



Municipality of Patras Local Action Plan

RUnUP Thematic Network

AN URBACT II PROJECT



Connecting cities
Building successes



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Foreword

The economic crisis of the last years has created an introversion climate and isolated the Greek economy from global markets and financial mechanisms, with negative results for the local SME'S and entrepreneurs. A significant number of enterprises with the Region of Western Greece have been closed during the last two years and unemployment rate has raised up to 16%, stretching the insecurity and making harder the life of the people.

Except the unfavourable internal environment of Greece, other European and International economies are improved during the same period and the needs for goods and services are increasing. The wealthy economies are those that include innovation, introduce new competitive products and services and handle the international markets with extroversion. Therefore, the acceleration of the transformation from the traditional structures and operation of our local economies to knowledge-based economies, should be a target that it is not only included in papers and strategic documents, but a roadmap of prosperity and wealthiness for the Greek businesses in the next years.

The knowledge sector institutions like the Greek Universities and Research centers have a nodal role in this attempt, promoting the culture of innovation in businesses, enhancing that way the competitiveness and extroversion of Greek economy. The businesses from their part should transform the old-fashioned way that they operate, incorporating new production methods, differentiating their products and services by exploiting the special local characteristic of our Region and our Country and at the same time the knowledge offers in our Universities.



Antonis Kotsalis

President, Patras Municipal Enterprise for Planning and Development S.A.

Executive Summary

URBACT II is a European Programme funded by the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) aimed at fostering the exchange of experiences among European cities and disseminating knowledge on all issues related to sustainable urban development.

The city of Patras, through its Municipal Development Enterprise (ADEP S.A.) was awarded funding in November 2008 through the URBACT II programme for the RUnUP (Role of Universities in Economic Development in Urban Poles) project. RUnUP explores how medium sized cities can develop new ways of working with Universities to promote economic development through the 'triple helix' – the combination of the university, business and public sectors.

The transnational project is led by Gateshead Council and has eight key partners: Campobasso (Italy), Barakaldo (Spain), Patras (Greece) and Solna Sweden), Leszno (Poland), Dunkirk (France), Agueda (Portugal) and Potsdam (Germany) and is supported by a Lead Expert, funded directly by the URBACT secretariat, – Dr Clive Winters from University of Coventry undertook this role.

A Local Support Group led by Patras Municipal Enterprise for Planning and Development S.A has been established including University of Patras, Chamber of Commerce, Hellenic Open University, Patras Technological Institution, Patras Science Park, Business Innovation Pole of Western Greece. The Managing Authority of the Regional Operational Programme of Western Greece supported also the RUnUP project, by signing a letter of Support and committed itself to adopt the Local Action Plan that will be delivered by the ULSG.

The URBACT Local Support Group developed the current Local Action Plan (the key output of RUnUP), studying the existing strategic framework in the city of Patras in terms of technological and business development, the current financial opportunities and instruments that can be exploited for specific activities, concluding in a series of axes and actions that can influence positively the local economy of the city of Patras.

The Local Action Plan focuses on three main sectors: Information and Communication Technologies, Environmental Management and Protection and Manufacturing, Agriculture and Food Industry Technologies.

Introduction

Cities are widely recognised as playing a fundamental role in the promotion of the knowledge economy but most research and policy has focussed on large cities with World-class educational and research institutes and advanced clusters of economic activity. There are clear and significant gaps in the knowledge of how smaller sized cities, with different levels and types of knowledge institutions and different levels of economic activity can compete within the Knowledge Economy. Yet such cities are recognised within European Union policy as playing a vital role in the implementation of the Lisbon agenda.

At the end of 2007, European Commission adopted the programme URBACT II, as the sequel of the successfully implemented URBACT I programme, in order to develop effective and sustainable responses to major urban challenges, through the creation and common work of city networks.

The URBACT II RUnUP thematic network addresses in a uniquely different way the fundamental issues of how universities should engage with their local communities with a particular focus on medium-sized cities; the role of local authorities and municipalities and the importance of triple helix structures for supporting economic development and encouraging entrepreneurship.

Patras Municipal Enterprise, acting as the main development and consulting branch of Municipality of Patras exploited the opportunity to participate in URBACT II networks, aiming at the exchange of knowledge and experience with other small and medium European cities.

The thematic of RUnUP project, that is the Role of Universities for Economic Development in Urban Poles, matched perfectly with the profile of the city of Patras, as it concentrates a significant number of Academic Institutions and scientific organizations that constitute one of the most important activities of the city.

Moreover, the RUnUP project extended the traditional role of Universities as bodies of knowledge and research to a pillar that along with the business sector and local administration pillars support the local economic development, innovation and entrepreneurship by creating a triple-helix scheme.

The final acceptance of RUnUP project in the middle of 2008, launched with two main tasks for the city of Patras: to participate in a European network of cooperation and sharing of knowledge and at the same time to create a local Support Group with stakeholders from private sector, academic sector and public administration that will approach commonly the problems and challenges for the economic development of the city.

With the effective coordination of the network by the city of Gateshead (UK) and the scientific support and encouragement of the Lead Expert of the project Dr. Clive Winters, the Local Support Group of the city of Patras was initially aware about the important role of the Universities in local economy development and gradually adopted experiences and ideas from successful European examples that could be implemented in the city of Patras.

The end of the project in the middle of 2011, is coming in a period where the smallest economies of Europe are facing enormous economic problems and the prosperity and social cohesion is more than ever an essential demand. In that timing, the common work in local and European level and at the same time the support of Regional authorities with instruments like the Local Action Plan can contribute to the extroversion and competitiveness of the local economies.

This local action plan focuses on the improvement of the local economy in the city of Patras, with emphasis to existing business sector transformation and creation of new innovative businesses.

The action plan presented at the end of this document will be under constant review, monitoring the actions that have been outlined and measuring specific indicators that influence the local economy and growth. The URBACT local support group of Patras (ULSG) will continue to meet regularly in order to keep track of the delivery of the Local Action Plan and enrich new committees or local group with its presence.

The City of Patras acknowledges the existence of the URBACT II operational programme (2007 - 2013) in funding the work of the RUnUP network. URBACTII is funded by the European Regional Development Fund aimed at fostering the exchange of experiences among European cities and disseminating knowledge on all issues relating to sustainable urban development.

Economic and Policy Context

It is recognised that the development of a Local Action Plan cannot be completed in isolation and that its background and actions need to reflect existing local, regional and national strategies and activities. In this context the Patras Local Action Plan has been developed within a framework of local, regional and national strategies.

These include the regional development plan of Western Greece Region (ROP Western Greece 2007–2013), the business plan of the city of Patras 2010, sectoral programmes and funding opportunities within 4th Community Support Framework. In addition it draws upon the activities and actions of Patras Life: Patras and the work of the universities located within the area of Patras.

The City of Patras

The City of Patras with a population that exceeds the 200.000 people is the capital of the Region of Western Greece and Achaia Prefecture. The Municipality of Patras is one of the major actors that moderate the local economy. The Municipality along with its partner organisations are directly and indirectly influencing the local economy of the city.

One of the most important direct activities of the Municipality of Patras that improves the local economy is the development of the Small Industry and Handicraft Park where more than 100 businesses have been established. In addition several public buildings have been assigned to local businesses using the Public-Private-Partnership model. Indicative examples are the Veso Mare complex that includes 8 cinema halls, one Bowling Centre, three restaurants and two bars, the Politeia Arts & Culture area, the Marine and Hill Restaurant and Bars etc.

The Municipality of Patras is also the main organization that manages the licences and develops the taxation policy for the local retailers and businesses and consequently has a major impact to the development of these kinds of businesses.

The indirect activities that play a significant role in the development of the local economy are the involvement of the Municipality of Patras in the organization of large-scale events like part of the Olympic Games of 2004, the Cultural Capital of Europe 2006 and the World Rhythmic Gymnastics Championship 2007 for example and also the annual Summer festival and famous Carnival of Patras that attract hundreds of thousands of visitors.

Finally, the Municipality supports organisations like Patras Social Enterprise that undertakes activities related with the support of unemployed people in poor areas of the city, support of unemployed or young people to be linked with the local businesses and support of disadvantage groups.

Specifically related to the work of the URBACT II network RUnUP the Municipality of Patras is a partner in the E.C. Business and Innovation Centre of the Region of Western Greece, a private non-profit Company, which was established in 1989, as BIC Patras.

The BIC is established and operates inside the Chamber of Achaia building, in close vicinity and collaboration with the Centre for SME Support, and the Electronic Commerce Centre for Western Greece. The building is placed at a strategic geographic location, right at the centre of the city of Patras, near the port, the municipality, railway and bus stations.

Operating inside the Chamber of Achaia provides several advantages, including sharing of Chamber facilities. Furthermore, close cooperation with the other hosted organisations and the Chamber provides several synergetic effects, arising from exploitation of the highly skilled and experienced personnel, and creating mutual advantages to all organisations.

In addition the Municipality works with the chamber of commerce for the Achaia Region. Currently the chamber has approximately 21.000 members, with 7500 members in the commercial sector, 9000 members in professional sector, 5000 members in handicraft sector and 100 in the industrial sector.

Indicative activities of the Chamber of Commerce of Achaia include the establishment of the Achaia Cooperative Bank, the establishment of the Business Innovation Centre, the establishment of the Enterprise for the Management of European Programmes of Peloponnese, Ionian Islands, West Sterea Hellada, the establishment of the Support Centre for SMEs of Western Greece, establishment along with Municipality of Patras, Achaia Prefecture and other local authorities of the Enterprise for Touristic Development of Achaia and Centre of E-commerce of Western Greece.

In line with the economy of Greece international sea transportation and commerce are important elements of the local economy with transportation accounting for 7.2% of gross value added recognising the importance of Patras as an important gateway to the markets of the European Union. Activities in agriculture and manufacturing remain of significant importance although activities in these primary and secondary sectors have declined by 2% and 7.5% respectively between 1995 and 2001.

Local Economy Outline

The Achaia profile

The primary sector while having the lowest Gross Value Added in the Prefecture of Achaia remains important as it employs 20% of those people who are economically active. The sector of fishery is important in the prefecture. Its professional fishing fleet is comprised of 243 vessels for medium and coastal fishing, which are active in the areas of the Patraikos and Korinthiakos gulfs, as well as in the Ionian sea.

The sale and distribution of fish of the Prefecture is done in the fish-pier of Patras. The fish-pier is also used as a place for the reception and distribution of imported fish from the EC countries or other countries, as well as of fish from other areas of the Greek territory. In the fish-pier of Patras more than 3.000 tonnes of fish are annually distributed.

Agriculture in the coastal area and in Western Achaia is well developed due to the good fertility of the territories but mainly because of the climatic conditions, that give the possibility for production of an important number of agricultural products with possibilities of export e.g. oil production, the viniculture, the citrus fruits, the horticultural, the spring potato.

The manufacturing sector in the prefecture has undergone significant recession in particular between 1984 and 1992 with significant impact in Patras and in addition overall economic activity in the secondary sector has declined by 7.5% between 1995 and 2001.

Despite this significant deindustrialisation the secondary sector in the Prefecture of Achaia remains the 3rd largest in Greece, producing 3.4% of the Greek Gross National Product in manufacturing. The sector of manufacturing is particularly developed in the prefecture of Achaia and especially in the area of Patras and the wider region, with a focus on the sectors of food and beverages, textile, clothing, non metal minerals and in the sector of machinery and equipment. In addition the construction sector is a significant industry accounting for 8.7% of gross value added.

Importantly the Prefecture of Achaia consists of 17.4% of manufacturing businesses in sectors that have been developing dynamically during the last 5 years, while 40% of manufacturing businesses in the Prefecture are concentrated in sectors that are in recession at the National level. As a consequence, the majority of the manufacturing industries of the Prefecture of Achaia do not belong in sectors with current growth potential.

The tertiary sector is the largest in the economy of the prefecture with growth from 61.6% to 71.1% between 1995 and 2001. In line with the economy of Greece international sea transportation and commerce are important elements of the economy of the prefecture with transportation accounting for 7.2% of gross value added recognising the importance of Patras as an important gateway to the markets of the European Union.

In parallel with these sectors, Patras shows a great development in the sectors of health services, education, research and development, as well as in the productive services. An analysis of Gross National Product per Capita region in Western Greece highlights that it is lagging behind, both on a national and European level. In particular, for the year 2003, the regional GNPPC for Western Greece corresponded to 77.3% of the Greece GNPPC and to 62.7% of the average European GNPPC in PPP (EU-25=100). Nevertheless, this region grew (GNP shift) at a higher rate than the community average (both EU-25 and EU-15) for the period 2000-2003, and consequently the per capita product difference with the European Union has gradually decreased¹.

The Prefecture of Achaia has good potential for the further development of research and technology services and the provision of innovative services to the local SMEs in particular linked to the University of Patras, the Technological Educational Institute of Patras and Patras Science Park. There are also important Research Centres and Institutes that contribute to the production of knowledge and innovation to the benefit of the local productive companies (e.g. BIC of Western Greece, CTI, etc), and have scientific and research potential with a specialization in sectors of high-value adding technologies.

SWOT analysis of Region of Western Greece

An analysis of the main characteristics of the Region of Western Greece as it is outlined in the Regional Operation Programme 2007-2013, that influence the city of Patras as it is its Metropolitan center is provided next:

Strengths

- Rio-Antirio Bridge
- Nodal position of Patras - Western Greece main Gate
- Operation of Research Institutes of International range
- Reach water potential and sources
- Touristic and Cultural sources. International range sites like Ancient Olympia
- Environmental sources - Protective areas (NATURA, RAMSAR).

Weaknesses

- Reduction of the rural population
- Low GDP per capita
- Low rates of employment and high rates of unemployment
- Low Production
- Low dissemination of the results of Research programs to the production processes
- Regional inequalities in infrastructures of ICT
- Lack of organized infrastructures for waste management
- Erosion of Land / Forest damages
- Lack of airport, modern highways and modern railways
- Lack of Natural gas

Opportunities

- Construction and operation of the new High-Way Korinth-Patras and modern rails
- Upgrade the role of the city of Patras as the main Greek Gateway to the rest EU countries
- Exploitation of the Research structures of the Region of Western Greece
- Increase of the International demand for qualitative services in Tourism or special Tourism sector.
- Development of Wind, Water or Solar Energy Infrastructures
- Development of alternative Tourism

Threats

- Increasing competitiveness in several production sectors of other EU countries
- Delay of linking Patras with Northern Greece and PanEuropean Highways

As it is also presented in the Report of Region of Western Greece for the Regional R&D and Innovation Strategy there are several weaknesses that should be overpassed in order to reform the local economy structure and to increase the innovation and competitiveness of local businesses. These main weaknesses are:

- Very low investments by the public and private sector in R&D and innovative applications. Among other reasons, this weakness is also due to the structure of the Greek economy (lack of large enterprises in innovation-producing, high-tech sectors). Business R&D expenditures are particularly low est. 16% of the EU average).
- Extremely low performance in several sectors: manufacturing (the lowest in the EU); employment in medium-tech and high-tech sectors; innovative manufacturing enterprises; new-to-market product sales, added value; high-tech industries.
- Weak production base, consisting of small-sized enterprises in traditional sectors that are used to transferring mature technology from abroad rather than developing technology in-house or cooperating with research organisations.
- Low performance in exports of high-tech products and in the development of new products.
- Low performance in venture capital, in terms of both supply (32% of the EU average) and demand.
- Segmentation of public R&D efforts across many areas, organisations and groups whose size is below the critical mass required to bring results.
- Public research organisations are characterised by introversion and a limited capacity to respond to the needs of the economy and of society. Nevertheless, the public sector is the main driving force for innovation in Greece.
- Weak intermediary technology transfer mechanisms, combined with qualitative and quantitative deficiency of liaison. Among other reasons, this is also due to the lack of the necessary specialised personnel in these areas.
- Incompatibilities between employment supply and demand in research - technology - innovation. Although social demand for university-level education is high, new graduate scientists can not be absorbed by the country's productive fabric. Lack of specialised scientists and engineers in rapidly developing technological areas; inability of new doctoral graduates to secure employment in enterprises; low level of life-long learning and training activities; lack of suitably qualified trainers.
- Lack of entrepreneurship in the Greek research community, and domination of "risk avoidance" attitudes, even in young people.
- Low level of recognition by the general public and by the enterprises of the importance of technology and of the possibilities it provides for restructuring economy and society. Society is wary of technological change, as a result of insufficient or distorted information. Inability to showcase social models from the research and innovation area.
- Great regional disparities. Concentration of R&D activities in the Attica Region (the only Greek Region whose innovation performance is above the EU average).
- Low performance in the registration of patents in all categories.
- Low performance in broadband penetration.
- Bureaucratic and time-consuming management system, focused on ex-ante evaluation rather than on monitoring and on detailed supervision of projects. Absence of a mechanism for systematic assessment/ study of the impacts of policies/actions/funding.

Policy Framework

There are several policy documents relating to future development and economy growth. The following section provides an analysis of frameworks most relevant to the city of Patras.

Lisbon Strategy

The Lisbon Strategy sets out a vision of creating the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world, promising to improve European Society, focusing efforts around growth and jobs; delivering stronger, lasting growth, and creating more and better jobs.

The Lisbon Strategy includes an action program based around three priorities:

- Europe is a more attractive place to invest and work.
- Knowledge and Innovation are the beating heart of European Growth.
- Policies are shaped to allow businesses to create more and better jobs.

Sectoral Programme- Competitiveness and Entrepreneurship

The core development goal of the Competitiveness and Entrepreneurship OP for the period 2007–2013 is “the improvement of the competitiveness and outward orientation of the country’s enterprises and production system, with special emphasis on the dimension of innovativeness.”

This core development goal consists of three strategic objectives:
(Acceleration of the transition to the knowledge economy.)

1. Development of healthy, sustainable and outward-oriented entrepreneurship and securing the natural, institutional and organisational conditions that will allow it to flourish.
2. Reinforcement of the appeal of Greece as a hub of business growth, with respect towards the environment and sustainability.

3. The rationale that governs the strategy emphasises the shift of public support towards increased added value interventions and sectors, towards actions fostering the ability to incorporate new technologies into the Greek production system and the adaptation of generated innovations, as well as the improvement of the country’s outward orientation through its interconnection with global integrated product and service production systems, the reinforcement of international collaborations between bodies and enterprises, the growth of the exports of goods and services, etc.

Sectoral Programme- Digital Convergence

The Development Vision for the new Programming Period of the Operational Programme (OP) “Digital Convergence” constitutes the “Digital Leap in Productivity – Digital Leap in Quality of Life”.

The strategic objective of the Programme is the “Digital Convergence of the country with the European Union by utilising Information and Communication Technologies (ICT)”. The achievement of the strategic objective is attained through the three Priority Axes set by the Operational Programme.

Sectoral Program - Human Resources Development

The Primary Objective of the OP’s development strategy is the utilisation of all human resources as a moving force for the country’s growth and the reinforcement of social cohesion. Establishment of reforms in the Mental Health sector, development of Primary Healthcare and promotion of Public Health. Supporting employment of women and youth, mature employees and vulnerable social groups. Promotion of equal access to the job market, as well as alleviating social isolation and boosting social cohesion.

Sectoral Program - Education and Lifelong Learning

The goal of the National Strategy for education is to increase the quantity, quality and effectiveness of investments in human capital, in order to upgrade the Greek educational and vocational training system.

The Programme is centred on four Strategic Goals, which correspond to its four thematic Priority Axes. Each thematic Priority Axis is repeated three times, once for each regional category (convergence, phasing out, phasing in). Thus, each Strategic Goal of the Programme corresponds to three Priority Axes with exactly the same content, one per regional category.

Sectoral Program - Environment & Sustainable development

The Strategic Goal for the Environment and Sustainable Development Sector during 2007–2013 is : The Safeguarding, Amelioration and Sustainable Management of the Environment, so that it can provide the foundation for the protection of public health, the improvement of citizens' quality of life, as well as constitute a primary factor contributing to the enhancement of the competitiveness of the economy.

The Programme's strategy mainly focuses on the effort to integrate Community Directives on urban waste water and urban solid waste, as well as on the implementation of Directive 60/2000, the promotion of green transportation and the construction of anti-flooding infrastructure and water supply systems.

Regional Operational Programme of Western Greece-Peloponnese-Ionian Islands 2007–2013

The three regions Western Greece, Peloponnese and Ionian Islands covered by the Regional Operational Programme of Western Greece - Peloponnese - Ionian Islands have variations, associated with different factors but at the same time share common characteristics.

The characteristics of the territorial section of Western Greece, Peloponnese and Ionian Islands substantiate the need for drafting a development strategy which contributes to the financial growth in the programming area and to improving the living standards of all three Regions.

Therefore, within the 2007–2013 period, the design of the ROP aims in expanding growth potential, in accelerating financial growth and social development, increasing productivity and improving quality of life of the citizens of all three Regions driven by sustainable development. The program has a budget of 1,315 billion €.

Business Plan of the city of Patras 2009–2010

The Business plan of Municipality of Patras is elaborated within the framework of organization, operation and modernization of the Municipality, aiming at the creation of permanent structures for organizing, monitoring and development. The obligation of elaboration of Business Plans introduced with the new law for Local Authorities (L. 3463/2006), especially for the Municipalities with more than 10.000 inhabitants.

The Business plan includes the Municipal strategy for local development for a specific period, the vision of the city within this period and specific actions and financial tools in order to deliver a realistic plan.

Comparison to the Baseline Study

The RUnUP thematic network seeks to maximise the economic, innovation and entrepreneurship potential of medium-sized urban poles. The challenges facing Patras within this context is that it has no focus on the transformation of its existing sectors of the economy (agriculture, food manufacturing) either through modernisation or diversification with no economic strategy or economic development activity at the municipality level.

A lack of data at the city level means that the identification of business need and the development and delivery of business support is being based on the needs of the prefecture and the region rather than local demand.

In addition given the high level of unemployment of 16.1% with business start-up rates below both the national average and convergence regions of the European Union and decline in economy activity within the primary and secondary sectors it is particularly important to consider the development of new industries within the economy potentially around Informatics and Communications and Environmental Management and Protection.

The primary sector (2010 data) contributes to the 5.2% of the Added Gross Value, while the secondary sector produces the 22.7 % and tertiary sector the 72.1% of the Added Gross Value accordingly. During the last decade there were not significant changes on the contribution of each economic sector in the total added gross value of the Achaia prefecture. The tertiary sector has the dominant role with 72.1 % of the AGV, but this value is now exceeding the national level that is 76.5 %.

Main Figures (2010 data)

- GDP per Capita (2007) in Achaia Prefecture: 20.200 €
- 75.3% of the Greek Average GDP per Capita
- 69.9% of the EU20 Average GDP per Capita
- Achaia prefecture contributes at 2.3% of the Greek GDP

Role of Universities in Urban Poles Context

With two universities, a technological institution and plenty of research institutes the City of Patras is an important scientific centre with a field of excellence in technical education. These institutions attract more than 30.000 students from other Greek or foreign areas that study and live in Patras.

The strength of the academic and services sector in Patras was recognized within the original URBACT II RUnUP declaration of interest, however the key challenge and problematic is that apart from the work of the Patras Science Park (see below) no links exist between universities and local businesses and industrial sectors in Patras.

Academic Institutions

University of Patras

The University of Patras (<http://www.upatras.gr>) offers an exciting and dynamic learning and research environment that provides its students with high level programs of studies.

The University consists of four Schools; Natural Sciences, Engineering, Health Sciences and Humanities & Social Sciences with a School of Economics and Business Administration being established. Each School includes a number of departments with 22 operating in the university overall.

Each Department is linked to a University discipline area and is the basic academic unit whose study programme leads to a specific degree. Departments covering relative discipline areas constitute a School, which has mainly coordinating authority. The Departments are divided into Divisions corresponding to smaller and distinct parts of the major scientific discipline of the Department. Within each Division there are specific Laboratories and Clinics, which operate under specific internal rules and procedures.

The University of Patras provides its students with a vast variety of courses through the twenty-two (22) Undergraduate Programs of Studies that lead in a Bachelor degree with 4 years of studies (6 years for the Faculty of Medicine) or in a Diploma degree with 5 years of studies.

Furthermore the University of Patras offers thirty-three (33) Programmes of Postgraduate Studies. Ten (10) of these programs are interdepartmental and two (2) of them are inter-university operating in collaboration with other well-known universities. The postgraduate programmes of the University of Patras lead to M.Sc. and Ph.D. degrees.

Linking the University to Industry is the Liaison and Patent office which through university expertise offers specialist services to enterprises, public and private sector organisations. Through networks and initiatives the office transfers scientific knowledge skills and know-how. Additionally it provides support for patent licensing and intellectual property rights.

Career Office of University of Patras (<http://www.cais.upatras.gr>)

The University of Patras, aiming at support the graduate students in the development of their career, proceeded in the foundation of "Office of Interconnection and Professional Information" in July 1997. For the achievement of this important work are used financial resources of European Union and Greek Ministry of National Education and Religions, in the framework of the Operational Program of Education and Initial Professional Training (SPECIAL TRAINING PROGRAM).

The intention of the Career office is the provisioning of information to students in order to select and be supported in their future career. The quality and validity of the provided services is achieved with the direct linking of the students with the market and businesses that offer new jobs.

The Career Office is linking the production with the education, is developing new mechanisms of accurate and continuous information, elects the dexterities and specialisations of students and graduates, and in general helps for the best possible exploitation of the scientific potential of the University of Patras.

Patras Science Park

Operating alongside the University is Patras Science Park (<http://www.psp.org.gr>) an active organisation established 15 years ago. Today, a remarkable number of new and strong enterprises are operating under the auspices of PSP most of them are inventors, adaptors and users of new technologies.

The strategic target of PSP is to establish an Innovative Business Area in the Region of West Greece, which will be a development and guidance tool for this Region towards the “rising innovative economic-productive frame” by facilitating - additively and alternatively- new economic, productive and business activities in the region. Thus, it aims at contributing essentially to the “innovative area” prominence.

The aims of PSP are:

- Encouraging Innovative ideas, products, services and procedures as well as the exploitation of research and development results.
- Promotion and financial completion of innovative investment & business plans for R&D results exploitation.
- Development, renewal and widening of the product and services spectrum, as well as of the methods for production, supply and distribution
- Introduction of new organizational and administrative methods for enterprises.
- Acquisition and diffusion of innovative methods and knowledge - Provision of services of scientific, technological, consulting and educational nature - Personnel training services for enterprises or any kind of legal entity.
- Attraction and installation of entrepreneurial schemes in the Park's premises

Hellenic Open University

The 2nd University in Patras is the Hellenic Open University (<http://www.hou.gr>), the 19th Greek State University but the only one that provides distance education in both undergraduate and postgraduate levels via the development and utilisation of appropriate learning material and methods of teaching. Promoting scientific research as well as developing technology and methodology in distance learning is within the scope of the university's objectives.

Like all other state universities in Greece, it is a Legal Entity of Public Law, completely independent and autonomous.

Career Office of Hellenic Open University (<http://career.eap.gr/>)

The Career office of the HOU is a new service that started its activity at June of 2003. The Career office of the HOU services all the students and postgraduates of the University, aiming at the information about postgraduate studies and support the achievement of a professional career. It is also targeting at businesses, organizations of public and private sector that seeking for new cooperates. Its organizational structure is based at the distance learning service of its users, with the use of internet services.

Technological Educational Institute of Patras

The Technological Educational Institute (<http://www.teipat.gr>) of Patras was established in 1972 as a Vocational Technical Education Centre (K.A.T.E.).

In 1983, it became an independent and self-governed institute and belongs to the Greek Higher Education system along with the thirteen other institutes and the Universities of Greece. T.E.I. orientation is towards applied research and technology and its main concern, the assimilation and application of scientific knowledge whereas the universities give emphasis to theoretical background and basic research. The T.E.I. of Patras is a State Institute. It is a self-governed body, subject to public law and financed from public funds.

Career office of Technological Institute of Patras (<http://career.teipat.gr>)

The Career Office is one of the Institute's Administrative Units and was founded within the framework of the corporate planning for the Initial Educational Training, it was introduced in the “A.E.I / T.E.I - Enterprises Link” and is being Funded by the European Community Fund.

Operating alongside the two Universities and Technological Educational Institute are research institutes for; Academic Computer Technology, Chemical Engineering and High Temperature Chemical Processes and the Industrial Systems Institute.

The existence of these institutions creates opportunities and prospects for the growth of research and technology accessible to the productive process and responsive to social needs, particularly with reference to specialised sectors (e.g. energy, primary production etc).

Nevertheless, the level of innovation in the social and economic sectors as confirmed by the data on expenditures for the transition to a knowledge economy, and by the number of registered patents, is deficient when compared to the European average. The average expenditure for research and innovation corresponds to approximately 0.92% of GNP for the Region of Western Greece and specifically, the patents granted per million people are 6.1 for the Region of Western Greece against an EU average of 100.

Research Activities in Academic Sector

R&D in University of Patras

One of the main objectives of the University of Patras is the creation of knowledge through the promotion of the scientific research.

The University's research activity is supported by its workforce (faculty members, postgraduate and undergraduate students, postdoc researchers etc.) and the state of the art infrastructure (laboratories, clinics, computers, experimental scientific instruments etc.) and represents the major factor for the improvement of Education and Learning.

The University of Patras demonstrates a remarkable research activity and a reputation for quality and innovative research. Its faculty members are very active in publishing their research results and groundbreaking achievements in international scientific journals of the highest quality.

This research publication record serves as a key criterion considered for granting tenure and promotion. In particular for the period 2002 to 2005 University of Patras research presents a ratio of 1,028 publications per faculty member per year. This ratio is considerably higher than the national ratio which has an average of 0,587 publications per faculty member per year. The ration of 1,028 is higher even from the previous years measurements in the same field that was 0,731 for the period 1998 ? 2001 and 0,66 for the period 1990 -1997.

Based on these measurements for the year 2005 the University of Patras holds the third place in absolute number of publications among the Geek Universities, but with significantly lower number of faculty members than the leading Universities. Furthermore the University of Patras holds fourth place among Greek universities regarding the publications per faculty member per year.

Major role in the support of the research work derives from the scientific projects. These projects are conducted by faculty members and researchers in order to promote specific fields in science. In this part the University of Patras demonstrates a boom of scientific programs and administration of funds that is clearly stated by the following diagram. Nowadays the scientific programs are the major funding resource for more than 3000 research personnel. The management of research projects is carried out by the Research Committee and its administration unit. The financial management of research projects with external funding produces resources for the University, which are used for specific educational and developmental activities, as well as funding of young researchers.

The University of Patras participates in all major European and National Scientific Programs. Finally the university receives funding from the State, the private sector or the European Union for the development and promotion of the scientific research.

R&D in Technological Educational Institute of Patras

The Technological Educational Institute of Patras is one of the main research institutions of the city of Patras. It usually uses the Archemedes II framework that aims at the encouragement of research development in the TEI along with research group reinforcement, of inter-Department/inters scientific character which conduct research at various scientific fields.

Moreover it has successfully involved as active partner in several EU funded projects and Research programmes including Leonardo, Life Long Learning Programme etc. and European Mobility programmes (Socrates, Erasmus etc.)

R&D in Hellenic Open University

The Hellenic Open University is consisted of four different Schools that have a rich research activity. The most important research units and laboratories of the HOU are:

The GEM (Geographic Euro-Mediterranean) Research Unit of the School of Humanities

GEM has a long history in European research projects. It was transported to the Hellenic O.U. from the University of the Aegean and has coordinated international research projects on EU borders, Education in Geography, Urban Sprawl, Civil Society and European Governance, and others.

Today the GEM Research Unit is networked, together with 20 EU Universities, within EastBordNet, a Network on European Borders, coordinated by the University of Manchester and funded by the EU COST programme.

Digital Systems & Media Computing Laboratory <http://dsmc.eap.gr/>

DSMC's main objectives are to conduct internationally competitive research and deliver high quality teaching. The faculty staff, together with their research associates and students are working at an internationally competitive level.

The outcomes of the research can be seen in various publications. We are fortunate to enjoy the support of a variety of funding agencies and to have established strong collaboration bids with research units nationally and internationally.

Software Quality Research Group (<http://quality.eap.gr>)

The Software Quality Research Group focuses its research activities on Software Metrics and Measurements, Software Quality Assessment, Modeling and Assessment of Perceived (user-centered) Software Quality, Software Usability and Quality of E-Commerce Systems, Educational Software Quality.

*Physics Laboratory, School of Science and Technology, Hellenic Open University, <http://physicslab.eap.gr>
HElIenic LYceum Cosmic Observatories Network, <http://helycon.eap.gr>*

The Hellenic Open University and the Developmental Cooperation Technomatheia cooperated in the EQUAL research project titled "Promoting Network of life long learning and distant Certification of Small to medium-sized businesses".

The 'Instructor Training' project for over 12000 instructors, coordinated by the School of Humanities of the HOU, financed by the Work Ministry and the European Social Fund.

The School of Humanities organises Pan-Hellenic Conferences every two years on Open and Distance Education, with international attendances and roughly 5,000 participants.

Every year, the School organises training courses for the HOU's Part time Academic Staff in Open and Distant Education. The associate Scientific Union of Adult Education and the Scientific Association "Hellenic Network of Open and Distance Education" publish the scientific journals "Adult Education " and "Open Education".

Transformation of the Local Economy

The Global and National Environment

During the last years and especially after the global economic crisis that started in 2008, the National economies and specifically the economies of smaller EU countries are suffering and their future perspectives are uncertain. In the last report of World Economic Forum (WEF) about the Global Risks for the year 2011, it is recognised that Economic disparity is one of the biggest problems of the modern era. Wealth and income disparities, both within countries and between countries, threaten social and political stability as well as economic development of all countries.

The aforementioned global conditions and the extremely big debts of the Greek state have driven at the beginning of 2010 the Greek economy to its greatest economic and fiscal crisis of the last years. The Greek Government announced several measures in order to rationalize and at the same time reduce the costs of the public sector and also decreased the salaries of the employees of public and private sector by introducing new austerity measures and laws.

Consequently, the Greek economy has been felt in a deep recession and the GDP growth of the country is 'running' with -6.6% at the last quarter of 2010. At the same time the unemployment rate has reached the 15% and it is estimated that it can exceed the 20% by the end of 2011 if the national economy will continue to follow the same policies.

The Global Competitiveness report of 2011 of the WEF is also correlating the fiscal policies with competitiveness, and the example of Greece is explicitly analyzed, where the weakening competitiveness of the country during the last years is finally translated in fiscal problem or economic instability. At the last year (2010) had the dismal performance to be the less competitive country between EU27 countries ranked 83rd out of 139 countries, having lost 16 places during the last two years (67th out of 134 at 2008-2009 GCI report). In the same report it is highlighted that the lowest scores are achieved in innovation and business sophistication factors and Macroeconomic environment.

Besides all these discouraging figures and reports, Greece is keeping recognized among the countries with the highest rates of Human Development Index (HDI), which is a complex index that measures the life expectation, the knowledge and education and the standard of living in each country. Greece is ranked 22nd in the world for the year 2010 HDI and it is also possessed the same (22nd) position in the world in the corresponding Economist's "Quality of Life" Index.

Focusing on the economy of the city of Patras that presented in Section 2, the previous mentioned contrasts can be easily identified, since the local economy has been shocked, a lot of businesses closed, the unemployment rate has increased at 5,5 % only in January 2011 and at the same time the knowledge and education sector and the standard of living hasn't been influenced severely yet. This fact is still giving hope for a local economy recovery, but within a completely different context that is concentrated to innovation, mutual collaboration and increasing of the competitiveness of the local businesses and professionals.

The Local Economy Transformation

The Municipality of Patras along with its development enterprise don't have yet a complete strategy to support the local economic development but they can indirectly affect the economy by several policies or act as catalysts for local interventions or initiatives. During the last years there were serious attempts to link the activities of Municipality of Patras with the knowledge community and academic sectors, and at the same time strong political support for bridging these two large local communities and invest on new skills, specializations and services in the city Patras.

However, the academic institutions are not fully focusing on industrial liaison activities and their capacity needs to be further developed with reference to models of knowledge-based enterprise support and entrepreneurial development within Universities across Europe. Moreover, the current strategies of knowledge transfer of the academic institutions and research prototypes adoption by local businesses, but even the consultation of the businesses from research communities, with intention to work in a more sophisticated way, are still underdeveloped and needed to be improved.

An important role for the local and regional economy can be played from the Science Park of Patras and the Regional Innovation Pole that coordinated by Science Park, since it has already focused on thematic areas in which the region has a competitive advantage in innovation and business activity. These thematic areas include safety and technologies of food, food manufacturing, information and communications technologies, environmental management and protection. All these areas are well justified with the University of Patras which has Departments of Computer Engineering, Chemical Engineering and Chemistry, Electrical Engineering and others.

Moving forward, the transformation of the local economy of the city of Patras has to focus on the diversification of the businesses of primary and secondary sector and at the same the creation of new businesses or upgrade the existing ones in tertiary sector. The main target should be the attraction of new investments and venture capitals, the increase of the competitiveness of the local businesses and the extroversion of the local economy, building a new economic profile for the city of Patras inside and outside the country.

Emphasis should be given to increasing investments in knowledge-intensive sectors and the reorientation of the productive dynamism of the economy into services and products of high added value as it outlined in Baseline Study. This will be pursued by the reinforcement of cooperation between universities, research institutes and enterprises, the set up of new companies including the modernisation of current ones, with emphasis on innovation and new technologies.

Three main steps have been identified towards the transformation of the local economy, changing the traditional model of economic development, to a sustainable and knowledge-based driven economy:

Step 1. Modernise the Primary and Secondary sectors and products

The small and medium enterprises (SME'S) is the core of the local economy of the city of Patras and the existing production sectors as agriculture, fishing, manufacturing, food industry have limited perspectives in a globalized economy.

All these businesses should be supported and consulted from business experts or Scientists in order to improve their production lines and internal procedures and produce highly value products. The role of Universities and Municipality is very important in this step, since they can initialize educational or awareness activities for the businesses, and improve the skills of the labour force. The diversification of the existing production lines can be also studied, from business experts that will help the local businesses to focus in more competitive products, more sophisticated ways of production and higher quality jobs.

Step2. Triple Helix cooperation - Enhance delivery capacity and capability within Knowledge Based Partners

The triple helix model of development should be adopted and applied in order to change the culture of the Public sector, Academic Sector and Business sector and follow a new development path with more collaboration, exchange of knowledge, rewarding excellence-creativity and competitiveness. The rich presence of academic institutions can help to study, evaluate, adopt and implement new approaches, based on international best practices, and deliver new competitive characteristics to the local businesses and professionals.

Moreover, the Municipality of Patras and its development enterprise can play the role of the catalyst in the University-Business relationship, since it is the coordinator of the biggest part of the local initiatives and polices, enhancing the delivery capacity of new methodologies and knowledge based activities for the local businesses and market.

Step3. Support the new end emerging economy sectors with high-tech products and services

The need for innovation and increase the competitiveness of the Region of Western Greece and especially of the city of Patras has been already outlined in the previous sections. The research outputs of the academic communities should focus on the production of new products and services and at the same time new emerging business areas should be created.

The Information Technologies and Communication sector is the one that has a very important position in this procedure, as it is also highlighted in the Regional Operational Programme of Western Greece, having a double role. Firstly, to improve the existing ICT businesses or establish new spin-off companies or high-tech companies based on research prototypes of the Universities that will have the capacity to attract investments and can be easily adopted from the global market. Secondly, to help all the existing businesses to work in a modern way, by using the ICT and support them to develop new ways of working as B2B, B2C or even linked with their clients and businesses through Social Networks.

The current transformation of the urban centre of the city of Patras, its enlargement with the merging with other four Municipalities, the acknowledge of the Metropolitan role of the city in Western Greece and the completeness of new transportation routes and infrastructures can play a significant role in the reform and revival of the local economy of the city.

Moreover, during the last five years the Municipality of Patras invested on the construction of a huge fiber optics network, covering a 84 km of the city center, and several wireless internet areas that can provide a modern environment for all types of businesses to grow and to be connected with the rest world.

Several streets have pedestrianized and a lot of historical buildings have been renovated, new cultural areas have been developed (New Archaeological Museum of Patras, Ancient Stadium) revitalizing the image of the city and at the same time giving more space to tourism and cultural development.

Last but not least, is the creation and operation of a small-handicraft & Small industries Park that is covering an area of 600.000 sq.mt and provides the opportunity to new or existing businesses to hosted in an environment compliant with International business standards. Currently, more than 50 local businesses are operating and there is the anticipation to increase this number exploiting the available area and infrastructures that have been already constructed.

The main transition pillars

The first pillar of transition of the local economy to a knowledge-based economy is to focus on the traditional economic sector (manufacturing, agriculture, fishing, food industry) and to develop new combined activities of awareness and education of the local entrepreneurs and SME'S on new technologies that can improve their production lines or the methods of working in order to be more competitive and efficient.

The second pillar is the exploitation of the ICT technologies where the academic institutions in Patras have a strong tradition and they promote the innovation and new e-services in order to create new companies and jobs. The spin-off model for new enterprises can be adopted in combination with the Structural and Regional funds that can be exploited to create new ICT-based businesses and at the same time educate and absorb a part of the unemployed population (that is higher than the average Greek rates).

A third pillar is the exploitation of the strategic positioning of the city of Patras and the advantages of its natural environment in order to develop new activities related with Green Energy and environmental protection. As one of the biggest Wind Parks in Greece is already operating in the Mt. Panachaikon and there are specialized scientists and academic programmes on Energy production and Electrical Engineering, new companies for solar panels production created last year in the industrial zone, a new leading role can be foreseen for Patras in the fields of energy production and also environmental protection.

Last but not least are the Culture & Tourism sectors and the impact that they have to local economy and businesses. The carnival of Patras as the main Touristic and Cultural attraction of the city and the biggest carnival in Greece can be organized in a more professional model.

In this new model the knowledge based economy can have a significant role from the materials that used for the costumes to floats, the ICT infrastructure, education games and virtual communities that should be developed, to the theatric performances and architectural design of the constructions.

Moreover, the city of Patras as an attractive destination can promote the scientific activities of the academic institutions by organizing international conferences, thematic events focused on constructions like the Bridge or Rio-Antirrio, scientific excursions etc. and by this way it can positively influence the touristic infrastructure and businesses.

Patras URBACT Local Support Group

As identified in the URBACT II Programme Manual the Involvement of relevant partners at local level is a core component of the URBACT II methodology for enhancing urban sustainable development policies. In order to allow for an effective impact of RUnUP network activities on local policies, the City of Solna set up an URBACT Local Support Group. This URBACT Local Support Groups gathered together the local key stakeholders concerned by the issues addressed within the network and by the city's Local Action Plan.

Patras ULSG Composition

To deliver the RUnUP project in Patras, a local support group has been established comprising key regional partners. The core ULSG is made up of members from:

- Patras Municipal Development Enterprise for Planning & Development S.A.
- University of Patras
- Achaia Chamber of Commerce
- Business Innovation Center of Western Greece
- Science Park
- Hellenic Open University
- Technical Educational Institute of Patras

From the beginning of the RUnUP project, the most important stakeholders have been identified in order to fulfil the scope and objectives of the project. During the Development Phase but also during the First Phase, when the Baseline Study elaborated, the Local Support Group of the city of Patras consisted of the most important local stakeholders that presented in the previous paragraph.

The URBACT Local Support of the city of Patras is also officially supported from the Region of Western Greece that is the responsible organisation for the management of Structural Funds in Western Greece.

Currently, the ULSG is coordinated by Patras Municipal Development Enterprise for Planning & Development which is the official project partner in RUnUP project and each member has assigned a senior consultant, officer or Professor to represent each organisation and work together for the project.

A political Group that is consisted from the Legal Representatives of the participating organisations (Mayor of Patras, President of Chamber of Commerce, Rector of University of Patras, President of HOU, President of Science Park, and President of BIC) will be activated after the Local Action Plan delivery, when joined activities and visions will take place.

The members of the URBACT Local Support Group of Patras are informed during the project lifetime about the development status and the goals that have been set and also about the role of the ULSG in Local Action Plan development. However, the relationship of the members wasn't too tight from the very beginning of the project, but it strengthened after the visit of the Lead Expert of RUnUP project, when an open dialogue with all members realised and several meetings organised until the end of 2009.

As a prerequisite of the programme, a Memorandum of Understanding has been developed and delivered to all ULSG members that will be signed and officially recognise the common work and development of the Local Action Plan.

The reference work that has been studied from the ULSG of Patras is the Business Plan 2009–2010 of the Municipality of Patras, the Regional Operational Programme of Western Greece–Peloponnese–Ionian Islands 2007–2013, the Business Plan of the University of Patras, the Innocation Pole of Western Greece strategy etc. The organisational structure of the academic institutions, the data of the Business Sector and Employment are complementing the sources that have been selected in order to deliver the activities of the RUnUP project until the end of 2009.

The ULSG of the city of Patras participated finally in both URBACT II annual meetings in Montpellier and Stockholm. Especially during the second meeting, there was the opportunity to exchange ideas and share common problems and visions with other Greek delegates and also the representatives from Region of Western Greece at the National Table meetings.

he main role of the ULSG is:

- To develop several programmes or strategic directions and highlight financial opportunities for joined activities between the Universities of the city of Patras, the Chamber of Commerce and Development Enterprise for Planning and Development S.A.
- To help start-up or existing companies to be linked with the scientists or experts from University of Patras in order to improve the quality of their products or services.
- To understand better the structure of the local economy and the potential of the academic institutions and follow common development paths.

The ULSG members agreed with the Baseline study observation that the city of Patras should focus on Creation of New Economies and also the Upgrading of Mature Economies.

Methodology

The aim of RUnUP is to maximise the economic, innovation and entrepreneurship potential of medium sized poles. The city of Patras will develop a Local Action Plan to drive towards the objectives of the RUnUP project and contribute to the transformation of the local economy of the city, with specific joined actions and projects.

From the Baseline Study the ULSG members along with the Lead Expert of the RUnUP project focused on the main features, assets and weaknesses of the city of Patras that influence its local economy:

- There is a significant number of Universities and Academic institutions concentrated in the city
- The local Businesses are mainly activated independently focusing on services sector
- There is a need to create new economic activities based on innovation and the knowledge of the Academic Sector
- The Academic Institutions should develop more efficient mechanisms to promote entrepreneurship and link their shelves with the Business sector, and more specialized academic programs to meet the local and regional needs
- There is limited cooperation and joined activities between the Municipality of Patras (along with its Development Enterprise), the Academic institutions and the Business sector.

The implementation phase of RUnUP project gave to the Local Support Group members the opportunity to study more deeply the previous issues and following the working program several complementary cases identified and the Local Identity of the city of Patras has been drawn.

Two local case studies were also studied, where the University of Patras cooperated with Municipality of Patras in order to develop local or regional strategies that influence the local economy and SMEs.

The first case is a viability study of Computer Engineering and Informatics department for the establishment of a Company for the Operation, Management and Exploitation of the Metropolitan Fiber Optics Networks of SouthWestern Greece.

The second case is the strategic planning and Re-organization of Municipality's structure and procedures study that was also elaborated from the University of Patras (Economic dpt, Business administration dpt, Computer Engineering and Informatics dpt, Electrical Engineering dpt.).

The Local Support Group attempted also to depict the Local Identity of the city of Patras and to create a Distinctive Local Brand.

The synthesis of the ULSG members with experienced consultants, officers and Professors gave also the opportunity to illustrate the Policy framework where the activities of the LAP should be developed and also to target the Financial Instruments that will provide the funds for these activities.

To develop the Local Action Plan, LSG members have participated finally in a number of exchange and learning activities including study visits to:

- Tampere, Finland - Learning best practice from Tampere, the third largest city in Finland and a centre for IT-based innovation.
- And thematic network visits to:
- Agueda, Portugal - Exploring how cities can harness the triple helix as a motor of local development.
- Barakaldo, Spain - Exploring how cities can adopt talent attraction and retention strategies to foster growth.

Finally, during the development of the Cross-Sectoral Exchange and Peer Review Programmes the LSG of Patras focused on City-twinning Programmes experience from the cases of Debrecen (HU) and Bydgoszcz (PL).

In both cases mixed delegations consisted of Politicians and Senior officers or consultants visited the cities of Debrecen and Bydgoszcz, aiming at the development of links of cooperation between the Universities, Local Businesses, Scientific Parks and adopt strategies or best practices that could applied in the city that represent.

Within the framework of city twinning the cooperation in technological sectors, the development of industrial parks, the organization of cultural and sports events, the organization of the cities as nodal transportation and administration centers were the focus points of the delegations. 6. Local Action Plan Activities

Introducing the Local Action Plan

From the analysis of the features of the city of Patras there was the initial observation that the city of Patras is mostly known as a Commercial port with a modern history of more than 150 years. It is a nodal commercial and touristic center that links Greece with the rest West Europe and at the same time it is the entrance gate to the Eastern European countries and Asia and finally it is an important academic city with universities, institutions and a science park with experience in applied sciences and new technologies.



At the same time there are some characteristic local products, Cultural Sites and events, infrastructure and emblems that compose the identity of the city of Patras and they can be used to the creation of a Distinctive Local Brand.

- Local Products (food & drinks): Liqueur Tentoura, Maurodafni Wine, Loukoumia
- Culture: Patras Carnival, Roman-Byzantine-Ancient Greek monuments, St. Andrews Church
- Infrastructure: Two ports and Marina, The Rio-Antirrio Bridge
- Emblems: St. Andrews, Patras LightHouse, Patreas (Ancient Greek Hero)

The USG members having in consideration that the previous mentioned characteristics are special and clearly define the identity of the city but at the same time don't have all the potential to distinguish the city in a National or even European level, focused on three pillars (Important Port, Cultural sites and Events, Academic cities) to compose the Local Brand of the city of Patras.

The creation of New Economies was initially focusing on Sustainable Industries (e.g. Informatics and Communications, Environmental Management and Protection) where the University of Patras is highly activated, to support growth of entrepreneurial businesses linked also with the innovation and knowledge produced from University of Patras, to the development of entrepreneurial services (incubation, start-up support etc), to the establishment of a Informatics & Communications and Environmental Management Protection industry identity of the city of Patras.

The Mature Economies could be upgraded with education and skill development of the people work in Agricultural and Manufacturing sector businesses, with Problem-Solving (Consultancy, applied research) for agricultural and manufacturing businesses, with Best Practice Scanning and finally with Technology/Sector Foresight Exercises.

The ULSG members contributed with their observations on the areas or Business sectors that have the potential to drive the local economy of the city of Patras and concluded to four thematic categories that should be studied and propose specific actions at the development of the Local Action Plan.

These thematic categories are:

- Information and Communication Technologies
- Environmental Management and Protection
- Manufacturing, Agricultural and Food Industry technologies

Local Action Plan Summary Table

AXIS	Actions	Involved Bodies	Expected Outcomes	Existing Plans	Timing
AXIS 1. Information and Communication Technologies	1.1 Joined ICT activities between local SME'S and Research Centers	Municipal Development Enterprise Chamber of Commerce Academic Sector	New or existing SME'S with improved ICT products or services	ROP-Research & Technological Development - Innovation and Entrepreneurship	2011-2013
	1.2 Exploitation of existing Fiber Optics Networks with new e-services and Connections of points of Public Interest	Administration Bodies Municipal Development Enterprise Local SME'S University of Patras, HOU and Institutions	New ICT infrastructure and services that improve the productivity and efficiency of the local economy	ROP-Research & Technological Development - Innovation and Entrepreneurship O.P. Digital Convergence	2011-2013
	1.3 Development of new ICT services for Port activities and traffic control management	Port Authority Municipal Development Enterprise Local SME'S University of Patras, HOU and Institutions	New ICT infrastructure and services that improve the efficiency of public sector	ROP-Research & Technological Development - Innovation and Entrepreneurship, O.P. Digital Convergence, Cross Border cooperation Programmes, GSRT Programmes	2011-2013
AXIS 2. Environmental Management and Protection	2.1 Green University	University of Patras, Technological Educational Institute, SME'S	Establishment of new infrastructures for energy production and reduction of energy consumption, New market Creation	O.P. Environment and Sustainable Development	2011-2013
	2.2 Green technologies in Tourism sector	Chamber of Commerce Local SME'S University of Patras, Technological Institution	Improved Touristic SME'S with reduction of energy consumption and green technologies usage	O.P. Competitiveness and Entrepreneurship ROP- Environmental Protection and prevention of risks	2011-2013

AXIS	Actions	Involved Bodies	Expected Outcomes	Existing Plans	Timing
	2.3 Combined measures for prevention of natural and technological risks	Municipal Development Enterprise Chamber of Commerce Local SME'S University of Patras, Technological Institution	New mechanisms and tools for forecasting and prevention of natural or technological disasters	ROP- Environmental Protection and prevention of risks	2011-2013
AXIS 3. Manufacturing, Agricultural and Food Industry technologies	3.1 Thematic Seminars & conferences for education of the local SME'S on new technological improvements in Manufacturing, Agriculture and Food Industry sectors	Municipal Development Enterprise Chamber of Commerce Local SME'S University of Patras, Technological Institution	Adoption of new technologies in productions - improved products	O.P Life Long Learning	2011-2013
	3.2 Spin-off companies using new methodologies of production	Chamber of Commerce Local SME'S University of Patras, Technological Institution	New competitive SME'S and production lines	O.P. Human Resource Development ROP-Research & Technological Development - Innovation and Entrepreneurship	2011-2013
	3.3 Wine & Oil tasting and educational activities for production and promotion	Chamber of Commerce, Local SME'S University of Patras, Technological Institution	New educational and promotional actions for local wine & Oil producers	Regional Operational Programme of Western Greece	2011-2014
	3.4 Improvement of Carnival Constructions and carnival floats with new technologies	Patras Cultural Development Enterprise, Municipal Development Enterprise, Local SME'S University of Patras, HOU and Institutions	New SME'S for Carnival construction and carnival floats with environmental friendly materials and new technological features	O.P. Competitiveness and Entrepreneurship	2012-2014

Description of the activities of the LAP

The core of the Local Action Plan is the set of activities that have been developed from ULSG and have been organized in four different axes.

AXIS 1. Information and Communication Technologies
Axis 1 is related with ICT and high-tech initiatives. The ULSG focused on this sector, recognizing that the local academic institutions, research institutions like RACTI and local ICT businesses are consisting one of the most important potential of the city of Patras and it can significantly help the revival of the local economy.

Action Number	Action
1.1	Joined ICT activities between local SME'S and Research Centers
Lead Organisation	Partner Organisation(s)
ADEP S.A.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Municipal Development Enterprise • Chamber of Commerce • Academic Sector
Timescale	Finance and Resources
2011-2013	ROP-Research & Technological Development - Innovation and Entrepreneurship, O.P. Digital Convergence, Programmes of GSRT
Description	
<p>The ICT has been developed significantly during the last 30 years in the University of Patras. Several businesses have been established, either to service the public and private sector of the Region of Western Greece, either to provide international products or services. Although there is a highly ICT skilled human potential in the city of Patras and at the same time the results of the research activities in ICT field are recognized internationally, the academic sector is isolated and the links between the research community and local businesses are very limited.</p> <p>The need for collaboration and joint working in order to give added value to the existing ICT products or services is more than ever an essential requirement for the growth of the local economy, There is also the financial opportunity to support these kind of activities, since there are instruments like ROP of Western Greece, the O.P. Digital Convergence and the programmes of the General Secretariat of Research and Development that support common working of research institutions and businesses in order to develop new innovative products or services for the industrial sector or new markets.</p> <p>Patras Municipal Enterprise will also extend its role as the organizer of activities that bring together the local Businesses, the researchers and skilled people and local Universities and Institutions, by hosting targeted meetings and workshops that highlight in emerging ICT sectors or technological trends that will be adopted from business sector with the support of research groups or communities.</p>	
Outcome(s)	
New or existing SMEs with improved ICT products or services	

Action Number	Action
1.2	Exploitation of existing Fiber Optics Networks with new e-services and Connections of points of Public Interest
Lead Organisation	Partner Organisation(s)
Municipality of Patras	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Administration Bodies • Municipal Development Enterprise • Local SMEs University of Patras • HOU and Institutions
Timescale	Finance and Resources
2011-2013	ROP-Research & Technological Development - Innovation and Entrepreneurship, O.P. Digital Convergence
Description	
<p>Public sector and especially the Municipality of Patras has invested more than 7 million euros during the last 5 years in order to have a modern and competitive ICT infrastructure.</p> <p>A fiber optics network with a length that exceeds the 85km has been constructed that covers the city center. Wireless hotspots and access points have also created in a way that with combination with the Fiber Optics network of the city of Patras powerful telecommunication infrastructure is shaped.</p> <p>As a result, the local businesses have the opportunity to work on a high speed network an especially the ICT companies can provide new and more reliable services and products with the exploitation of this infrastructure. New skills and types of businesses are required for this attempt in order to ensure the security, operation, monitoring and service provisioning in a new competitive technological environment.</p> <p>University of Patras has the role of Technical Consultant of Fiber Network construction and exploitation. Therefore several combined activities have been already initialized fro Municipality of Patras to aware the local businesses and citizens about the benefits of this attempt.</p> <p>Moreover, there are existing financial resources from Regional or National Funds aiming to promote the innovation and excellence of new ICT companies and can be used to help new ICT professionals to establish their own businesses and operate over the telecom infrastructure of the city with the University consultation.</p>	
Outcome(s)	
New ICT infrastructure and services that improve the productivity and efficiency of the local economy	

Action Number	Action
1.3	Development of new ICT services for Port activities and traffic control management
Lead Organisation	Partner Organisation(s)
Municipality of Patras	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Port Authority • Municipal Development Enterprise • Local SMEs • University of Patras • HOU and Institutions
Timescale	Finance and Resources
2011-2013	ROP-Research & Technological Development - Innovation and Entrepreneurship, O.P. Digital Convergence, Cross Border cooperation Programmes, GSRT Programmes
Description	
<p>The selection of Port activities and traffic control as key sectors of local economy development is not accidental. They are both highlighted from the ULSG members as two of the most important parameters for the local economy development.</p> <p>The ICT can significantly contribute with the support of the local academic institutions to develop further the existing infrastructure (Transportation system, Port monitoring, Traffic light monitoring, traffic control systems etc.) and adopt more sophisticated ways of managing the Port and the traffic of the city, improving the living status and the way of port operation.</p> <p>The Municipality of Patras along with the University of Patras have already planned several activities for the traffic control management with ICT technologies and monitoring of the Port and Marina infrastructures and pollution factors. The results of this researches will feed the local SME'S with important data in order to transform the way of their operation adopting new ICT applications and services that will link them with Port authorities or Municipal departments.</p> <p>The existing financial instruments are many, including the Regional Operational Program of Western Greece, the O.P "Digital Convergence" the GSRT programmes and also some interregional programmes of cross border cooperation between Greece and Italy.</p>	
Outcome(s)	
New ICT infrastructure and services that improve the efficiency of public sector	

AXIS 2. Environmental Management and Protection

The second strategic axis of the Local Action Plan is related with the Environmental Management and Protection.

It is widely recognized from all members of all ULSG members of RUnUP that the local economic development is closely linked with the healthy natural environment, the reduction of Natural risks and the mechanisms to protect the pollution or reduce the energy consumption.

Action Number	Action
2.1	Green University
Lead Organisation	Partner Organisation(s)
University of Patras	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • University of Patras • Technological Educational Institute • Local SMEs
Timescale	Finance and Resources
2011-2013	O.P. Environment and Sustainable Development
Description	
<p>The academic institutions and especially the University of Patras and Technical Educational Institute of Patras are focusing the last years to the Environmental protection and management, new types of Green Energy including all types of renewable sources and energy efficiency of buildings and industries.</p> <p>At the same time the local market is extended or diversified with new or existing businesses that develop energy-efficient buildings or solar and wind parks. Currently, it is estimated that in the city of Patras there are more than 20 new local SME'S that support businesses or the Public sector to develop Green technology infrastructures and one small industry that construct solar panels in the industrial area of Patras.</p> <p>A complete and innovative approach has been proposed from the University of Patras and it has been already programmed for the year 2011. It is to develop activities and new infrastructures that will allow University of Patras to operate in a more environment-friendly way, reducing the electricity consumption of the buildings of the University campus.</p> <p>A new solar park, the largest in the urban area of Patras, will be constructed for that purpose and at the same time new technologies will be used in order to transform the existing University buildings to 'green' ones.</p> <p>The initiative of University of Patras can constitute a pilot example of adopting a complete strategy based on 'green technologies' or the whole country or even for other European cities, giving the opportunity to the local businesses to exploit their current target groups and at the same time to work in more complex projects with the support of the experts of the Academic Institutions. Moreover, several educational activities can be organized for the awareness of the younger people on new 'Green' technologies and also for the training of the existing SMEs of the Energy/Environmental sector, enhancing the labour and business market.</p>	
Outcome(s)	
Establishment of new infrastructures for energy production and reduction of energy consumption, New market Creation.	

Action Number	Action
2.2	Green technologies in Tourism sector
Lead Organisation	Partner Organisation(s)
Chamber of Commerce	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local SMEs • University of Patras • Technological Institution
Timescale	Finance and Resources
2011-2013	O.P. Competitiveness and Entrepreneurship ROP-Environmental Protection and prevention of risks
Description	
<p>The tourism sector is recognized as one of the most important business sectors of the city of Patras that influences the local economy. The ULSG members especially represented by the Chamber of Commerce highlighted the commercial profile of the city of Patras and its role as a commercial and metropolitan center.</p> <p>The touristic SME'S will adopt the new technologies in order to operate in a more sophisticated way. There is a two -way benefit for them by including the 'green technology' usage in their everyday operation: firstly they reducing the energy consumption of their infrastructures or protect the natural environment and secondly they expand their client-lists since there is an increasing demand of the people to choose environmental-friendly businesses and products.</p> <p>The Chamber of Commerce along with the technological experts (Universities, local institutions, Municipal Development Enterprise) will undertake the role to aware the touristic SME'S about the benefits of the 'Green technologies' adoption.</p> <p>These benefits include but don't restricted to the development of new systems of reducing the water consumption, the improvement of the energy efficiency of the buildings, the reduction of energy consumption, the sophisticated waste management for reducing the pollution etc.</p> <p>At the same time the business and academic sector as it described in Action 2.1, will moderate the local market in a way that it will have the capacity to support all the needs of the SME'S to develop 'Green' infrastructures and exploit the existing financial instruments and EU funds to fulfil their target.</p>	
Outcome(s)	
Improved Touristic SME'S with reduction of energy consumption and green technologies usage	

Action Number	Action
2.3	Combined measures for prevention of natural and technological risks
Lead Organisation	Partner Organisation(s)
Region of Western Greece Municipality of Patras	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Municipal Development Enterprise • Chamber of Commerce • Local SMEs • University of Patras • Technological Institution
Timescale	Finance and Resources
2011-2013	ROP-Environmental Protection and prevention of risks
Description	
<p>The natural and technological risks are indirectly affected the local economies and some times in a very strong way. Several natural phenomena like forest fires, earthquakes, hail</p> <p>fall, water overflows in the past have damaged the local businesses, especially of the primary sector, influencing all the rest sectors of the economy of the city.</p> <p>Moreover, the technological orientation of many of the businesses of the city of Patras are adding new requirements and increase the demand of the local SME'S for safety and prevention of technological-oriented disasters.</p> <p>The Region of Western Greece along with the Municipality of Patras have complementary roles in management, reduction and prevention of the aforementioned risks. The current technological advancements can be exploited with the contribution of the local academic institutions in order to develop new added value services and mechanisms that will forecast or prevent the natural risks. Indicative examples are the Multi-sensor Technologies, the Robotics, special cameras, innovative earthquake sensors, ICT-prediction models that can also supported from some local businesses towards this target.</p> <p>The technological risks, on the other hand can be reduced by adopting several ICT policies with the support of the local Universities and exploit the existing infrastructure of them (fiber optics network, Public Data Centers) in order to provide highly-value e-services in a safe environment.</p>	
Outcome(s)	
New mechanisms and tools for forecasting and prevention of natural or technological disasters	

AXIS 3. Manufacturing, Agricultural and Food Industry technologies

The third strategic axis of the Local Action Plan is related with the local production in terms of agricultural and food industry activities.

As the main objective of the RUnUP project is to highlight on the cooperation of local businesses with academic sector with the support of the local authorities, consisting this way a triple helix structure, the third axis is focusing on the development of new communication and education channels, new production methods and new promotional approaches from local stakeholders and businesses.

Action Number	Action
3.1	Thematic Seminars & conferences for education of the local SMEs on new technological improvements in Manufacturing, Agriculture and Food Industry sectors
Lead Organisation	Partner Organisation(s)
Chamber of Commerce	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Municipal Development Enterprise • Local SMEs • University of Patras • Technological Institution
Timescale	Finance and Resources
2011–2013	O.P. "Life Long Learning"
Description	
<p>The ULSG members have agreed that there is an existing gap between the University's activities with the methods used currently in primary sector and more specifically in manufacturing, agricultural production and the biggest part of food industry production.</p> <p>The Chamber of Commerce as a member of the ULSG will take the role of bridging this gap by organizing several thematic seminars, workshops and conferences for the local SMEs.</p> <p>In these meetings that will be also supported from the Municipal Development Enterprise, the technological advances in manufacturing, agriculture and food industry sectors will be presented from selected scientific groups of the Academic Sector, allowing the local businesses to be educated and adopt new methods of production and finally give added value to their existing production lines.</p> <p>These meetings between the academic community and the local producers can initially help businesses that work for several years in a traditional way to better understand the catalytic role of the technology and transform the culture of their production either with changes in the methodology of the production or with the usage of ICT technologies in order to improve the linking and cooperation with new markets and businesses.</p> <p>In a second step this meetings can extended to a space of promotion and show off the new methods of production and innovation results for the local SME'S attracting venture capitals or investments for all these businesses.</p>	
Outcome(s)	
Adoption of new technologies in productions – improved products	

Action Number	Action
3.2	Spin-off companies using new methodologies of production
Lead Organisation	Partner Organisation(s)
Academic Sector	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local SMEs • University of Patras • Technological Institution • Chamber of Commerce
Timescale	Finance and Resources
2011-2013	O.P. Human Resource Development, ROP-Research & Technological Development - Innovation and Entrepreneurship
Description	
<p>It is widely agreed from all ULSG members that the local economy should be enriched with new businesses that will adopt innovative methods of production. The academic sectors, especially the University of Patras is currently attempted to report all the research results, or prototypes that can be the basis for the creation of new businesses in the area of Patras.</p> <p>The strategic positioning of the city of Patras is adding an extra advantage to all these businesses that have the ambition to operate with extroversion, since new products or services can be easily delivered to the western Europe or Balkan countries.</p> <p>The current opportunities of 4th CSF is an extra asset for the creation of new spin-off companies from graduates or researchers of the academic institutions with the sustainable support of the local Universities and Research Institutions, because they can initially provide a reliable financial mechanism for the creation, establishment and equip of new competitive SMEs.</p> <p>The Scientific Park that is already operating is going to be the catalyst for the establishment of new spin-off companies inside the campus area of University of Patras. Its existing infrastructures and working environment can easily support the new spin-off SMEs to grow and linked with national and international markets.</p> <p>The Municipality of Patras through its Development Enterprise can also contribute significantly, through the exploitation of the Municipal property. Currently there are several public buildings (with fast internet support), that belong to the Municipality of Patras that can be transformed and used from business sector. The small-industry and handicraft park of the city of Patras can be also an opportunity for new spin-off companies to be hosted.</p> <p>The 'Demola' model is discussed during the ULSG meetings and it is a common understanding that a similar initiative from the Municipality of Patras can help the local businesses to be linked with small research groups that will next enrich their production or services.</p>	
Outcome(s)	
New competitive SMEs and production lines	

Action Number	Action
3.3	Wine & Oil tasting and educational activities for production and promotion
Lead Organisation	Partner Organisation(s)
ADEP S.A.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chamber of Commerce • Local SMEs • University of Patras • Technological Institution
Timescale	Finance and Resources
2011-2013	Own budget, Regional Operational Programme of Western Greece
Description	
<p>There are some local products (e.g. wine & oil) where the city of Patras and the neighbourhood areas have a considerable production. These products, except the impact on the local economy growth, strengthen the local identity of the city and contribute to built a brand name for the city in National or international level. However, the knowledge sector and specific departments of Universities haven't engaged seriously yet with the local businesses that for several years operate with the same way.</p> <p>The academic institutions can have an important role and improve the production methods of the local products and help to approach new markets, especially out of Greece. The Chemical Engineering and Chemical departments have already presented several times the technological advancements in the areas of wine or oil production and how these products can be more qualitative and certified.</p> <p>The chamber of Commerce will initialize specific educational activities for the wine and oil producers with the support of the local Universities for the adoption of new methods of production and awareness of the state of the art of technology and production by providing examples from other countries.</p> <p>New marketing models and ways of promotion and standardization of the local products will be also presented to the local businesses from business specialist or Market experts targeting at new markets, especially out of Greece with increased demand on this products.</p>	
Outcome(s)	
New educational and promotional actions for local wine & Oil producers	

Action Number	Action
3.4	Improvement of Carnival Constructions and carnival floats with new technologies
Lead Organisation	Partner Organisation(s)
Patras Cultural Development Enterprise Municipality of Patras	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Municipal Development Enterprise • Local SMEs • University of Patras • HOU ad Institutions
Timescale	Finance and Resources
2011–2013	O.P. Competitiveness and Entrepreneurship
Description	
<p>The culture and tourism sectors indirectly affect a big part of the local economy and at the same time consist a sustainable lever of development and growth. The ULSG focused on specific activities that will give added value to the existing businesses of the touristic sector and help the city of Patras to be more modern and competitive compared to other EU cities of similar size and potential.</p> <p>The Carnival of Patras is the biggest event of the city in terms of culture and tourism and it attracts hundreds of thousands of visitors every year. It is estimated that a total budget of 20 million euros is spent in every carnival from the visitors' side and another two million euros from the organizers of the Patras carnival events and attractions.</p> <p>For several years the costumes, carnival constructions and floats are developed with similar materials and methods. At the same time a lot of carnival accessories are imported from other countries limiting the potential of the local industries and businesses.</p> <p>The local Universities are working on new materials that will be environmental friendly and at the same time cost effective. There is a great opportunity to develop further the sector of carnival-related businesses but within a new concept, adopting new materials for costumes, constructing locally new accessories and improve the carnival constructions and floats.</p> <p>The carnival of Patras is already famous inside Greece and recognized from the other city as the most important in Greece. Therefore, new carnival products or constructions can easily promoted to the other Greek cities and in a second step to European cities that organize carnivals enhancing the contribution of the existing business sector to the local economy.</p>	
Outcome(s)	
New SMEs for Carnival construction and carnival floats with environmental friendly materials and new technological features	

Conclusion

URBACT II - RUnUP project was an exciting experience of collaboration and networking in local level and between EU Cities for the last three years.

Patras Municipal Development Enterprise had the opportunity to coordinate a group with participants from some of the most important regional stakeholders as University of Patras, Chamber of Commerce, Hellenic Open University, technological Educational Institute and others, sharing common problems and issues on Local Economic Development.

The mutual understanding that new Technologies, Innovation and Creativity are crucial parameters for the exploitation of the economy of the city of Patras, bringing together two separate worlds, the academic community and the business sector, lead the local support group of the city of Patras in a set of specific activities that presented in this Local Action Plan.

Completing at the middle of 2011 the implementation of the project RUnUP, a new instrument of strategic development for the city of Patras is introduced, aspiring to be a complementary mechanism of development and initialization of new tasks and activities towards the local economy revitalization.

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URBACT II

URBACT is a European exchange and learning programme promoting sustainable urban development.

It enables cities to work together to develop solutions to major urban challenges, reaffirming the key role they play in facing increasingly complex societal challenges. It helps them to develop pragmatic solutions that are new and sustainable, and that integrate economic, social and environmental dimensions. It enables cities to share good practices and lessons learned with all professionals involved in urban policy throughout Europe. URBACT is 181 cities, 29 countries, and 5,000 active participants

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