulting from specialist scientists (botanists, zoologists)

The basic infrastructure of the Park is designed to address to all ages and specifications (for the elderly, young children and people with disabilities). Then the activities that the visitor could selectively practice had a scale of difficulty and both the printed brochures and the special marking that existed for example on the paths, informed the visitor about the degree of difficulty.

It is well known that South Africa is considered to be one of the world leaders in knowledge and applications of protected area management. There is regulation and control of the number of visitors, guarding and minimum poaching and harmonized ecotourism infrastructure with the landscape, with little or no environmental impact. (The description that will be developed is based on both bibliographic data and data gathered from the experience of a visit to South Africa by a member of Agrotouristiki SA in February 2002).

1.4.2 Abruzzo National Park in Italy

In the present study it was chosen to present the example of the Abruzzo National Park of Italy, which was the first to demonstrate in practice that environmental protection can have positive effects and economic benefits. The Park consists of a variety of valleys, rivers, natural and artificial lakes, forest areas and three mountains with an altitude of over 2,200 meters. A number of regulations and protection regimes have created the conditions for the protection and sustainable development of ecotourism in the region, significantly reducing the initial degradation problems it

faced and the local contradictions that had arisen especially due to non-implementation of development programs and geographical isolation of the area. The Abruzzo National Park (Apennina, Central Italy) was recognised by Royal Decree 1923.

1.4.2.1 Short Description of the Natural Environment

Its variety and the changes of the landscape throughout the Park offer a variety of different habitats, with rich and unique flora and fauna. Bears, wolves, wild goat, are among the most interesting species as they belong to the endangered species. The bear (Marsican brown bear) has even been established as a symbol of the park in its logo. The numbers of these mammals have increased in recent years through their conservation program. The flora of the Park, especially in the spring, presents a wonderful spectacle since one can find among many plants peonies, violets, endemic species of bellflower and the rare large Italian orchid. The scattered parts of the Park covered by Black Pine are of ecological interest.

1.4.2.2 Management Body and Description of actions

The park management body, an autonomous management authority called Abruzzo National Park (NPA), was established in 1968. In 1968 the management body of the Park was established, an autonomous managing authority called the 'Abruzzo National Park (NPA). The, was to convince about the dynamics of the local development that the region presented. At the same time, the role of the NPA was strengthened by the National Parks Committee and the WWF of Italy, as well as smaller local organizations, such as the organization of San Francisco.

Actions:

- The management body defined 4 protection zones for the park, setting individual management measures for both protection and tourist activities.
- In 1983, legislative measures began to ban the construction of buildings at a distance less than 50 meters from the rivers and 200 meters from lakes and shores. At the same time, the arable lands and the intensive use of fertilizers and chemicals gradually began to decrease.
- Individual streams and dams were built in order to help the local rural population, while giving them incentives to become more familiar with ecotourism.
- With the excellent cooperation of the NPA with the local bodies, the local population and the entrepreneurs, a tour guide association was created, while training and education seminars through special financial programs led to the creation of catering and accommodation centers. The growing tourism development of the region had a multiplier effect and benefits for the region and the local population.
- Something extremely beneficial that has been achieved is that the tendency to leave the area, which was especially prevalent among young people, has been reduced as it has reduced unemployment by creating new jobs. Data from the National Park show that 70 permanent and 30 seasonal direct jobs were created, as well as about 120 collaborations. In addition, about 100 indirect jobs were created (including local businesses).
- Checking the number of people entering the park, and opening hours, a reservation system is promoted

In almost every one of the villages of the protected area, were established Visitor Information Centers and in each area - zone, central information offices. Also, an Ecological Research Center was established in the Apennines that researches and publishes studies on the rare species and habitats of the area. At the same time, the infrastructure of the park (paths, signage, observatories) have been improved and the staff operating in the Park is excellently trained to provide even the most specialized

information. Walking, hiking and cycling are activities that are allowed throughout the park, but always outside the high protection zone.

2. Survey-research of needs and expectations and the possibility of collaborations to improve environmental management in the WLFE area

Below is the study of the needs and expectations of the visitors of the Prefecture of Xanthi but also of the entrepreneurs in the field of ecotourism of the wider area. The required information has been collected with the involvement of all relevant bodies (entrepreneurs in the industry, intermediaries (travel agencies, tour guides, etc.) as well as other stakeholders (local, regional authorities, etc.))

2.1 Research methodology

The Chamber of Xanthi is the beneficiary of the project “Enhancing biodiversity through sustainable management and protection of rare species habitat in Nestos and Ardas rivers and the Rodopi Mountain Range” and acronym "WILD LIFE FOR EVER", funded by the European Interreg Greece-Bulgaria project 2014-2020. Within the framework of the project, a quality label will be designed and developed, which will be given to companies and organizations that will implement effective measures for the protection of the environment and biodiversity.

After the completion of the research, the Chamber of Xanthi will have the opportunity to determine the current state of business methods and techniques, which are in line with the protection of the environment at the local level, in order to then draw up the conditions and rules that should to be incorporated in the Quality Label

The Survey-Research of Needs, Expectations and the Possibility of Collaborations to Improve Environmental Management in the WLFE Area was based on a primary research through two questionnaires. More specifically, an electronic survey was

conducted between the companies in the tourism sector of the Prefecture of Xanthi and one among the visitors of the Prefecture

The methodology steps before the release of the questionnaires:

1) Planning of the research and the possibility of collaborations for the improvement of the environmental management in the WLFE area:

During this stage, the research team defined the research objectives, the research questions and proceeded to identify and select potential participants in the sample. As the research is descriptive and refers to the identification of needs and expectations and the possibility of collaborations to improve environmental management in the WLFE area, the sampling methodology chosen is a probability sampling methodology and more specifically the "expediency" methodology. The participants in the sample are visitors of the Prefecture of Xanthi and companies that are active in the field of tourism.

2) Research preparation stage:

During the second stage, a sample of the two questionnaires was created, one questionnaire for the companies of the Prefecture of Xanthi and one for the visitors of the Prefecture as well as the electronic form of the questionnaires and the contact list of the participants in the research were finalized. The questionnaires were piloted by members of the research team to assess the accuracy of the test questions. The contact with people who participated in the sample was decided to be made via e-mail by the Chamber of Xanthi.

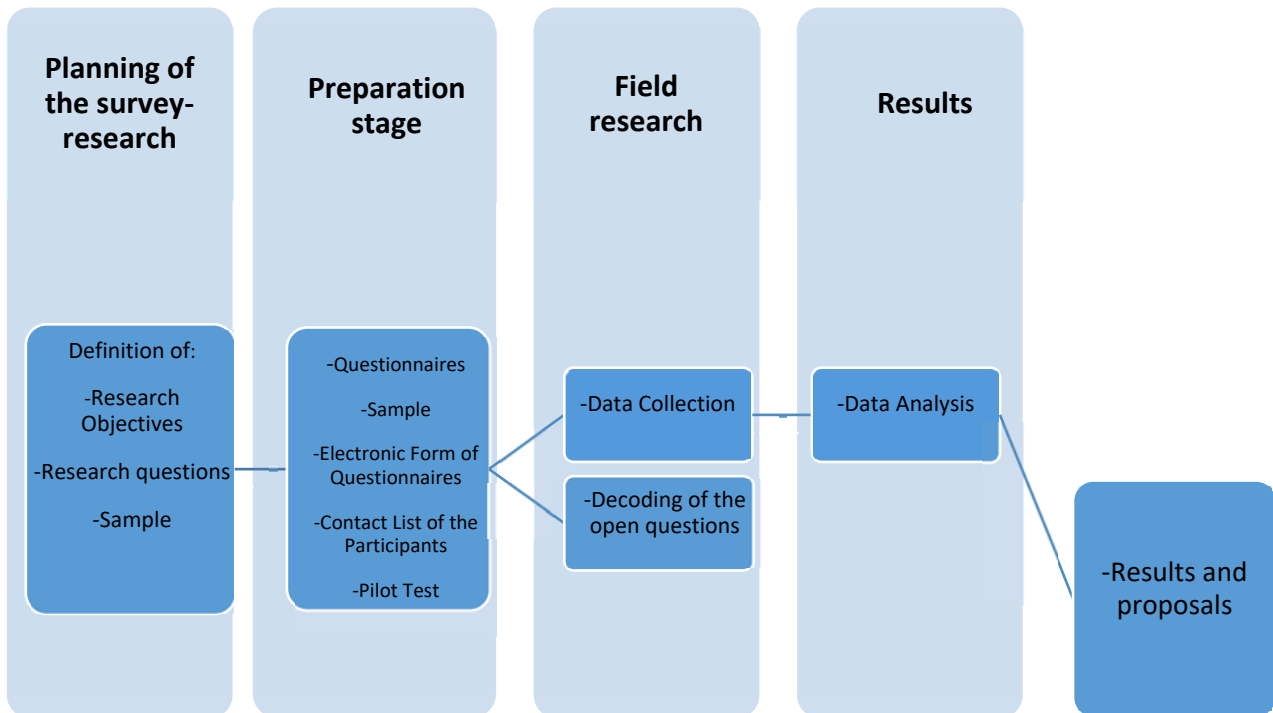
3) Field research:

After the release of the 2 questionnaires in Google Forms format, all the data were collected in a final database (excel file). The decoding of the open questions was also applied. The data were checked for accuracy and internal consistency.

4) Results.

During this final stage, the data were analysed, presented visually and finally conclusions and proposals were made.

Methodology:



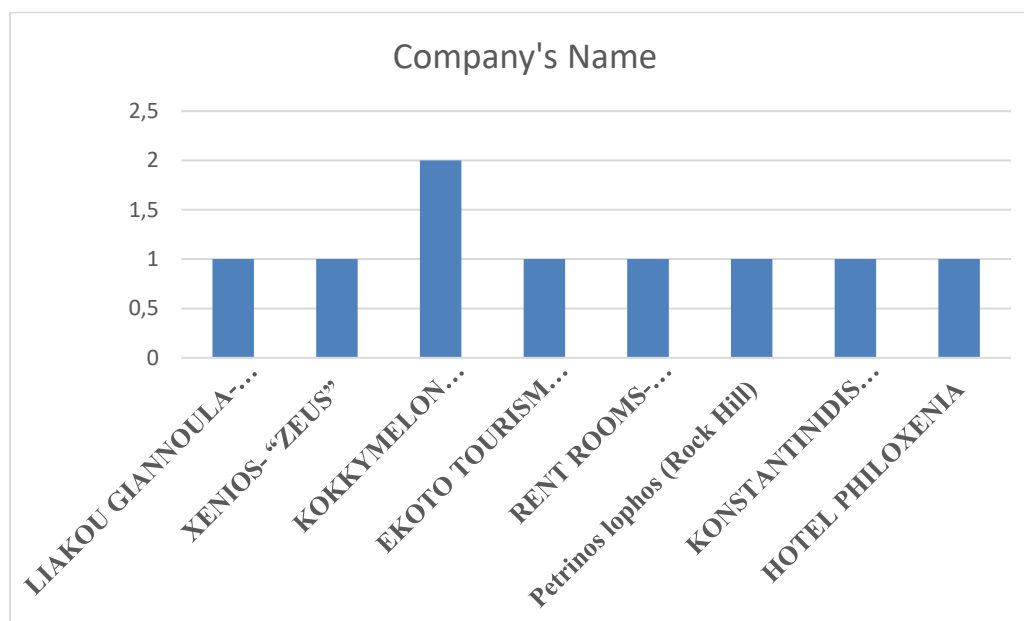
2.2 Questionnaire results

Companies of the Prefecture of Xanthi

The first questionnaire created within the framework of the project is addressed to companies of the Prefecture of Xanthi, consists of 23 questions and has been answered by 8 companies.

Question 1: "Name of the organization"

In the first survey conducted within the project, 9 people from 8 companies / organizations in the tourism sector took part and answered the questionnaire distributed to companies in the Prefecture of Xanthi.

**Question 2: "Basic goods / services offered by the organization"**

As shown in the table below, all the organizations involved in the survey provide goods and services to visitors/tourists in the area.

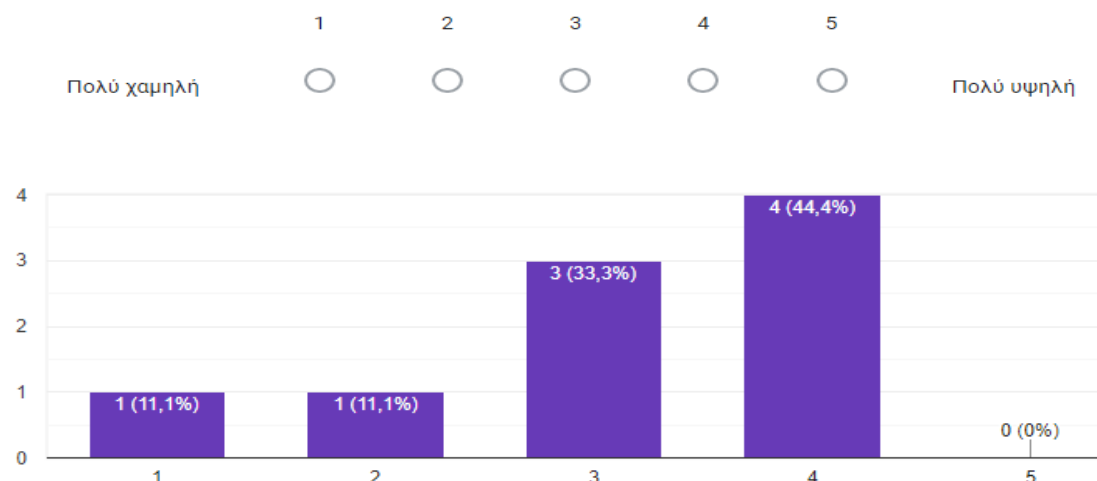
Company's Name	Goods / services offered by the organization
LIAKOU GIANNOULA- "TO ARCHODIKO"	ACCOMMODATION-ACTIONS IN NATURE
XENIOS- "ZEUS"	ACCOMMODATION-GUESTHOUSE
KOKKYMELON GUESTHOUSE	TOURIST ACCOMMODATION
EKOTO TOURISM FISH FARMING PORTO LAGOS S.A.	HOTEL
RENT ROOMS- PORTO LAGOS	Rooms that have a positive impact on the environment
Petrinos Iophos (Rock Hill)	Tourist services
KONSTANTINIDIS KONSTANTINOS	FORESTRY WORKS - GUESTHOUSE
HOTEL PHILOXENIA	ACCOMMODATION



Question 3: "How would you describe the condition of the environment in the Municipality where you live?"

Four (4) of the participating businesses / individuals (44.4%) characterized the environmental situation in the Municipality where they live as high, three (3) enterprises / individuals (33.3%) characterized it as moderate, two (2 or 11 , 1%) as low while one (1) business / individual (11.1%) characterized as very low the condition of the environment in the municipality where they live.

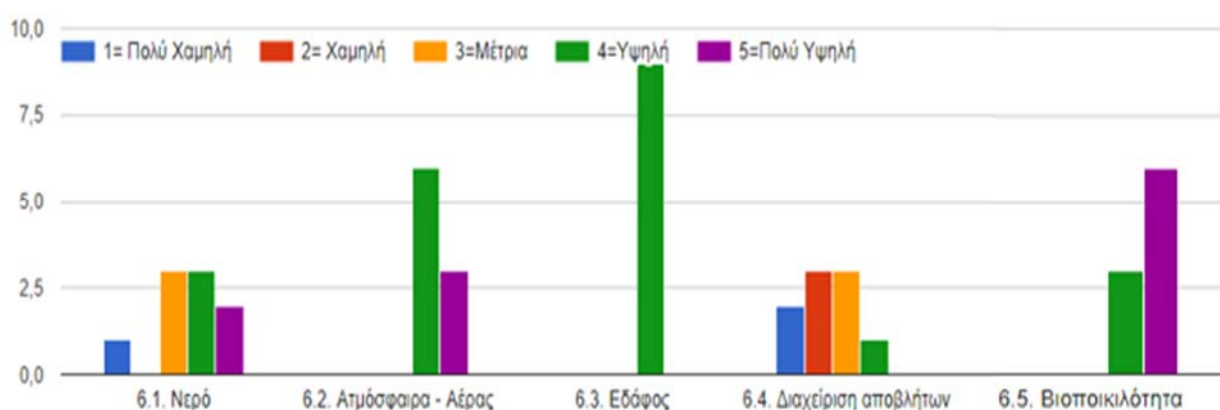
(1= Πολύ Χαμηλή, 2=χαμηλή, 3=Μέτρια, 4=υψηλή 5=Πολύ Υψηλή)



1=Very Low, 2=Low, 3=Medium, 4=High, 5=Very High

Question 4: “Please indicate what is, in your opinion, the quality of the following elements (1.Water, 2.Atmosphere-Air, 3.Soil, 4.Waste management, 5. Biodiversity) of the environment in the municipality where you live”

The “water quality” in the municipalities of residence of the respondents was characterized as very low by one person / business, moderate by three people / businesses, high by also 3 people / businesses while 2 people characterized it as very high. The majority of the participants in the survey (6 out of 9 participants) stated that the “quality of the atmosphere” in the municipality where they live is high while three described the quality of the “Atmosphere-Air” as very high. Regarding the environmental element “Soil” all the participants of the research stated that its quality is high in the municipality where they live. For the environmental element “Waste Management” 2 respondents described its quality as very low, three as low, three as moderate and one as high.



1=Very Low, 2=Low, 3=Medium, 4=High, 5=Very High

6.1. Water

6.2. Atmosphere-Air

6.3. Soil

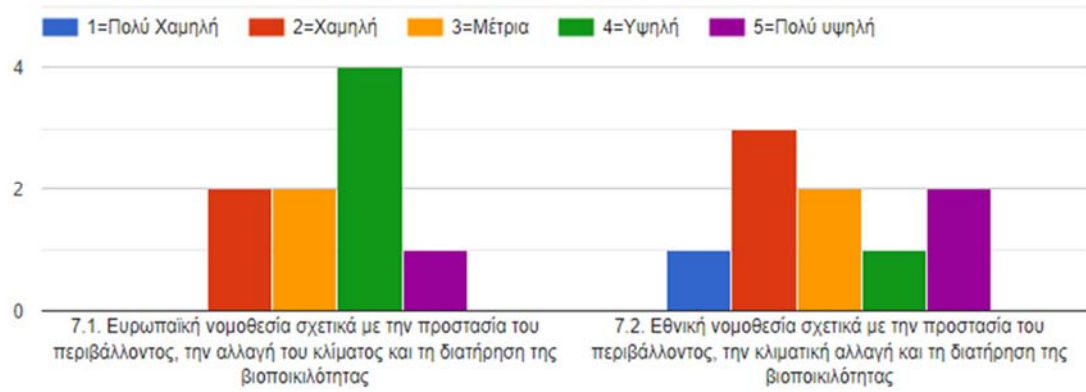
6.4. Waste Management

6.5. Biodiversity

Question 5: “Please note the level of your knowledge (from 1 Very Low to 5 Very High) on the following topics:”

44.5% of the companies surveyed stated that their level of knowledge regarding European legislation on Environmental protection, climate change and biodiversity conservation are high. An equal percentage of participants of 22.2% described their level of knowledge as moderate and low while 11.1% stated that they are very familiar with European legislation on environmental protection, climate change and biodiversity conservation. .

In addition, the level of knowledge of National legislation on environmental protection, climate change and biodiversity conservation is very low for 11.1% of participants, low for 33.4%, moderate for 22.2% , high for 11.1% and very high for 22.2% of respondents.



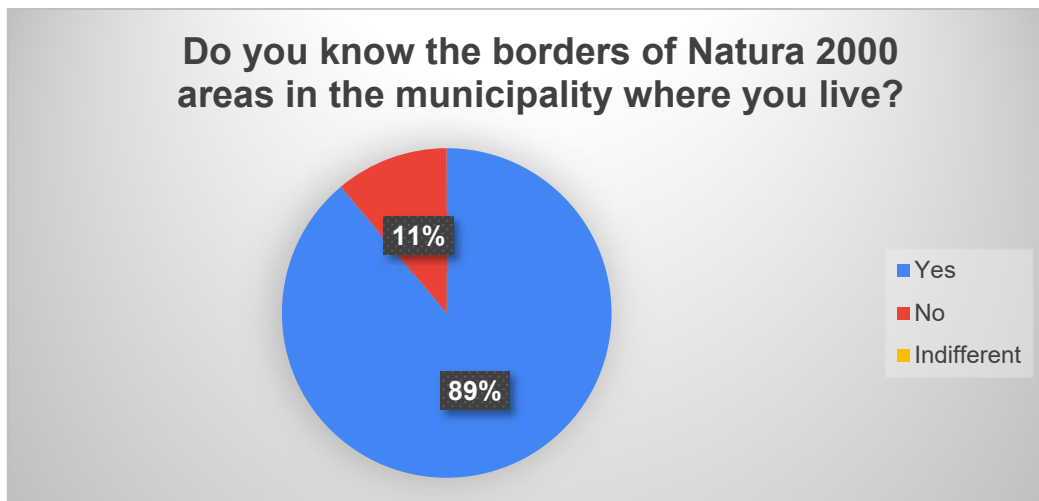
1=Very Low, 2=Low, 3=Medium, 4=High, 5=Very High

7.1. European legislation for the protection of the environment, the climate change and the preservation of biodiversity

7.2. National legislation for the protection of the environment, the climate change and the preservation of biodiversity

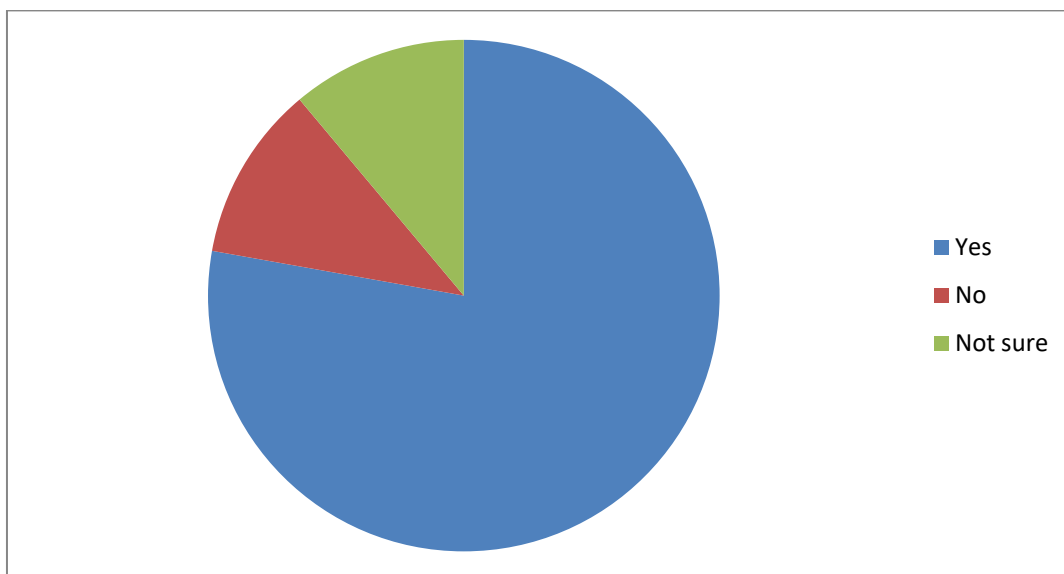
Question 6: "Do you know in the municipality where you live, where the borders of Natura 2000 sites are?"

89% of the participating companies know the borders of the Natura 2000 areas in the Municipality where they live while 11% do not know them.

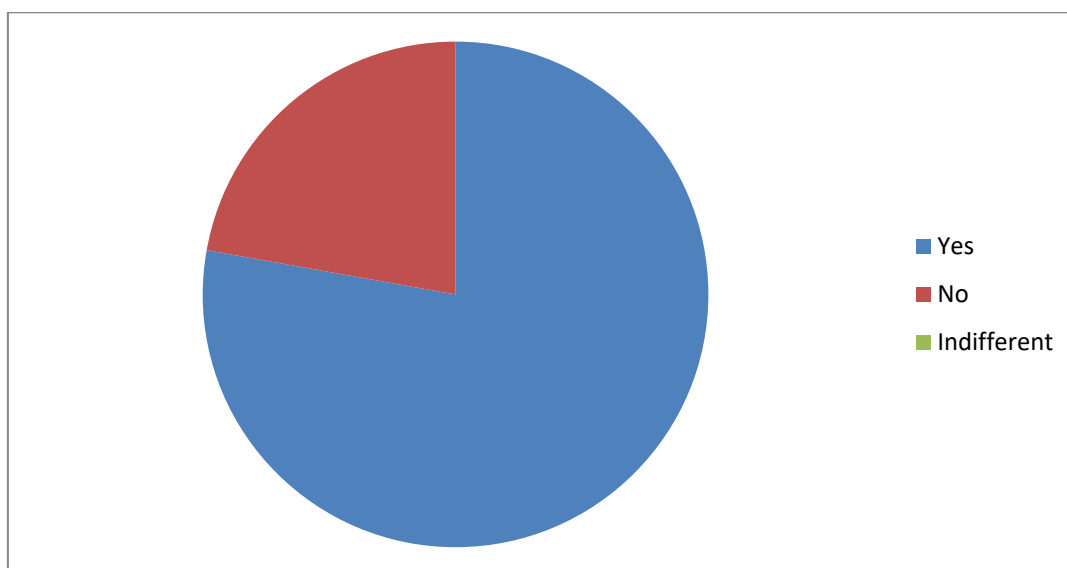


Question 7: "Do you know what is allowed to happen and what is prohibited in the areas of Natura 2000"

The majority of participants in the research (77, 8%) know what is permitted and what is prohibited in the Natura 2000 areas and a small percentage (11, 1%) does not. Also small is the number of respondents who have an idea but do not know for sure what is true in Natura 2000 (11, 1%).

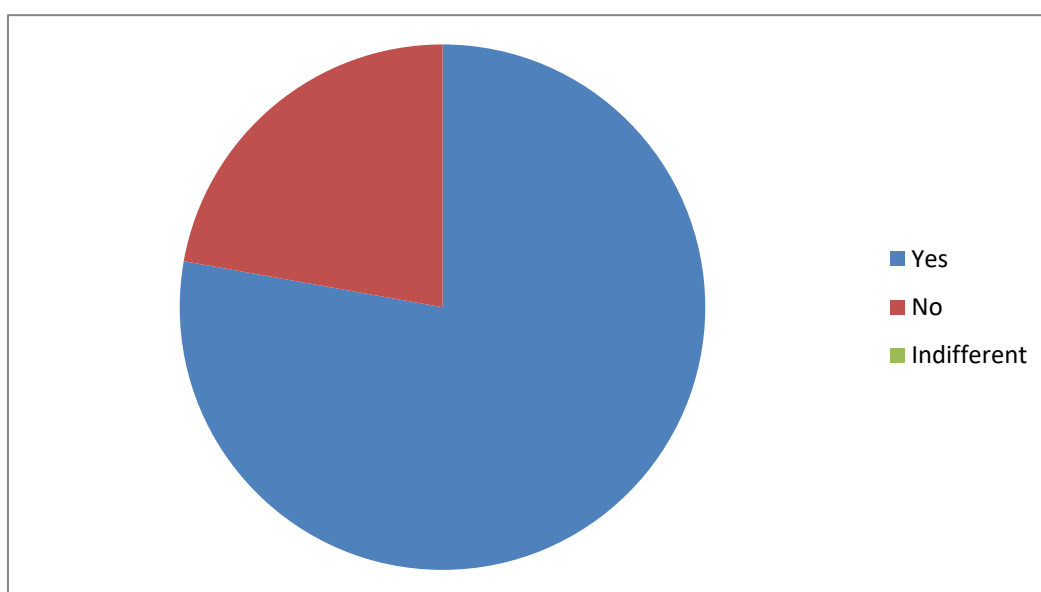
**Question 8: "Do you know what the term 'green economy' means?"**

The majority of survey participants (77.8%) know the term "green economy" while only 22.2% of respondents do not know this term.



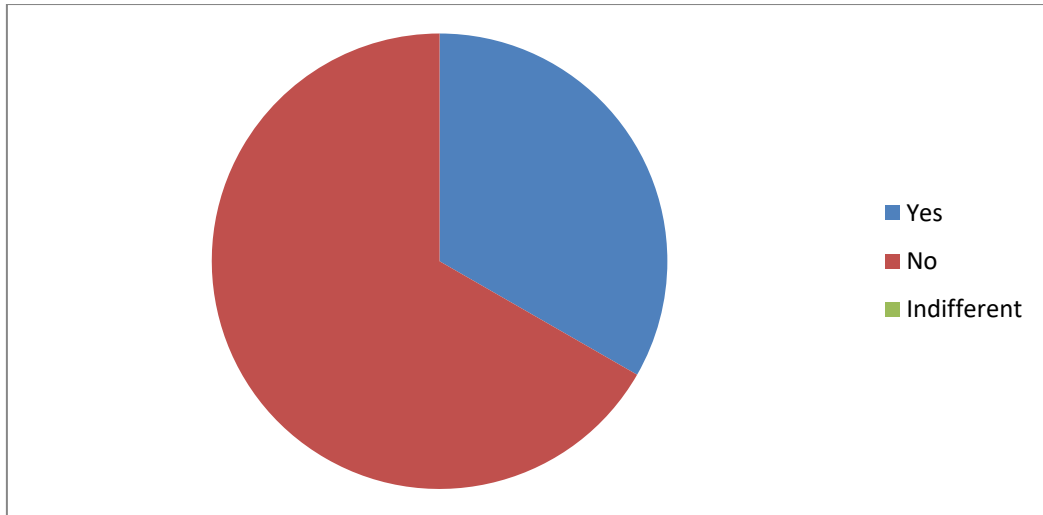
Question 9: "In recent years, the circular economy has become one of the EU's top priorities. Do you know the main features of the 'circular economy'?"

7 of the 9 individuals / companies that answered this questionnaire (77.8%) know the main characteristics of the circular economy while the rest of the participants do not know them (22.2%). There is a parallel between questions 10 & 11 as the percentage of participants who do not know the definition of circular economy obviously do not know its main features.



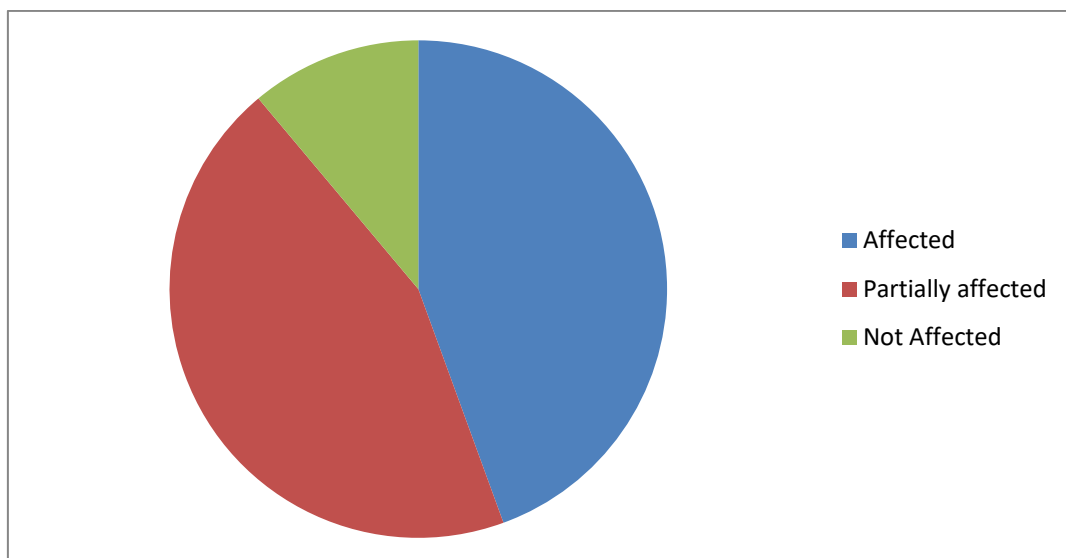
Question 10: "In the forthcoming European Union planning period 2021-2027, each country is expected to invest at least 25% of the funds under all programs to finance climate change measures. Is there a plan / action being prepared in the context of tackling climate change? "

66.7% of the participants in the survey stated that there is no plan / action being prepared in the context of tackling climate change while the remaining 33.3% answered yes to this question



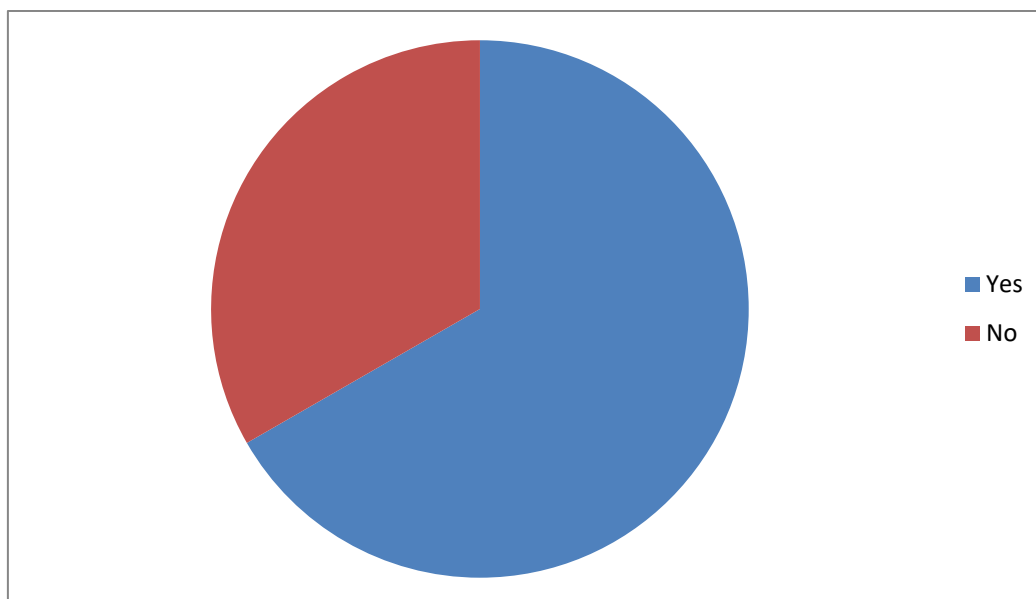
Question 11: "To what extent do you believe that the provisions of national environmental legislation affect the activities carried out by your organisation?"

44.4% of the participants in the survey stated that the provisions of the national environmental legislation affect the activities carried out by their organization while the same percentage believes that the aforementioned provisions partially affect their activities. Only one company stated that its activities are not affected by the provisions of national environmental legislation.



Question 12: "Does your organization implement formal or informal environmental measures?"

The majority of research companies (66.7%) implement formal or informal environmental measures while unfortunately there are 3 companies in the sample (33.3%) which do not implement any environmental measures.

**Question 12.1: "If you answered Yes to question 12, please fill in what measures do you apply (specify them)?"**

The environmental measures that are formally or informally implemented by some companies in the sample are the following:

- Waste recycling, wood burning
- Recycling
- Recycling, use of biological wastewater treatment, use of energy class A + appliances, treatment of flora of the area (planting of plants and trees, cultivation of fruits and vegetables without the use of pesticides)
- Energy saving lamps, water saving program, solar system, composting, recycling
- Renewable energy, ecotourism

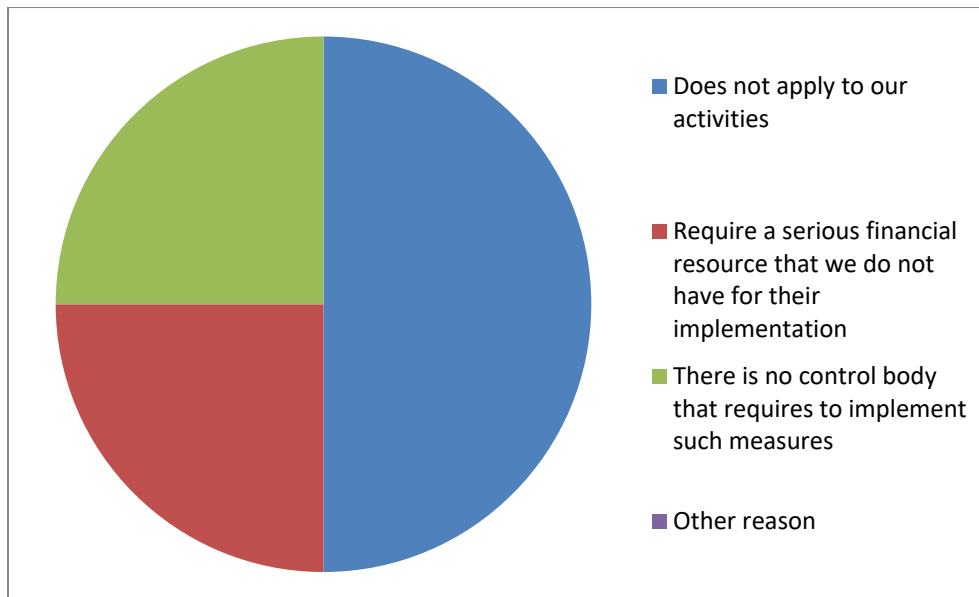
- Reduction of chemical cleaners, reduction of water consumption, solar system energy

ΑΝΑΚΥΚΛΩΣΗ ΤΟΝ ΥΠΟΛΕΙΜΑΤΩΝ -ΚΑΥΣΗ ΞΥΛΟΥ
ανακυκλώση
Ανακύκλωση συσκευασιών, χρήση βιολογικού καθαρισμού λυμάτων, χρήση συσκευών ενεργειακής κλάσης A+, και αυτές μόνο όποτε χρειάζονται, περιποίηση χλωρίδας της περιοχής (φύτευμα φυτών και δέντρων, καλλιέργεια φρούτων λαχανικών χωρίς τη χρήση επιβλαβών φυτοφαρμάκων)
Στα ενοικιαζόμενα δωμάτια εφαρμόζουμε περιβάλλοντικά μέτρα όπως λάμπες οικονομίας πρόγραμμα εξοικονόμησης νερού θέρμανση με οικονομικούς τρόπους ηλιακά, επειδή τα δωμάτια έχουν κουζίνα υπάρχει κομπόστα ποιητές στον κήπο κάδοι για ανακύκλωση .
ΑΠΕ, οικουρισμός
ΜΕΙΩΣΗ ΚΑΤΑΝΑΛΩΣΗΣ ΧΗΜΙΚΩΝ ΚΑΘΑΡΙΣΤΙΚΩΝ, ΜΕΙΩΣΗ ΚΑΤΑΝΑΛΩΣΗΣ ΝΕΡΟΥ, ΖΕΣΤΟ ΝΕΡΟ ΧΡΗΣΗΣ ΜΕ ΗΛΙΑΚΗ ΕΝΕΡΓΕΙΑ

(Table of answers)

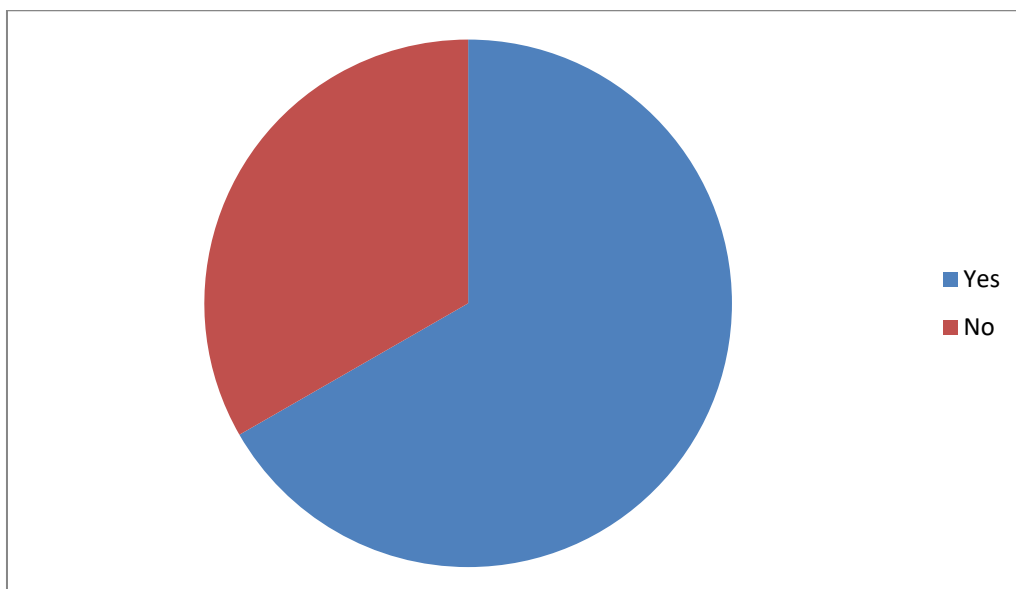
Question 12.2: "In case you do not implement environmental measures, what is the reason?"

The 50% of undertakings which do not apply any environmental measure indicates as a reason that it does not apply to their activities, 25% indicates as a cause of non-application of environmental measures that there is no control body requiring such measures and the rest 25% claims that the implementation of environmental measures requires a serious financial resource that they do not have and therefore cannot implement.



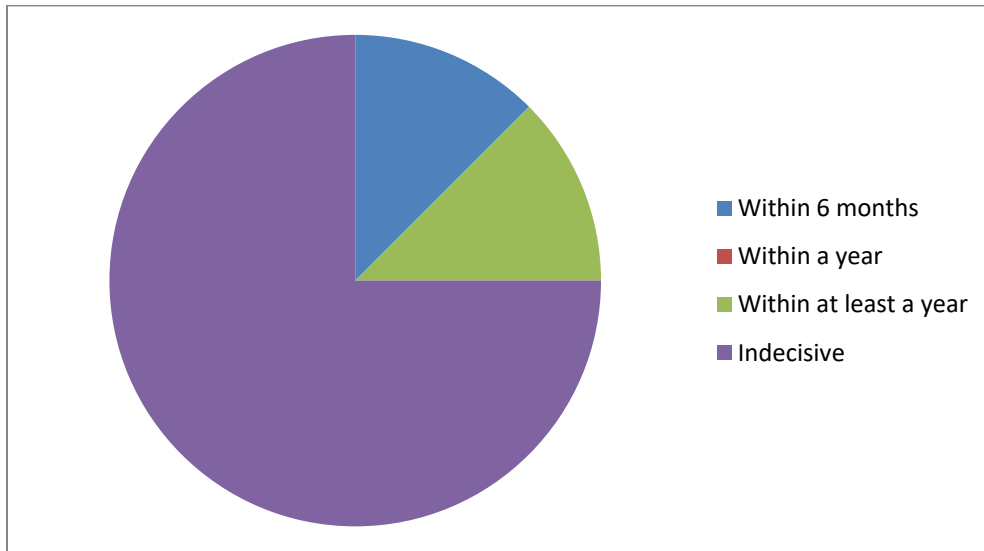
Question 13: "Do you intend to introduce (new) environmental measures in your organization?"

The majority (66.7%) of companies are positive in introducing and implementing (new) environmental measures while a small percentage insists on not introducing environmental measures in their organization.



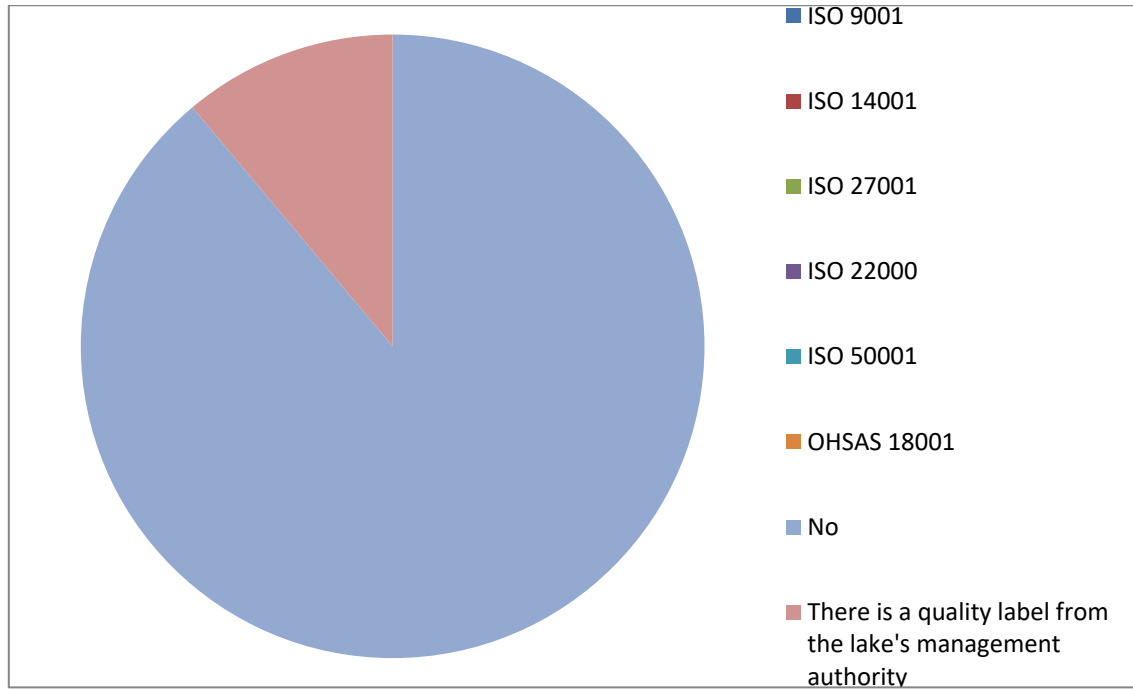
Question 13.1: "If yes, when do you intend to do so?"

75% of companies that have expressed a desire to introduce new environmental measures in their organization have not decided how long it will take to do so. One company stated that within at least one year it will introduce (new) environmental measures while one organization stated that within 6 months it will proceed with the introduction of environmental measures.



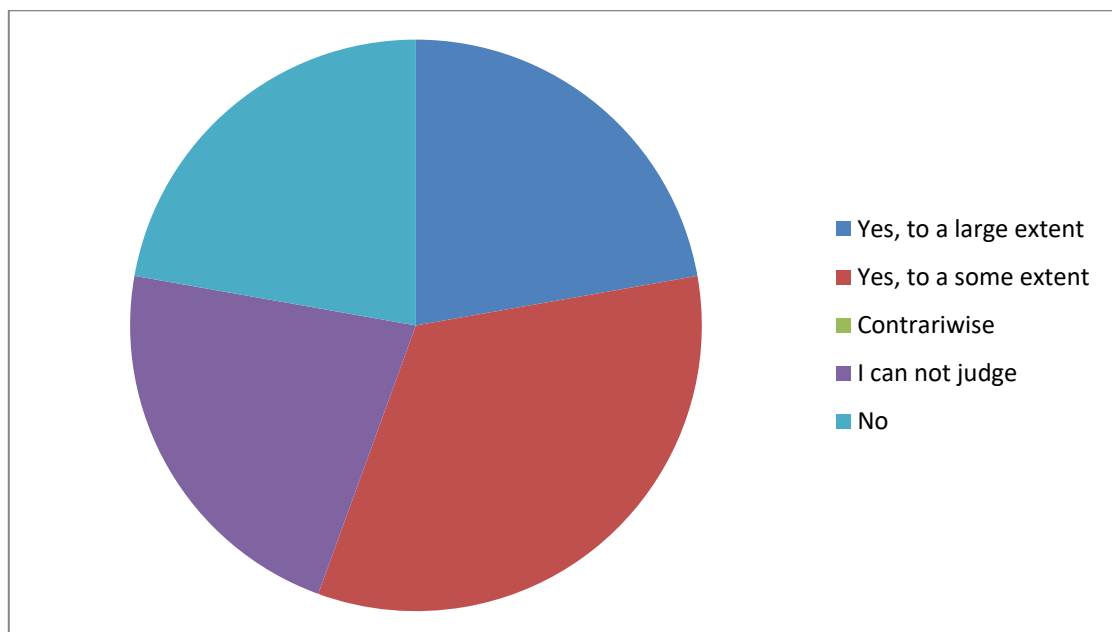
Question 14: "Is there a quality management system in your organization?"

88.9% of the organizations participating in the survey do not have a quality management system while only one organization has a quality label from the Lake Management Agency



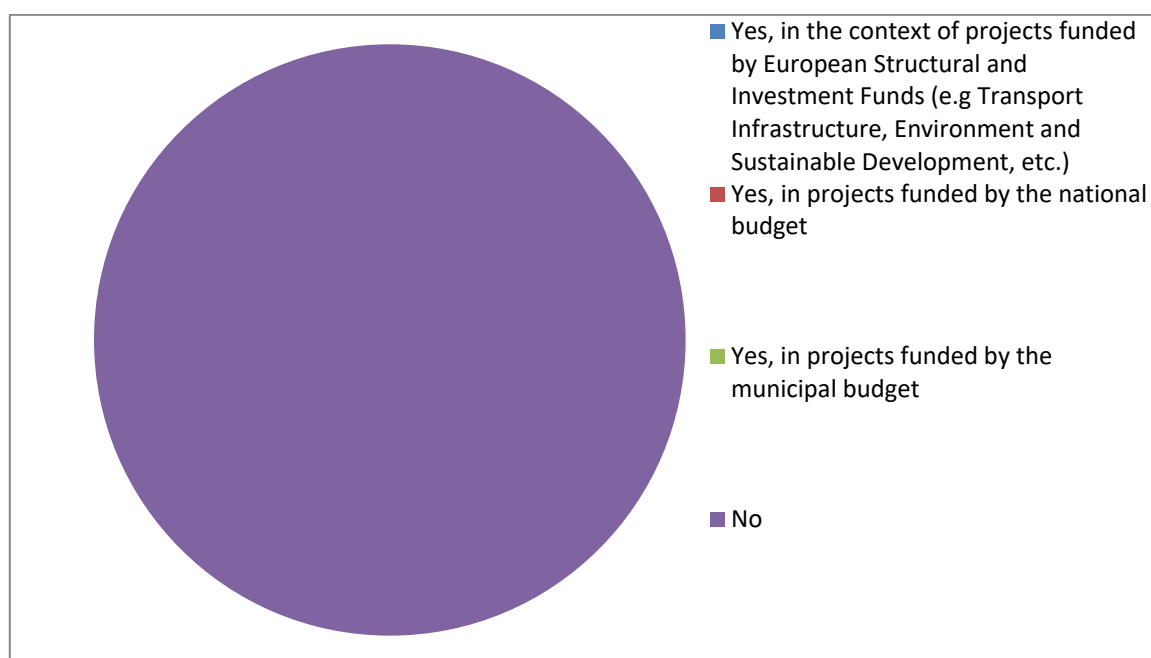
Question 15: "Do you think that if your organization had an Environmental Management System, would the efficiency of your activity be enhanced?"

The views of companies on whether the efficiency of their activity would be enhanced by having an Environmental Management System differ. A percentage (33.3%) believe that the existence of an Environmental Management System would to some extent enhance the effectiveness of its activity while an equal percentage of participating companies state that they are not able to judge whether or not their activity would be strengthened or would be greatly enhanced by having an Environmental Management System.



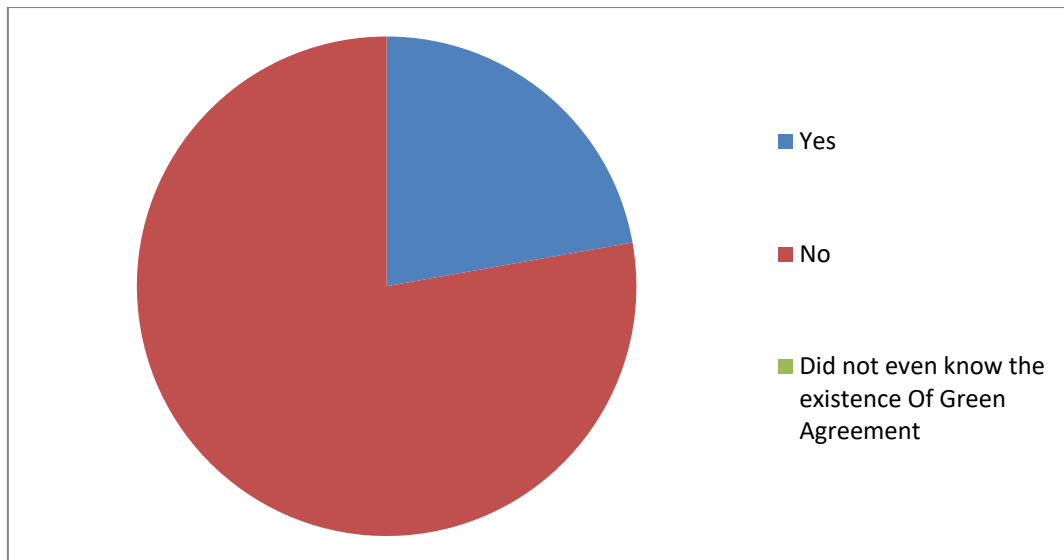
Question 16: "Have you received external funding for environmental protection activities (e.g. EU budget, state or local budget) in the last 3 years (2017-2019)?"

None of the participating companies has received external funding for environmental protection activities (e.g. EU budget, state or local budget) in the last 3 years (2017-2019).



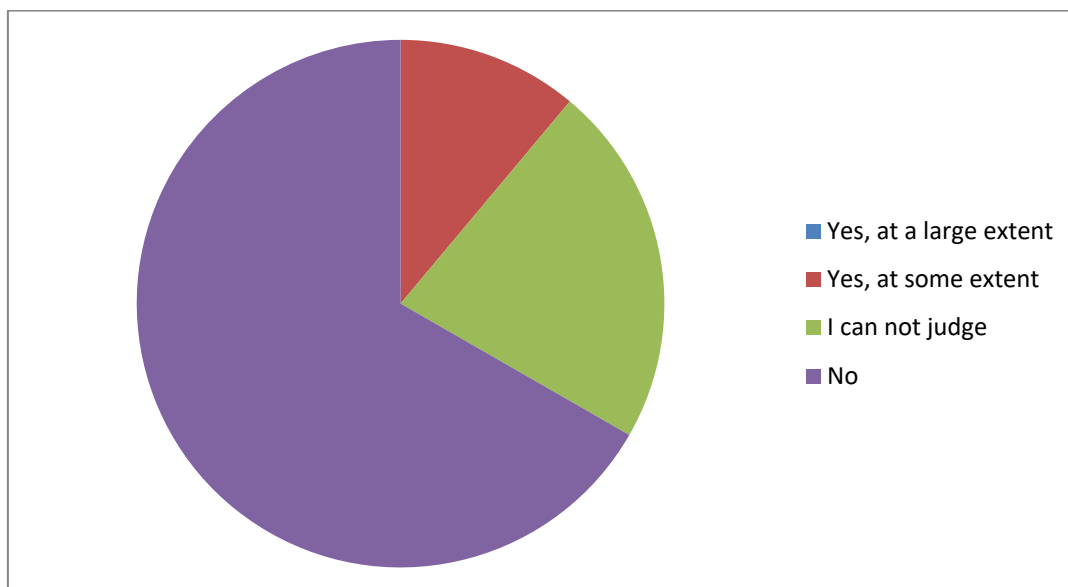
Question 17: "Greece is among the EU's ambitious Member States regarding the "Green Agreement" proposed by the European Commission at the end of 2019 for the further reduction of greenhouse gases and the achievement of climate neutrality by 2050 (the so-called European Green Pact). Do you know the main elements of the Green Agreement? "

The majority of the participants (77.8%) in the survey among the companies of Prefecture of Xanthi do not know what the main elements of the Green Agreement proposed by the European Commission at the end of 2019 for the further reduction of greenhouse gases and the achievement of climate neutrality by 2050 are. Only 2 companies (22.2%) know the main elements of the Green Agreement



Question 18: "In your opinion, has the national or local environmental policy improved over the last 3 years?"

According to most survey companies (6 out of 9 or 66.7%) there has been no improvement in national or local environmental policy in the last 3 years. Only one company claimed that there has been some improvement in national or local environmental policy over the last three years while 2 companies stated that they are not in a position to judge.



Question 18.1: "If so, in which direction do you see improvements?" (Specify them)

One company argued that in its opinion there has been an improvement in national or local environmental policy in many directions over the last three years.

Question 18.2: "If your answer is negative, in your opinion, what should be done? (Specify) "

Companies that have claimed that there has been no improvement in national or local environmental policy in the last 3 years have provided the following suggestions on what can be done to reverse this:

- Information
- Discussion with the experts for each region's wealth , discussion with the residents and sensitization
- Actions
- Citizen information and application supervision
- There are no appropriate measures and subsidies for people / businesses to upgrade appliances and facilities with lower energy consumption. There is no control over the flora and fauna of the area. At national level there are no real incentives to withdraw polluting vehicles. Investment in public transport, stricter controls and measures in factories that produce a lot of pollutants and / or pollute the water, more serious education and not just informing the citizens about the state of the environment as no one is still "convinced" of the seriousness of the situation and other many that need high resolution

ΕΝΗΜΕΡΩΣΗ

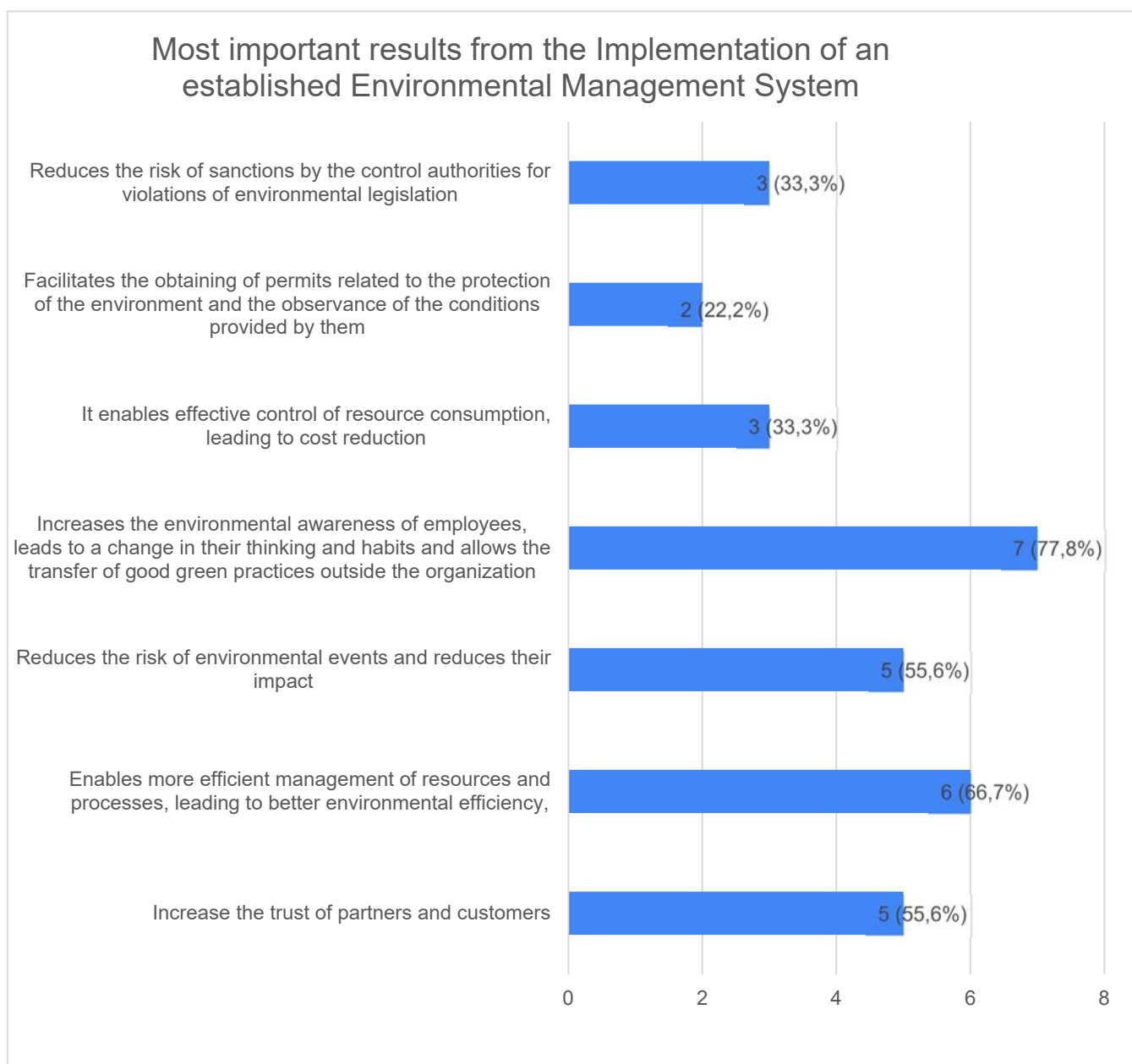
ΣΥΖΥΤΗΣΗ ΜΕ ΕΙΔΙΚΟΥΣ ΓΙΑ ΤΟ ΤΙ ΠΛΟΥΤΟ ΕΧΕΙ Η ΚΑΘΕ ΠΕΡΙΟΧΗ ΑΝΑΔΕΙΞΗ ΑΥΤΟΥ ΣΗΖΗΤΗΣΗ ΜΕ ΤΟΥΣ ΚΑΤΟΙΚΟΥΣ ΕΥΑΙΣΘΗΤΟΠΟΙΗΣΗ ΜΕ ΑΥΤΟΥΣ ΠΟΥ ΑΣΧΟΛΟΥΝΤΑΙ ΜΕ ΠΕΡΙΒΑΛΛΟΝ ΓΕΝΙΚΟΤΕΡΑ ΚΑΙ ΥΛΟΠΟΙΗΣΗ ΟΧΙ ΜΟΝΟ ΣΥΖΥΤΗΣΗ

ΠΡΑΓΜΑΤΙΚΕΣ ΔΡΑΣΕΙΣ ΚΑΙ ΟΧΙ ΛΟΓΙΑ

Δεν υπάρχουν κατάλληλα μέτρα και επιδοτήσεις για να προβεί ο κόσμος/επιχειρήσεις σε αναβαθμίσεις συσκευών και εγκαταστάσεων με μικρότερη ενεργειακή κατανάλωση, δεν υπάρχει έλεγχος και φροντίδα για τη χλωρίδα και πανίδα της περιοχής (Τουλάχιστον στο Πόρτο Λάγος που δραστηριοποιούμαστε), δηλαδή δεν καθαρίζεται η παραλία και η γύρω περιοχή, ούτε υπάρχουν αυστηρές απαγορεύσεις ενάντια στη διασπορά σκουπιδιών εκτός των κάδων απορριμάτων, δεν υπάρχει προστασία κατά της υπεραλίευσης, δεν υπάρχουν προγράμματα και έργα ανάπλασης της περιοχής όπως δεντροφυτεύσεις και λοιπές καλλιέργειες, και άλλα πολλά όσον αφορά τη τοπική περιοχή. Σε εθνικό επίπεδο δεν υπάρχουν ουσιαστικά κίνητρα για απόσυρση των ρυπογόνων οχημάτων (Το πρόγραμμα της "επένδυσης στην ηλεκτροκίνηση" που εφαρμόζεται από τον Αύγουστο δεν επαρκεί ούτε εις το ελάχιστον για διάφορους λόγους, κυρίως στο ότι ο κόσμος δεν νιώθει σοβαρό κίνητρο να διώξει το παλιό του αμάξι ούτε έχει οικονομικούς πόρους), επένδυση στα μέσα μαζικής μεταφοράς, αυστηρότεροι έλεγχοι και μέτρα σε εργοστάσια που παράγουν πολλούς ρύπους ή/και μολύνουν τα ύδατα (βλέπετε Θερμαϊκό κόλπο όπου λόγω του ευτροφισμού που προκαλούν τα σκουπίδια των ανθρώπων και τα λύματα των εργοστασίων έχει κυριολεκτικά... αλλάξει χρώμα), σοβαρότερη εκπαίδευση, και όχι απλή ενημέρωση, στους πολίτες για την κατάσταση του περιβάλλοντος, καθώς κανένας ακόμη δεν "πείθεται" από τη σοβαρότητα της κατάστασης, και άλλα πολλά που χρήζουν μεγάλης αναλύσεως.

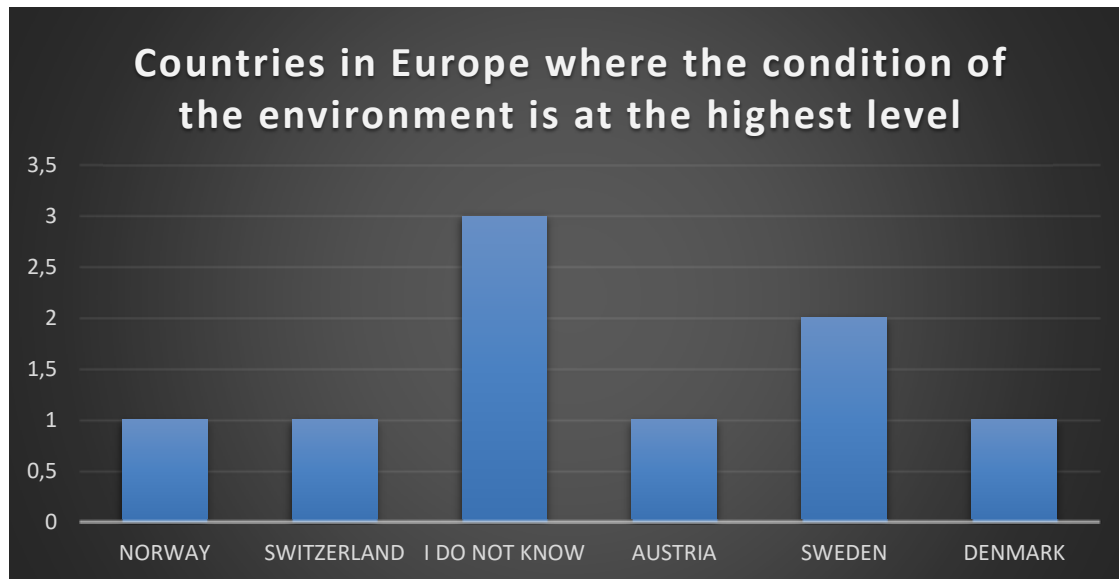
Question 19: "What results do you think are more important for businesses from the implementation of an established environmental management system?"

The most important results from the implementation of an established Environmental Management System for the respondents are the increase of the environmental awareness of the employees, the more efficient management of the resources and processes, the reduction of the risk of environmental events and the reduction of their effects as well as the increase of partner and customer trust.



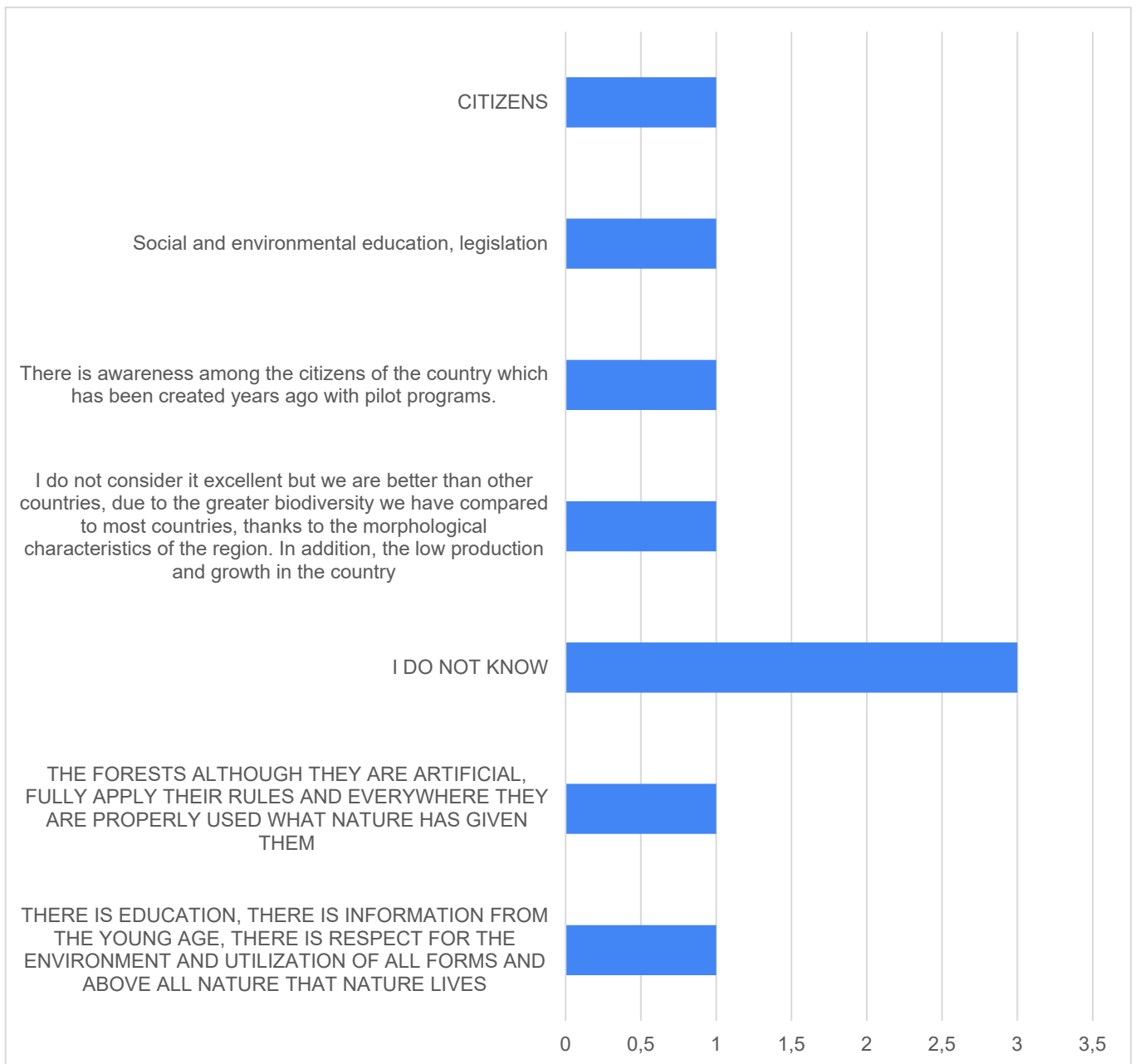
Question 20: "In which European country, in your opinion, is the state of the environment at the highest level?" (Specify)

The graph below shows the countries where, in the opinion of the respondents, the state of the environment is at the highest level.



Question 21: "What do you think is the reason for the exceptional state of the environment in this country?"

The reasons why the respondents declared the countries in question 21 as countries in which in their opinion the state of the environment is at the highest level are listed below:

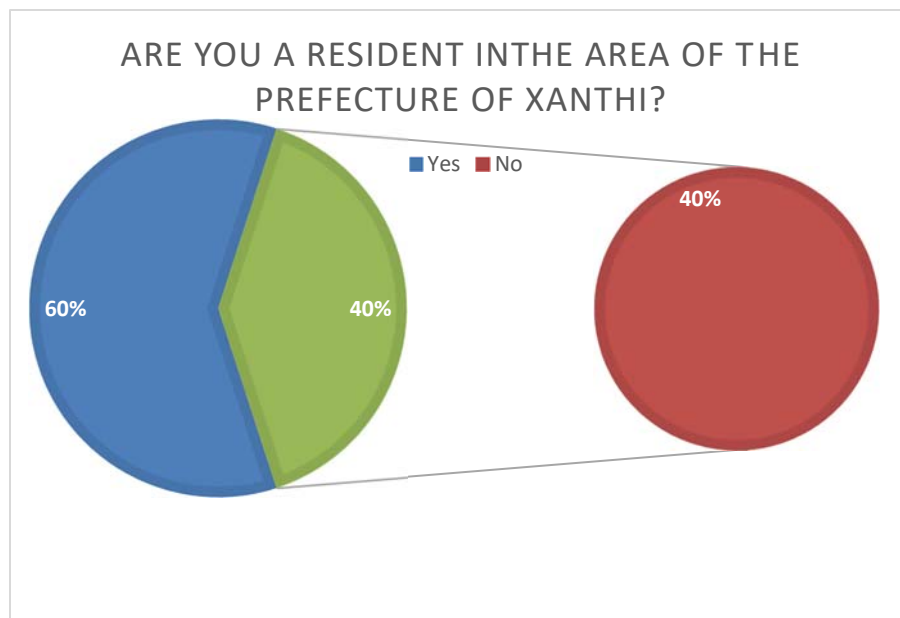


Visitors of the Prefecture of Xanthi

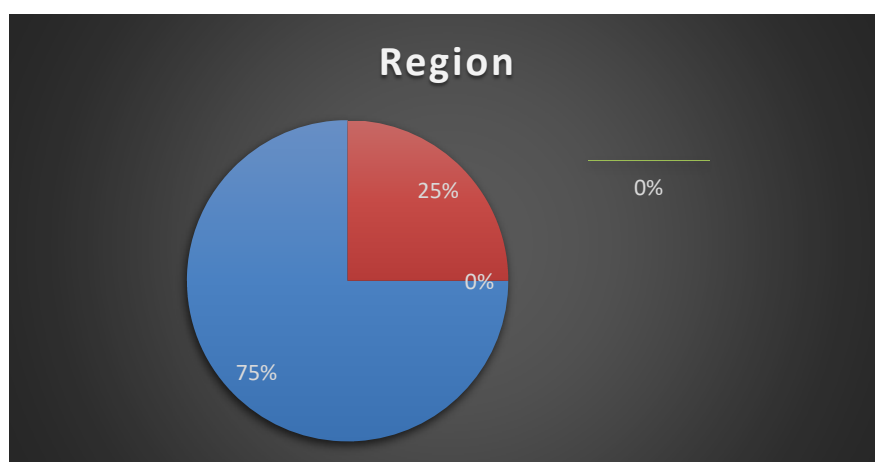
The second questionnaire that was created is addressed to visitors of the Prefecture of Xanthi, it consists of 18 questions and was answered by 20 people.

Question 1: "Are you a resident of the area of the Prefecture of Xanthi?"

60% of the participants in the survey are residents of the area of the Prefecture of Xanthi while the remaining 40% live either in the region of Eastern Macedonia and Thrace or in another area of Greece.



Question 1.1: "If not, please fill in which region you come from"



75%: Region of Eastern Macedonia and Thrace

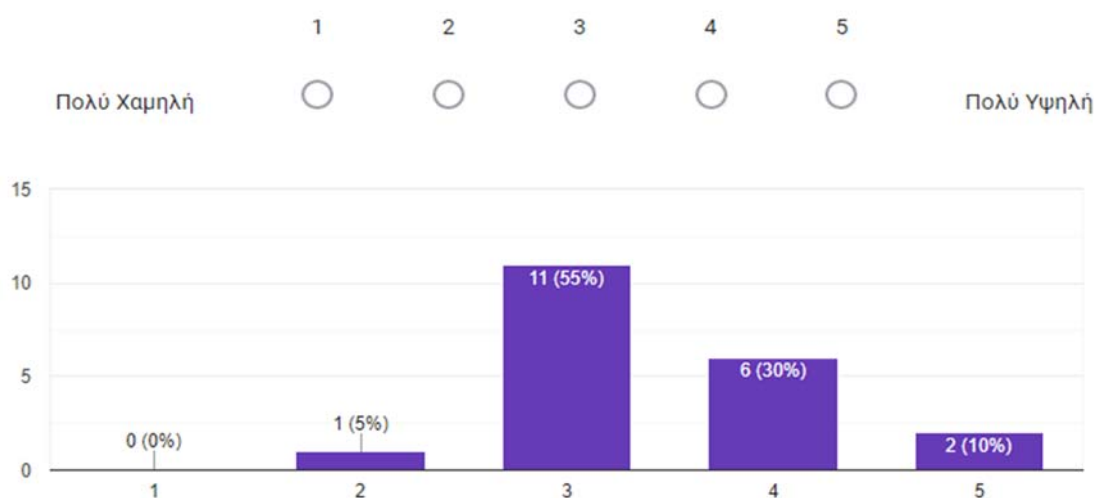
25%: Other region

0%: Abroad

Question 2: "How would you describe the condition of the environment in the municipality where you visited?"

The majority of visitors to the Prefecture of Xanthi (11 or 55) who answered the questionnaire characterize the state of the environment in the Municipality they visited as moderate, 6 visitors characterize it as high, 2 as very high while only one visitor characterizes its condition as low environment in the Municipality he visited.

(1= Πολύ Χαμηλή, 2=χαμηλή, 3=Μέτρια, 4=υψηλή 5=Πολύ Υψηλή)



1=Very Low, 2=Low, 3=Medium, 4=High, 5=Very High

Question 3: “Please indicate is, in your opinion, the quality of the following environmental elements in the municipality where you live?”

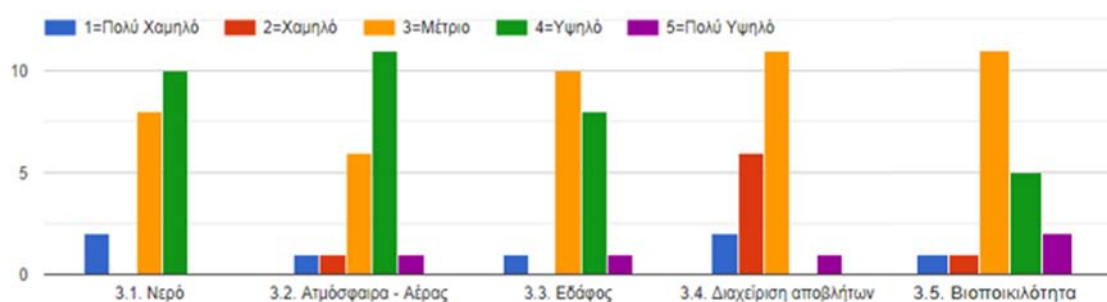
The quality of the environmental element “Water” in the municipality of residence of the respondents was characterized as high by 50% of them (10 visitors), moderate by 40% (8 visitors) and very low by 10% (1 guest).

The quality of the "Atmosphere-Air" in the municipality of residence of the participants was characterized as high by 55% of respondents (11 guests), moderate by 30% (6 visitors), very high by 5% (1 guest), low by 5% (1 guest) and very low also from 5% (1 guest).

Regarding the quality of the “Soil” 10 of the 20 participants in the survey stated that it is moderate in the municipality where they live, 8 stated that it is high, one visitor stated that it is very low and one visitor stated that the soil quality in the municipality of residence is very high.

The quality of "Waste Management" in the municipality of residence of each participant was characterized as moderate by 11 people / visitors, low by 6 people / visitors, very low by 2 people / visitors and very high by 1 person / visitor.

"Biodiversity" in the municipalities of residence of the respondents was characterized as moderate by 55% of them, high by 25%, very high by 10%, low by 5% and also very low by 5%.



1=Very Low, 2=Low, 3=Medium, 4=High, 5=Very High

3.1. Water

3.2. Atmosphere-Air

3.3. Soil

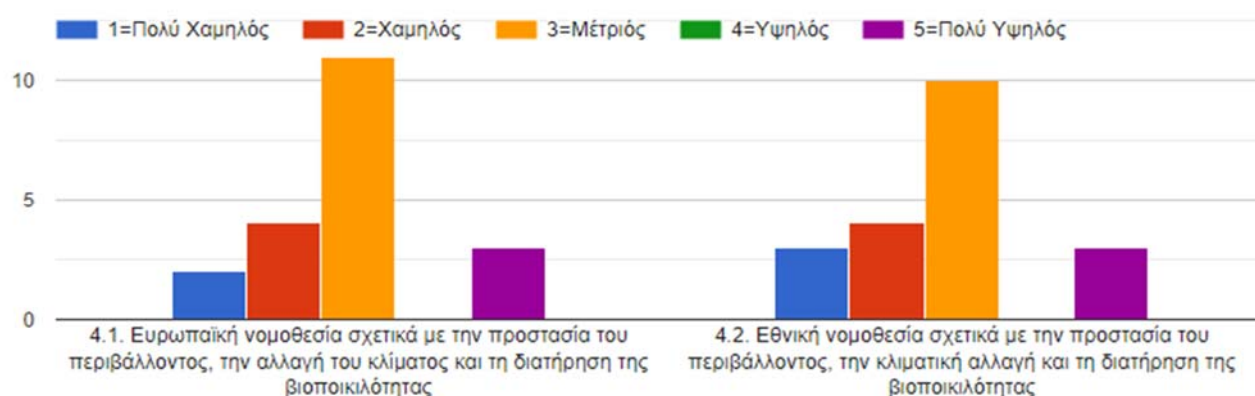
3.4. Waste Management

3.5. Biodiversity

Question 4: “Please note level of your knowledge on the following topics”

The level of knowledge of the majority of participants in research on European legislation on environmental protection, climate change and biodiversity conservation is moderate while there are visitors who have a very low or low level of knowledge in this subject. 3 visitors have a very high level of knowledge of European legislation on environmental protection, climate change and biodiversity conservation.

50% of the visitors of the Prefecture of Xanthi who answered the questionnaire have a moderate degree of knowledge of the National legislation on environmental protection, climate change and conservation of biodiversity while there are visitors who have a very low or low level of knowledge on the subject this. 3 visitors have a very high level of knowledge of National legislation on environmental protection, climate change and biodiversity conservation.



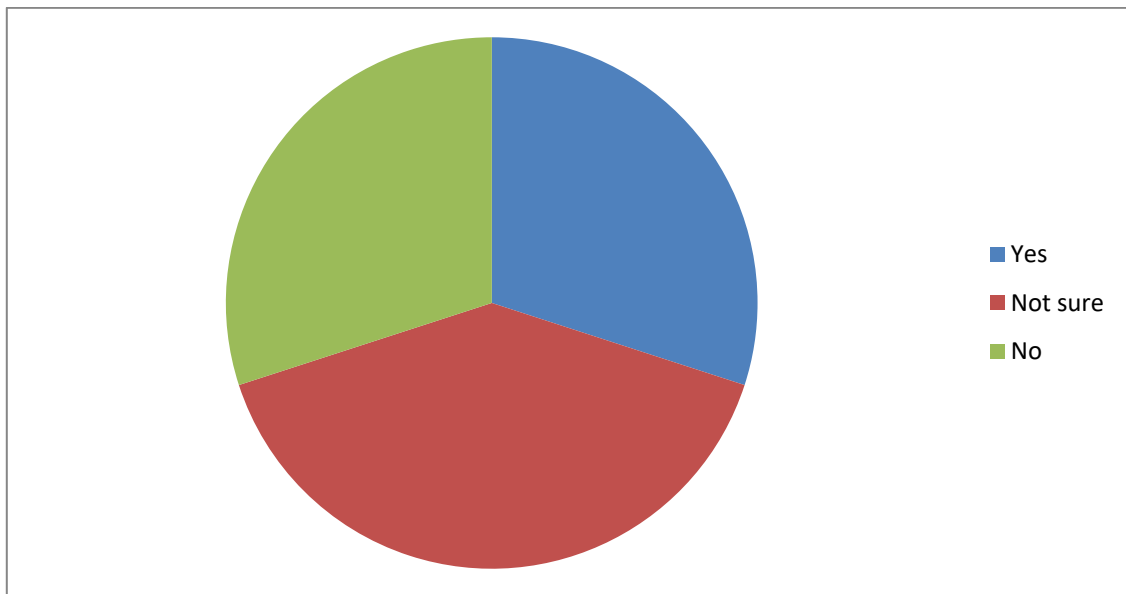
1=Very Low, 2=Low, 3=Medium, 4=High, 5=Very High

4.1. European legislation for the protection of the environment, the climate change and the preservation of biodiversity

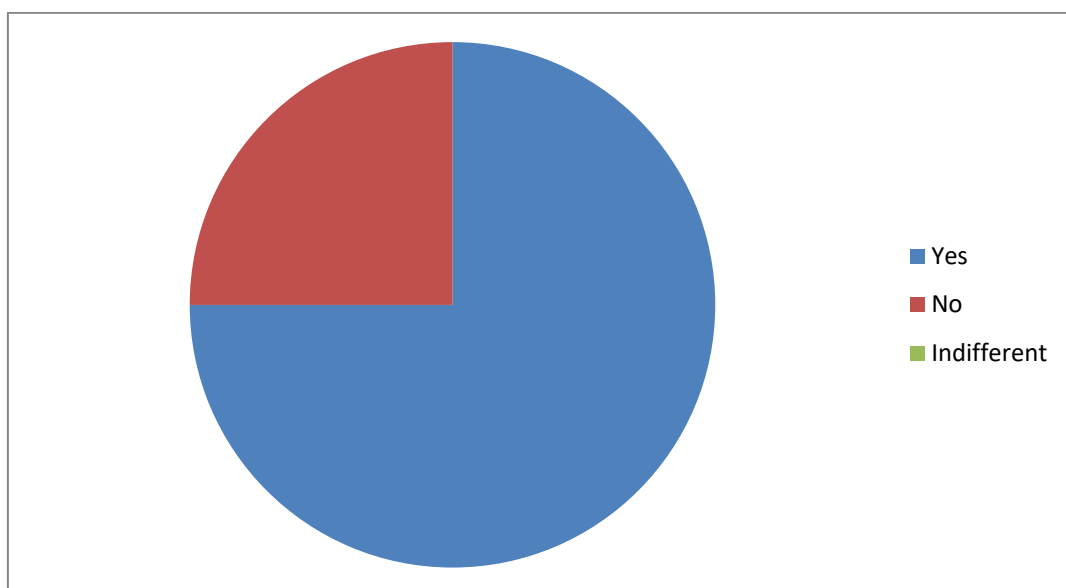
4.2. National legislation for the protection of the environment, the climate change and the preservation of biodiversity

Question 5: "Do you know what is allowed and what is prohibited in the areas of Natura 2000?"

The 40% of research participants have an idea of what is allowed to be done and what is forbidden in the Natura 2000 areas, while a smaller percentage (30%) knows or does not know what is true (30%)

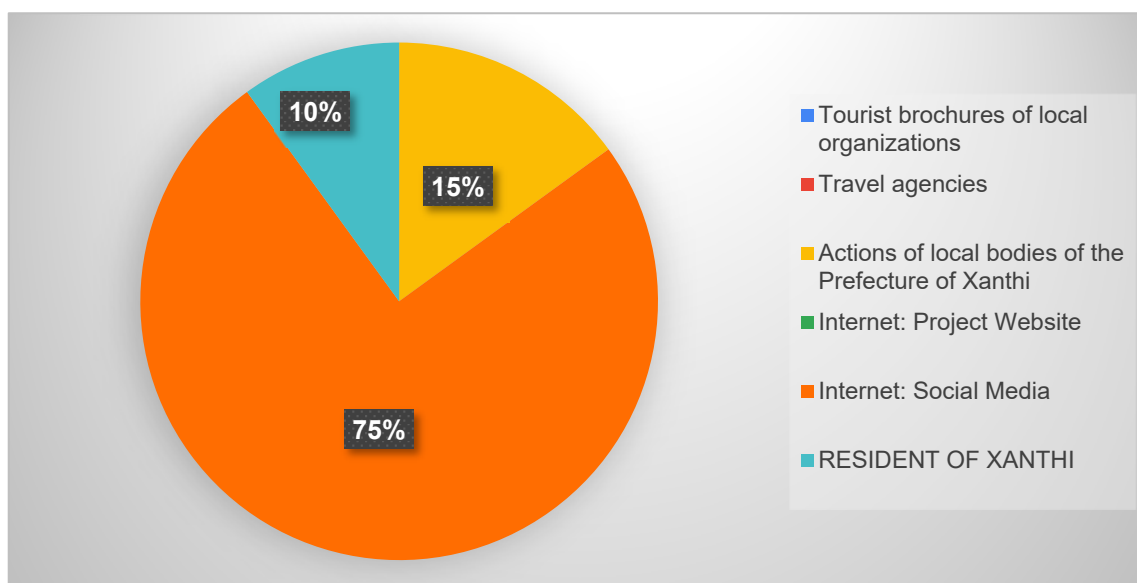
**Question 6: "Do you know what the term 'Green Tourism' means?"**

75% of the visitors of the Prefecture of Xanthi who participated in the research know what the term "Green Tourism" means while a small percentage of 25% do not know this term.

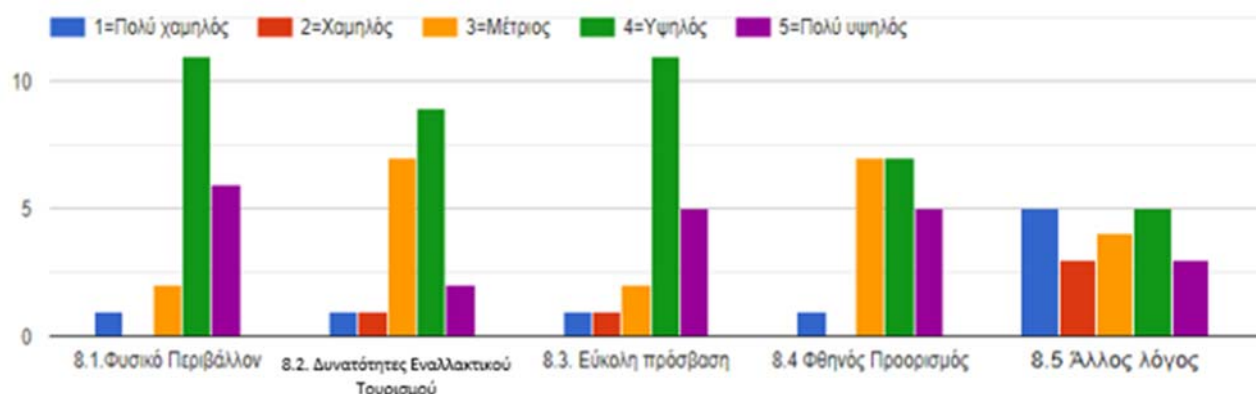


Question 7: "What source of influence has contributed to the selection, as a tourist destination, of the Prefecture of Xanthi?"

The 75% of the participants in the survey chose Xanthi Prefecture as a tourist destination influenced by posts on Social Media. Other reasons that prompted participants to visit this Prefecture are either actions by local organizations of Xanthi Prefecture or the fact that they are inhabitants of Xanthi.

**Question 8: "Please note the extent to which the following options contributed to the reason for visiting N. Xanthi"**

The majority of participants chose the Prefecture of Xanthi as a tourist destination due to its natural environment, the possibilities of alternative tourism and easy access to it. An additional reason that contributed to the visit of the Prefecture is the fact that it is a cheap tourist destination. Based on the answers to the survey, other reasons than the above mentioned contributed to a lower degree to the selection of the Prefecture as a tourist destination.



1=Very Low, 2=Low, 3=Medium, 4=High, 5=Very High

8.1. Natural environment

8.2. Alternative tourism potentials

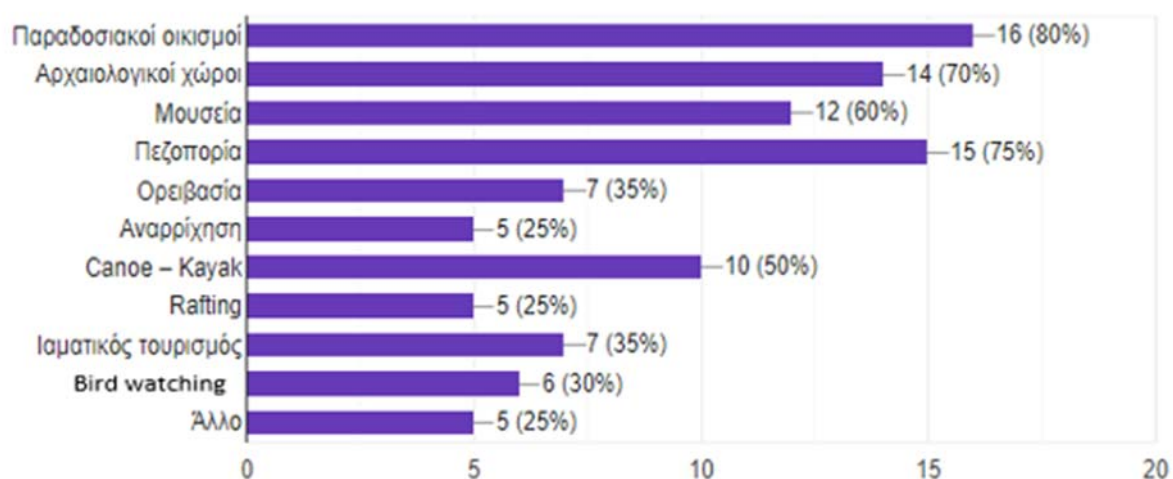
8.3. Easy access

8.4. Cheap destination

8.5. Other reason

Question 9: "Please fill in which of the following you have participated or visited"

More than fifty percent of the respondents who chose N. Blossoms as a tourist destination visited traditional settlements of the area, archaeological sites and museums and participated in activities such as hiking and Canoe-Kayak. Actions such as mountaineering, climbing, rafting, spa tourism were less popular with research participants.



80%: Traditional settlements

70%: Archeological areas

60%: Museums

75%: Hiking

35%: Mountain Climbing

25%: Climbing

50%: Canoe – Kayak

25%: Rafting

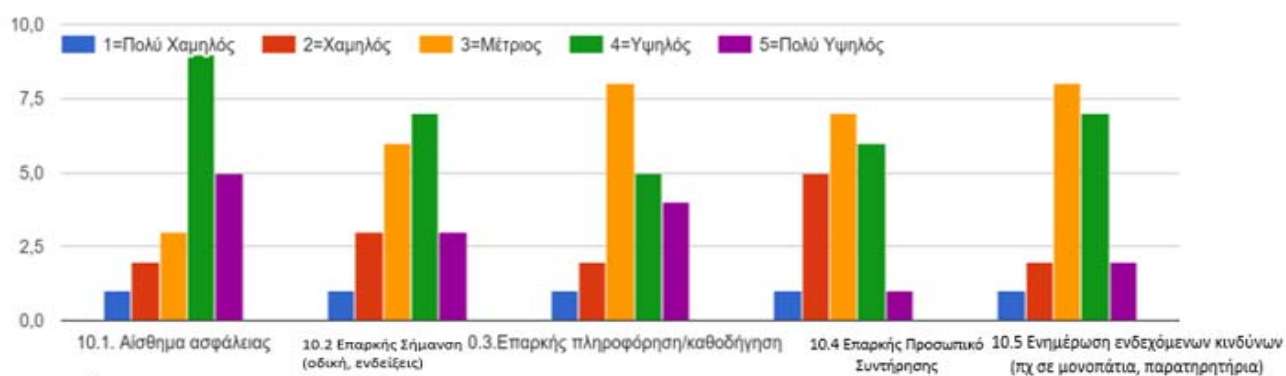
35%: Spa tourism

30%: Bird watching

25%: Other

Question 10: "Based on your answer to Question 10, please fill in to what extent, in your opinion, local actors were able to respond effectively to the activities in which you participated"

Local actors, based on most responses, have managed to respond effectively to a high/very high level as far as the feeling of safety in the activities provided. In terms of adequate signage, information / guidance, maintenance staff and information on potential risks of activities in the prefecture the degree of satisfaction of visitors is high or moderate for the majority.



1=Very Low, 2=Low, 3=Medium, 4=High, 5=Very High

10.1. Feeling of security

10.2. Adequate marking (road, signs)

10.3. Sufficient information/guidance

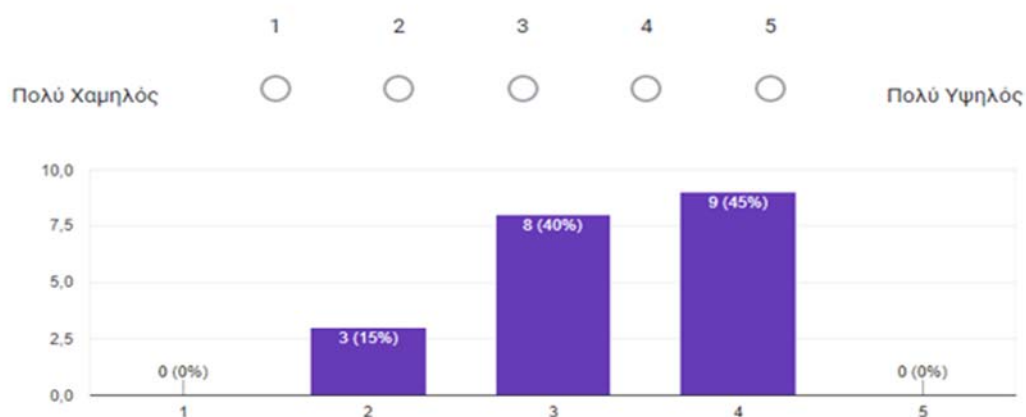
10.4. Adequate maintenance staff

10.5. Information on potential risks of activities

Question 11: "To what extent did you get the feeling that the environment is taken care of by the competent bodies?"

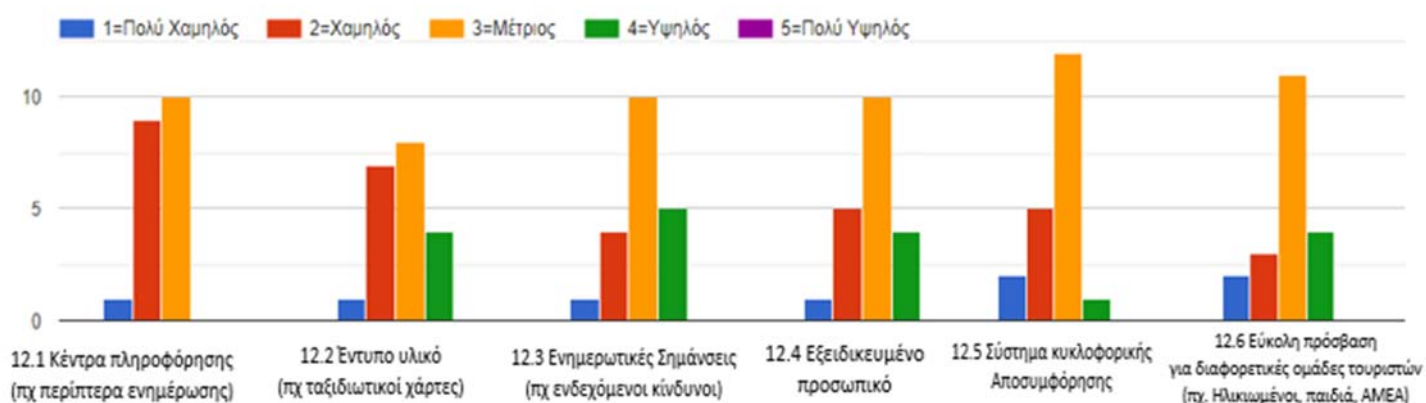
45% of the participants in the survey stated that from their visit to the Prefecture of Xanthi they had the feeling that the environment is taken care of by the competent bodies to a high degree while 40% considered that the environment of the prefecture is taken care of to a moderate degree by the competent bodies. In addition, a small percentage of 15% expressed the view that the environment of the prefecture is taken care of to a low degree.

(1= Πολύ Χαμηλός, 2=χαμηλός, 3=Μέτριος, 4=υψηλός,5=Πολύ Υψηλός)



Question 12: "Please return to what extent were the following infrastructures in the alternative tourism"

The majority of visitors of Pref. Xanthi surveyed stated that the degree of existence of infrastructure within the alternative tourism such as information centers, printed materials, information signs, specialized staff, traffic congestion system and easy access for different groups of tourists is moderate or low. Especially as far as the existence of information centers is concerned, no visitor answered positively.



1=Very Low, 2=Low, 3=Medium, 4=High, 5=Very High

12.1. Information centers

12.2. Printed material

12.3. Information signs

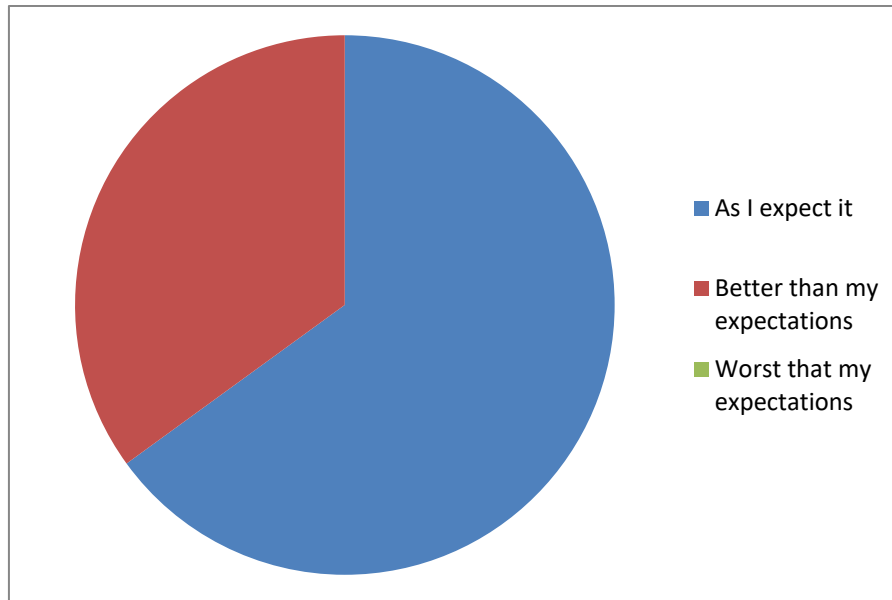
12.4. Specializes staff

12.5. Traffic congestion system

12.6. Easy access for different groups of tourists

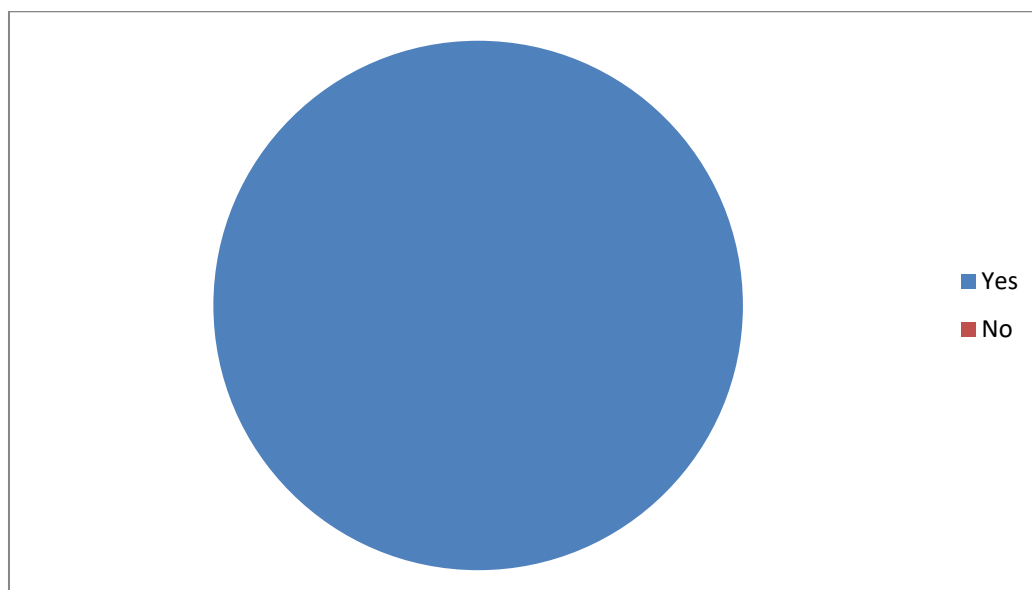
Question 13: "Complete how the tourist environment of Prefecture of Xanthi has met your expectations"

The tourist environment of Prefecture of Xanthi responded equally or better to the expectations of its visitors on the basis of the answers given.



Question 14: "Would you suggest the destination of Prefecture of Xanthi to someone else?"

All the visitors of Prefecture of Xanthi who participated in the present research would suggest to someone else to choose the prefecture as a tourist destination.



Question 15: “What would you suggest to the local bodies or the local community in order to improve, in terms of quality, the experience of a visitor in the Prefecture of Xanthi? (Specify) ”

The visitors of the Prefecture of Xanthi through the experience of their visit to the prefecture presented the following suggestions to local agencies and the local community in order to improve the quality of the tourist experience of those who choose the prefecture of Xanthi as a tourist destination.

- Specialized staff
- Means for easier access
- More promotion to students, special offers and more, highlight of the options for the visitors
- Better information and promotion. Mostly through the internet
- More advertisement of the current recreation activities and enrichment with new ones
- Larger and targeted investments in the field of alternative tourism and mainly in the mountains of the Prefecture (Pomakochochia). Things are better in Nestos but there is room for improvement. Strategic use of resources by hiring experts in the field of alternative tourism, who will make decisions after research and not arbitrarily
- Information centers
- Raising public awareness of environmental protection from waste, more bins, greater exploitation of the natural landscape with more activities
- More actions
- Clean town
- More advertisement
- Tourism product design and targeted promotion
- Better information about the activities
- Better infrastructure and alternative tourism orientation in order natural wealth to utilized
- Arranging and development of the infrastructure

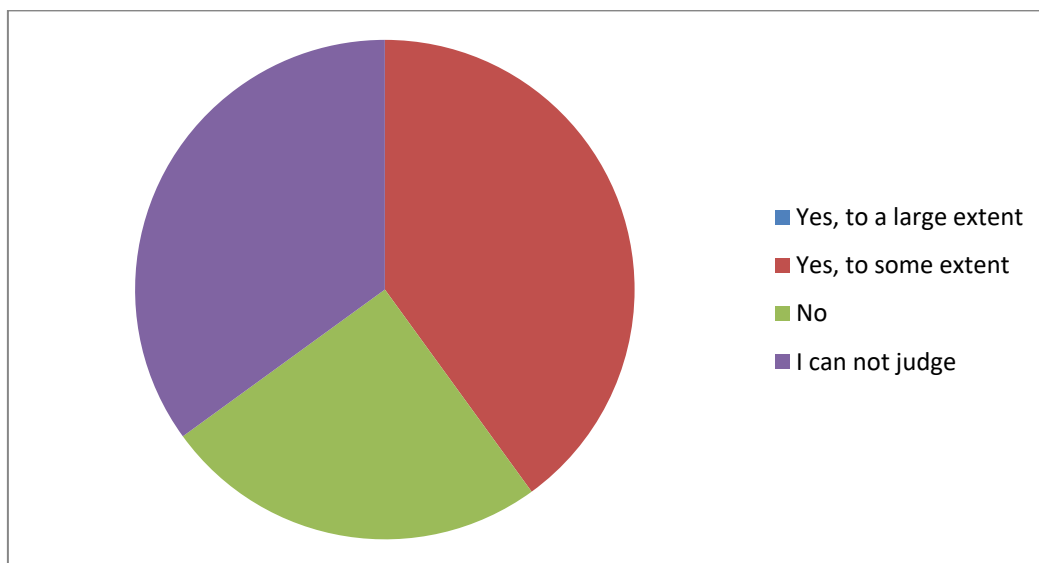
(Table of answers)

Εξειδικευμένο προσωπικό
Μέσα για ευκολότερη πρόσβαση
Περισσότερη προβολή σε φοιτητές, πακέτα προσφορών και περισσότερη ανάδειξη των επιλογών που υπάρχουν για τον επισκέπτη
Καλύτερη ενημέρωση και προώθηση. Ίσως μέσα από το διαδίκτυο.
Να διαφημίζει περισσότερο τις δραστηριότητες αναψυχής που θα μπορούσε κάποιος να κάνει στην Ξάνθη καθώς και να τις εμπλουτίσει και με νέες
Μεγαλύτερες και στοχευμένες επενδύσεις στο χώρο του εναλλακτικού τουρισμού και κυρίως στα ορεινά του Νομού (Πομακοχώρια). Στον Νέστο είναι καλύτερα τα πράγματα και εκεί όμως υπάρχει περιθώριο βελτίωσης. Στρατηγική αξιοποίηση των πόρων με πρόσληψη ειδικών στον χώρο του εναλλακτικού τουρισμού, οι οποίοι θα πάρουν αποφάσεις έπειτα από έρευνα και όχι αυθαίρετα.
Κέντρα πληροφόρησης
Ευαισθητοποίηση των πολιτών για την προστασία του περιβάλλοντος από τα απόβλητα, περισσότερους κάδους, μεγαλύτερη εκμετάλλευση του φυσικού τοπίου με περισσότερες δραστηριότητες.
Να κάνουν περισσότερες δράσεις.
Καθαρή πόλη.
Περισσότερη διαφήμιση
Tha to skeftw
ΔΗΜΙΟΥΡΓΙΑ ΚΕΝΤΡΩΝ ΠΛΗΡΟΦΟΡΗΣΗΣ
ΚΑΛΥΤΕΡΗ ΠΛΗΡΟΦΟΡΗΣΗ
ΣΧΕΔΙΑΣΜΟΣ ΤΟΥΡΙΣΤΙΚΟΥ ΠΡΟΙΟΝΤΟΣ ΚΑΙ ΣΤΟΧΕΥΜΕΝΗ ΠΡΟΒΟΛΗ
Βελτίωση στην πληροφόρηση σχετικά με τις δράσεις που μπορεί κάποιος να επιλέξει
Να βελτιωθούν οι υποδομές και να αλλάξει ο προσανατολισμός προς τον εναλλακτικό τουρισμό ώστε να αξιοποιηθεί ο φυσικός πλούτος
ΟΡΓΑΝΩΣΗ ΚΑΙ ΔΗΜΙΟΥΡΓΙΑ ΥΠΟΔΟΜΩΝ

Question 16: "In your opinion, has the national or local environmental policy improved in the last 3 years?"

40% of respondents believe that in the last three years there has been some improvement in national or local environmental policy.

35% of respondents said they could not judge whether there had been an improvement in national or local environmental policy in the last 3 years while 25% said there had been no improvement.



Question 16.1: “If so, in what areas have you seen improvements? (Specify)”

Those who answered yes to question 16 indicated the following areas in which they felt that national or local environmental policy had improved to some extent in the last three years:

- Waste management, increase recycling, more awareness, information through seminars, etc.
- In the organization of activities and excursions in the natural landscapes of the prefecture, which should be exploited to a greater extent with more activities
- Waste/garbage cleaning
- Exploitation of natural wealth
- Arrangements

Διαχείριση απορριμμάτων, αύξηση ανακύκλωσης, περισσότερη ευαισθητοποίηση, ενημέρωση μέσω σεμιναρίων κλπ.

Στην οργάνωση δραστηριοτήτων και εξορμήσεων στα φυσικά τοπία του νόμου τα οποία κατά την γνώμη θα πρέπει να εκμεταλλευτούν σε μεγαλύτερο βαθμό με περισσότερες δραστηριότητες.

Μάζεμα σκουπιδιών.

Αξιοποίηση του φυσικού πλούτου

ΣΤΗΝ ΔΙΑΘΕΣΗ ΟΡΓΑΝΩΣΗΣ

(Table of answers)

Question 16.2: “If your answer is negative, what should be done in your opinion?**(Specify)**

Those who answered negative in question 16 stating that there has been no improvement in national or local environmental policy in the last three years have suggested the following ways in which they believe this could be reversed:

- Environmental education in schools. Incentives for ecological awareness.
Utilization of resources environmentally friendly infrastructure
- Citizens’ information and arenas

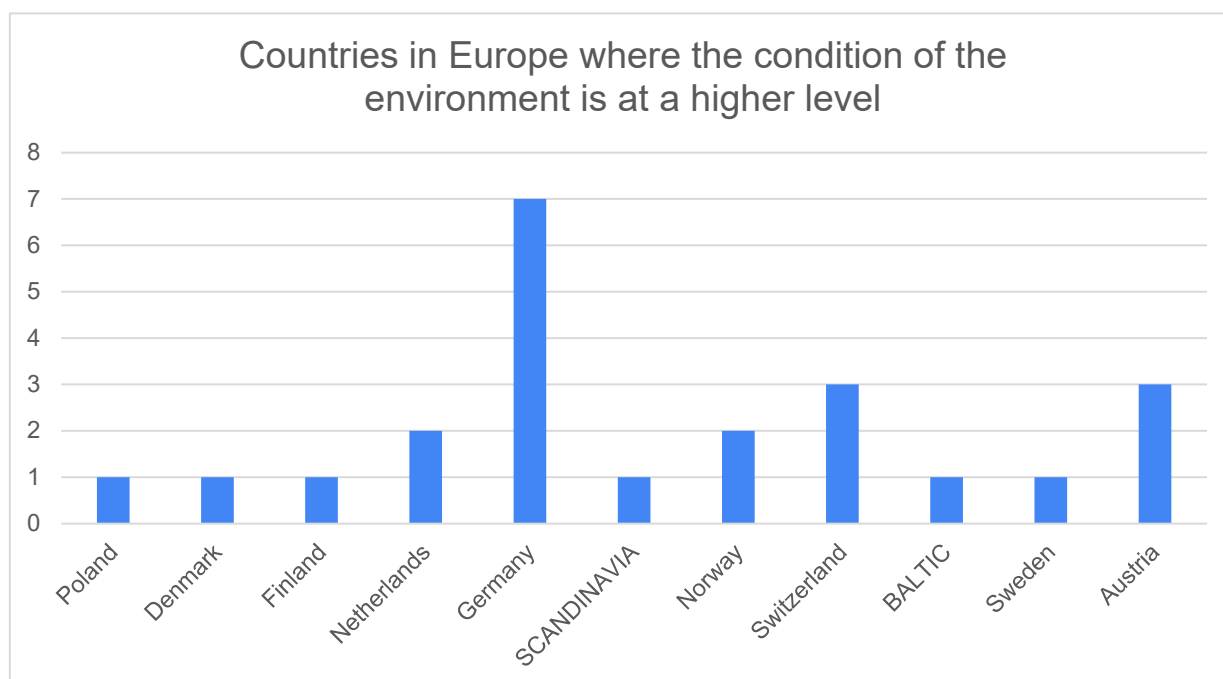
Εκπαίδευση και περιβαλλοντική παιδεία στα σχολεία. Κίνητρα για οικολογική συνείδηση. Αξιοποίηση πόρων για υποδομές φιλικές και προστατευτικές προς το περιβάλλον.

ΕΝΗΜΕΡΩΣΗ ΚΑΙ ΕΥΑΙΣΘΗΤΟΠΟΙΗΣΗ ΤΩΝ ΠΟΛΙΤΩΝ

(Table of answers)

Question 17: "In which European country do you think the state of the environment is at its highest?"

The following graph shows the countries in which, in the opinion of the respondents, the state of the environment is at the highest level. 7 out of 20 people declared Germany as the country with the highest level of environmental status, three people said Austria, three Switzerland, two the Netherlands, two Norway and one person said Poland, Denmark, Finland, Scandinavia, the Baltic and Sweden.



Question 18: "What do you think is the reason for the exceptional condition of the environment in this country?"

The reasons why the respondents declared the countries in question 17 as the countries in which the state of the environment is at the highest level are listed below:

- Prohibitions and fines
- There is proper information to the citizens, environmental awareness, many options and innovations in the field of environment (e.g. products, shops, environmental groups, innovative ideas and their implementation in municipalities, buildings)

- Lack of environmental awareness to be cultivated within the family of education
- Many parks with greenery and people are involved in alternative tourism
- Awareness and information of citizens from an early age in school
- Life in this country is very good, everyone together strives for the best
- Education
- Government organization for the protection of the environment.
- Care for the protection of the environment, environmental awareness
- Care and citizens
- The legal framework and its observance
- Organization and proper political will

Να μην ρίχνουν τα σκουπίδια στους δρόμους.

Απαγορεύσεις και προστίματα

Υπάρχει σωστή ενημέρωση στους πολίτες, περιβαλλοντική ευαισθητοποίηση, πολλές επιλογές και καινοτομίες όσον αφορά στον γενικότερα τομέα του περιβάλλοντος (πχ προϊόντα, μαγαζιά, περιβαλλοντικές ομάδες, καινοτόμες ιδέες και υλοποίηση αυτών σε δήμους, κτίρια κλπ)

Έλλειψη περιβαλλοντικής συνείδησης που πρέπει να καλλιεργείται σε πλαίσιο οικογένειας και εκπαίδευσης. Όλα είναι θέμα συνήθειας και το θέμα της περιβαλλοντικής συνείδησης επιβάλλεται να αποτελεί μια ΚΑΛΗ συνήθεια μιας και αποτελεί σημαντικό κομμάτι της καθημερινότητάς μας. Το περιβάλλον δεν είναι παιχνίδι και οφείλουμε ΟΛΟΙ να το σεβόμαστε!

Έχει πολύ πράσινο, πολλά πάρκα, ο κόσμος ενασχολείται με τον εναλλακτικό τουρισμό

Παιδεία και υποδομές.

Το κλίμα της

Η ευαισθητοποίηση και ενημέρωση των πολιτών από μικρή ηλικία στο σχολείο.

Η ζωή σε αυτή την χώρα είναι πολύ ποιοτική. Όλοι μαζί προσπαθούν για το καλύτερο.

Παιδιά.

Δεν είναι Έλληνες πολύ απλά ;)

Den einai exeraitiki

ΚΡΑΤΙΚΗ ΟΡΓΑΝΩΣΗ ΚΑΙ ΜΕΡΙΜΝΑ ΓΙΑ ΤΗΝ ΠΡΟΣΤΑΣΙΑ ΤΟΥ ΠΕΡΙΒΑΛΛΟΝΤΟΣ

ΜΕΡΙΜΝΑ Γ ΤΗΝ ΠΡΟΣΤΑΣΙΑ ΤΟΥ ΠΕΡΙΒΑΛΛΟΝΤΟΣ, ΠΕΡΙΒΑΛΛΟΝΤΙΚΗ ΣΥΝΕΙΔΗΣΗ

Η ΦΡΟΝΤΙΔΑ ΚΑΙ ΟΙ ΠΟΛΙΤΙΚΕΣ

Το νομοθετικό πλαίσιο και η τήρησή του

ΟΡΓΑΝΩΣΗ και σωστή πολιτική βούληση

ΟΡΓΑΝΩΣΗ ΚΑΙ ΠΑΙΔΕΙΑ ΤΩΝ ΑΝΘΡΩΠΩΝ

(Table of answers)

2.3. Conclusions

The "WILD LIFE FOR EVER" project aims to enhance biodiversity through the sustainable management and protection of rare species habitats in the rivers Nestos and Arda and in the Rhodope Mountains.

Companies

Based on the answers of the companies participating in the research, the majority of which provide accommodation services to visitors, there are companies active in the tourism sector in the prefecture of Xanthi that do not know the European and National legislation regarding environmental protection, climate change and biodiversity conservation, although the provisions of national environmental legislation largely or partially affect the activity of 88.8% of respondents. Furthermore, a percentage of 11.1% of the participating companies do not know the boundaries of the Natura 2020 areas in their municipality as well as what is allowed and what is prohibited in these areas. 22.2% do not know the term "green economy" and the same percentage of research companies do not know what are the main features of the "circular economy" which in recent years has become one of the top priorities of the EU. Greece is one of the ambitious EU Member States on the "Green Agreement" proposed by the European Commission at the end of 2019 to further reduce greenhouse gases and achieve climate neutrality by 2050 (the so-called European Green Pact) but 77,8% of participants do not know the main elements of the Green Agreement. Therefore, it is considered appropriate to have continuous information of citizens and businesses regarding the above thematic areas in order to raise their awareness and their activity by adopting and implementing the most effective measures for the protection of the environment and biodiversity.

The answers of the surveyed companies regarding the environmental situation in their Municipalities vary. Four (4) enterprises / individuals (44.4%) characterized the environmental situation in the Municipality where they live as high, three (3) enterprises / individuals (33.3%) characterized it as moderate, two (2 or 11.1%) as low while one (1) business / individual (11.1%) characterized as very low the state of the environment in the municipality where he resides.

Regarding the quality of the environmental elements of the Atmosphere-air, soil and biodiversity in the municipalities of residence of the respondents, all the answers have a positive response as their quality was characterized as high and very high. The quality of waste management was characterized as very low to moderate by the majority of the respondents, while water quality was characterized as very low by one person / company, moderate by three people / companies, high also by 3 people / companies while 2 people described it as very high. Therefore, more attention should be paid by the stakeholders to the improvement of water quality and waste management in the municipalities of the prefecture.

A large percentage of the companies (66.7%) do not have a plan / action to tackle climate change. 66.7% of the surveyed companies implement formal or informal environmental measures such as recycling of waste-wood burning, packaging recycling, use of biological wastewater treatment, use of energy class A + appliances, treatment of local flora (planting plants and trees, cultivation fruits and vegetables without the use of harmful pesticides), use of energy saving lamps, water saving program, heating with solar systems, reduction of consumption of chemical cleaners. The reasons why the remaining 33.3% of companies do not implement an environmental measure are either because it does not apply to their activities, or because there is no control body that requires such measures to be implemented.

66.7% of the surveyed companies wish to introduce (new) environmental measures in their organization. 75% of companies that have expressed the desire to introduce new environmental measures in their organization have not decided when they will proceed with it. One company stated that within at least one year they will introduce (new) environmental measures while one organization stated that within 6 months they will proceed with the introduction of environmental measures.

The majority of the surveyed organizations (88.9%) do not have a quality management system, although 55.5% of them believe that if they had an Environmental Management System, the efficiency of their activity would be greatly enhanced.

During the last 3 years (2017-2019) none of the organizations has received external funding for environmental protection activities (eg EU budget, state or local budget).

The majority of research companies (6 out of 9 or 66.7%) consider that in the last 3 years there has been no improvement of the national or local environmental policy and propose the following measures to reverse this situation: 1) informing the citizens, 2) discussion with experts regarding the natural wealth of each area in order to highlight it, 3) discussion with the residents in order to raise their environmental awareness, 4) investment in public transport, 5) stricter controls and measures in factories that pollute the water, 6) education, and not just simple information, to the citizens about the state of the environment, as no one is yet "convinced" of the seriousness of the situation, 7) more investment programmes for the construction of hydroelectric factories, wind and solar parks and exploitation of the geothermal wealth of the country and lastly 8) use of the most environmentally friendly vehicle technology, which are fuel cell engines, and even in electric vehicles, batteries require large resources in their construction that they pollute the environment.

Only one company claimed that there has been some improvement in national or local environmental policy over the last three years in several directions.

The most important results from the implementation of an established Environmental Management System for the respondents are the increase of the environmental awareness of the employees, the more efficient management of the resources and processes, the reduction of the risk of environmental events and the reduction of their effects as well as the increase of partner and customer trust.

In addition to informing citizens and businesses in order to raise awareness and gain environmental awareness and education, it is necessary to support and supervise them regarding the implementation of effective measures to protect the environment and biodiversity.

Visitors

All the visitors of the Prefecture of Xanthi who participated in the research would unreservedly suggest to someone else to choose the prefecture as a tourist destination after the experience of their visit to it.

60% of the visitors to the Prefecture of Xanthi who participated in the research are residents of the area of the Prefecture while the remaining 40% live either in the region of Eastern Macedonia Thrace or in another area of Greece.

The majority of visitors to the Prefecture of Xanthi (11 or 55%) who answered the questionnaire describe the condition of the environment in the Municipality as moderate, 6 visitors describe it as high, 2 as very high and only one visitor characterizes the situation of the environment in the Municipality he visited, as low.

The quality of the environmental element "Water" in the municipality of residence of the respondents was characterized as high by 50% of them (10 visitors), moderate by 40% (8 visitors) and very low by 10% (1 visitor). The quality of the "Atmosphere-Air" in the municipality of residence of the participants was characterized as high by 55% of the respondents (11 guests), moderate by 30% (6 visitors), very high by 5% (1 guest), low by 5% (1 guest) and very low also from 5% (1 guest). Regarding the quality of the "Soil" 10 out of 20 participants in the survey stated that it is moderate in the municipality where they live, 8 stated that it is high, one visitor stated that it is very low and one visitor stated that the soil quality in the municipality is very high. The quality of "Waste Management" in the municipality of residence of each participant was characterized as moderate by 11 people / visitors, low by 6 people / visitors, very low by 2 people / visitors and very high by 1 person / visitor. "Biodiversity" in the municipalities of residence of the respondents was characterized as moderate by 55% of them, high by 25%, very high by 10%, low by 5% and also very low by 5%. The majority of visitors described the quality of the aforementioned environmental data as moderate or high. The designation "very low" or "low" regarding the quality of environmental elements 1. Water, 2. Atmosphere-air, 3. Soil, 5. Biodiversity was present in small percentages while the quality of waste management had the most negative characterizations as very low and low.

The cognitive level of the majority of tourists in the Prefecture of Xanthi who participated in the research, about the European and National legislation for the protection of the environment, climate change and the conservation of biodiversity is moderate. The number of visitors who are well acquainted with European and National legislation on environmental protection, climate change and biodiversity conservation is very small.

An equal percentage of visitors (30%) know or do not know (30%) about what is allowed and what is forbidden in Natura 2000 areas while the remaining 40% have an idea but do not know for sure what is valid.

The majority of people who visited the Prefecture of Xanthi and participated in the survey (75%) know the term "green tourism"

75% of the respondents stated that they chose the Prefecture of Xanthi as a tourist destination influenced by posts on social media, which states that advertising is an important means of promoting and attracting visitors to a place.

More than 50% of respondents who chose the Prefecture of Xanthi as a tourist destination visited traditional settlements in the area, archeological sites, museums and participated in activities such as hiking and Canoe-Kayak. Activities such as mountaineering, climbing, rafting, spa tourism and rafting were less popular with research participants.

The local actors, based on most of the answers, managed to respond effectively to a high / very high degree as far as the feeling of security of the provided activities is concerned. In terms of adequate signage, information / guidance, maintenance staff and information on potential risks of activities in the prefecture, the degree of satisfaction of visitors is high or moderate for the majority. However, there are visitors who stated that the tourist environment did not meet their expectations and the local agencies did not respond effectively to the activities they participated in. Therefore, there is room and need to improve the provided tourist activities of the prefecture

45% of the participants in the survey stated that from their visit to the Prefecture of Xanthi they had the feeling that the environment is taken care of, by the competent

bodies to a high degree while 40% considered that the environment of the prefecture is taken care of, in a moderate degree, by the competent bodies. In addition, a small percentage of 15% expressed the view that the environment of the prefecture is taken care of, to a low degree.

In addition, the majority of respondents stated that the degree of infrastructure in the context of alternative tourism such as information centers, printed material, information signs, specialized staff, traffic congestion system and easy access for different groups of tourists is moderate or low. Especially as far as the existence of information centers is concerned, no visitor answered positively. Therefore, the necessary attention must be given to the infrastructure of alternative tourism in order to improve it.

The visitors in the prefecture suggest improving the access to it, an easier access to the places of activities, creation of tourist packages with offers and more highlighting and promotion of the options that exist for the visitors of all age groups. Also they suggest better information and promotion of the tourist activities/destinations of the place, larger and targeted investments in the field of alternative tourism and mainly in the mountains of the Prefecture, strategic utilization of resources by hiring experts in the field of alternative tourism, who will make decisions after research and not arbitrarily, creation of information centers, raising public awareness, environmental protection from waste, more rubbish bins and recycling, greater exploitation of the natural landscape with more activities and improvement and creation of tourist infrastructure.

40% of the respondents believe that in the last three years there has been some improvement in national or local environmental policy in terms of waste management, recycling, public awareness, information through seminars, organization of activities and excursions in natural landscapes of the prefecture and the exploitation of natural wealth.

25% of the respondents claim that in the last 3 years there has been no improvement in national or local environmental policy and suggest as solutions to reverse this, within education in schools, creating incentives for ecological awareness, utilizing

resources for friendly and environmentally infrastructure and raising public awareness.

Seven (7) out of the twenty (20) visitors, named Germany the country with the highest level of environmental status, three visitors said Austria, three Switzerland, two the Netherlands, two Norway and one for each of the following countries: Poland, Denmark , Finland, Scandinavia, the Baltic and Sweden.

The reasons why the respondents declared the above countries as the countries in which in their opinion the condition of the environment is at the highest level are the following: the legal framework and its observance, proper information of the citizens, environmental awareness, many options and innovations in the general field of environment (e.g. products, shops, environmental groups, innovative ideas and their implementation in municipalities, buildings, etc.), education, infrastructure, awareness and information of citizens from an early age at school, engaging in alternative tourism, state coordination and care for the protection of the environment, environmental awareness.

The existence of a legislative framework which requires the observance of measures for the protection of the environment in combination with the information and awareness of citizens from an early age in order to acquire environmental awareness and education as well as the creation of appropriate tourism infrastructure are the main and most effective measures to protect the environment and biodiversity.

3. Gap analysis between the current situation and the needs and expectations of customers throughout the area of the Act

Based on the results of the two previous studies, a gap analysis is performed between the current situation and the services provided on the one hand and the needs and expectations of customers on the other, throughout the study area. The results of the gap analysis will be used to design the common framework model.

WHAT IS GAP ANALYSIS?

Gap analysis allows organizations to determine the best way to achieve their business goals. It compares the current situation with the ideal situation or goals, pointing out the shortcomings and opportunities for improvement.

The questions that should be answered are:

- In which areas of your business are your results good and perhaps better than your competitors or market expectations?
- In which areas of your activities have you not achieved the goals you have set?
Mainly: What are the reasons you have not achieved your goals?

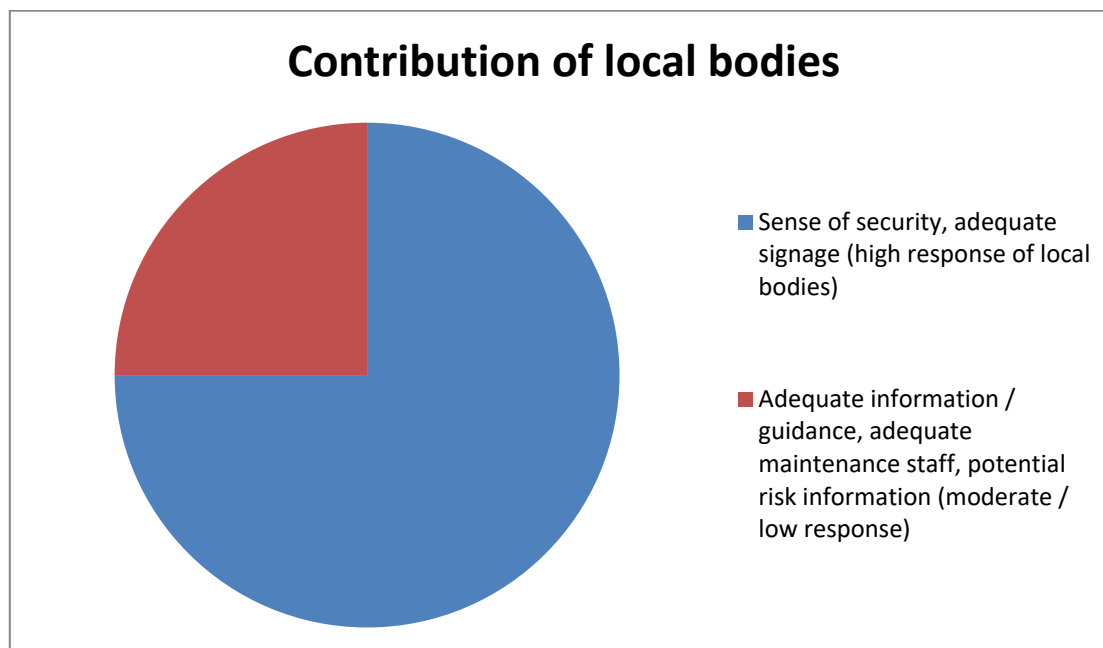
This method offers important capabilities for identifying the causes of possible discrepancies and also determines how to implement strategic and operational measures that will close the discrepancies that have been identified.

RESULTS THAT MEET THE VISITORS 'EXPECTATIONS

Based on the answers given by the visitors of the Prefecture, the areas of activity, the facilities and the infrastructure that meet their expectations are presented below.

A case of **high / very high response** is related to the activities that the visitors took part in and the contribution of the local bodies. The local bodies, as reported by the visitors, met their expectations regarding **the sense of security** of the provided activities and the **adequate marking (road, signs)**, while their response to issues of

information, availability of maintenance staff and information on possible risks was considered moderate to low, as we will mention below.



More than half of the visitors who took part in the survey chose to visit traditional settlements, archaeological sites and museums as well as activities such as hiking and Canoe-Kayak instead of: mountain climbing, climbing, rafting and spa/ healing tourism. (Activities that need to be promoted more).

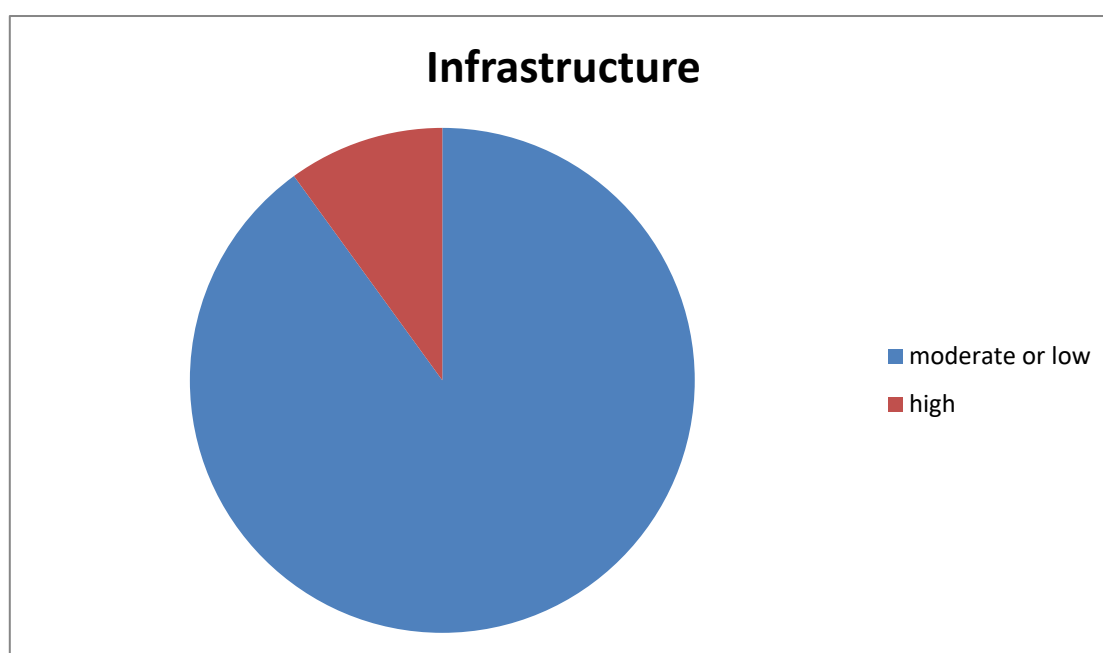
Finally, 65% of visitors consider that the tourist environment of Xanthi met equal or better to their expectations.

Regarding the **promotion and advertising** of the area and the ecotourism initiative:

75% of the participants of the survey chose Xanthi as a tourist destination influenced by posts on **social media**. Other reasons that encouraged the participants to visit the Prefecture are either actions of local bodies of the Prefecture of Xanthi or the fact that they are residents of Xanthi.

RESULTS THAT INDICATE THE NON-ACHIEVEMENT OF THE GOALS

From the visitors' point of view, the answers that reveal the gap of the market concern the **infrastructures** in the context of alternative tourism. Specifically, the majority of the interviewed visitors of Xanthi stated that the degree of infrastructure in the context of alternative tourism such as information centers, printed material, information signs, specialized staff, traffic congestion system and easy access for different groups of tourists is **moderate or low**. Especially as far as the existence of information centers is concerned, **no visitor answered positively**.



Another **moderate or low** rating by visitors was related to the **response of local bodies** to: information/guidance, adequate maintenance staff and information on possible risks in areas such as pathways, observatories, etc.

The most important view of the entrepreneurs who took part in this research, regarding the possible causes / reasons that have not achieved their goals in specific areas of activity, is based on the lack of information from experts, the lack of actions and the continuous monitoring of their implementation, lack of programs related to the regeneration of areas and the lack of incentives leading to non-compliance with measures to protect the environment of the areas.

Promotion and advertising of the region:

Sources of influence that did not help at all in the choice of destination were: tourist brochures of local organizations, travel agencies, internet (project website)

4. Good practices at an international level

Agrotourism in Europe emerged in the 1980s and has grown significantly since then. Several European countries have significantly developed agrotourism, through a variety of agrotourism activities, with the contribution of the policies of the respective governments. Agrotourism represents an important part of tourism in Europe, while revenues reach large amounts. Of course the EU contributed positively to this issue through its guidelines. Internationally, the United States has the longest history of agrotourism since it emerged in the 1960s and has grown steadily since then, with significant growth in China, Japan and Australia. As mentioned above, the concept of agrotourism first appeared in Europe in the 1980s, while since the 1990s a total of 12 countries (Belgium, Denmark, Greece, the Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, Ireland, Great Britain, Italy, Austria, France and Germany) have registered more than 100,000 agricultural tourism businesses. In general, European countries as a whole have a positive attitude towards the development of agrotourism-ecotourism (Gopal, Varma, Gopinathan, 2008).

GOOD PRACTICES

By good practices we mean the set of guidelines, ideas, procedures that have proven in practice to be more effective than others.

According to the European Commission, a practice is good when:

- ✓ It is innovative
- ✓ Effective
- ✓ Sustainable
- ✓ It can be repeated under the same conditions
- ✓ It can be transferred and adapted to other environments

Like most economic activities in Europe and elsewhere, ecotourism is governed by both legal and voluntary systems. In some countries there is a solid and structured legal framework, while in others this framework is fragmented. For the most part, formal legal systems focus primarily on protecting the environment on the one hand and the client / tourist on the other, usually including Protected Areas legislation or regulations on agrotourism accommodation and services or other forms of mild tourism. Voluntary systems are becoming increasingly popular in the ecotourism sector, based on agreed "codes of practice". They vary widely in scope and complexity but have two common features: first, they are market-driven and second, they are structured around sets of criteria that reflect the best known practices in the field. "Quality labels" are the most structured of these systems. Their acquisition is sought by private companies as a means of promotion and marketing and is usually awarded by independent bodies or committees that the companies themselves recognize and which try to ensure as much objectivity and proper application of the standards as possible. There are currently around 100 different types of eco-labels worldwide that are related to tourism. Although the concept of "ecotourism" is very broad and includes various services related to activities in nature and the corresponding facilities, travel, housing and food, most of them are aimed at sustainable tourism and mainly concern the marking of accommodation.

1. GLOBAL SUSTAINABLE TOURISM COUNCIL (GSTC)

The Global Sustainable Tourism Council (GSTC) establishes and manages global standards for sustainable travel and tourism, known as the GSTC Criteria. There are two sets:

- Destination Criteria (for public policy-makers and destination managers)
- Industry Criteria for hotels and tour operators.

They are the result of a worldwide effort to develop a common language about sustainability in tourism. They are arranged in four pillars:

(A) Sustainable management

(B) Socioeconomic impacts

(C) Cultural impacts

(D) Environmental impacts

GSTC does not directly certify any products or services, but provides an accreditation program through its partner ASI/Assurance Services International to accredit Certification Bodies.

The GSTC Destinations Criteria -known informally also as “GSTC-D”- are the minimum that any tourism destination should aspire to reach.

The GSTC Criteria have been developed and revised while striving to adhere to the Standard-Setting Code of the ISEAL Alliance, the body recognized to provide guidance on international norms for developing sustainability standards in all sectors. The most recent revision of the GSTC-D took place in 2019 and was based on two rounds of stakeholder consultation.

Some of the uses of the GSTC Destination Criteria include the following:

- Serve as the basis for certification for sustainability
- Serve as basic guidelines for destinations that wish to become more sustainable
- Help consumers identify sound sustainable tourism destinations
- Serve as a common denominator for information media to recognize destinations and inform the public regarding their sustainability
- Help certification and other voluntary destination level programs ensure that their standards meet a broadly accepted baseline
- Offer governmental, non-governmental, and private sector programs a starting point for developing sustainable tourism requirements

- Serve as basic guidelines for education and training bodies, such as tourism schools and universities
- Demonstrate leadership that inspires others to act.

The Criteria indicate what should be done, not how to do it or whether the goal has been achieved. This role is fulfilled by performance indicators, associated educational materials, and access to tools for implementation, all of which are an indispensable complement to the GSTC Criteria.

The GSTC-D have been designed for destinations. The criteria do not relate to a single body but rather to a named place that can be uniquely identified. The criteria simply require that the condition described pertains in that destination, irrespective of what body may be responsible for it or how or by whom any related action is implemented.

GSTC Tour Operator and Hotel Criteria

- Some of the uses of the criteria include the following:
- Serve as the basis for certification for sustainability
- Serve as basic guidelines for businesses of all sizes to become more sustainable, and help businesses choose sustainable tourism programmes that fulfill these global criteria
- Provide greater market access in the growing market for sustainable products, serving as guidance both for travelers and for travel agencies in choosing suppliers and sustainable tourism programmes
- Help consumers identify sound sustainable tourism programmes and businesses Serve as a common denominator for information media to recognize sustainable tourism providers GSTC
- Help certification and other voluntary programmes ensure that their standards meet a broadly-accepted baseline
- Offer governmental, non-governmental, and private sector programmes a starting point for developing sustainable tourism requirements
- Serve as basic guidelines for education and training bodies, such as hotel schools and universities

- Demonstrate leadership that inspires others to act

2. NEW ZEALAND

There are an increasing number of guidelines, programmes and certifications in New Zealand to indicate environmental preferability, many of which have their own ecolabels or logos.

Environmental Choice New Zealand (ECNZ)



Environmental Choice New Zealand is New Zealand's official ecolabel. Environmental Choice's Type I ecolabel offers strong, independent proof of environmental best practice for those products and services that bear the mark.

Type I ecolabels, like Environmental Choice New Zealand, work by enabling companies to compete on demonstrable environmental standards that are specific to issues within their industry.

Simply put, customers recognize and reward companies who want to prove the manufacturing and lifecycle of their product does less environmental harm.

Key characteristics of a Type I ecolabel:

- Rigorous, multi-criteria assessment of environmental harm across the whole life-cycle of a product or service
- Independent, third party verification
- Ongoing compliance
- Criteria are written locally to address local environmental issues
- Criteria are updated regularly to encourage continuous improvement.

At the foundation of Environmental Choice are the technical specifications it develops, setting the most stringent, up to date standards for environmental compliance in business.

New Zealand companies who can meet or exceed these specifications are permitted to display the ECNZ mark, widely recognised by New Zealanders as a badge of environmental leadership.

Environmental Choice operates to internationally recognised standards and principles, and is a member of GEN, the Global Ecolabelling Network, which links a world of environmentally preferable products and services.

VISION

Supporting New Zealand businesses, Government, and consumers to transition to a sustainable and low-emissions economy by introducing competition for environmental leadership within industries.

MISSION

As the country's most trusted and recognised ecolabel, we enable significant reduction of environmental harm for New Zealand, enhancing the value of New Zealand and its businesses.

Benefits to you as the service or product provider

- a point of differentiation between you and your competitors, allowing you to reliably compete on environmental value
- confidence that your products have less negative impact on the environment across their entire life cycle
- customer recognition and market reward that you are acting responsibly in preparing your product or service and delivering it to them
- stronger employee engagement arising from the positive environmental and sustainability stance you have taken
- recruitment and retention benefits because of your business's robust environmental reputation
- community recognition that you are an environmentally aware and responsible organisation
- economic benefits arising from more efficient processes and thoughtful sustainability initiatives

The companies listed below all have products which have been awarded an Environmental Choice New Zealand license.

- Advance International Cleaning Systems (NZ) Ltd
- Asaleo Care
- Aspect Furniture Systems
- Bestwood
- Bio-Zyme New Zealand Ltd
- Brother International (NZ) Limited
- Canon
- Car Clean Products NZ Ltd
- Care4 Products
- Chemical Solutions Limited
- Cottonsoft Limited
- CrestClean
- Daiken New Zealand Ltd
- Customwood
- Deesignatek
- Dulux Ltd
- Earthwise Group Ltd
- Eco Group NZ Limited
- EcoPro Cleaning Co.
- Ecostore
- FUJIFILM Business Innovation New Zealand Ltd (Formerly Fuji Xerox New Zealand)
- Furnware
- Gerard Roofs
- Golden Bay Cement
- GreenEarth
- Green Rhino
- IdealCup™

- Kimberly-Clark Australia Pty Ltd

3. FRANCE

Today France is one of the most active countries within the European Union in the field of eco-labeling. There is no legislation regarding eco-labeling in France.

« NF Environnement » Label



The NF Environment label is a label issued by AFNOR (Association Française de Normalisation-French Standardization Association). This label was created in 1991.

Unlike the European eco-label, this is an official French ecological certification. This label is intended to distinguish goods and their packaging with low environmental impact throughout their life cycle. All consumer products are eligible for the label except pharmaceuticals, food and automobiles.

The NF-Environnement Mark eco-labeling system is run by the Environmental Labelling Committee (Comité Français des Ecolabels, CFE), the main responsibility of which is the development of product group criteria. The CFE is made up of the representatives of industry, commerce, consumer and environmental groups, the Ministry of Industry, the Ministry of Environment, the Academic Committee, the ADEM (Environment Protection and Energy Agency), and of the AFNOR.

In the NF-Environnement Mark system, AFNOR evaluates the applications, develops the product group criteria, signs the contract with the applicant, and inspects the use of the label. AFNOR also appoints the members of the Verifying Committee.

Application and label use

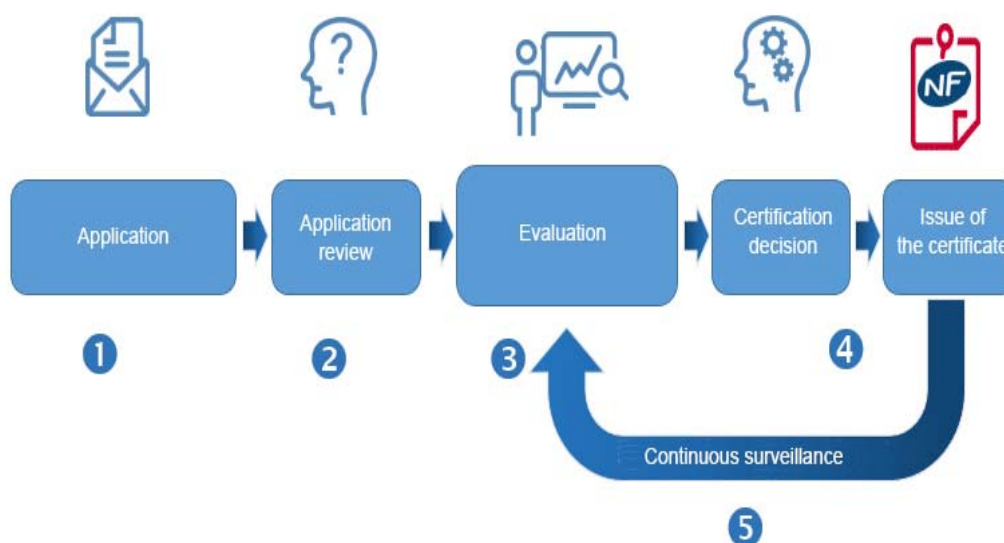
An expert of AFNOR evaluates applications for the NF-Environnement Mark, and – in case it is needed – an outside expert is also involved in the evaluation process. Decision is made by that Director of AFNOR who is responsible for the directorate developing the given product criteria. In case the application is accepted, AFNOR signs the

contract with the applicant, after which the applicant is entitled to use the NF-Environnement Mark on its products.

The manufacturer must pay a registration fee to cover the costs of processing the application. In addition, the manufacturer must pay the costs of verifying that the product conforms to the Technical Rules, as well as pay a site visit fee, an administration fee, and compliance test fees. In addition, an annual royalty payment (0.1 percent of product sales) is payable for the right to use the NF-Environnement logo.

If a manufacturer is found to be mis-using the NF-Environnement Mark, AFNOR may apply sanctions on the product and/or may withdraw the manufacturer's rights to use the eco-label.

NF CERTIFICATION KEY STAGES



For the process from submission of your application through to displaying the NF Certification logo on your products or services, a few months is normally sufficient. Since, although there may be numerous requirements to be met, the procedure itself is simple.

5. Planning and development of the common framework

Based on the above and from the international experience gained from the Agenda 2030, the 17 Sustainable Development Goals adopted by the United Nations and the World Tourism Organization, the Common Sustainability Framework is the common agreement of establishing criteria which provide a common understanding around the world and the business community about sustainability, and ecotourism. It is obvious that there is a close relationship with the concept of the environment and the interconnection with its individual concepts in local adaptation. Natural, structured, cultural, social and economic environment compose the framework of sustainable development and the level that each body / business aspires to reach in parallel with its own objectives causing chain effects at each classified level of knowledge, effort and application.

The overall picture is the one that creates competitive advantage through the complementarity that is required from the vertical approach of the users' , visitors' and citizens' steps as well as the horizontal networking, that creates levels of added value and externality, gradually forming a unified identity of quality and recognition for businesses/bodies and the destination as a whole. Gap Analysis and Good Practices, as analysed above require coordinated initiatives from a wide range of bodies such as the Chamber of Commerce of Xanthi, and possibly the parallel activation of other, individual bodies / businesses and networks, public and private bodies that face sustainable development and its implementation criteria not just as an opportunity but as a tool of immediate and simultaneous adaptation through the reorientation of many different in size, perception and philosophy organizations.

5.1 Background Configuration

The common sustainability framework constitutes a local pact of quality and sustainability, linking the broader concept of the environment and the need to protect and promote it. The human activities of both community people and visitors have shown that conditionally visited areas can enjoy better levels of protection and sustainability. The common sustainability framework concerns the study and implementation of the quality label in companies of the eligible area, mainly members of the Xanthi Chamber, which reflects the level of acceptance and adoption of procedures for the implementation of the criteria of sustainable development.

The common sustainable framework for agrotourism/ecotourism and the mild forms of tourism concerns the assessment of the environmental footprint in order to avoid an environmental burden in the reference area which is the wider area of Xanthi, including Nestos, Arda and mountainous Rhodope. The framework can be applied by grading levels of all stakeholders active in the sector, such as primary sector enterprises (farmers, breeders, apiarists, fishermen, and forest producers), restaurants, agricultural cooperatives, accommodation, information centers, volunteer groups etc. With minimal adjustments, the framework can be applied to all sectors of the economy and to all social, cultural institutions.

The aim of this common model of sustainability is to connect the local community with the development of the biodiversity conservation strategy and at the same time to ensure the relationship of local economic development so that it becomes continuous, uninterrupted and therefore sustainable. This objective is achieved by creating incentives for local communities to connect the economy and health with the environment and to help preserve biodiversity as a valuable, sustainable and non-consumable, natural and economic resource in their area. The concept of biodiversity is enriched by the concepts of habitats, on-site conservation, special protection zones, the red list, ecological corridors, mainly for the dissemination of knowledge and their local importance.

The aim is to promote sustainable development and tourism with its thematic forms and especially agrotourism / ecotourism in order to directly and actively link tourism activity with agricultural construction, its products and agricultural heritage in terms of continuity and sustainable development. Through the common model of sustainability framework, the integration of internal monitoring and self-evaluation procedures of each participating institution / company is achieved. A key element is the knowledge and treatment of human resources and the formation of a culture related to the natural environment (of the area of action / reference), the cultural environment (the local host community) but also of the management mechanisms of visitors / customers / beneficiaries especially in the structures strengthen and promote rural development by creating a sustainable improvement background compatible with the concept of sustainability.

The Common Sustainability Framework defines common guidelines that can be implemented in ways that the agrotourism and manufacturing sectors make a positive, interconnected complementary contribution to the economic activation of rural areas and their multiplier effect on the basis of sustainability. At the same time, reducing the environmental footprint by recognizing the importance of natural resources as well as recognizing the importance of management and human resources creates compatibility with environmental, social and community values, allowing both farmers and producers in general a quality of life in terms of sustainability while for customers / visitors / beneficiaries a series of positive interactions and the creation of quality experiences that are reflected at the healthy relationship between producer / consumer and the wider healthy relationship of the host / visitor and the citizen / destination in terms of quality and sustainability.

The evolution of the local quality and sustainability pact can go through the Hellenic Accreditation System SA – ESYD which based on Law 4468/2017 has been defined as the National Accreditation Organization of Greece according to its requirements Article 4 of Regulation (EC) 765/ where each Member State designates a single national accreditation body. For the issuance of an accreditation certificate, the candidate body is evaluated on the spot by a team of evaluators and possibly experts, whose members have in-depth knowledge of the respective technical subject, as well

as experience in the evaluation of quality assurance systems. The evaluators are selected and trained according to strictly defined criteria and procedures and they obey to rules regarding the independence, integrity and confidentiality.

5.2 Methodological Approach

The development of the common model of sustainability is based on the adaptation of the local research of the present study, the international literature on destination management, local quality agreements and the requirements for sustainable development as adopted by the UN and the European Union.

The common framework of sustainability is developed in 4 pillars which are analyzed in a series of initiative actions and specialized at the level of implementation in criteria. The number of criteria and the way they are developed create a graded rating scale and give, depending on the level of compliance, a quality-sustainability signal to the participating body/company. The levels of compliance are three, **bronze** with the basic minimum participation criteria, **silver** with good practices of environmental conservation and coexistence with wildlife and **gold** with active participation in habitat improvement and implementation of a long-term model of sustainable development.

The compliance process is educational, with a consensus assessment and not repression, and it is completed in two phases. The first is the self-assessment phase and it is done voluntarily from each body/company that is interested to find out what level of compliance is theirs. This results in encouragement of actions and initiatives to link environmental protection actions and production processes with local communities. It is mainly an introductory training process. The second phase of evaluation is done at the request of the body for on-site evaluation-inspection by an independent evaluator-inspector in consultation with the evaluated body / company after the self-evaluation of Phase A has been completed, which is taken into account.

The aim is to encourage the uniform implementation of policies by public and private bodies for the environment in its broad sense and for biodiversity so that they are acceptable, applicable and effective. The involvement of local communities and the

interested members in the implementation of the policy on the restoration and conservation of biodiversity is a key element in addressing the problem of fragmentation in the region due to different administrative and state entities. Beyond the respective administrative boundaries, the area and the evaluation criteria are treated as a whole and the environmental area, integrated, as one with common or similar ecological characteristics.

The result is the development of a new Sustainability Quality Label (QL), which will have specific criteria and will be promoted to professionals in the target areas (tourism businesses, crafts, etc.) to comply and provide procedures that protect the biodiversity of the area in respect of the recognition, education, awareness and holistic approach of combining actions for the natural, cultural and social environment of the reference area.

The attribution of the quality and sustainability signal is completed through the creation of an institutionalized flexible local certification mechanism utilizing the structure and the members of the Chamber of Xanthi. It is important that there is an ongoing, clear, established and institutionalized vertical process that includes: a) open invitation for trainers with criteria of basic and additional qualifications and initial training, b) organize of a register of inspectors-evaluators at the chamber level, (c) open invitation to companies/ businesses to go through the evaluation process, d) evaluation control and on-the-spot control, e) verification of the results and attribution of the label to the interested body/ company, f) the creation of a single identity for at least thirty bodies/companies with a sufficient geographical spread in order to start the publicity and to ensure the continuation of the procedures.

The Chamber of Xanthi will establish the local certification mechanism of the selected units in the WLFE area, by decision of its administrative body, organizing the Label attribute and Dispute Resolution Unit with the clear process of compliance with the criteria.

In addition to the initial 5 inspectors who will be the first group of inspectors who will be thoroughly trained in the analysis of the criteria, the unit takes care to keep open the invitation to both inspectors-evaluators and inspections.

In this way, the dissemination of knowledge is methodologically ensured both to the bodies / companies that will be evaluated and to the inspectors-evaluators who will go through the educational process that will ensure common handling of various cases during the inspections (calibration). Only trainees who successfully pass the training and special tests will be classified as accredited inspectors and will be registered in the relevant register. Respectively, only the bodies / companies for which will be found compliance with the criteria will be awarded the label which expresses the level of compliance.

Finally, the adoption of the common sustainability framework may include a large percentage of the local specificities of each region in the wider cross-border zone and therefore can be used throughout the WLFE region. This achieves the main goal of WLFE which is the participation of the interested parties-members across the cross-border area in a joint effort to preserve and upgrade wildlife habitats and sustainable development in the natural, cultural and social environment in the project reference area.

In summary, the quality and sustainability label is attributed as Q4Ex= (Quality, 4E= Environment, Education, Enhancement, Efficiency, x=Xenia Xanthi). The initial procedure and criteria are here: [εδώ](#).

5.3 Criteria of the Common Sustainability Framework

The criteria of the Common Sustainability Framework are organized into four main thematic units: management of the bodies and effective sustainability planning, maximizing social and economic benefits for the local community, enhancing cultural heritage, and reducing the negative impact on the environment. The criteria are applicable to all bodies/companies through a set of indicators for evaluating the behavior and quality of services provided to customers/beneficiaries.

The criteria are developed and revised in parallel with the effort of complying with the Agenda 2030, the Standardisation Code established by the ISEAL Alliance which is the recognised body to provide guidance on international rules for the development of

sustainability standards for all sectors as well as the global Sustainable Tourism Council. The criteria will be reviewed by the body every 5 years following both international requirements and European directives. The planning for the reviews as well as the preliminary registration for the public contribution to future reviews are available on the chamber's website as well as on the website which provides additional information on the progress and history of the development of criteria. Uses of the public sustainability criteria are included in the following:

- Act as a certification basis to sustainable management
- Act as training guidelines for businesses and organizations of all sizes to include sustainability in the culture of management and leadership
- Help businesses choose sustainable tourism programs that meet these globally recognized criteria
- They offer greater access to the growing market for sustainable products acting as a guide for both travelers and other tourism ecosystem intermediaries in selecting suppliers and sustainable tourism programs
- Assist consumers and beneficiaries in identifying truly sustainable tourism programs and businesses
- Act as a common denominator for the media in identifying sustainable service providers
- Support quality certification and other voluntary programs ensuring that their standards meet a widely accepted reference level in terms of sustainable development
- Provide a starting point for the development of the requirements for sustainable tourism in governmental, non-governmental and private sector programs
- Act as basic guidelines for education and training providers, such as hotel colleges and universities
- They improve the leadership of each body to inspire a change of attitude so that there is sustainable action at local, regional, national and international level

The criteria indicate what should be done, not how it should be done. They also demonstrate whether the objective has been achieved by assigning a level of mastery, knowledge, effort, application and quality result, starting from bronze, to silver and ending at the gold level. This role is fulfilled by **performance indicators**, appropriately developed training materials, and access to tools for implementation, each of which is an essential complement to the criteria of the common standard framework.

The **performance indicators** presented here are designed to provide guidance in the measuring of the compliance with the criteria. They are not intended to be the defining set or to include everything, but to provide a consistent sample to the users of the criteria for developing their own indicators. **Performance indicators** provide a suggested list of circumstances, factors, evidence and actions that have to be looked for when assessing the compliance with the criteria. The implementation of the criteria will help operators/businesses and the destination to contribute to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). In each of the criteria, one or more of the 17 SDGs are identified, depending on which of them is most relevant.

The common standard framework of criteria refers to all types of businesses in the agri-tourism sector (Catering, Accommodation, Tourism / Outdoor Activities, Primary Sector (farmers, stockbreeders, apiarists), Manufacturing, Private Volunteers, Information Centers, NGOs & School Units) covering the requirements that contribute to the creation of expectations on the one hand and to the satisfaction of the service provision on the other hand, giving terms of completeness and quality to customers/beneficiaries. At the same time, the critical mass of the participating bodies/companies and the dispersion, both geographically and in the sectors of the local economy, gives added value to the reference region which can also participate through local authorities. The aim of the common sustainability standard-framework is the integration of all structures into a common certification system and monitoring of the criteria, which is why it is applied the European guideline for open data.

The application of the criteria of the Common Sustainability Framework is defined to the greatest practical extent unless if for a specific situation (bodies/companies), the criterion does not apply and this can be justified. There may be cases where a criterion

does not apply to a particular tourism product, taking into account local regulatory, environmental, social, economic or cultural conditions. In the case of small and community-owned bodies /agro-tourism and other enterprises which have a small social, economic and environmental footprint, it is recognised that limited resources may prevent comprehensive implementation of all criteria. One goal, however, is to encourage even the smallest groups to participate and contribute through their effort.

Further guidance on these criteria, the supported indicators and the glossary is available in the **Q4eX Criteria ANALYTICAL GUIDE v.1.0**. The initial procedure and criteria are here [εδώ](#).

5.4 Criteria structure

The criteria are developed in four thematic categories each with two or three sub-sections, as shown below. The order of the sections and sub-sections do not show the relative importance of each topic. The Common Sustainability Framework is defined in balance on the following pillars:

<p>A. Management of the institution / company / groups & human resources</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Management structure and framework - Involvement of executives/members/clients - Sustainability management effectiveness - Managing pressure and change 	<p>C. Sustainable Relationship with the Cultural Environment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Protection of cultural heritage-Σχέση με χώρους πολιτισμού - Maximizing the benefits for the environment and minimizing the negative impacts
<p>B. Sustainable Relationship with the Natural Environment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Conservation of natural heritage - Management of natural resources - Waste and emissions management - Maximizing the benefits for the environment and minimizing the negative impacts 	<p>D. Sustainable Relationship with the Social Environment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Local economic benefit - Social prosperity and relationships - Maximizing social and economic benefits to the local community and minimize negative impacts

Table 1: Common Sustainability Framework Criteria

The set of evaluation criteria are compatible with the general philosophy of respective labels at European or global level as they are based on the 17 goals of sustainable development. The criteria of sustainable relationship with the environment and the organizational and administrative capacity of each company with a total weight of 60%

are specified as special criteria. Additional criteria with a total weight of 40% of the total also assess, equally, the sustainable relationship with the cultural and social environment. The criteria are common to all bodies/companies and based on international standards so that it is possible in the future the connection of WLFE with some of them.

The criteria are divided into mandatory and optional. In each criterion response the institution / company receives a reference score which is added to the respective sector. The basis for achieving compliance is the 500/1000 with which the operator obtains the sustainability quality label at the lowest level.

The criterion grading is officially valid only after the confirmation of the evaluator of the register inspector and therefore only then the certificate of acquisition of the label is given which is signed by the evaluator and the head of the unit. The quality label is valid for one plus one (1+1) year when in the second year the body/ company will have to go through a re-evaluation process in order to maintain or improve the mark.

The criteria and score are analyzed as follows and examples are given:

Criteria	Maximum 1000	Significance	Mandatory	Optional
Specific	A. Management of the body/ Company/Group	30%/300d	150	150
Specific	B. Sustainable Relationship with the Natural Environment	30%/300d	150	150
General	C. Sustainable Relationship with the Cultural Environment	20%/200d	100	100
General	D. Sustainable Relationship with the Social Environment	20%/200d	100	100

Table 2: Criteria Analysis

Example 1: An agency collects the 500p (points) of the mandatory criteria out of the 1000. Result: Receives the Label for a period of 1 + 1 year

Example 2: An agency collects the 900p (points) out of the 1000. Result: Receives the Gold Label for 1 + 1 year

Example 3: A company collects 600p without however being able to collect at least 100p from section D for a sustainable relationship with the social environment. Result: Does not receive the label, is improved and re-evaluated upon request.

Example 4: A company collects 600p without however being able to collect at least 100p from section D for a sustainable relationship with the social environment. Result: Does not receive the label, is improved and re-evaluated upon request.

5.4.1 Management: Institution/Company/ Groups & Human Resources

Management is defined as the key process of achieving sustainability objectives and therefore the adoption of the common sustainability framework from the interested members. Therefore the structure and management framework, members' engagement and the management of pressure and change are the key modules.

Each body/company needs to have sustainability as part of its strategy and can potentially support the sustainable destination or receive visitors. This is achieved by an effective organisation, department, team, or competent committee for a coordinated approach to sustainable development and sustainable tourism with an expressed will for private and public sector cooperation. The body/company has defined responsibilities, oversight and implementation capacity to manage socio-economic, cultural and environmental issues, understanding first and foremost that it is not only concerned with the internal environment, analyzing strengths and weaknesses, but also with the external environment, understanding opportunities and threats. The organisation/enterprise has sufficient (self-) financing possibilities, and the ability to cooperate with a range of bodies by having sufficient staff or members (for associations/groups), including staff with experience in sustainability and following the principles of sustainability and transparency in its operations and

transactions. Staff is involved in the development and implementation of the sustainability management system and receives periodic guidance and training on their roles and responsibilities for achieving it.

The body/company has established and is implementing or seeking to implement a multi-annual management strategy and action plan that is publicly available, appropriate to its scale, developed with the widest possible stakeholder involvement and based on the principles of sustainability. The strategy includes the identification and evaluation of the value added of each body/company and takes into account socio-economic, cultural and environmental issues and risks. The strategy relates to and influences the broader policy of sustainable development and action through management.

The operator/enterprise shall implement a system for monitoring and responding to socio-economic, cultural and environmental issues and impacts arising mainly from activity and tourism. Actions and results are regularly monitored, evaluated and publicly reported. The monitoring system shall be reviewed periodically. The organisation communicates its sustainability policy, actions and performance to interested parties, including customers/members/beneficiaries and seeks to engage their support. Customer experience and satisfaction, including aspects of sustainability, are measured and corrective action is taken.

The body/company implements a programme with accurate promotion. Promotional materials and marketing communications are accurate and transparent about the organisation and its products and services, including its sustainability claims. Operators do not promise more than they offer.

The body/company adopts standards of corporate commitment and sustainability by regularly informing its internal environment (partners, suppliers, employees, members) about sustainability issues, encouraging them to make their activities more sustainable. The body/company promotes the adoption of sustainability standards, the implementation of the criteria of the Common Sustainability Framework and the publication list of certified sustainability bodies accepting that it is part of a network that collectively influences the identity of an entire destination.

The body/company shall enable and promote active public participation in sustainable planning and management. Local communities' ambitions, concerns and satisfaction with sustainability and its management are regularly monitored, publicly reported and action taken to achieve them. The body/company has a recording and monitoring system to enhance local understanding of the opportunities and challenges of sustainable tourism and consequently support communities to respond.

The operator/enterprise shall encourage and have a system in place to monitor and publicly report on visitor satisfaction with the quality and experience of sustainability and, if necessary, take steps to improve their satisfaction. Visitors can learn about sustainability issues and efforts to achieve them, as well as actively contribute by becoming and playing a role in the process as volunteers, recorders or observers.

The body/company has promotional and informational material to inform visitors about its own identity and its connection to the destination and is accurate in terms of products, services and sustainability requirements. Purchase or participation messages and other communications reflect the values and approach to sustainability and treat local communities of people, cultural heritage and natural resources with respect.

The body/company has a visitor management system which is regularly reviewed. Measures are taken to monitor and manage the volume and activities of visitors and to reduce or increase them as needed at specific times and in specific areas, in order to balance the needs of the local economy, the community, the cultural heritage and the environment.

The entity/business follows guidelines, regulations and/or planning policies that control the location and nature of sustainable development require environmental, economic and socio-cultural impact assessment and incorporate sustainable land use, design and construction based on applicable legislation. With regard to buildings and infrastructure, there is planning, placement, design, construction, renovation, operation and demolition of buildings and infrastructure in compliance with the requirements of spatial planning and laws related to protected and sensitive areas and natural and cultural heritage issues. The carrying capacity and integrity of the natural

and cultural environment are taken into account and sustainable local practices and local materials are applied.

The body/company shall identify the risks and opportunities related to climate change. Climate change adaptation strategies are pursued for the placement, design, development and management of tourism and other facilities. Information on the operator's contribution to projected climate change, associated risks and future conditions is provided to residents, and visitors.

The body/company has a plan about risk reduction, crisis management and emergency, that is appropriate for its scale. The key elements are communicated to residents and visitors. Procedures and resources shall be established for the implementation of the plan and shall be regularly renewed.

The body/company is committed to engage in sustainable tourism planning and destination management, where such opportunities and possibilities for participation and consultation exist.

5.4.2 Sustainable relationship with the Natural Environment

Conservation of natural heritage and protection of sensitive ecosystems is perhaps the most important area for ensuring sustainability and viability. It is not only the legislation that matters but also the effort to acquire a quality natural environment that acts as an added value and a force multiplier for each body/company. The food chain, the circular economy, constitutes an impenetrable total, in which important steps have been taken, but a significant effort is required from local communities. According to Tripadvisor (2019), the number one reason that tourists visit Greece is for its nature and natural heritage. They want a classical relationship with the nature and culture of the country on the basis of the microcosm. Moreover, according to the World Tourism Organization, two (2) out of the three (3) of the world's tourists move individually (UNWTO, 2018)

The body/operator is required to have, or attempt to monitor, a system for measuring and responding to the impacts of its activities on the natural environment, the

conservation of ecosystems, habitats and species, and the prevention of the introduction and spread of invasive alien species. The organisation also takes measures to prevent the introduction of invasive species. Native species are used for landscaping and restoration where possible, particularly in natural landscapes.

All bodies/companies managing visitors to natural sites should have or want to formulate a visitor management system in and around natural sites, that takes into account their characteristics, capacity and sensitivity and seeks to optimize visitor flows and minimize adverse impacts. Guidelines on visitor behavior in sensitive sites and cultural events are made available to visitors, tour operators and guides before and during the visit. The body/company follows appropriate guidance on the management and promotion of visits to natural sites in order to minimize negative impacts and maximize the fulfillment of visitors' expectations.

Bodies/companies located on sites where wildlife interactions occur must have a system in place to ensure compliance with local, national and international laws and standards for wildlife interactions. Interactions with wildlife, taking into account the cumulative effects, should be non-invasive and responsible in order to avoid adverse effects on the animals concerned and to ensure the viability and behavior of wild populations.

At the same time the bodies/companies ensure the legal exploitation of species and the good treatment of animals through information and a system that ensures compliance with local, national and international laws and standards that seek to ensure the good treatment and conservation of species and biodiversity (animals, plants and all living organisms). This includes the harvesting or capture, trade, display and sale of wild animal/plant species and their products. No species of wild animal shall be acquired, bred or kept in captivity except by authorized and properly equipped persons and for appropriately controlled activities. The handling of all wild animals and the housing, care of pets meet the highest standards of welfare.

The conservation of biodiversity is supported including appropriate management of the site/installation of each of the body/company. Particular attention is paid to natural protected areas and areas of high biodiversity value. Any disturbance to

natural ecosystems is minimized, restored, and there is a compensatory contribution to conservation management.

Resource management and rational energy management is a component of the Common Sustainability Framework. Each body/company should have targets to reduce energy consumption, improve the efficiency of its use, and increase the use of renewable energy sources. The body/company can have a system that measures, monitors, reduces consumption and publicly reports their contribution to these targets.

Each body/company must make a positive contribution to water management by encouraging actions and initiatives that measure, monitor, and publicly report on water-related issues. Any water-related risk following interventions by the operator must be assessed and documented. In high-risk situations, water supervision objectives are identified and actively pursued with businesses to ensure that uses do not infringe and conflict agricultural, manufacturing or tourism businesses with the needs of local communities, ecosystems and visitors. Any such intervention must have maximum legal competence. The use of harmful substances, including pesticides, paints, and swimming pool disinfectants and cleaning materials, is minimized and substituted, where available, with harmless products or processes. Appropriate management shall be applied to the storage, use, handling and disposal of chemicals.

The bodies/companies shall monitor and report on the quality of water for drinking, recreational and ecological purposes using quality standards. Monitoring results are available to the public and every company can have a system in place to respond to water quality issues in a timely manner

The Operator shall implement practices to minimize pollution from noise, light, run-off, erosion, ozone depleting compounds, and air, water and soil contaminants.

Waste and emissions management is a critical factor for operators and businesses. Each body/company shall have clear and applicable guidelines for the installation, maintenance and control of discharge from septic tanks and wastewater treatment systems. The operator must ensure or demonstrate that efforts are being made to

find sustainable solutions so that the waste is properly treated, reused or safely released without adverse effects on the local population and the environment.

The bodies/companies are handling solid waste with great respect. Each business must measure and report on waste generation and set objectives for its reduction. It ensures that solid waste is properly treated and diverted from landfill by providing a multi-flow collection and recycling system that effectively separates waste by type. The management of each organisation should encourage action to avoid, reduce, reuse and recycle solid waste, including food waste. Particular reference is made to actions to eliminate or reduce single-use items, in particular plastics and those that are not recycled. Solid waste residues that are not reused or recycled shall be disposed of to appropriate bodies for further treatment in accordance with safety and sustainability rules.

Each body/company can incorporate actions to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and mitigate climate change. It is important to have objectives for the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions and to report on the implementation of mitigation policies and actions. Businesses are encouraged to measure, monitor, reduce or minimize, disclose and mitigate greenhouse gas emissions from all aspects of their operations (including suppliers and services). Offsetting other emissions such as diversification into production/transport/transport modes is encouraged.

Bodies/companies may additionally have aims for reducing emissions from travel within and outside the destination. An increase in the use of sustainable low-emission vehicles, public transport and active travel (e.g. walking and cycling) is needed to reduce the contribution of tourism to air pollution, congestion and climate change. Obtaining hiking-friendly (HikersFriendly, 2020) or cycling-friendly (BikeFriendly, 2020) labels is an important element of sustainability as it touches a large part of everyday life which is also a quality experience from the visitor's point of view.

The body/company shall ensure through guidelines that light and noise pollution issues are addressed. In addition to regulations, especially in outdoor open spaces close to nature and habitats, it is necessary to minimize light and noise pollution as much as possible. Each body/institution must encourage actions and initiatives to follow the relevant directives and regulations.

5.4.3 Sustainable Relationship with the Cultural Environment

The body/company shall ensure in its operation the protection of the intangible and tangible cultural assets of the place including political promotional, the restoration and preservation of cultural assets, and the established intangible cultural heritage and cultural landscapes.

The body/company recognizes the added value of cultural artefacts and takes care of the promotion and the observance of the legislation in the proper sale, trade, display or donation of historical and archaeological objects or copies. The laws are made public, including tourism businesses and visitors.

The body/company recognizes the value of intangible heritage and supports celebrations and actions to protect cultural heritage, including local traditions, art, music, language, gastronomy and other aspects of local identity and their distinctive and therefore competitive character. The presentation, reproduction and interpretation of living culture and traditions is sensitive and respectful, seeks to engage and benefit local communities and provides visitors with an authentic, genuine and unique experience. At the same time, the local community is ensured continuity in terms of quality of life and reconnection with the whole region.

The body/company aims to have access to traditional cultural resources by ensuring their observation and protection and, when necessary, assist in the restoration and access of the local community to natural and cultural sites.

The body/company shall respect intellectual property and contribute to the protection and preservation of the rights of communities and individuals. The body/company particularly acknowledges local producers by mentioning the name or requesting the

relevant permissions to republish photos and use media freely available on the internet. It does not mean that they are royalty free.

The body/company encourages visitor management in cultural sites by promoting and highlighting the possibility of structured and managed visitor access in and around cultural sites. It also takes into account their characteristics, capacity and sensitivity and seeks to optimize visitor flows and minimize adverse impacts. Guidelines on visitor behavior in sensitive sites and cultural events are made available to visitors, intermediary users (tour operators, guides, escorts, tour leaders) before and during the visit. Also, the body/company creates areas/corners that reflect the visitors' need for information related to the respective object of the business.

The body/company is committed to explaining its site and the wider area with accurate interpretive material that informs visitors of the significance of the cultural and natural aspects of the sites they visit alongside its physical object. The information is suitable for the cultural heritage, developed with the cooperation of the host community (local information network or local government) and communicated clearly in languages relevant to visitors and residents. The body/company shall provide interpretive information on the natural environment, local culture and cultural heritage, as well as an explanation of the importance during visits to natural areas, and cultural heritage sites to achieve/educate appropriate behavior. The enterprise tries to use product/service catalogues with photos and perceptual maps to ensure communication with visitors from all over the world without the need for translation, which is often rendered in a mechanical way.

5.4.4 Sustainable Relationship with the Social Environment

The body/company measures and evaluates the direct and indirect economic contribution of tourism to the economy and to itself and then provides general data to the destination if data is monitored and made public. The body/company requires that appropriate measures are taken at destination level which may include information and actions to ensure sustainable levels of visitor volumes, visitor

spending, labor and employment, investment and evidence of the distribution of economic benefits to the local population.

The body/company shall ensure decent work and career opportunities by encouraging and supporting ecotourism/agrotourism training and specialization. The body/company is committed to provide equal opportunities for local employment, training and advancement as well as a safe working environment and a living wage for all. The body/company supports local employment and giving local people equal employment and development opportunities, including managerial positions.

The body/company shall encourage the retention of tourism expenditure in the local economy through support for local businesses, supply chains and sustainable investments. Promotes the development and marketing of local sustainable products based on the principles of fair and equitable trade and reflecting the nature and culture of the region. These may include agricultural, livestock, forestry and fishery products, food and drink, local cottage industry and crafts, arts, products from local women's cooperatives and disabled groups.

The body/company provides support for society through actions and a social responsibility system that enables and encourages visitors and the public to contribute in a responsible way to society and sustainability initiatives.

The body/company shall ensure that exploitation and discrimination of any kind is prevented in accordance with international human rights standards. Fully and comprehensively implement laws, practices and established codes of conduct to prevent and report on human trafficking, modern slavery and commercial, sexual or any other form of exploitation, discrimination and harassment against anyone, particularly children, adolescents, women, LGBT and other minorities. Established practices are public and are implemented.

The body/company shall adopt actions and system for monitoring, prevention, reporting to the public and addressing any risks, safety and health that meet the needs of both visitors and residents.

The body/company shall fully accessibility procedures, physical or electronic, for everyone. Wherever it is possible, places, facilities and services, including those of natural and cultural significance, are accessible to everyone, including people with disabilities and others who have special accessibility requirements or other special needs, e.g. elderly people or families with children or parents with pushchairs. In case sites and facilities are not readily accessible, access is provided through the design and implementation of solutions that take into account both the integrity of the site and the reasonable accommodations for people with accessibility requirements that can be achieved. Information on the accessibility of premises, facilities and services is provided.

The body/company shall actively support initiatives for local infrastructure and social development of the community, including, education, training, health and hygiene and projects addressing the impacts of climate change.

6. Adaptation of the common framework to local conditions

The common sustainability framework needs a number of processes in order to be activated and gradually become accepted in the local society, taking into account local specificities and conditions. The aim remains to achieve the broadest possible consensus on the acceptance of the criteria of the sustainable development so that through the training processes, encouragement, improvement, through deepening and raising awareness in environmental issues in pursuit of efficiency and strong the commitment of bodies/companies to the requirements of sustainability. At the implementation level, the adoption of criteria is required which is scored. The criteria may change if there is a change at the sustainable development criteria at international level. At this stage the criteria were adopted in the US in December 2019 and are valid until 2023. The steps to adapt the model to local conditions are presented in summary as follows:

6.1 Acceptance of the certification system by the governing body

The completion, acceptance and implementation of this study is defined as the establishment of the common sustainability framework and its monitoring through the creation of a Local Sustainability Pact and Sustainability Label Unit and the manual of procedures for obtaining the certification of the label.

The decision of the governing body of the Chamber of Xanthi activates the following procedures a) an open invitation for trainers based on the following criteria, additional qualifications and training, b) organisation of a register of inspectors-evaluators at the chamber, c) open invitation for business operators to enter into the process of evaluation, control compliance and monitoring of label criteria, d) evaluation control and on-the-spot control of the bodies/businesses, (e) monitoring of results of the evaluation and award of the label.



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6.2 Acceptance of the Label by the governing body

The completion and acceptance of this report clearly defines the certification and label process.



Table 1 : Label proposal

There are three (3) label levels and they are related to the maximum score that each organisation/business can gather. The maximum is 1000 points on the scale of compliance criteria. For the Bronze Label category it is required a minimum of 500p+, while for the Silver category 600p+. For the Gold category the evaluation score for the criteria should be 800p+. A change of compliance level requires re-evaluation. Each label has a validity QR which leads to the page of the program and certifies the authenticity of the label.

GOLD	SILVER	BRONZE
From 800p and above	From 600p to 799p	At least 500p to 599p

Table 2 : Levels of Labels



Figure 1 The Sustainability Quality Label at the Gold Level



Εικόνα Figure 2 Silver level

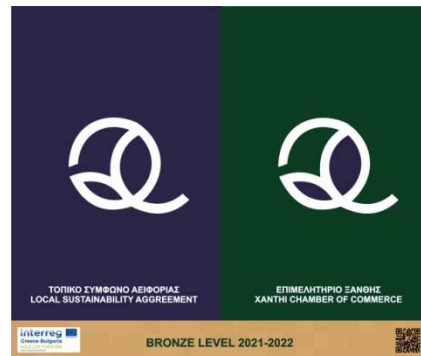


Figure 3 Bronze level

The colors of the logo are blue and green, symbols of water and nature. Blue is CMYK 100/100/10/60 while green is CMYK 100/25/100/75. The visualization is vector-based and contains the letter Q, which internationally stands for quality and a couple of leaflets that link to the environment and sustainable development. At the base of the label, the level (Bronze/Silver/Gold) and its validity is indicated, on the left is the logo of the project/programme and on the right is the QR of the label validity with a redirect to the authentication of the label.

6.3 Open invitation for Inspectors- Evaluators

The certification process for bodies/companies needs to be continuous and structured. For this reason, the implementing body of this study proceeds according to the timetable to a call for expression of interest for the staffing of at least 5 inspectors-evaluators from the members of the Chamber. For this purpose, it publishes an open call/invitation for expression of interest, firstly to members and secondly to the local community. In addition to the invitation for expression of interest, the application form is published as well as the main and additional characteristics of the candidates. The initial open invitation for expression of interest for the inclusion in the Register of Inspectors, Evaluators, Trainers of the Chamber of Xanthi, is accompanied by the Open Invitation for Expression of Interest which you can download here [εδώ](#) as well as the application form along with the characteristics, qualifications and skills of the candidate. Candidates are entered in the temporary register of evaluators and are initially evaluated in terms of mandatory qualifications and immediately afterwards, if they meet the requirements, they are led to the relevant training-examination by a qualified associate-trainer of the contractor team. The request, registration and verification of the documents for the first 5 inspectors are responsibilities of the study contractor. Then the process and its costing, if any, is regulated by the Unit of Quality-Sustainability Label.

6.4 Inspectors- Trainers- Evaluators of the Label

Inspectors-Trainers-Evaluators can be individuals who have responded to an open invitation of the organization for their inclusion in the register of inspectors-trainers-evaluators of the label maintained by Unit of the Chamber of Xanthi with the following qualifications:

a) Mandatory qualifications

1. Degree in Higher Education from a Greek University (A. E. I. /T. E. I.) or equivalent degree from a Foreign University School legally recognized by the competent legal body, preferably in environmental administration or tourism administration or sustainable/regional development administration or related to the above.
2. At least two years of professional experience, acquired during the last decade, in one or more of the following areas/sectors: a) Environment b) Tourism c) Manufacturing, mainly in SMEs d) Energy, mainly in RES (Renewable Energy Sources)/Co-production/Co-generation/Savings e) Quality f) Services-Trade g) Information and Communication Technologies (ICT), h) Cultural and Creative Industries i) Rural/Rural Development j) Regional Development
3. Knowledge of the Greek language as well as English or another EU language at level C
4. Certified skills in the use of computers as well as in distance communication and distance learning

b) Desirable qualifications

1. Certification of Adult Educators in force by the EOPPEP (National Organization for the Certification of Qualifications & Vocational Guidance)
2. Master's/Doctoral Degree.

Also, those who are already members of the Intermediate Body for Entrepreneurship and Competitiveness Operational Programmes evaluators register can request to join the register (<https://www.efepae-registry.gr>)

Applications are registered in order of priority, receiving a protocol number from the Chamber of Xanthi. Those who apply to become inspector-evaluators and are found to meet the criteria are placed on the provisional register of inspector-evaluators and can attend the Inspector-Evaluator training programme.

6.5 Inspector-Evaluator training program

The Inspector-Evaluator training program is open to those who have been placed on the provisional register of inspectors-evaluators after their formal and auxiliary/desired qualifications have been checked.

An invitation to participate in the training program is organized immediately afterwards. In each training program there is a 12-hour training timetable which is divided as follows, 5 training hours in theory, 5 training hours in the field and 2 hours of examinations. The program is short and no absences are foreseen. The training may be distance learning and includes theoretical training and Inspector-Evaluator Compliance exercises. The 5 hours of theory training analyze the background of the label, its interrelationships with sustainability issues, quality and applied policies in sustainable development issues.

The 5 field training hours are related with case studies of evaluation (in practice) with evaluation of the criteria and a comparative method with the self-assessment already carried out by the applicant of the label.

Finally, 2 hours are allocated for the development of a scenario as an examination procedure as an Examination procedure of Inspector Evaluators in order to establish that the trainees can cope with the inspection-evaluation process by informing, educating and evaluating at the same time, since the crucial part of the process is to encourage continuation of quality and sustainability policies without repressive attitudes and without damaging the credibility of the process.

The first training of the 5 inspector-evaluators with the full training program, compliance exercises and inspector-evaluator exams will be the responsibility of the contractor of this study. Upon successful completion of the training program and the relevant examination procedure, the inspectors-evaluators can participate in the register of the Quality- Sustainability Label Performance Unit.

We note that the first 5 applications that are positively evaluated will be able to participate in the training program organized by the contractor in cooperation with a certified trainer from the EOPPEP. Subsequently, the educational program and the examination procedure as well as the relevant costs of the procedure, which are borne exclusively by the inspector-evaluator, are regulated by the Quality- Sustainability Label Performance Unit of the Xanthi Chamber of Commerce.

6.6 Register of Inspectors- Evaluators

In order to serve the needs of the evaluation of the Quality-Sustainability Label Performance Unit, the applications and the monitoring of the inspection of the implementation of the certification process for the acquisition of the Quality-Sustainability Label of the Common Sustainability Framework, and the compliance with its specifications as well as the following legal requirements, a register of evaluators-inspectors is established by decision of the Xanthi Chamber of Commerce.

Individuals shall be entered in the Register at their request in accordance with the procedure set out in the preceding paragraphs. Initially by nomination to the provisional register and at the end of the training-examination process to the general register of assessors-inspectors.

Evaluators must have a degree from an institution of higher education, combining extensive experience and expertise in the evaluation of relevant projects, studies and programmes. For their registration in the Register, the body invites by public invitation the interested parties to submit an application. The call for expression of interest shall specify the above-mentioned qualifications of the applicants and the way in which they are to be documented.

By decision of the Xanthi Chamber of Commerce, the Registry is formed (a three-member Committee from the Quality Label Performance Unit), which evaluates the applications of the interested parties, judges whether and to what extent they have the qualifications required for participation in the educational-examination process. If

the procedures are successful, the Committee recommends to the body, by decision of which they are entered in the Register.

Before taking up their duties, all applicants are invited to provide the following confirmation: «...that I will perform my duties in accordance with the law, the provisions of the body regarding the awarding of the Xanthi sustainability quality label and will carry out the work assigned to me conscientiously, impartially, indefinitely and impersonally». After the process of appointing inspector-evaluators, the parties concerned shall sign a protocol. Registration in the Register does not create an employment relationship with the Chamber or any other body/business/organization or the public sector.

Inspectors-Evaluators must be identified/ authenticated in accordance with the provisions of Law 3979/2011 and participate in the evaluation process of certification applications exclusively with their identification data.

The Quality- Sustainability Label Performance Unit ensures the training of the Inspector-Evaluators and the periodic certification of their skills by decision of the Quality- Sustainability Label Performance Unit. By decision of the Quality- Sustainability Performance Unit, the Inspectors-Evaluators are evaluated by those being evaluated and when they do not carry out their work on time or do not fulfill their duties properly, they are removed from the Register, following a recommendation of the Quality- Sustainability Label Performance Unit.

The Quality- Sustainability Label Performance Unit also ensures that any questions and clarifications raised by the inspectors-evaluators during the evaluation process are recorded and answered only electronically and communicated to the entire network of inspectors-evaluators.

The inclusion in the register has a cost that is borne exclusively by the inspector-evaluator, which is determined by the Chamber of Xanthi. The Chamber of Xanthi may publish the surname, name and status of the inspector-evaluator on the website of the organization or programme.

6.7 Certification Procedures Manual

All procedures in this study are available in a summary manual of certification procedures which is available to inspectors- evaluators. In particular, the manual includes:

- ✓ Sustainability Quality Manual
- ✓ Description of the Certification procedures
- ✓ Label Performance Inspection-Evaluation Work Instructions
- ✓ Planning of the system forms

6.7.1 Open Invitation to Bodies/Companies

The certification procedure for bodies/companies requires an open invitation to open invitation immediately after the establishment of the register of inspectors/evaluators. The invitation needs to be continuous and structured. The initial procedure and invitation can be found here [εδώ](#).

For this reason, the implementing body of this study is proceeding according to the timetable with an open invitation for expressions of interest for the certification of at least 30 organizations from the members of the Chamber. For this purpose, it publishes an open invitation for expression of interest, firstly to members and secondly to the local community. In addition to the call for expression of interest, the criteria and the method of certification based on the adoption of criteria are published.

The initial open invitation for expression of interest for certification in order to obtain a quality-sustainability label on behalf of interested bodies/companies is accompanied by the Open Invitation for Expression of Interest. Bodies/ companies can view it here [εδώ](#) as well as go through the process of self-assessment and requesting confirmation of assessment from the inspector-evaluator of the register.

6.7.2 Application for Certification & Self-Assessment of Bodies/Companies

The application for certification of the body/company and the procedure for compliance with the criteria of the Common Sustainability Framework for obtaining the label, concerns the assessment of the body/company in order to obtain the sustainability quality label.

The companies can, at any time and at no cost, start the process of checking compliance with the criteria. (The initial procedure and criteria are here [εδώ](#)) This procedure constitutes the first phase of the self-assessment of the bodies and at the end of the procedure they have the option to choose the second phase evaluation where an independent inspector-evaluator, after consultation within 15 days, proceeds to an evaluation based on the registration and control of the supporting documents and, if the criteria are met, to certification and awarding of the label. For the first 30 inspections-certifications the cost is borne by the study contractor. The request informs the body/company of the status of its application and of the evaluation and certification phase.

Then the process and its costing, if any, is regulated by the Quality-Sustainability Label Performance Unit.

6.7.3 Certification Assessment - Report of Inspection of Bodies/Companies

The application of the body/company is evaluated according to the compliance with the criteria based on the registration and the verification of the supporting documents. Once Phase A of the self-assessment has been completed by the interested body/company, the business can request confirmation of registration from an inspector-evaluator of the register. The inspector prepares an inspection report and ranks the body/company. The report should be fully documented. The request informs the enterprise of the status of its application, the stage of assessment and certification and the outcome of the inspection. In any case, the communication is

simultaneously communicated to the Quality Label Performance Unit under the responsibility of the inspector-evaluator.

For the first 30 inspections-evaluations the cost of the inspection-evaluation by an independent inspector-evaluator is borne by the study contractor. Then the process and its costing, if any, is regulated by the Quality-Sustainability Label Performance Unit. At the end of each process there is an evaluation by the evaluator to ensure the quality of service provision.

6.7.4 Awarding of the Label - Validity of the Label of Bodies/Companies

After the successful evaluation, confirmation of the inspection data, the inspector-evaluator draws up the quality-performance certificate which is awarded to the company operator together with the label level, followed by the joint acceptance of the common obligations.

The label is awarded with the agreement of the body/company, the evaluator and a representative of the Chamber and an annual contract is concluded with a validity of one (1) + one (1) year. The award of the label includes a number of publicity benefits to the body/business as a reward for its efforts towards sustainable and green development. Please note that the label is granted to the enterprise for as long as it complies with the conditions and procedures set out in the list of compliance criteria. In any case of improper use, the label is returned to the Quality-Sustainability Label Performance Unit.

6.7.5 Acceptance of Common Sustainability Framework Commitments

With the completion and acceptance of the label, the acceptance of the common obligations with acceptance of publicity and settlement of disputes follows as an agreement between the Quality- Sustainability Label Unit and the body/company regarding the compliance with the terms and conditions.

6.7.6 Publicity Rules, Continuous Information, Awareness Raising

The Quality- Sustainability Label Performance Unit reserves the right of publicity exclusively for the body/company that has obtained the label and it is in force. In addition, it keeps the data in accordance with the GDPR data protection regulation and also reserves the right to inform by e-mail all those who have been contacted at least once and accepted the electronic communication. Electronic communication will be done by e-mail and a newsletter which will target the results of the action and the initiatives taken. The aim of the information is not a commercial, but rather it aims to raise awareness among the public and the business community towards the adoption of sustainable development criteria in as many bodies/companies as possible.

6.8 Workshop on Information, Documentation, Online Viewing

As part of its publicity activities, the Quality and Sustainability Label Unit may organize annual and periodic information events with a physical, electronic or hybrid presence. The aim is to attract businesses to follow the certification procedures through periodic reports and statistical monitoring of the overall situation in terms of adoption of sustainable development criteria.

6.9 Adoption of Criteria and Monitoring System

The criteria are adopted upon receipt of the present study by the Chamber of Xanthi, which by decision of its competent body can activate them at the level of the reference framework within which institutions and enterprises of the reference area are included and evaluated.

6.10 Timetable and implementation procedures

	Procedures / Time Sequence	0	5	10	11	12	13	14	15
		15/6	20/6	25/6					30/6
1	Acceptance of a certification system by the governing body of the Institution / Decision of the Institution (Board of the Xanthi Chamber)	0							
2	Acceptance of a signal by the governing body of the Institution	0							
3	Open Invitation of Inspectors-Evaluators	0							
4	Inspectors-Trainers-Label Assessors	0							
5	Training Program for Inspectors-Evaluators		0						
6	Register of Inspectors-Evaluators		0						
7	Certification Procedures Manual		0						
8	Open Invitation to Bodies / Companies			0					
9	Certification Application & Self-Assessment of Bodies / Companies				0				
10	Certification Evaluation - Inspection Report of Bodies / Companies					0			
11	Label Award - Label Validity of Bodies / Companies						0		
12	Acceptance of Common Obligations of the Sustainability Framework							0	
13	Rules of Publicity, Continuous Information, Awareness								0
14	Workshop on Information, Documentation, Online Viewing								0
15	Adoption of Criteria and Monitoring System								0

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