

Regional Tourism Authorities and Tourism Policy

Monitoring: The Case of Greek RTOs

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The increasing contribution of tourism to a country's growth renders imperatively the need for state intervention. The state tourism agencies' efficiency depends, however, on a well-organized decentralized tourism structure; the decentralisation form varies according to the amount of competencies assigned to regional or local authorities. Decentralisation though can only be effective when Regional Tourism Offices (RTOs) are sufficiently staffed with qualified and experienced workforce and operate under a solid and trustworthy legal framework. The aim of this article is to study the operation and the efficiency of Regional Tourism Offices (RTOs) in Greece. Therefore a primary survey was conducted by the authors, and all offices were called to answer a written questionnaire whereas an interview with their directors provided additional information. The questionnaire investigates their competencies, their structure, the percentage rate of the local agencies' employees inspecting the tourist enterprises in their area of competence as well as the problems they are facing. The results of our survey as well the data given by the Directorate of Control of the Regional Tourism Offices reveal that the most important problems the RTOs facing are the lack of personnel, the legal uncertainty, the bad administrative practice, and issues of minor importance as the inappropriate buildings housing the agencies, the insufficient equipment and the inadequate financial resources. This article is concluded with certain proposals on the improvement of the agencies in terms of efficiency and effectiveness aiming furthermore at the improvement of the Greek national tourism product.

Keywords: Regional Tourism Offices (RTOs), management, Greek National Tourism Organization, tourism policy

Introduction

The increasing economic, social and cultural contribution of tourism to a country's growth renders imperatively the need for state intervention. It is generally acknowledged that tourism should not form a market forces-driven economic activity (Elliott, 1997, pp. 2-4; Zacharatos, 1999, p. 34). Considering tourism's huge economic benefits, the governments seek to influence its forms and the direction of its development (Airey, 1984, p. 269; Lickorish & Jenkins, 2004, p. 258). For this purpose, the state established public authorities to control and monitor the tourism activity. In fact when tourism became massive, state intervention gradually began to increase. It has actually been observed that the more contributes tourism to a country's economy, the bigger the state intervention is (Jenkins & Henry, 1982, p. 506).

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The role of the state authorities consists among others in the design of tourism development, in the promotion of tourism, in the coordination of tourist enterprises and in the monitoring of their activity, in the establishment of tourist enterprises construction and operation rules, in the protection of the environment and in the reinforcement of safety and hygiene guidelines. Last but not least the state guarantees that tourist enterprises are well equipped with specialized staff. (IOUTO, 1974, p. 68; Hall & Jenkins, 1995; Hall & Page, 1999, p. 258)

Various administrative bodies as ministries, public entities, public organizations, and local government organizations are responsible for the administration and supervision of the tourism sector (Airey, 1983, pp. 234-244; Elliot, 1997, p. 8; Mylonopoulos-Mentis & Moira, 2003, pp. 229-239).

The administrative structure of public sector tourism agencies influences considerably their effectiveness: their size, their legal framework, their staffing, the workforce's continuing training, as well as a quick and effective decision-making procedure are parameters that determine significantly their efficiency. The public sector's efficiency also depends on a well-organized decentralized tourism structure (Zacharatos, 1999, p. 40). The form of the decentralization varies according to the number of competencies assigned to the local authorities (regional tourist boards, regional tourism offices etc.). However, the tourism decentralization policy may change through the years depending on the respective political and socioeconomic conditions (IOUTO, 1974, pp. 66-72).

In Greece, tourism sector lies under the supervision of a public entity, the Greek National Tourism Organisation (GNTO), which for many decades was the ruling state agency in tourism sector; therefore the tourism development of the last 60 years in Greece is closely related with GNTO.

The Greek National Tourism Organization (GNTO)

First Period of Operation (1914-1949)

The first official state intervention in Greek tourism sector took place in 1914 through the establishment of a Tourism Office. By virtue of the article 15 of the law 241/1914 (Government Gazette 111/A) "Amendment of the law ΓΨΚΔ' concerning the establishment of the Ministry of Finance", there established an independent office. This office was responsible to take measures not only to attract foreign visitors but also to extend their stay in Greece, to support and supervise associations, unions, committees or public entities organizing feasts, contests, excursions or those aiming at the embellishment of landscapes and sightseeings, to facilitate the establishment of modern hotels, to facilitate the Greek participation in international exhibitions and to hold commercial and industrial exhibitions in Greece. This office was under the supervision of the Ministry of Finance. During First World War, the office's operation was abruptly interrupted. In 1918, the Law 1698/1919 (GG 11/A) "Re-operation of the independent Office of Foreigners and Exhibitions established by the law 241" came into force.

GNTO was first established in 1929 by virtue of the law 4377/1929 (GG 285/A). Article 1 in particularly establishes an organization under the name "Greek National Tourism Organization", an independent public entity under the supervision of the Ministry of Finance and more specifically under the supervision of the Directorate of Foreigners and Exhibitions. The aim of the organization is to promote tourism in Greece through the coordination of all authorities (State, Municipal or Communal), private organizations and companies related to inbound or outbound tourism. GNTO is directed by a Board consisting of various state agencies', private organizations', and enterprises' representatives.

In 1936 GNTO was abolished by virtue of article 2, paragraph 2 of the Emergency Act 45/1936 (GG 379/A) "Establishment of the Sub-Ministry of Press and Tourism"; therefore the competencies of the Directors'

Board were assigned to the new Sub-Ministry. The Sub-Ministry of Press and Tourism was abolished however in 1941 and its competencies were assigned according to the law 19/1941 (GG 160/A) to the Ministry of Finance and more specifically to the Directorate of Spa Towns and Tourism.

In 1945, by virtue of the Emergency Act 588/1945 (GG 160/A), was established a General Directorate of Tourism in the Government's Presidency, to which were transferred all tourism related competencies.

Second Period of Operation (1950-2000)

In 1950 GNTO was re-established by virtue of the Emergency Act 1565/1950 (GG 255/A) "Establishment of the GNTO". According to article 1 more specifically, there established an independent public entity under the name "Greek National Tourism Organization" whereas its head office is located in Athens. GNTO lies under state supervision, exercised by the Minister of Finance. Scope of the Organization is the promotion of tourism in Greece through the wise use of all its resources and assets. During the following decades GNTO was under the supervision of various Ministries, like the Ministry of Coordination (1968), the Ministry of the Presidency (1974) and the Ministry of Finance (1985).

In 1989 eventually, GNTO and other public entities in tourism sector (Hellenic Chamber of Hotels etc.) were placed under the supervision of the Ministry of Tourism, established by the law 1835/1989 (GG 76/A). After two years the Ministry of Tourism was abolished through the presidential decree 417/1991 (GG 153/A) and its supervision was assigned once again to the Ministry of Finance.

In the 1990s, the GNTO supervision was offered to the Ministry of Tourism, which was re-introduced by virtue of the presidential decree 459 (GG 193/A). In 1996, the supervision has assigned to the Ministry of Development, established by virtue of the presidential decree 27/1996 (GG 19/A) "Amalgamation of the Ministries of Tourism, Industry, Energy, Technology and Commerce into the Ministry of Development". In 2000 was introduced in the Ministry of Development a General Directorate of Tourism by virtue of the law 2837/2000 (GG 178/A) "Regulation of Competitiveness matters, Regulatory Authority for Energy and tourism matters and other provisions".

Third Period of Operation (2001-2010)

In 2004 the Ministry of Tourism was re-introduced through the presidential decree 122/2004 (GG 85/A) "Re-establishment of the Ministry of Tourism" and took up the competencies of the Directorate General of Tourism under the Ministry of Development. This legal status changed once again in 2004, when according to the law 3270/04 (GG 187/A) was established the Ministry of Tourism and GNTO fell consequently under its competence.

In 2009, through the presidential decree 186/2009 (GG 213/A), the Ministries of Culture and Tourism amalgamated into a single Ministry of Culture and Tourism. In 2010 however, by virtue of the presidential decree 15/2010 (GG 35/A), there established, in the Ministry of Culture and Tourism, the General Directorate of Tourism that took over all the competencies foreseen by article 1 of the law 3270/2004 and by the presidential decree 149/2005, as they have been amended and put into force.

Regional Tourism Offices (RTOs)

GNTO

Regional Tourism Offices were initially established to monitor the tourism activity all over the country. Although there is no official record, it seems, according to our survey, that the first regional tourism office was

founded in 1957 in Thessaloniki, operating in fact as an information office. Probably the choice of the city of Thessaloniki was related to the respective International Fair taking place there every year. Under this office's jurisdiction was the management of GNTO's legacy and the participation into tourism events.

In the 1970s, there established more Regional Tourism Offices (RTOs) throughout the country in the framework of a wider decentralization of competencies.

In implementation of the presidential decree 683/1971 (GG 226/A) "Organization of the Directorates and distribution of GNTO's workforce", article 1, are established RTOs under the supervision of GNTO. Regional Tourism Offices are structured into Tourism Directorates, Departments and Information Offices. According to article 6 the RTOs are: (1) Attica and Islands Regional Tourism Office, located in Athens; (2) Central and Western Macedonia RTO, located in Thessaloniki; (3) Peloponnese and Western Continental Greece RTO located in Pátras; (4) Thessaly RTO located in Larissa; (5) Crete RTO located in Irakleion; (6) Epirus RTO located in Ioannina, and (7) East Macedonia and Thrace RTO located in Kavala.

In 1972 by virtue of the decision 525887/1972 (GG 454/B) of the Minister of Finance "Devolvement of Central Service competencies to the RTOs" were clearly defined all the competencies assigned to the RTOs related to supervision, inspection, legacy management and tourism development.

In 1976 the Presidential Decree 884/76 (GG 325/A) "Regulation on GNTO structure and personnel matters" defines in article 1 that GNTO is structured into the Central Service, the RTOs and the Tourism Offices Abroad.

More specifically, article 26 defines that the Regional Tourism Offices are structured into Tourism Directorates, Tourism Offices, and Information Offices; they are assigned to all central service competencies related to the supervision and implementation of tourism policy, the information of the stakeholders, the cooperation with the local administration, and the professional associations etc..

Region

After the establishment of the region as a single administrative structure (aiming at its economic, social, and cultural development) as well as the administrative division of the country into 13 regions, the GNTO competencies were transferred to the regions.

In 2001 by virtue of article 14 of the presidential decree 313/2001 (GG 211/A), the GNTO competencies were transferred to the regions. The competencies are related with tourism accommodation facilities, travel agencies and thermal spa facilities as well as with general inspection, tourist enterprises, and tourism ports inspection, monitoring of the tourism legislation implementation, administrative penalties to tourism enterprises or tourism sector professionals.

In implementation of article 15, there established Tourism Directorate in each region, located in the capital of each region², in order to exercise the assigned competencies. The Tourism Directorate lies under the Directorate General of the prefecture (see Figure 1). Its jurisdiction consists of the performance of the duties bestowed upon the regions; it is structured into the following departments (only in the regions of Central Macedonia, Western Greece, Attica, Crete, Ionian Island, and South Aegean): (1) tourist facilities; (2) tourist professions; (3) inspection and control; and (4) tourism development. In the regions of Eastern Macedonia and Thrace, of Western Macedonia, Epirus, Thessaly, Central Greece, Peloponnese, and North Aegean the

² With the exception of the Tourism Directorate of Thessaly, it is located in Volos instead of Larissa. In South Aegean region there established two separate directorates: one located in Syros exercising its power in Cyclades Prefecture, and the other located in Rhodes exercising its authority in Dodecanese Prefecture.

Directorates are structured into the following departments: (1) tourist facilities and professions; (2) inspection; (3) control; and (4) tourism development.

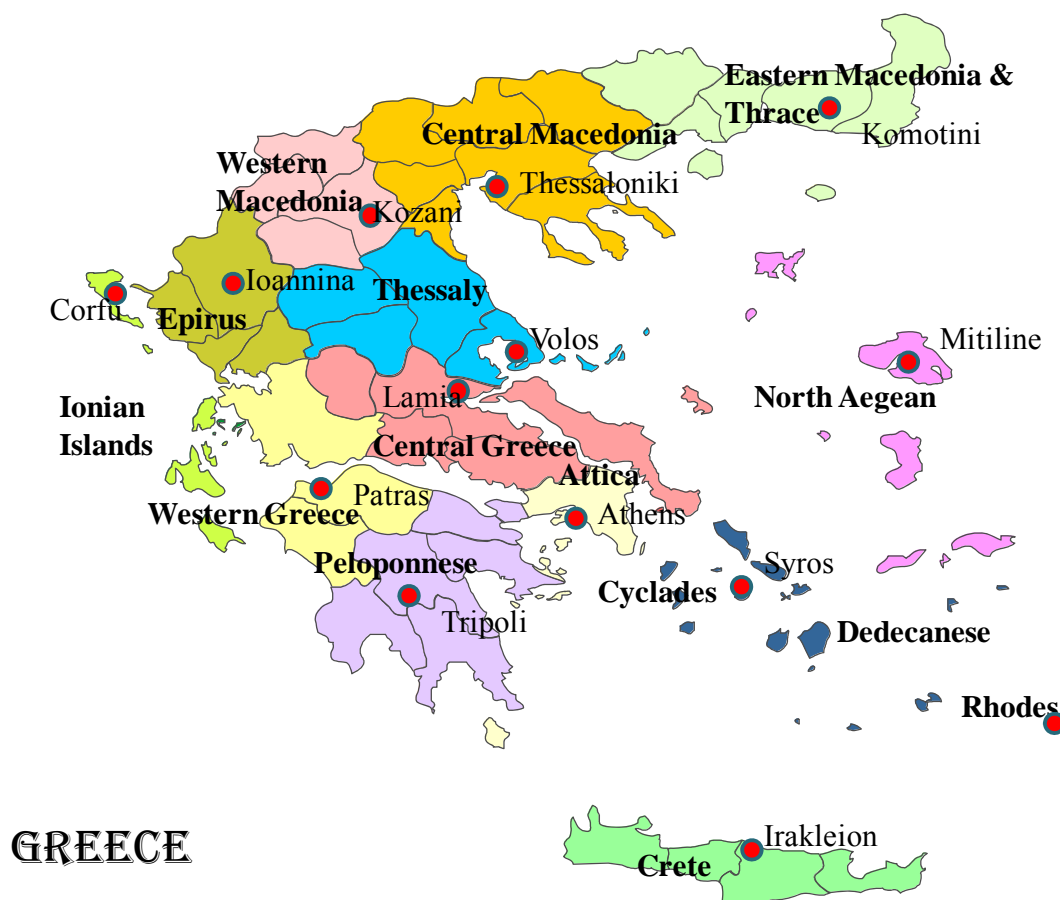


Figure 1. Regional Tourism Offices and prefectures in Greece. Source: Polyxeni Moira.

Reintegration of RTOs in GNT0

In 2005 the law 3270/2004 (GG 187/A) “Competencies of the Ministry of Tourism and other tourism issues”, and more specifically article 4, paragraph 6, establishes in each Region Regional Tourism Offices under GNT0 (in implementation of article 15, presidential decree 313/2001, GG 211/A provisions). RTOs are structured into Directorates, Departments and Tourism Offices and are bestowed with all competencies related to tourism. The Directorates, the Departments and the Tourism Offices of GNT0 share exactly the same organizational structure, staffing, positions, seat, substantial, and spatial competencies with the abolished tourism agencies of the regions.

The RTOs are also mentioned in the law 3498/2006 (GG 230/A) “Development of thermal tourism”, in the article 32 “Provisions on GNT0 RTOs”, more specifically, the directorate of the Regional Tourism Offices Control is established in GNT0. GNT0 jurisdiction lies in the general inspection, the coordination and in the legality check of RTOs acts. GNT0 is also responsible for their administrative organization, i.e., their housing, their technical infrastructure, their staffing, their support in legal matters, and is in generally responsible to safeguard their efficient operation.

The Regional Tourism Offices' Operation

Survey Method

In order to study the operation and the efficiency of Regional Tourism Offices (RTOs) a primary survey was conducted, between April and May 2010. All 14 RTOs received a questionnaire, which they were called to answer; then followed an interview with their directors (see Table 1).

Table 1

Regional Tourism Offices

Regional Tourism Offices	City/Seat	Prefectures
Thessaly	Volos	Magnesia, Trikala, Karditsa, Larissa
Crete	Iraklion	Chania, Rethimno, Iraklio, Lasithi
Central Macedonia	Thessaloniki	Thessaloniki, Chalkidiki, Pella, Imathia, Pieria, Serres, Kilkis
Epirus	Ioannina	Ioannina, Arta, Thesprotia, Preveza
Ionian Islands	Corfu	Corfu, Leukada
Western Macedonia	Kozani	Kozani, Kastoria, Florina, Grevena
Eastern Macedonia	Komotini	Drama, Kavala, Xanthi, Rhodope, Evros and Thrace
Central Greece	Lamia	Viotia, Evia, Fthiotida, Fokida and Erytania
North Aegean	Mitiline	Lesvos, Chios, Samos
Western Greece	Patras	Achaia, Iliia, Aitolokarnania; temporarily (even though this has been established the last 15 years) it has under its jurisdiction the Prefectures of Kefallonia, Zakynthos and Ithaki. It also has some jurisdiction in the Prefectures of Arcadia, Corinth, Argolida and Laconia.
Dodecanese	Rhodes	Dodecanese
Cyclades	Syros	Cyclades Islands
Peloponnese	Tripoli	Messinia, Arcadia, Laconia, Argolida, Corinth
Attica	Athens	Attica

Note. Source: GNTO.

Considering that all RTOs answered the questionnaires (apart from the Regional Tourism Office of Attica), the survey conducted was inventory. There used however useful data that derived from a secondary survey, this information was provided from the directorate of the Regional Tourism Offices Control. The questionnaire consists of the following parts:

(1) The first part of the questionnaire intends to investigate the structure and the competencies of RTOs. The requested topics were: when the agencies first operated, their administrative structure, their spatial competency and the number of tourist enterprises under their supervision (hotels, rooms to let, holiday self-catering apartments, camping, guesthouses, travel agencies, and rent a car agencies);

(2) The second part investigates the general staffing of each agency. The information requested concerned the number of the employees, their age, their role, the type of their employment, their studies, their specialization in tourism, and their foreign languages and computer knowledge;

(3) The third part investigates the administrative practice of the agency. More specifically, the directors were asked: if the agency draws up an annual work flow report; what is the average time to settle a citizens' demand; to describe the work flow; if they cooperate with others agencies to carry out the tourist enterprises' inspection; which administrative penalties are imposed and to report which are the most important problems they are confronting;

(4) In the last part of the questionnaire the directors were free to draw general observations and put forward proposals on the improvement of the agency in terms of efficiency and effectiveness.

Survey Findings

The results of our survey as well the data given by the directorate of Control of the Regional Tourism Offices reveal that the most important problems facing the RTOs are the following:

(1) Lack of personnel. The results of our survey as well the data given by the directorate of Control of the Regional Tourism Offices reveal that the personnel of the agencies are inadequate (as far as the number of employees and fields of specialization are concerned) to carry out the duties bestowed upon the local agencies (see Table 2). In all cases, apart from Crete and Western Macedonia directorates, the number of the employees is lower than the one defined by the presidential decree 313/2001. This number can be a bit deceptive though as it includes employees that are not permanent as well, like contract staff members. It is rather impressive that if those employees did not exist, the agencies would operate with half of their current staff! It is also quite surprising that in regions like Cyclades, one of the greatest tourist resorts in Greece, the permanent staff amounts to only five people, which actually inspect 15.71% of the tourist enterprises in Greece!

This huge problem affects negatively the ability of carrying out independently core competencies like inspection. For instance, inspections that should be carried out by the local agencies of Peloponnese and Western Macedonia are performed instead by the central agency, due to a lack of personnel. In directorates like Cyclades, Epirus, Northern Aegean, and Eastern Macedonia the inspections are carried out in cooperation with the central agency due to the same reason.

Apart from the lack of personnel, it is easy to conclude that there is an important lack of technical specializations like engineers. In the majority of the agencies, the work is done by contract staff but the negative effects are evident in their operation since they are left for long periods of time without engineers until their contract is renewed. The only solution left is the accomplishment of the architectural plans approval by the central agency. A further problem is that there is no even distribution of the employees, as far as their educational status is concerned. For instance, the employees of high school education exceeds by far the number foreseen by the presidential decree 313/2001 whereas the employees holding a university degree (administrative staff and Engineers) fall behind the number foreseen by the above mentioned decree. This certainly causes efficiency problems in the operation of the RTOs rendering them unable to perform sufficiently their duties.

In addition, although many RTOs may seem adequately staffed, it is easy to observe that they are “aged” services. The majority of them last employed permanent staff around 1988! Their staffs are renewed since then through occasional and certainly not targeted contracts, like transfers and seasonal employment contracts.

Furthermore, it is quite interesting to study the percentage rate of the local agencies’ employees controlling the respective supervised tourist enterprises. The largest amount of tourist enterprises (15.7%) is under the supervision of the Cyclades directorate, and then follows Crete (12.50%) and Central Macedonia (11.53%) whereas the lowest share has Western Macedonia (only 0.65%). The Crete Tourism directorate has the greatest percentage rate of hotels to inspect (15.43%) and then follow the directorates of Central Macedonia (11.93%) and Cyclades (10.98%). Cyclades however comes first as far as complimentary accommodation is concerned (21.25%) following the Directorates of Ionian Islands (13.72%) and Central Macedonia (11.52%).

Table 3 depicted the proportion between the employees and the tourist enterprises under their supervision (although not all of them participate in the inspections), more specifically Table 2 indicates how many tourist enterprises correspond to the employees of each RTO in terms of inspection. In this way, we can easily deduce that the personnel are remarkably inadequate to keep the workload under control. Considering on top of this that the number of the employees corresponds only to the period of time that the survey was conducted (as long as it comprises the seasonal staff as well) combined with a huge lack of specialties, the work load is unbearable for the majority of the local agencies, something that is totally reflected on efficiency and effectiveness.

Table 2

Positions of Permanent and Temporary Employees in the RTOs

	Directors	Higher education graduates/administrative staff	Higher education graduates/engineering staff	Technological education graduates	Secondary education graduates	Primary education graduates	Total	Directors	Higher education graduates/	Higher education graduates	Technological education	Secondary education graduates	Primary education graduates	Others	Total
Attica	1	8	7	23	12	5	56	1	5		4	26	2		38
Eastern Macedonia and Thrace	1	3	2	6	3	2	17	1		2		4	1	3	11
Central Macedonia	1	5	5	15	7	3	36	1	2	5	9	12		4	33
Western Macedonia	1	2	2	6	3	2	16	1	1		4			5	11
Epirus	1	2	3	6	3	2	17	1	1	1	1	6		4	14
Thessaly	1	3	2	7	3	2	18	1	3		8	3		4	19
Ionian Islands	1	5	3	6	6	3	24	1	6		7	7		4	25
Western Greece	1	3	3	7	4	3	21	1	3	4	14	15	1	9	47
Central Greece	1	4	2	7	5	2	21	1	4	2	2	6		4	19
Peloponnese	1	3	2	6	4	3	19	1	1		3	2		6	13
North Aegean	1	4	2	3	4	2	16	1	3		2	3	1		10
Cyclades								1	1	1	1	1		6	11
S. Aegean	2	9	6	9	14	6	46								
Dodecanese								1	3		6	4		2	17
Crete	1	6	5	13	6	6	37	1	7	3	16	8		8	43
Total	14	57	44	114	74	41	344	14	40	18	77	97	6	59	311

Note. Source: GNT0.

(2) Legal uncertainty. It is generally acknowledged that the legislation used by the RTOs is quite anachronistic considering that many laws have not been revised for many decades. As a result, they are insufficient to serve the needs of the tourism sector. The administrative penalties legislation for instance have not been revised since 1993, and the amount of money to be paid as a fine remains so low that the tourist enterprises prefer to pay for it rather than take measures to solve the problem. The procedure of imposing a penalty is also very time-consuming, whereas it does not provide for any specific procedure in case of an emergency requiring immediate intervention, for instance in case that a tourist enterprise should be immediately closed (Mylonopoulos & Nikolaou, 2008, pp. 22-31).

Besides, the legislation is quite complicated, vague, and controversial. Many regulations are characterized by important legal vacuums—like the recent law for the “hotel functional settlement”. Further issues, like the severity of the imposed penalties, the leniency in the approval of architectural plans or the necessity to close temporarily a hotel in case that there has been already imposed a fine, still remain unsettled. As a result, those matters are confronted in a totally different way by each Regional Office causing therefore uncertainty of law and administrative practice diversity.

Table 3

RTOs and Supervised Tourist Enterprises

RTO	Number of employees (May 2010)	Total sum of tourist enterprises	Proportion
Attica	38	4.427	1/116
Peloponnese	8	1.855	1/232
Cyclades	7	8.253	1/1179
Dodecanese	15	3.563	1/237
Western Greece	36	4.490	1/125
Northern Aegean	11	2.245	1/204
Central Greece	18	2.419	1/134
Eastern Macedonia & Thrace	10	1.689	1/169
Western Macedonia	12	344	1/29
Ionian islands	25	5.784	1/231
Epirus	15	1.594	1/106
Central Macedonia	37	6.059	1/164
Crete	43	6.572	1/153
Thessaly	19	3.261	1/172

Note. Source: GNTO.

Another drawback causing negative effects on effectiveness and certainty of law is overregulation (Mylonopoulos & Nikolaou, 2008, pp. 22-31; Mylonopoulos, 2009, pp. 194-195). There is not one single legal text that the employee can consult; on the contrary, there are hundreds of legal texts that are not only scattered in various legal texts of different ministries but also constantly revised.

Another difficulty mentioned by the majority of the regional agencies is the inadequate support on behalf of the central agency, especially in terms of facing legal matters. The central agency support is considered to be inadequate in case of crises and emergencies, especially when those cases are not foreseen in any legal texts (for instance when a hotel should be immediately closed for reasons of public health). RTOs have no other choice but to act on their own responsibility when such cases emerge.

Due to the fines they imposed to tourist enterprises, RTOs are often called to participate in judicial proceedings in the court of law. When such cases are judged in Administrative Courts, the RTO director has to submit the necessary documents but not to attend the proceeding himself or herself. However, when the case is judged in Civil Courts the director is obliged to attend the proceeding. In most cases, there is no kind of support offered by the central agency, including financial support; hence the director has to bear the cost himself. Considering that such incidents occur quite often, it is no wonder that qualified and experienced civil servants do not wish to assume high-ranking positions.

(3) Administrative practice. Due to a lack of a common administrative practice, each RTO tends to follow its own administrative practice to deal with the difficulties emerging from the uncertainty of law and the insufficient staffing. As a result, the citizens all over the country are not treated on equal terms. The workload, the amount of which varies from one office to another, has a negative impact as well. Almost no office draws an annual work report with statistics neither exists a citizens demand accomplishment report on a weekly or a monthly basis. On the contrary, most of the agencies have estimated that the average time to accomplish a citizen's demand is three to 10 days. We will now put forward a dysfunction example deriving from a bad administrative practice: Western Greece RTO, located in Patras, performs officially its powers in the Prefectures of Achaia, Ilia and Aitolokarnania. However, it also supervises the Prefectures of Kefallonia and

Zakinthos, although they belong to the Ionian Islands RTO located in Corfu, whereas it is also assigned with some competencies in the Prefectures of Arcadia, Corinth, Argolida, and Laconia although they officially belong to the Peloponnese RTO located in Tripolis.

(4) As issues of minor importance were reported by some RTOs, the inappropriate buildings housing the agencies, the insufficient equipment and the inadequate financial resources.

Conclusion

The aim of this survey was to study the operation of RTOs, to highlight the problems they are facing and to point out their importance in the improvement of each region's tourism product.

The survey confirms that it is impossible for the central agency to be fully aware of the problems facing each region, therefore, it is neither rational nor effective to handle such matters without taking into consideration the distinctive characteristics of each region.

The revision of the current tourism policy is fundamental in order to adjust to the modern competitive environment whereas the RTOs should strengthen their role in tourism policy design. A vital condition to achieve this would be their sufficient staffing with employees that will manage to keep up with the excessive workload contributing therefore to the region's sustainable tourism development.

Greek National School of Public Administration and more specifically the Tourism Economy and Development Department have an essential role to play through the training of qualified executives that will later staff not only GNTTO but the RTOs as well. Last but not least, a permanent legal framework that will not be under constant revision causing therefore legal uncertainty and work insecurity to the employees is crucial for the effective operation of RTOs.

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