

# ADMINISTRATIVE CAPACITY AND INSTITUTIONAL DESIGN IN NATIONAL LOCAL GOVERNMENT FUNDING: AN EX-ANTE EVALUATION OF THE “ANTONIS TRITSIS” PROGRAM IN GREECE

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## **Abstract**

This paper discusses the design, administrative sufficiency, and perceived efficiency of the Antonis Tritsis special development program to support the local government in Greece. The analysis will take an ex-ante evaluation which will look at the capacity of an administration, the institution design and the conditions of implementation of programs directly than the actual economic outcomes. The empirical research is founded on theoretical questionnaire and structured interviews with top managers, who are personally engaged in the program designing, financing, and monitoring, and is supported with S.W.O.T. analysis. The goal is to embed the perceptions of the strategic appropriateness, institutional functionality as well as implementation constraints with an focus on the inequality in administrative capacity between the municipalities and institutional complexity. The results indicate that the program can be viewed as strategically significant and financially innovative especially because the entire funding of the project financial sources was in place. At the same time, limitations related to the uneven administrative capacity of local authorities, institutional complexity, and the need to strengthen technical support, especially for small and island municipalities, are highlighted. The study contributes to the literature on local governance by offering evidence-based policy guidance for the design of more effective and equitable funding programs.

**Keywords:** E-ante evaluation, administrative capacity, public investments, local government, Greece

**JEL classification:** H70, H72, R10, R50, R58, D73  
pp. 13-36

## **1. Introduction**

Local Government plays a crucial role in the provision of basic public services, in the management of infrastructure and in the promotion of local and regional development. However, in many European countries, and particular in administratively centralized states, the effectiveness of Local Authorities is limited by structural weaknesses related to fiscal autonomy, administrative capacity and multi-level governance.

The issues of financing and institutional sufficiency of Local Government increased in Greece during the time of the economic crisis, and the COVID-19 pandemic further underscored the already existing disparities and deficiencies in operations. In this respect, the program "Antonis Tritsis" emerged as a combined national financial instrument, to help to reinforce infrastructure, to promote local development and enhance the role of Local Authorities.

This paper discusses the design and the implementation terms and anticipated success of the "Antonis Tritsis" development program that is a national financial tool to be implemented during 2020-2025 and will support Local Government Organizations in Greece. The study sheds light on the program administrative capacity and institutional arrangements and the

governance process that to large extent defines the capacity of the municipalities to transform funds into effective development and social interventions.

Although there is a wide range of international literature on Local Government financing and also assessment of public programs, empirical studies have been few primarily consisting of ex-post review of monetary outcomes or quantitative analysis of resource ingestion (Morgan & Pasurka 2023; Nadler and Nadler, 2018). Rather, the institutional and administrative determinants of impact on ex ante predictive success of national financial instruments is under-researched, particularly on the Greek administrative scenario. The main aspect of this gap is the administrative capacity of local governments, the institutional complexity, and technical assistance in the process of designing and implementing major development programs.

The current paper addresses a severe gap because it conducts an ex-ante analysis of the program in terms of governance and administrative capacity. The analysis employs an executive interview and structured questionnaire supported by a S.W.O.T. analysis in order to determine that the design is appropriate, implementations issues and conditions under which the territorial equity can be improved in future funding plans.

This article seeks to explore to what extent this makes the institutional design and administrative setting of the program called Antonis Tritsis be likely to be effective or not as a local-development-social-cohesion tool. In particular, it measures the capacity of such factors as Local Authorities administration, complexity of the procedures, technical assistance and flexibility of the program in solving different local needs.

Despite extensive ex-post evaluations of public investment programs, there is limited empirical evidence on how administrative capacity and institutional design shape the expected effectiveness of national funding instruments at the ex-ante stage. This gap limits our understanding of how governance conditions and capacity asymmetries influence implementation prospects before financial resources are translated into concrete development outcomes.

In this regard, the following research questions are formulated:

**RQ1.** What is the estimated contribution of the “Antonis Tritsis” program to improving the basic infrastructure of local governments, strengthening the local and regional economy, and promoting social cohesion?

**RQ2.** What proposals can be formulated to maximize the efficiency and effectiveness of future local government funding programs?

To fulfill these goals, the research employs primary information in the form of structured questionnaire as well as structured interview of top officers of the agencies responsible in the planning, financing and monitoring processes of the program. This qualitative data is supplemented with a S.W.O.T. analysis that enables one to systematically map the strengths and weaknesses of the program and opportunities and threats that are presented by the institutional and administrative environment.

The contribution of the article is twofold. At a theoretical level, it enriches the discussion on the financing of Local Government, shifting the emphasis from the simple absorption of resources to the administrative capacity and governance of the programs. At a policy level, it provides evidence-based conclusions that can support the redesign of future financial instruments, aiming at greater efficiency, territorial justice and strengthening social cohesion.

The rest of the article is structured as follows: in section 2, the contribution of operational programs to Local Government and the special development program “Antonis Tritsis” is presented, in section 3, the methodology and limitations of the research are analyzed, in section 4, the findings from the questionnaire, interviews and S.W.O.T. analysis are presented and discussed. Finally, in section 5, the conclusions and policy proposals are formulated.

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## **2. Theoretical background**

### **2.1 The contribution of operational programs to Local Government**

Local Government is a key pillar of regional development, especially in countries with strong inequalities, such as Greece. In the context of the European strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth, co-financed operational programs have evolved into critical tools to support local authorities, providing funding, institutional strengthening and administrative upgrading (Bachtler et. al, 2013; Barca et. al, 2012; Copeland & Diamond, 2022).

National Strategic Reference Framework (N.S.R.F.) is the main mechanism for the allocation of European funds by financing infrastructure, social inclusion, environment, entrepreneurship and digital transition projects. At the same time, recommendations for the design, documentation and monitoring of projects, while tools such as Integrated Spatial Investments, JESSICA and PPPs They promoted innovation and cooperation with the private sector (OECD, 2018; European Commission, 2020). The N.S.R.F. 2014–2020 financed critical projects of social structures, energy upgrades, urban regeneration and environmental interventions, while the participation of Local Authorities in the above programs strengthened their technical and administrative structures (Chorianopoulos, 2012).

Municipalities with initially limited functioning developed project management models, internal monitoring mechanisms, practical transparencies and improved their organization. At the same time, the programs contributed to the reduction of spatial inequalities, giving priority to remote, mountainous and island areas.

However, the unequal administrative capacities of Local Authorities led to differentiated access to resources. Small municipalities, due to insufficient staffing and dependence on external partners, faced obstacles, which showed the need for institutional and technical support.

Overall, operational programs functioned as levers of modernization and decentralization, going beyond the role of simple financial tools. Their strategic and balanced utilization is now emerging as a critical factor for sustainable local development (Augusztin et al., 2025).

### **2.2 Ex-ante evaluation, structured interviews and S.W.O.T. analysis as tools for understanding implementation**

In the policy evaluation literature, ex-ante evaluation is considered appropriate for the early identification of design and implementation risks, especially when the outcome depends on institutional interactions and multiple actors. In such cases, structured interviews and questionnaires with institutional “insiders” offer comparable data on perceptions, administrative practices and bottlenecks.

In addition, S.W.O.T. analysis functions as a complex tool for linking internal characteristics (strengths/weaknesses of institutional design and administrative functioning) with external dynamics (opportunities/threats), allowing the translation of research findings into coherent policy directions. Its application within the framework of "Antonis Tritsis" is particularly useful for the systematization of issues such as bureaucracy, project maturity, technical support and interoperability.

### **2.3 The special development program “Antonis Tritsis”**

In April 2020, the special development program "Antonis Tritsis" was established with the aim of strengthening local authorities, supporting local economies, and addressing the consequences of the economic and health crisis in Greece. It is a strategic financing mechanism on a national scale that aims at local development, social solidarity, and upgrading the role of local government. The main objectives of the program are: a) The upgrading and modernization of the basic infrastructure of the local authorities, b) the revitalization of social and economic activity, c) the implementation of actions and initiatives that promote social cohesion and solidarity, d) the use of information and communication technologies, e) the improvement of the efficiency of the administration and f) the upgrading of the institution of civil protection.

The program is structured around six key priority areas, which reflect its strategy for multidimensional and balanced local development. Each axis includes actions aimed at addressing the specific needs of local communities, improving everyday life, and ensuring sustainability. The program focuses on six key areas: civil protection, urban quality and function, digital convergence, environmental protection, social solidarity, and the advancement of education, culture, tourism, and sports.

The program is implemented through specific calls, such as: AT01-Water Supply, AT02-Urban Wastewater, AT03-Renewable Energy Sources, AT04-Waste, AT05-Rural Road Construction, AT06-Urban regeneration, AT07-Building stock, AT08-Smart cities, AT09-Studies, AT10-Open spaces, AT11-Pre-earthquake control, AT12-Electromobility, AT14-1821, as well as calls that incorporate projects from "Philodimos I".

The program supports first and second degree local authorities, Local Government Associations, and their legal entities nationwide. It covers island, mountain, and lowland municipalities equally to reduce regional disparities and promote social and economic cohesion.

The Antonis Tritsis program is among the biggest financial instruments designed to address the local government in Greece. It is funded through development loans on Deposit and Loan Fund (DLF) and European Investment Bank. Such loans are a paid back indirectly through the facilities by the Public Investment Program (PIP) of the ministry of the interior thereby not putting local authorities in the direct bracket of responsibility.

The budget in the entire programming period of the program is EUR2.5 billion and funding can take up to EUR3.45 billion, which will be divided between new calls (AT01-AT14) and transfer of the project of Philodimos I. There is a budget limit and performance measure on each call to measure its performance.

Its initial term was 2020-2023, yet it has already been prolonged until 2028 as a result of high interest and need increase across the country.

The program the Antonis Tritsis has a structured system of measures that cannot allow the projects, submitted to be carried through, to completion, through the evaluation, approval, financing and monitoring phases. This program is operated by the Special Management and Implementation Service of the Ministry of the Interior (MIA-MOU).

The process of implementation starts with the reviews where the MIA-MOU issues invitations indicating the axes, the beneficiary groups and the selection criteria. The bodies also present their proposals along with the ruling of their competent bodies together with the technical file that is required. The Special Management and Implementation Service of the Ministry of the Interior make the completeness check and verify the proposals and the Evaluation Committee presents recommendations to the Minister of the interior to be finally included. The DLF Board of Directors then approves the loan, the loan agreement (with a special provision designating the beneficiary as the holder of the hereditary interest in case of non-compliant use) is signed between the beneficiary and the DLF and the loan is disbursed.

Overall, the "Antonis Tritsis" program lays the foundations for a long-term development strategy, with an emphasis on local government, in order to create resilient, functional, and socially just local communities.

## **2.4 Administrative capacity and the effectiveness of local government funding programs**

The administrative capacity represents a key factor of the effectiveness of the public policy, especially a complex multi-actor funding programs targeted at the local government. It describes how public organizations plan, administer, execute, and supervise policies efficiently, which include human resource, technical skills, organisational design, information technology systems, and coordination systems.

The literature typically draws the difference between formal administrative capacity that deals with institutional structures, legal structures, and procedural regulations, and operational administrative capacity that is the literal capability of organizations to transform formal stipulations into actual utility by way of skilled staff, project development maturity, and administration ability. Formal capacity can guarantee compliance and accountability, but the performance and results of policies are largely due to operational capacity.

The administrative capacity has a two-fold role in the field of local government financing. First, it preconditions the availability of funds, because the skills in preparing mature proposals, making feasibility studies and fulfilling formal requirements of the procedure differ considerably across the municipalities. Second, it determines effectiveness in implementation, which affects timeframes, cost management, quality of project as well as attainment of desired social and economic impacts.

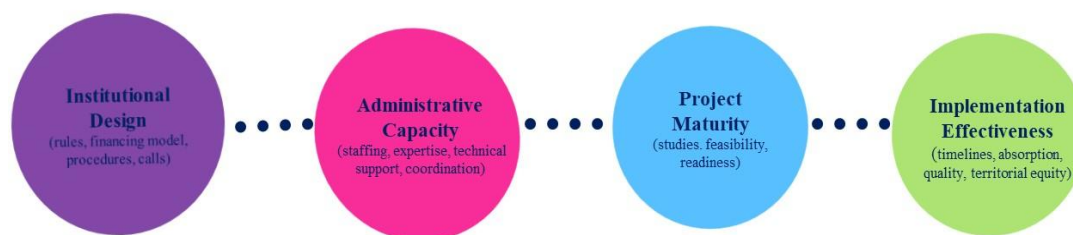
Empirical research has revealed that inequalities in administrative capacity tend to result to unequal territorial results, despite the fact that funding instruments are meant to facilitate equity. Various other differences in administrative systems tend to increase these inequalities in centralized administrative systems, including Greece, due to lack of decentralization, reliance on central agencies, and recurrent staffing shortages locally.

Regarding an ex-ante evaluation approach, administrative capacity evaluation is also necessary to determine the risk of implementation and how this will lead to inequalities in program effectiveness. Such a course of action is also adopted in this study to study the interaction between the institutional design and governance operating in the program level of the Antonis Tritsis and the status of the current state of administrative capacity, which alters the perceived effectiveness of the program before a full implementation is made possible.

According to the discussion presented above on the theoretical aspects, a conceptual framework is developed to explain the interaction between institutional design and administrative capacity to determine project maturity and implementation effectiveness.

The framework is an analytical instrument that helps in informing the empirical study and findings interpretation.

**Figure 1. Conceptual framework linking institutional design, administrative capacity and program effectiveness**



### **3. Methodology**

This section outlines the methodological approach that will be used to evaluate the program "Antonis Tritsis" and, in particular, research design, data collection sources and methods, research questions and the study limitations that the study will have. The methodology was designed to produce systematic records of the experiences and evaluations of the executives to make an exhaustive ex-ante program evaluation.

#### **3.1 Research design**

The research was carried out in a mixed format with a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods to provide a deeper insight into the program (Gill et al., 2008; Raimondo and Newcomer, 2017; Bamberger and Mabry, 2020). To identify trends, characteristics and implications to future researches and understand better the highly complex study like the impact and the efficacy of a national Local Government funding program, descriptive and exploratory strategy was adopted.

The quantitative component was carried out by way of the structured questionnaire which has made the systematic recordability and comparability of answers and the qualitative component was secured by way of the structured interview with the executives who were in the design and monitoring as well as evaluation aspect of the program.

At the same time, having analyzed the international and Greek literature on local government financing and the evaluation of operational programs, a S.W.O.T. analysis was

conducted to identify the key strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats in the design and implementation of the respective financing tools in the future (Creswell & Plano, 2017).

The findings of the observance of the interviews, S.W.O.T analysis synthesis assisted to reach the substantive conclusions and policy recommendations on the perfect structure of the financing that would contribute to the sustainable development and the local government.

### **3.2 Data collection**

Primary data were utilized in the study in order to provide comprehensive and valid findings. The main data was gathered using a questionnaire and an interview which was structured, based on two main bodies that take part in the planning and supervision of the Antonis Tritsis program. This technique was chosen due to its ease of analysis, its emphasis on participation, and the fact that it enables the capture of qualitative data on executives specifically engaged in the design and execution of the program (Johnson et al., 2007; Creswell, 2017; Ponzo and Milazzo 2025; Munoz-Fernandez et al, 2024).

The questionnaire was developed using the research objectives and research questions. It encompassed primarily closed-ended Likert-type questions to be analyzed quantitatively about the implementation issues, the efficiency of funding, and the potential improvement recommendations, which enabled the attitudes and judgments to be recorded in the standardized fashion, and a small number of open-ended questions to make the qualitative observations and proposals. The structured interviews were administered in form of in-person or remote interviews with the mean length being 30-45 minutes.

The triangulation of the validity of the researches by primary (questionnaires, interviews) and secondary data (bibliography) enhanced the validity (Teddlie and Tashakkori, 2010; Rossi et. al., 2004). The data collection was done in July 2025, without exploring the temporal variations. Ethics of conducting the research were implemented throughout the research, with anonymity, voluntary participation, and preservation of personal information.

The structure facilitated the comparability of their responses and at the same time enabled detailed documentation of experiences on the issue of implementation problems, the perceived success of funding and possibility of future improvement in programs.

The validity of the responses was made by using participants who were involved in the program, and their role of responsibility in the project and their experience in the profession. The objective was to provide an ex-ante analysis, find difficulties, and accumulate experience to enhance local government financing instruments in the future.

### **3.3 Research limitations**

Despite the methodological completeness of the approach aimed at producing reliable and documented conclusions, the study has certain limitations. The limitations mainly concern the methodology, the nature of the data, the sample, and the time frame, affecting to some extent the interpretation and generalization of the findings (Bamberger & Mabry, 2020; Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2010).

The emphasis on the use of questionnaires and structured interviews limited the possibility of exploring causal relationships, as complementary methods were not used, while the qualitative dimension focused exclusively on executives of central agencies, without the participation of representatives of project beneficiaries or the local community (mayors, local businesses, residents), which limited the recording of social acceptance and local impacts of the program.

This could introduce some level of institutional bias, which could result in an over-estimation of the financial sustainability of the program, and underestimation of implementation difficulties encountered by the beneficiary municipalities. These limitations are inherent to the ex-ante and top-down nature of the analysis and should be taken into account when interpreting the findings.

In addition, the time and practical constraints associated with the nature of the study affected the breadth and depth of the analysis, while the findings relate to a specific funding program, limiting the possibility of direct generalization. For this reason, it is recommended that future ex-post evaluations and comparative studies with similar programs at the national and international level be carried out.

## **4. Results and discussion**

This section presents the findings from the questionnaires and structured interviews that were based on the same research tool. Data collection was carried out with a mixed qualitative and quantitative approach between 14-25 July 2025 with the participation of executives who contributed, through their experience and expertise, to the evaluation of the operation and effectiveness of the "Antonis Tritsis" program.

### **4.1 The identity of the survey participants**

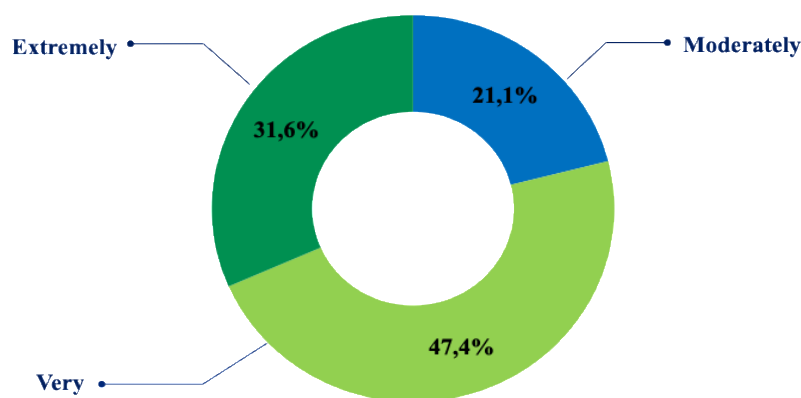
The survey was based on structured interviews and a questionnaire, addressed exclusively to 19 executives, 14 (77%) from the Deposit and Loan Fund and 5 (23%) from the Special Management and Implementation Service of the Ministry of the Interior with an active role in the design, monitoring, and implementation of the "Antonis Tritsis" program. The predominance of the DLF may limit the generalizability of the findings. Participants covered all stages of implementation (proposal evaluation, contracts, disbursements, monitoring), ensuring institutional consistency and financial accuracy.

In terms of experience, 47.4% have more than 10 years of experience in the design and/or financing of development programs, 15.8% have 6–10 years, 10.5% 2–5 years, and 26.3% have less than 2 years, which indicates a renewal of the executive staff. This composition combines experienced and younger executives, strengthening both the technical competence and adaptability of the management system.

### **4.2 Design and objectives of the “Antonis Tritsis” Program**

**Q1.** To what extent do you consider that the design of the "Antonis Tritsis" program responded to the needs of local government after the economic crisis and the COVID-19 pandemic?

**Figure 2. Degree of responsiveness of the design of the "Antonis Tritsis" program**



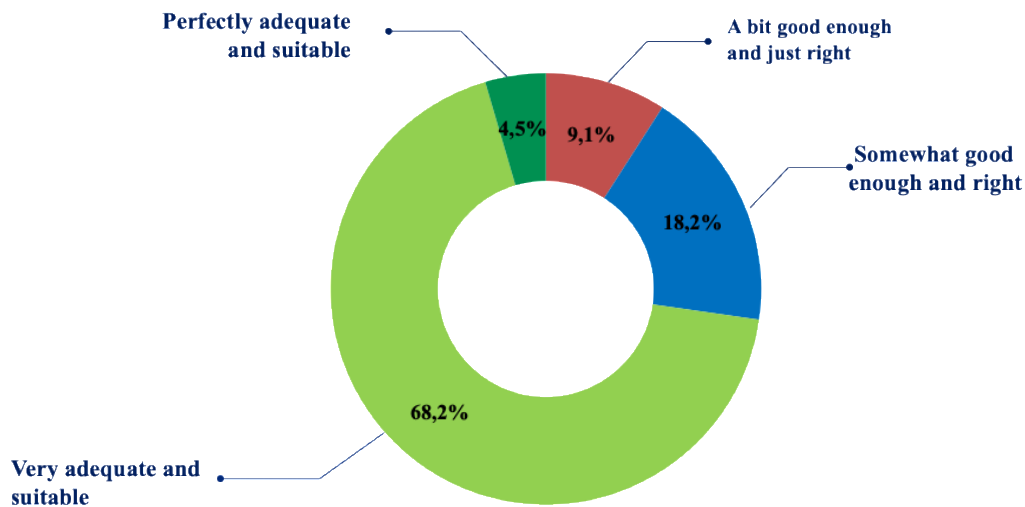
The majority of participants (79%) believe that the program design responded to a large or very large extent to the needs of local authorities following the economic and health crisis, acting as a tool for recovery. However, 21.1% said it was a "moderate" response, pointing out the need for more flexibility and faster adaptation.

A key advantage was the coverage of critical infrastructure through targeted calls for proposals and its role as a liquidity mechanism, replacing the "Philodimos" program. The moderate assessments were linked to insufficient information provided to citizens and local authorities, a mismatch between demand and available resources, and imperfect "fair distribution." At the same time, institutional and informational gaps were identified that made it difficult to achieve the objectives.

The combination of flexibility, simplified procedures, and technical support, in general, proved that the program aligns with the UN Sustainable Development Goals and development orientation. It represented a significant intervention in support of the local government with the positive environmental, social, and economic presence.

**Q2.** To what extent do you consider that the strategic planning of the "Antonis Tritsis" program is compatible with and meets the needs of local government?

**Figure 3.** Assessment of the suitability of the strategic planning of the "Antonis Tritsis" program



The vast majority (approximately 90.9%) consider the program to be "moderate" to "very adequate and appropriate," with the majority (68.2%) describing it as very adequate and appropriate, while only 9.1% consider it to be somewhat adequate and appropriate. Although limited, this percentage highlights the need for further adaptation to the diverse needs of local government. Consequently, the program is moving in the right direction, but its flexibility and effectiveness need to be enhanced.

**Q3.** In your opinion, to what extent have the objectives of the Antonis Tritsis program been achieved or are expected to be achieved?

**Table 1** Assessment of the degree of achievement of the objectives of the Antonis Tritsis Program

	Not at all	A little	Moderaty	Very	Extremely
<b>Objective A:</b> Improvement and modernization of basic local government infrastructure	4,6%	0,0%	13,6%	68,%	13,6%
<b>Objective B:</b> Restarting social and economic life, protecting public health, and strengthening the local economy	4,5%	0,0%	27,3%	59,%	9,1%
<b>Objective C:</b> Implementing social cohesion and solidarity actions	0,0%	4,5%	36,5%	45,%	4,5%
<b>Objective D:</b> Integrating ICT and transforming cities into "smart cities."	4,5%	9,1%	59,1%	22,%	4,5%
<b>Objective E:</b> Modernizing civil protection policy at the local level	4,5%	22,%	36,4 %	31,%	4,5%

Approximately 81.8% of the respondents marked Objective A as a particularly successful achievement. Interventions within the water supply, sewerage, road construction and flood protection sector, buildings and energy upgrades are associated with high satisfaction, which establishes that the design has been handled into physical infrastructure. The percentage of more cautious respondents (18.2) speaks of the need of improvement, primarily because of time lags or local circumstances. The success of the second goal is evaluated favorably but more reservations as compared to the first goal. This image is ascribed to the multifacetedness of the goal, time losses, and the impossibility to gauge social results within a rather brief time frame. Though measures were taken in the fields of the entrepreneurship and the public health

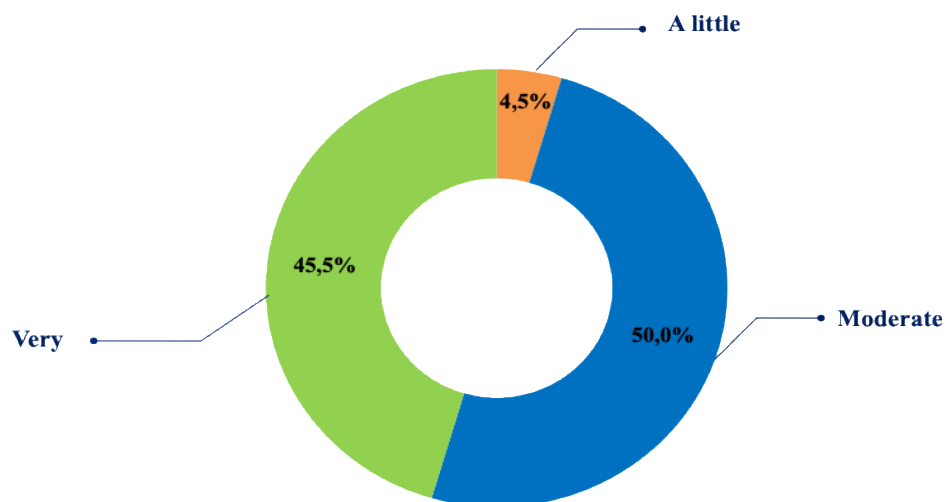
organization, there are still the reservations that specific synergies should be established, especially in regions with the serious pandemic load or the socio-economic impact. In general, Objective II is of paramount strategic value, taking more time, resources, and co-ordination. Program objective III has the lowest positive rating. Half of them think it has been attained at an acceptable level. The reason behind this lag is largely due to the challenge to measure qualitative goals that take long-term measures, collaboration of actors involved in the few social calls, the incapacity of small municipalities to encompass projects and monitoring of the social impact. The image identifies the necessity to reinforce the social aspect of the program with the help of specially designed measures, social criteria into the assessment of projects, and methods that are to measure social added value. Planning and cooperation between ministries and policies that are region-specific will be needed to achieve success. According to the majority of the respondents (59.1%), they felt that the program was moderately achieved. The main threats are variations in digital maturity, the unavailability of specialists, the absence of a local strategy, and system interoperability as well as inadequate continuous training. An evaluation of objective E indicates a subject of serious alertness and disparate results. The percentage of positive ratings by 36.3% clarifies that 58.7% of them are slightly satisfied, which is a long-term weak point in local civil protection, even though it has become particularly relevant against the backdrop of the climate crisis. The reactions indicate that there are important disparities in the local authorities the key main challenges include understaffing, equipment deficits, low coordination and specialisation of calls to proposals. Altogether, this program has not succeeded in ensuring that civil protection becomes a strategic pillar. The advancement will need specific projects, institutional backup, human resource growth and technical backup in such a way that the local leaders have become ready to build significant operational capability and strength.

Key insight: The strategic design of the program is broadly aligned with local government needs; however, the extent to which its objectives are expected to be achieved is primarily conditioned by administrative and technical capacity disparities rather than by program design deficiencies.

#### 4.3 Assessment of the effectiveness of the “Antonis Tritsis” Program

**Q4.** In your opinion, to what extent did the six priority axes of the program adequately covered the needs of local government for the period 2020-2025?

**Figure 4. Assessment of Local Authority Needs Covered by the Antonis Tritsis Program**



The results show strong, but not universal, agreement on the appropriateness of the thematic axes of the Antonis Tritsis program. 45.5% of executives consider that they “very much” meet the needs, 50% “moderately” and only 4.5% “a little.”

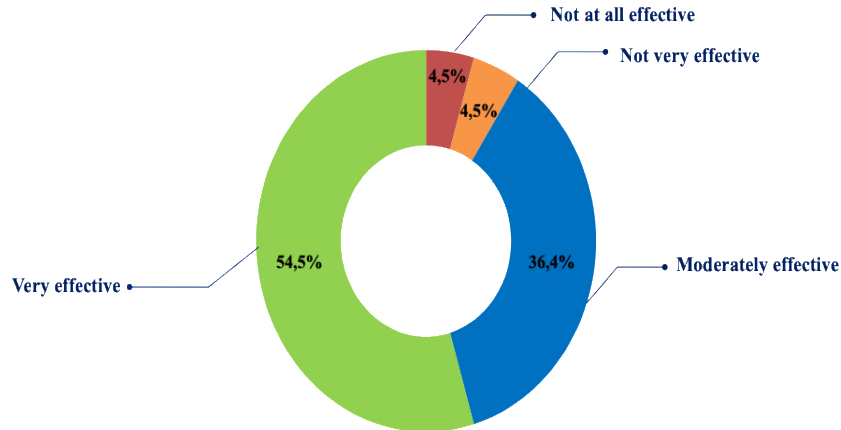
The positive attitude confirms that the axes are moving in a realistic direction. However, the high percentage of “moderate” acceptance highlights the need for adjustments in areas such as

digital transformation, tourism, and culture, where there is a lack of targeted calls for proposals or operational readiness on the part of local authorities.

Overall, the planning is considered positive, but continuous readjustment of priorities is required in line with evolving needs, local dynamics, and socio-economic conditions.

**Q5.** How effective do you consider the design of special calls (e.g., AT01, AT04, AT08) to have been in attracting high-quality projects for local government?

**Figure 5. Evaluation of the Effectiveness of Specific Calls**



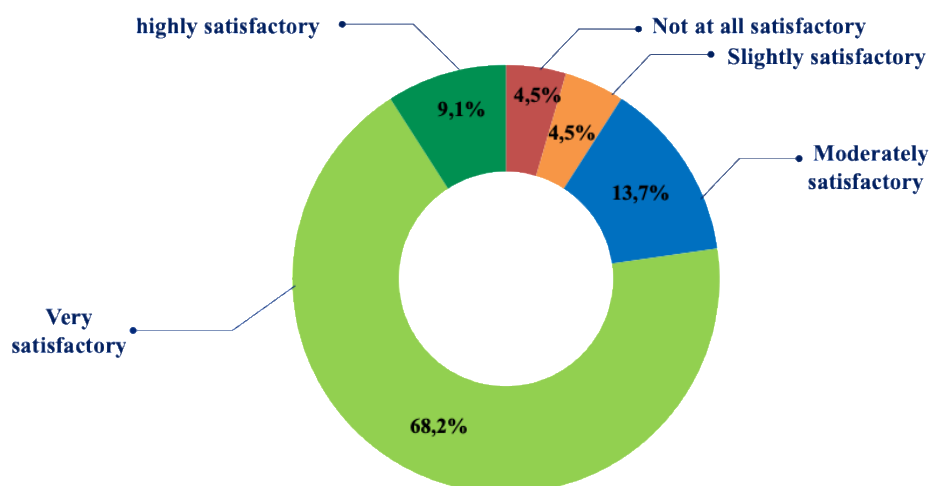
Regardless of the general design, a number of the executives found flaws in such areas as environment and civil protection (non-issuance of AT13), health of the population, energy adequacy, digital convergence, and food security, particularly island and rural regions. Another issue they noted is the disparity between local authorities as a result of scarcity of resources and technical assistance, which poses the necessity of flexibility and the regular revision of the axes.

The rated calls turned out to be rated as “very effective” by 54.5% and named as moderate by 36.4% of executives, owing to the transparent topics that the submission of mature proposals became possible. In small municipalities, however, participation was simply constrained by technical weaknesses. There is a need to strengthen technical assistance to have equal benefit access.

The free comments gave rise to proposals for a single P.I.P., the establishment of a central managing authority that could design calls for proposals based on the country’s horizontal needs rather than fragmented initiatives, and the strengthening of dialogue with local authorities. At a technical level, it was proposed to set a ceiling per call, avoid the submission of immature proposals, and assign specialized issues to the competent ministries so that the MIA-MOU can focus on its core role.

Overall, the body of calls is considered adequate, but effectiveness depends on better preparation, institutional cooperation, and administrative simplification

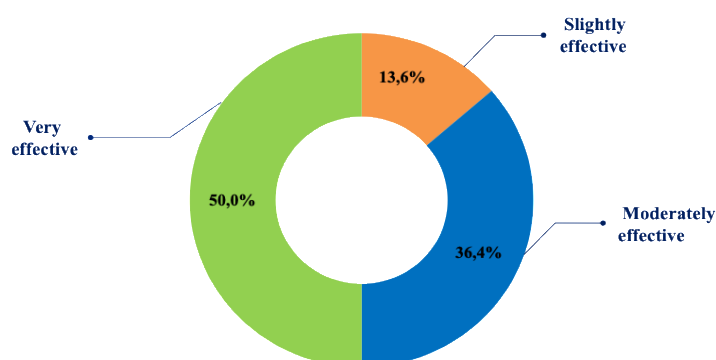
**Q6.** How would you assess the overall implementation of the program, from the publication of calls for proposals by the EYDE YPES, the submission and evaluation of proposals, to the approval of loans by the DLF and the disbursement of funds?

**Figure 6. Overall assessment of the program implementation process**

The overall assessment of the implementation of the Antonis Tritsis program by public service executives is particularly positive. 77.3% rated it as “very” or “absolutely” satisfactory, 13.7% as “moderately satisfactory” and only 9% as “not at all” or “slightly” satisfactory. This finding demonstrates a high level of acceptance of the operation of the MIA-MOU and its partner agencies (DLF, EIB), as well as organizational adequacy at all stages, from the issuance of calls for proposals to the disbursement of funds.

The main delays are in the implementation of projects, due to administrative weaknesses of local authorities, bureaucracy, and insufficient information provided to elected officials. The solutions proposed include the development of a unified information system with interoperability between the agencies involved (MIA-MOU, DLF, EIB, and municipalities), the establishment of clear timetables, unit costs, and revision ceilings. At the same time, the positive contribution of the Court of Auditors in ensuring legality was recognized, as well as the need to strengthen technical support, especially in small municipalities.

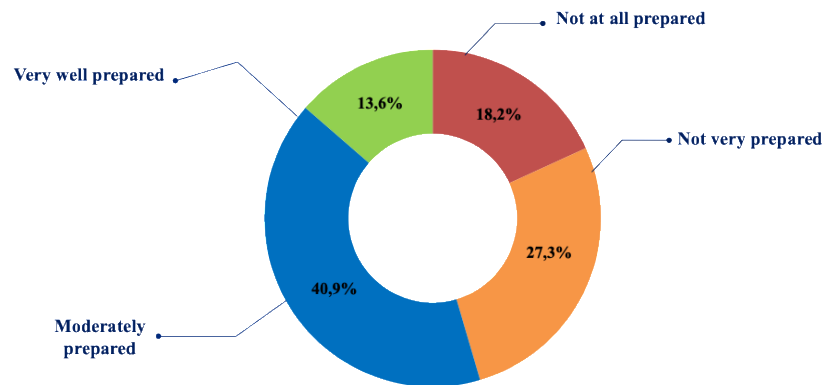
**Q7.** How do you assess the effectiveness of the procedural framework that has been put in place for the proper implementation of projects and the monitoring of the defined performance indicators per call?

**Figure 7. Effectiveness of the framework for implementing and monitoring indicators**

Fifty percent of participants gave a positive assessment of the institutional and technical framework of the Antonis Tritsis program, recognizing as advantages the clear procedures for each call for proposals, the guidelines issued by the MIA-MOU and the provision of performance indicators, which enhanced transparency and functionality. Nevertheless, the other 50% considered it as moderate or low because of the failures of the standardization of indicators and monitoring tools, data recording in time, as well as the connection between physical and financial objects. The results remind about the necessity to revise the framework with the digital tools and better methodological background in order to guarantee transparent and meaningful evaluation.

**Q8.** In your opinion, how prepared were local authorities to submit mature and eligible projects under the program?

**Figure 8. Level of preparation of local authorities for the submission of mature and eligible projects**



Analysis of the above question highlights a critical structural weakness in the local governance mechanism, the inadequate technical and administrative readiness of a significant number of local authorities to manage complex projects within the framework of national or co-funded programs.

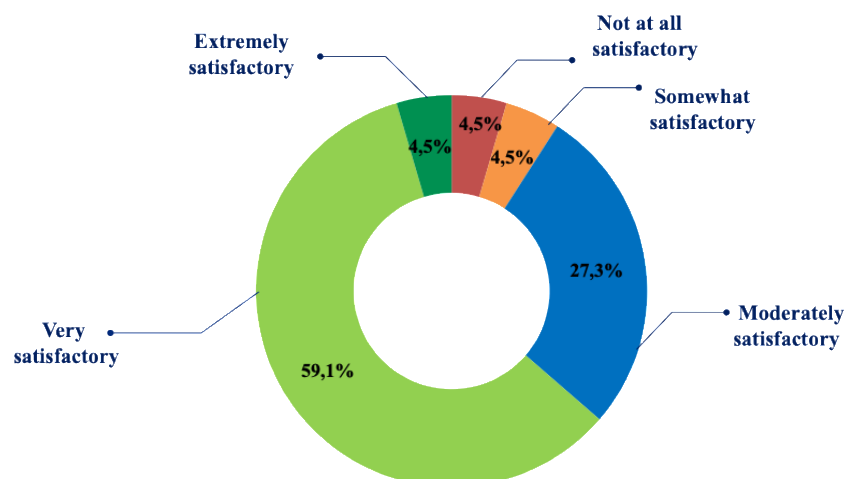
Despite the introduction, through the Antonis Tritsis Program, of a financial framework that provided tailored opportunities for strengthening and supporting local authorities, the existing imbalance in the degree of organizational readiness of municipalities has hindered the balanced and horizontal utilization of the Program's available resources and capabilities at the national level.

Comparing the "Antonis Tritsis" and "Philodimos I" programs shows broader coverage but greater management difficulties.

The Antonis Tritsis program is characterized by a proliferation of calls for proposals, an expansion of eligible sectors (energy upgrading, urban regeneration, digital governance) and a larger funding range, but the absence of a ceiling and unit costs created asymmetries and delays. The establishment of Development Agencies did not yield results due to understaffing, while "Philodimos" stood out for its more targeted planning in basic infrastructure.

On the whole, the program of the "Antonis Tritsis" can be discussed as rather ambitious but challenging as it signifies the shift towards the more stable base of projects to the more complicated and administratively organized structure. Nevertheless, the advanced coverage of themes and easy disbursement increased efficiency, which has made the program a blend of both financial and operations innovation and could be used in future local development intervention as a model.

**Figure 9. Assessment of flexibility in the reallocation of resource for local government**

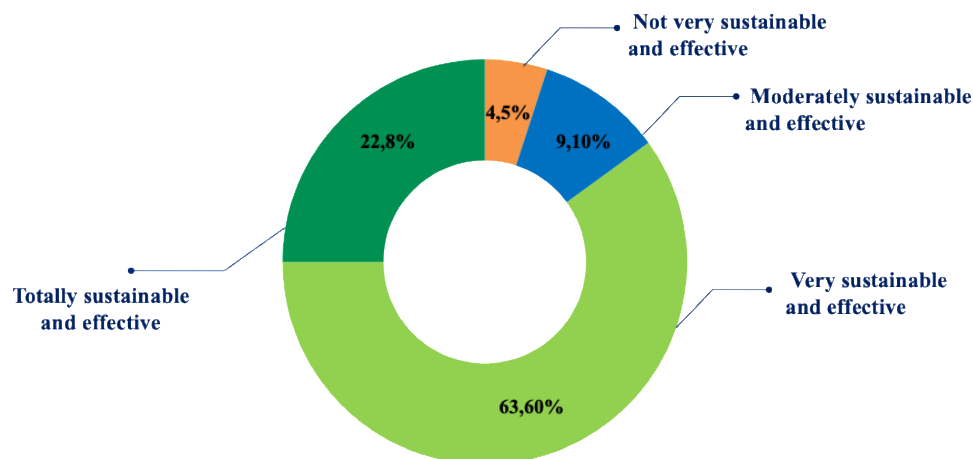


Key insight: The thematic axes and their individual relevance do not define the effectiveness of the program but, rather, an imbalance in administrative capacity within municipalities that influence their capacity to realize funding opportunities.

#### 4.4 Funding of the “Antonis Tritsis” Program

**Q9.** In your opinion, has there been sufficient flexibility in the reallocation of resources between axes, or do you consider that further adjustments are necessary?

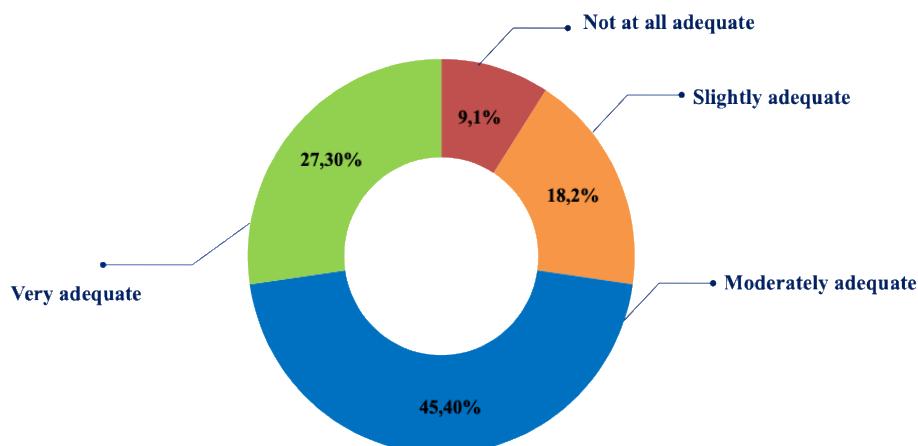
**Figure 10. Assessment of flexibility in the reallocation of resource for local government**



The majority of participants (63.6%) took the Antonis Tritsis program to be very flexible when it comes to reallocating resources between themes, which implies that it can adapt to the needs of local authorities well. This capacity to devote funds to other projects or the most important interventions enhanced the effectiveness and precision of the program. Nevertheless, 27.3% rated flexibility as moderate because of delays, lack of transparency, and absence of local authorities' involvement. Thus, it is suggested that a more participatory and open redistribution system should be institutionalized to guarantee equitable and efficient utilization of assets.

**Q10.** The program was mainly financed through development loans from the Deposits and Loans Fund (DLF) and the European Investment Bank (EIB), with repayment coming from the Public Investment Program (PIP) of the Ministry of the Interior. In your opinion, do you consider this financing model to be sustainable and effective?

**Figure 11. Assessment of sustainability and effectiveness of financing through DLF and EIB**

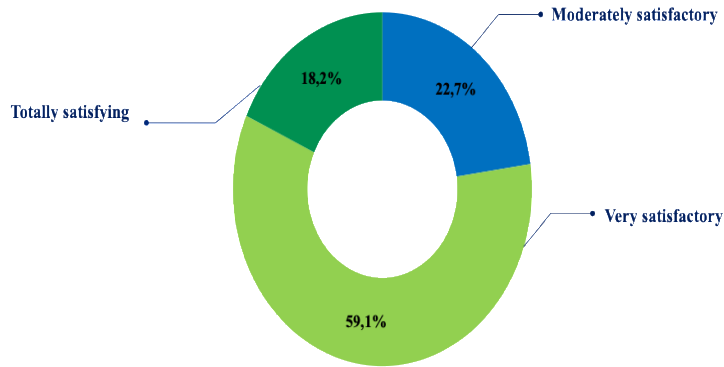


The financing model of Antonis Tritsis program, which is based on cooperation with the Public Investment Program and the Hellenic Development Bank, with repayment through the Public Investment Program, is positively evaluated by 86.4% of executives. The positive assessment is attributed to the stability of financing, the absorption of risk by the state, access

to resources without direct fiscal cost, and enhanced transparency. Eleven percent expressed reservations about the complexity and dependence on state resources. Overall, the model is considered a benchmark for public investment financing in conditions of fiscal constraints, with the possibility of application to other local government interventions.

**Q11.** In your opinion, how did the financing mechanism work in practice through development loans granted by the Deposits and Loans Fund (DLF) and the European Investment Bank (EIB), with repayment from resources of the Public Investment Program (PIP) of the Ministry of the Interior?

**Figure 12. Assessment of financing mechanism**

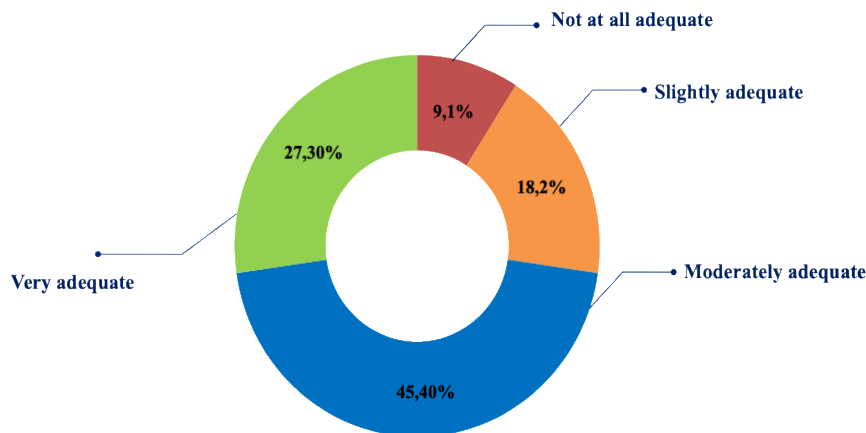


The stability, reliability, and efficiency of the mechanism was reported with a positive rating by 77.3% of executives as the Antonis Tritsis program was being financed by development loans secured by the Public Investment Program and the European Investment Bank with repayment by the first. The 22.7 percent who rated it as moderate satisfactory stated delays and ambiguity in the procedures.

Still, despite the overall positive outlook, certain improvements were proposed, including the accelerated repayment of the debt by means of the Public Investment Program, the creation of non-cumbersome and transparent information systems (e.g., web-based dashboard), funding cap, and stricter project consideration and maturity check to enhance the efficiency of the administration and to achieve fair distribution of resources.

**Q12.** The initial total budget for the program was €2,500,000,000. In your opinion, do you consider this level of funding to have been sufficient to achieve the program's objectives?

**Figure 14. Perceptions of the adequacy of program funding**



The initial budget of EUR2.5 billion on Antonis Tritsis program was not considered enough to meet the demands with requests that exceeded EUR6 billion as a result of high demand, inflation of material prices, and extension of calls. Executives reckon it ought to be at least twice that figure and demand mechanisms to indicate prioritization, feasibility tests, and migration of undertakings to alternative financing tools. There is a common position on the

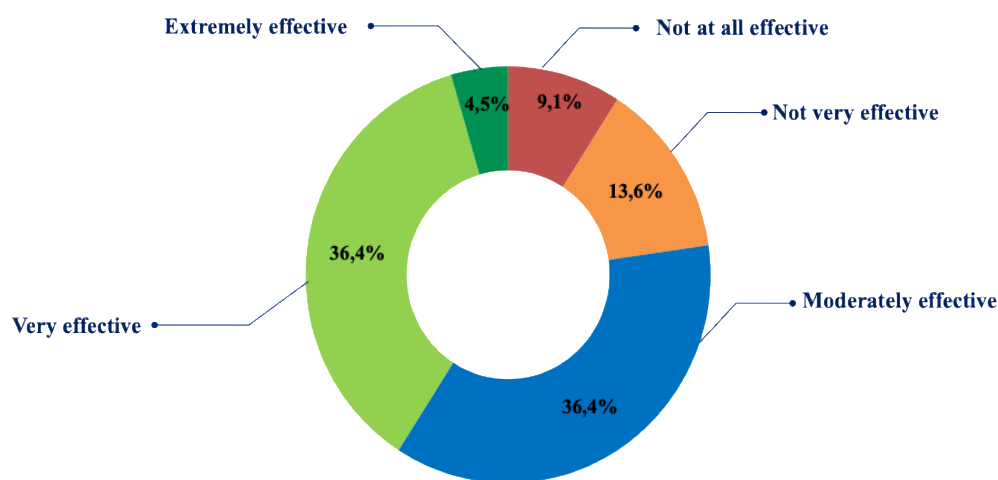
need for flexible and strategically targeted planning with dynamic adjustment of the program budget.

The main obstacles are bureaucracy, delays, and price increases, which have led to cost overruns and project modifications. The lack of technical competence of many local authorities, combined with contractor failures and weak supervision, limited absorption. In addition, the broad scope, the absence of a ceiling, and frequent changes in focus made it difficult to allocate resources rationally.

The findings suggest boosting management, streamlining procedures, and offering technical support to enhance future program effectiveness and uptake.

**Q13.** In your opinion, how effective was the management and monitoring of financial indicators during the implementation of the program?

**Figure 14 Effectiveness of financial monitoring of the program**



The evaluation of the management and monitoring of the financial indicators of the Antonis Tritsis program provided a positive but interchangeable image 41.9% said that it is very effective and extremely effective as it contributes to the smooth adoption of projects. Conversely, 36.4% rated it as moderate and 13.6% somewhat effective and they were worried about the accuracy, speed and consistency with the monitoring mechanisms. The results indicate the necessity to modernize the control tools (e.g., digital dashboards, integrated information systems) and become more rigorous in terms of capturing performance indicators.

The administrative and technical weaknesses that influenced implementation include bureaucracy, disbursement delays, and lack of coordination among the Ministry of Economy and Finance, the Technical Assistance Department and the EIB because there was no single system of monitoring. Limited technical capacity became an even greater challenge to small and medium-sized local authorities with multiple Recovery Fund projects happening concurrently. Moreover, the rise of the material prices, revision of the prices, and necessity to sign some additional contracts (because of insufficient research or some unpredictable costs) disfavored the process. The drop in discounts of projects to the lower than 10% in 2025 proves the stress the construction market was under.

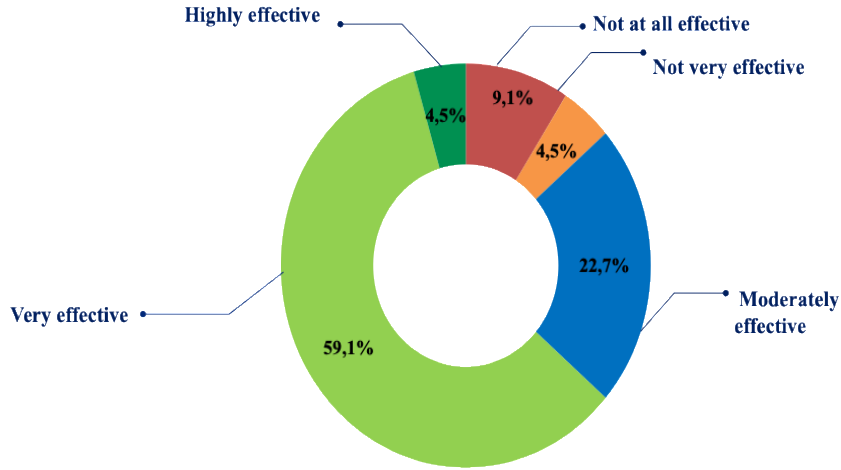
Altogether, the administrative, technical, and structural issues curtailed the efficiency of the program, which contributes to the necessity to provide specific attention to local authorities, digitalize the project management, and streamline the processes during future financing programs.

Key insight: While the financing model is perceived as stable and innovative, its effectiveness is mediated by administrative preparedness and project maturity rather than by financial constraints.

### 4.5 Cooperation-administrative capacity of the “Antonis Tritsis” Program

**Q14.** The program was managed and implemented by the Special Management and Implementation Service of the Ministry of the Interior (MIA-MOU). In your opinion, how effective were the procedures for evaluating, approving, financing, and monitoring the projects?

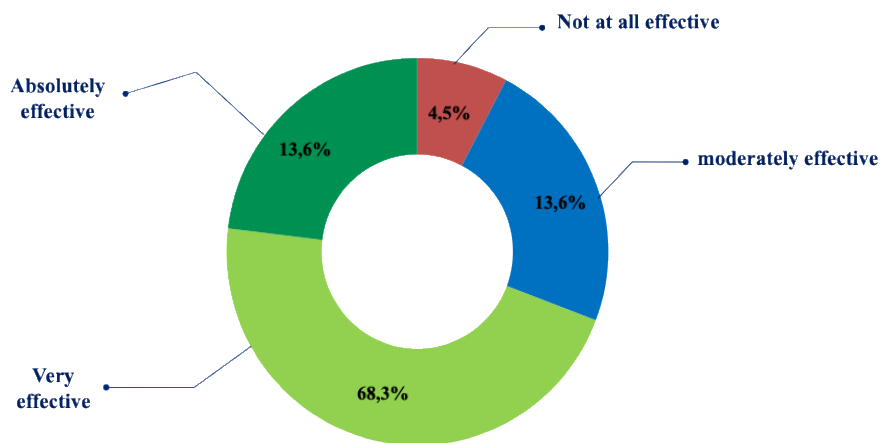
**Figure 15 Assessment of the Management Adequacy of the MIA-MOU**



The processes of the MIA-MOU in the evaluation of the projects, their approval, financing, and monitoring were rated by the majority of executives (63.1%), which proved its effectiveness in the conditions of such a vast number of projects and the complexity of the Desk program Antonis Tritsis. This confidence of local authorities was improved through reliable monitoring and management of payments in a timely manner. Nevertheless, 22.7% referred to the procedures as moderately effective and 9.3% not effective at all because red tape and administrative fatigue cause delays. The results demonstrate the necessity to enhance the staffing, technical competencies, as well as visibility in approval and control to increase the effectiveness and reputation of the program.

**Q15.** In your opinion, how effective and functional was the cooperation between MIA-MOU and DLF during the program design stage?

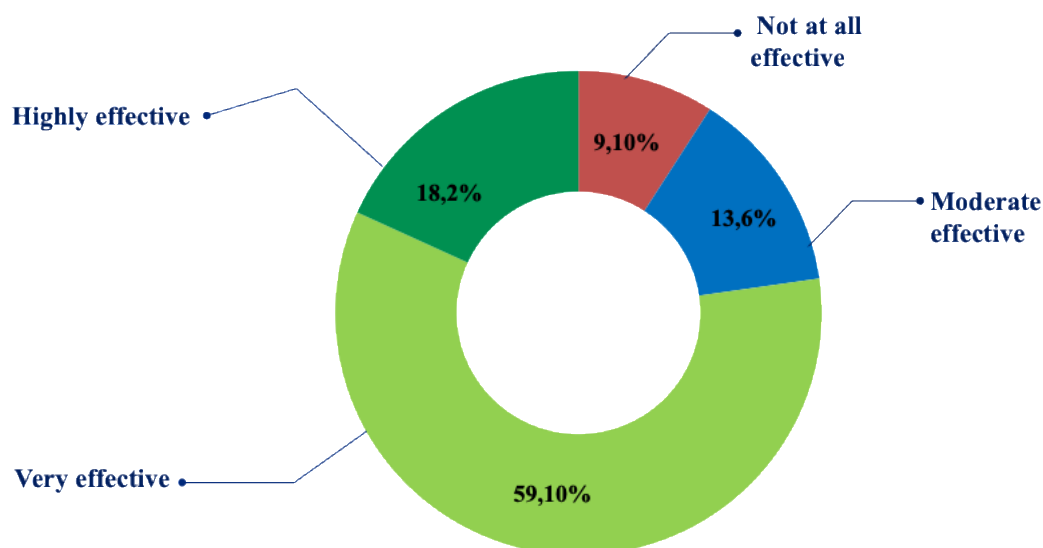
**Figure 16 Assessment of cooperation between agencies during program design**



Most executives gave a positive evaluation of MIA-MOU and DLF's cooperation during the planning of the "Antonis Tritsis" program. DLF, with its experience in financing local authorities, strengthened the expertise and credibility of the financing scheme. Suggested areas for improvement included more systematic communication and consultation with local authorities and citizens, simplification of procedures, revision of the series of loan agreements, and the establishment of a single framework for dialogue during the drafting of regulatory texts. Overall, transparent and coordinated cooperation between the two bodies is considered crucial for the effective financial management and smooth flow of funding for the program.

**Q16.** In your opinion, how effective was the cooperation between MIA-MOU and DLF during the implementation and monitoring phase of the program?

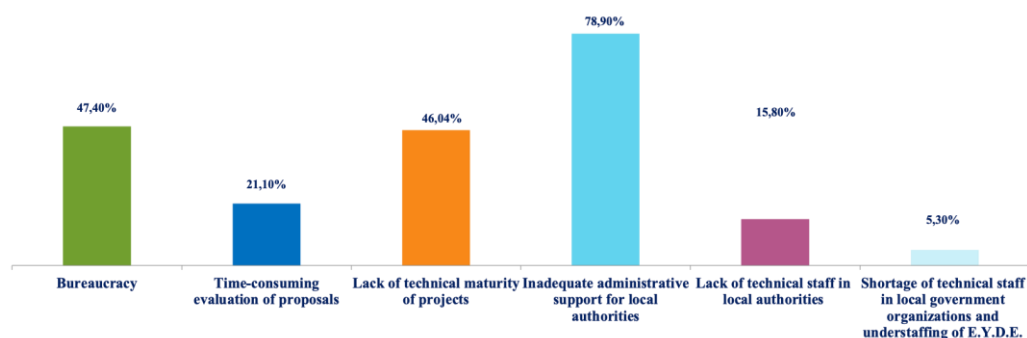
**Figure 17 Assessment of cooperation between agencies during program implementation and monitoring**



The cooperation of MIA-MOU DLF was positively evaluated by most executives at the stage of planning the program under the name of Antonis Tritsis DLF with its experience of financing local authorities increased the competence and believability of the financing program. The proposed areas for improvement included more systematic communication and consultation with local authorities and citizens, simplification of procedures, revision of the series of loan agreements, and the creation of a single framework for dialogue during the drafting of regulatory texts. Overall, transparent and coordinated cooperation between the two bodies is considered vital for effective financial management and the smooth flow of program funding.

**Q17.** What do you consider to be the most significant challenges during the design and/or implementation of the program?

**Figure 18 Most significant challenges during the design and implementation of the program**



The structural limitations of the local government, including poor administrative and technical support, maturity, and bureaucracy, related to the Program as the primary problems limiting its effectiveness. This emphasizes the necessity to enhance the administrative power of the municipalities, empower digital tools, and enhance interoperability among agencies.

Nevertheless, the Antonis Tritsis program achieved high absorption on critical infrastructure (water supply, sewerage, civil protection, energy, school building) and enhanced disbursements than other instruments despite the problems. One of the reasons behind the success of the loan

scheme was through the Public Investment Program which gave a lot of financial relief to local authorities.

But the immaturity of technology, slow approvals, and meager resources of small cities showed weaknesses in the organizing structure. The success of future programs will be predetermined by the enhancement of technical support and the facilitation of procedures.

Key insight: Central-level institutional cooperation enhances governance coherence, but persistent gaps in local administrative capacity remain the critical bottleneck for effective implementation.

#### 4.6 S.W.O.T. Analysis of the financing program

The SWOT Analysis of the program Antonis Tritsis is found in the one attached in Appendix A. The current section offers a strategic overview of the most important findings, which pertain to the practicality of the program and the development of its governance abilities.

According to the SWOT analysis, the "Antonis Tritsis" program is a multidimensional national funding program with a well-stayed and flexible fund base, which allows carrying out infrastructural and development projects that would not otherwise have been implemented. Funding structure of the program, facilitation of the procedures and contribution to the possibility of local development is continuously defined as the main strength, especially in the context of increasing the access to the investment sources on the municipalities.

Meanwhile, the review also identifies endemic organizational and technical vulnerabilities which limit effective implementation. These are unequal administrative capacity in municipalities, low staffing positions, poor technical support system and lack of a central information system to monitor and coordinate. Furthermore, the external risks associated with political unpredictability, economic variability and regular project redesigns add to the complexity of the implementation as well as administrative load.

Next to these obstacles, there are also major opportunities identified as a result of the SWOT, as the ways to strengthen the local administrative capacities, to increase the level of institutional learning and better the governance coherence. The issue of scale and its thematic coverage of the program provides the conditions of capacity development, which is subject to the creation of the required support mechanisms, the transparency of activities, and the computer management systems.

In general, the SWOT analysis shows that the success of the program of the Antonis Tritsis issues is not as related to its financial design as to administrative and institutional situation in which it is realized. It is based on such that the targeted policy responses are elaborated in the next section.

**Table 2 Translating SWOT Findings into Policy Responses**

<b>Key SWOT Finding</b>	<b>Policy Response</b>
Uneven administrative capacity among municipalities	Establish permanent regional technical assistance hubs and capacity-building programs tailored to municipal needs
Limited project maturity and preparation	Introduce mandatory pre-feasibility and project preparation support prior to submission
Institutional complexity and overlapping procedures	Develop a unified digital governance platform integrating all involved agencies
Weak monitoring and fragmented performance indicators	Implement standardized KPIs and real-time monitoring dashboards
Risk of widening territorial inequalities	Apply differentiated calls and capacity-based allocation mechanisms
Implementation delays due to revisions	Introduce predefined timelines, unit costs and ceiling mechanisms
Strong financing model but limited prioritization	Adopt strategic prioritization frameworks incorporating social and territorial criteria

Exposure to economic and political instability

Institutionalize multi-year funding guarantees and continuity mechanisms

#### **4.7 Discussion**

These results prove the validity of the conceptual framework utilized in the present study, which had to rely on the institutional design as only not enough to make the large-scale local government funding programs effective. The administrative capacity stands out as the crucial mediating factor that determines project maturity, project implementation procedures and spatial equity.

The findings are consistent with the general body of existing literature in the field of public administration and local governance which highlights the importance of organizational capacity and governance coherence in developing outputs through the divinciation of financial investments. In centralized administrative structures, like those found in Greece, asymmetries of capacities among municipalities are bound to increase inequalities with territories unless specifically mediated through a set of policy interventions.

#### **5. Conclusions and policy proposals**

The study identified the vital elements of the work of the program named Antonis Tritsis, where the only qualitative information was collected by use of the structured questionnaire of Local Government executives and the S.W.O.T analysis. In this way, there was a possibility to care about the profound knowledge of the institutional, administrative and operational parameters that impact the efficacy of the program and concentrate on the experience and perceptions of the directly touched implementing agencies.

The results of the questionnaire indicate that the program is rated globally as a robust development instrument to the Local Government, primarily because it is fully funded and does not involve its own participation, its potential wide coverage in terms of its themes and the potential to finance a project that is of utmost importance to daily life and social integrity. The significance of the program is that it reduces disparities among municipalities and makes financing available even to small, remote local authorities with little resources.

Meanwhile, the questionnaire and the S.W.O.T. analysis have shown that structural weaknesses are present in large numbers. The major issue is the lack of the administrative and technical capacity of many municipalities, particularly during the stages of maturation of the project, preparation of studies and monitoring of the implementation. According to the participants, lack of human resources, expertise and support mechanisms binds exploitation of the potential of growth of the program notwithstanding the presence of the resources. Moreover, institutional impediments, red tape and duplication of roles are also pointed out, which compound administrative overheads and a slowdown in implementation.

As seen in the S.W.O.T. analysis, its core competencies lie in the financial stability, the countrywide geographical presence and also in the institutional empowerment of the local government and the potential to generate local jobs. In line with this, the opportunities are correlated with the utilization of the program as the instrument of digital transformation, energy transition and reinforcement of the social unity. Nevertheless, the threats identified, including the loss of resources without proper development focus, the disintegration of the interventions, and institutional or political instability, demonstrate the possibility of the limited impacts in the long-term.

With the above in mind, policy proposals, which have the above as their central concern, are aimed at strengthening the Local Government, both institutionally and operationally. It is deemed as necessary to develop long-term technical and managerial support structures, including decentralized support centers (Local Acceleration Hubs) and cooperation with universities, technical organizations, and other non-governmental bodies and organizations. Enhancing the level of administrative capacity can be achieved by strengthening the capacity through staffing, mentoring and ongoing training to be a critical requirement towards enhanced efficiency.

Simultaneously, the study shows the necessity to transition to a more congruent and digitally advanced form of program governance. Bureaucracy may be mitigated by adoption of common digital tools, standardization of procedures and automated work processes to improve

transparency and enhance accountability. Similarly, the possibility to have clear result indicators in each of the thematic unit and the systematic quality overseeing of implementation can be deemed as the key to prevent fragmented interventions.

The answers to the questionnaires indicate that there is a necessity to improve social element of the future financial instruments. Tasks connected to social inclusion and housing, employment, energy poverty and daily life enhancement are scored with high social value and must be given a first priority. Local consultations and active interaction of citizens can increase the legitimacy of interventions and its relationship with how a local community really needs things to be.

To sum up, the qualitative analysis of the questionnaire and the S.W.O.T. proves that the program Antonis Tritsis qualifies well as a development tool, the success of which lays entirely in the institutional sufficiency, the abilities of the administration and the strategic placement of the interventions. The offered policy directions can guide the development of more sustainable, more targeted programs and more socially just programs on the empowerment of the Local Government as an effective lever of local sustainable development.

This ex-ante assessment provides a crucial analytical baseline. A necessary next step is a rigorous ex-post evaluation, combining administrative data from the program with field-based evidence, in order to assess its actual socio-economic impact and validate the anticipatory findings presented here. Future research should also complement this top-down perspective by incorporating the views of beneficiary municipalities, elected officials and local communities. Finally, comparative analysis with similar local government funding instruments in other Southern European countries could yield valuable insights into best practices and institutional design.

#### **Acknowledgments**

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## **Appendix A**

**Table A1 Strengths of the "Antonis Tritsis" special development program**

<b>Access for All</b>	Fair access to resources – participation of small and regional local authorities
<b>Innovation &amp; Thematic Breadness</b>	Emphasis on innovative projects (Smart cities, RES, earthquake checks), multidisciplinary approach
<b>Financing</b>	High budget – guaranteed liquidity through PDE, without burdening the OTAs
<b>Implementation Flexibility</b>	Submission of immature proposals, long-term loan servicing, possibility of co-financing with EIB
<b>Support &amp; Know-how</b>	Capable staff in the Ministry of Economy and Transport and Infrastructure and TSI – technical support through Development Organizations
<b>Simplified Procedures</b>	Less bureaucracy compared to other tools (such as the NSRF)
<b>Development Targeting</b>	Projects with direct social impact – improving quality of life, strengthening infrastructure

**Table A2 Weaknesses of the “Antonis Tritsis” special development program**

<b>Slow implementation rates</b>	Delays in contracting and implementation, constant requests for revisions, supplementary contracts, low discounts
<b>Political discontinuity</b>	Dependence on changes in political leadership
<b>Economic instability and crises</b>	Rapid increase in material costs, inflationary pressures, international crises (energy, geopolitical, pandemics), difficulty in securing P.D.E.
<b>Financial risk</b>	Increase in interest rates (e.g. Euribor) affecting EIB loans
<b>Resource management risks</b>	Inability to cover budget overruns, risk of abuse due to inadequate control
<b>Lack of control tools</b>	Lack of effectiveness assessment tools (indicators, KPIs, disbursement monitoring)
<b>Widening inequalities</b>	Different levels of preparedness – risk of widening the gap between large/small local governments, lack of computerized monitoring
<b>Institutional &amp; technical lag of local governments</b>	Some local governments risk being left behind, increasing the risk of exclusion
<b>Institutional risk</b>	Absence of institutional guarantee for the continuation of multi-year projects regardless of governments

**Table A3 Opportunities of the “Antonis Tritsis” special development program**

<b>Digital Transformation &amp; Innovation</b>	Adoption of cutting-edge technologies (artificial intelligence, GIS, ICT) Development of smart applications to improve services to citizens Utilization of tools for administrative and financial monitoring of projects
<b>Training &amp; Human Resources</b>	Digital seminars and training for local government executives Development of know-how for the utilization of future funding
<b>New Calls &amp; Themes</b>	Expansion into areas such as energy efficiency, recycling, environment, resilience Integration of innovative actions into new calls
<b>Interinstitutional Cooperation</b>	Cooperation between the Ministry of Environment and Energy, CRES, other ministries, and specialized agencies Networking with European organizations and leveraging experience
<b>Strategic Linkage with National Goals</b>	Linking projects to green growth, sustainability, and resilience of local communities
<b>Development of Support Structures</b>	Creation of regional/thematic support mechanisms Development of new targeted tools for the needs of local authorities
<b>Social &amp; Economic Benefits</b>	Strengthening infrastructure with long-term benefits (water supply, sewerage, rural roads) Creation of thousands of jobs Improvement of the capacity of local authorities to develop and implement projects

**Table A4 Threats of the “Antonis Tritsis” special development program**

<b>Low implementation rates</b>	Delays in contracting and implementation, constant requests for revisions, supplementary contracts, low discounts
<b>Political discontinuity</b>	Dependence on changes in political leadership
<b>Institutional Risk</b>	Absence of institutional guarantees for the continuation of multi-year projects regardless of government changes
<b>Economic instability and crises</b>	Rapid increase in material costs, inflationary pressures, international crises (energy, geopolitical, pandemics), difficulty in securing public investment programs
<b>Financial risk</b>	Increase in interest rates (e.g., Euribor) affecting EIB loans Resource management risks Inability to cover budget overruns, risk of abuse due to inadequate control
<b>Lack of control mechanisms</b>	Lack of effectiveness assessment tools (indicators, KPIs, disbursement monitoring)
<b>Widening inequalities</b>	Different levels of readiness – risk of widening the gap between large/small local authorities
<b>Institutional &amp; technical lag of local authorities</b>	Some local authorities are at risk of falling behind, increasing the risk of exclusion