



“Island Sustainable Strategy: from vulnerability to resilience”

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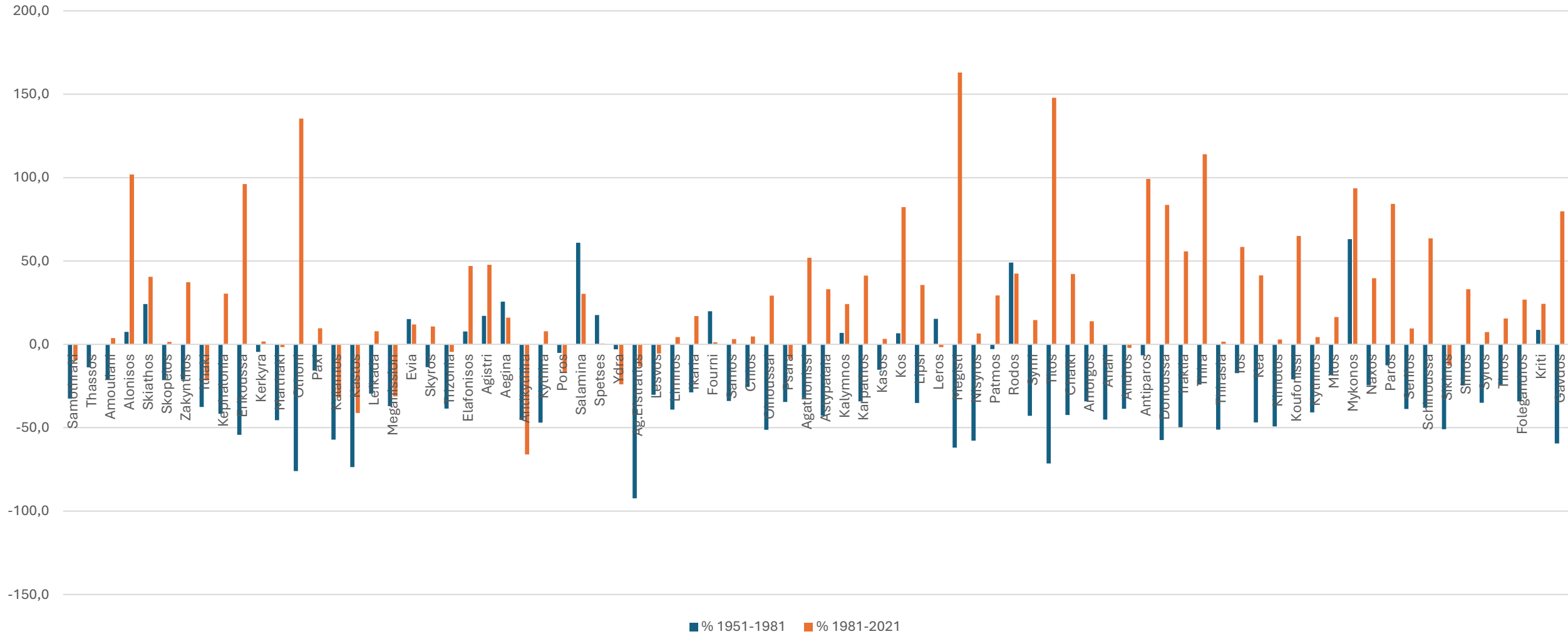
From the vulnerability of demographic and productive shrinkage to the vulnerability of the unlimited tourism growth

- **Demographic and productive shrinkage** were the main impacts caused by the unique characteristics of insularity (small size, peripherality and isolation, uniqueness but high fragility of natural and cultural resources) under the pressure of **the dominant economic model of mass production in the 20th century**, placing them in a vulnerable position.
- At the same time the islands, **from centers of a network of short-scale and short-distance maritime transport, have become isolated by a complex network** of long-scale and long-distance maritime, air and land transport.
- The islands **were not any more attractive** for companies and population that have moved to the mainland and mainly to the bigger cities.

A new attractive era for islands through tourism growth

- Tourism growth in recent decades has changed the trend, as islands are considered worldwide as very attractive places to visit.
- New incomes, often very high, have been created, as well as new jobs.
- Tourism creates a new attractiveness for islands and tourism growth has reversed the shrinking trend in a different way in the different groups of islands.
- Do tourism growth has limits? Is tourism growth sustainable? What about the sustainability of the islands?

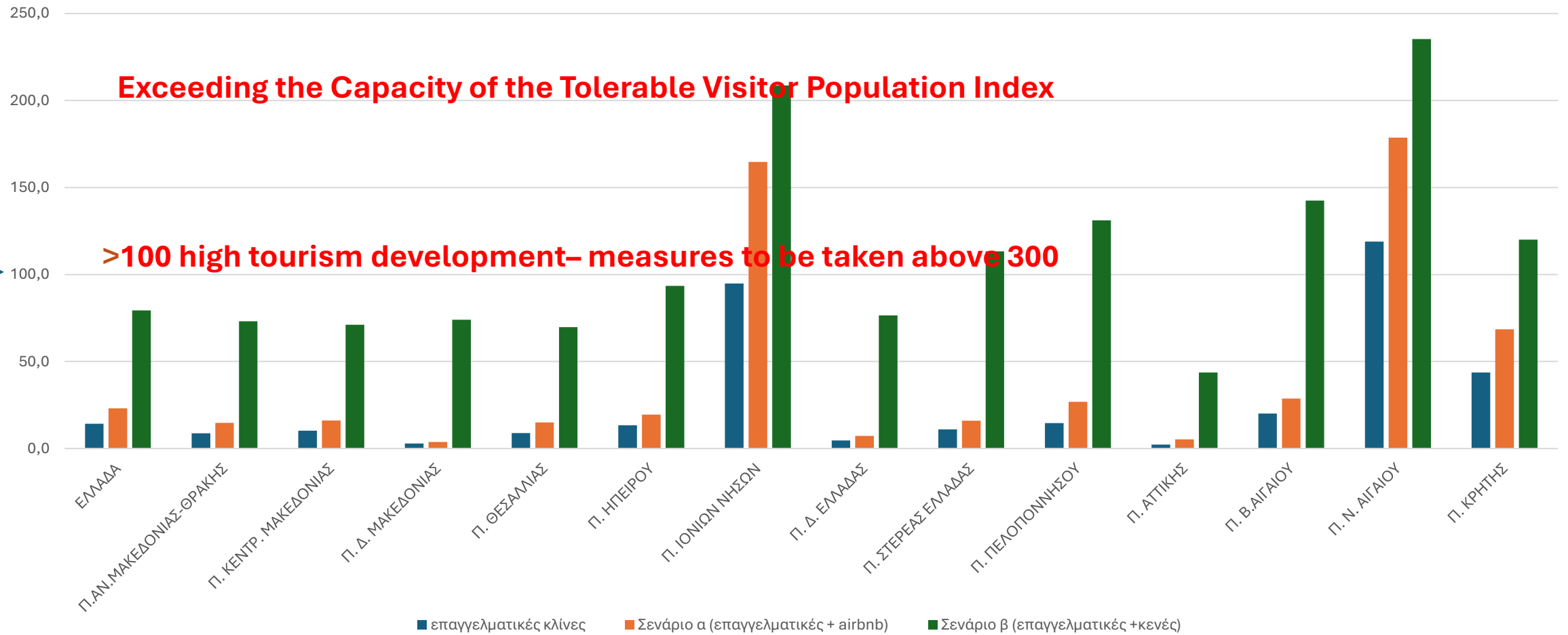
Change of demography trends before (1951-81) and after tourism growth (1981-2021)



The debate on tourism growth, overtourism and exceeding carrying capacity: the new vulnerability

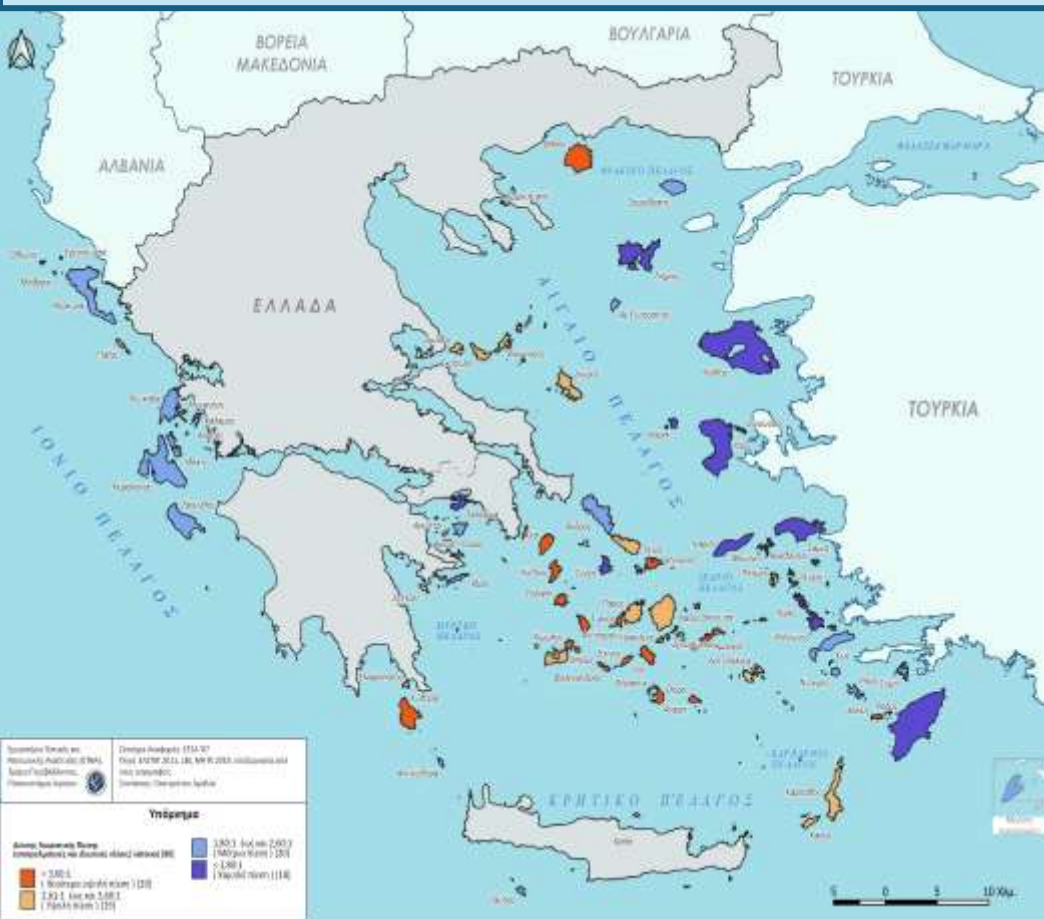
- **High consumption of limited natural resources** such as land and water, high waste production and high energy consumption, while climate change puts even more pressure on them.
- **High concentration of economic activity (monoculture)** in a rather unstable sector with low productivity, low added value and high leakages, as the production of other sectors is limited and shrinking.
- **High level of seasonal and unskilled jobs** that do not attract young people to stay on the islands all year round, especially the more skilled ones.
- **High level of negative externalities** linked to uncontrolled tourism development on the quality of life of the local community, such as the cost of living, the difficulty of housing, congestion, noise, pressure on infrastructure, natural resources and public services, but also on the tourism product itself, as the tourist experience is reduced.

Tourism pressure (beds/inhabitant) at regional level



Tourism pressure (beds/inhabitant) at island level

Map: Tourism pressure index (Professional and private beds per inhabitant)



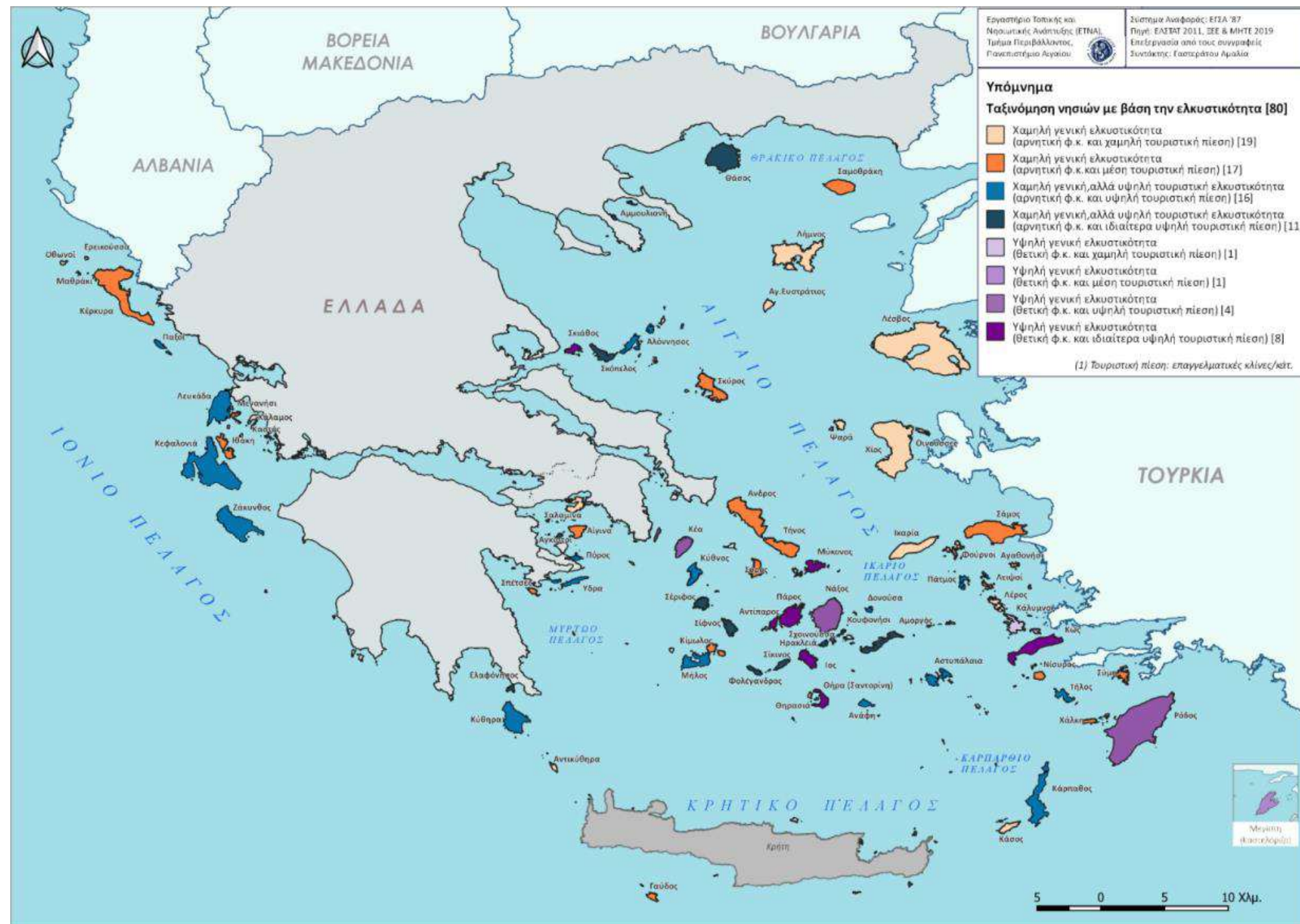
Criteria for CC from the Ministry of Energy and Environment:

Carrying Capacity / Tourism Functionality Index	Beds/inhabitant	Total professional and private beds	Professional beds + airbnb	Professional beds
Very high tourism development	>5	10	0	0
Limit for taking measures	>3	38	9	3
high tourism development	1> κ >5	68	45	32
Tourism as important sector	0,4> κ >1	1	14	24
Tourism has a presence, but it is not the main sector	0,1> κ >0,4	0	15	16
Low tourism activity	>0,1	0	5	7

Source: Laboratory of Local and Islands' Development, 2023, Insularity and new programming period 2021-27, HALDG

Tourism is the most important factor influencing the state and the attractiveness of islands

Classification:
 Low general (orange)
 High tourism (blue)
 High general (purple)



Ameliorating the attractiveness and the sustainability (resilience) of the islands

The most important goal on islands, as in every place in the world, is

- (a) to be attractive for both people and businesses in short and medium terms
- (b) to remain within the limits of sustainability (to be resilient) in long term

Islands' attractiveness cannot be the same as in other types of areas (urban, rural, coastal, mountain) as they have not the same characteristics **(Strengths)**. Islands cannot have low-cost mass production, as economies of scale and of agglomeration as small size and isolation are natural and not changing barriers.

New (flexible) technologies suitable for SMEs, ITC and changes to people priorities about quality-of-life including food security, small scale, "locality", environmental quality, safety and sustainability/resilience, give to islands a new set of **Opportunities** in order to tackle with natural **Weaknesses** and **Threats**

What are the principles of island development?

EUROPE Strategy	Islands Strategy
1. Smart growth : developing an economy based on knowledge and innovation	1. Qualitative islands : focusing on well branded, quality products and services using local resources destined to niche markets
2. Sustainable growth : promoting a more resource efficient, greener and more competitive economy	2. Green islands : reducing the use and growing the reuse of scarce resources such as water, land, energy
3. Inclusive growth : fostering a high-employment economy delivering social and territorial cohesion	3. Equal Opportunities islands : giving the same opportunities to insular companies and populations to perform as in European mainland

Do (European) islands need a special strategy and why?

Depicting particular characteristics of insularity – articulating the view that insularity is not an “incurable” disadvantage, but a usable diversity



The low attractiveness of the islands for settlement/residence

- Residents
- Businesses

Factors and how they are addressed
Work (acceptable and with perspective)

Quality of life

Connectivity (transport -
communications)

A different development model that
capitalizes on diversity

Public consultation has shown as priorities

For living	For enterprises
healthcare system	Frequency of trips
connectivity	Economic incentives
Regularity of water supply	Regularity of water supply
Job opportunities	Development vision of local authorities
Quality of life	Energy costs
Quality of education	Travel costs
Cost travel	Efficiency of public administration
Cost of living	Trained human capital
Regularity of energy supply	Land and construction costs

What kind of Insular Strategy and Policy?

Island policy must be multi-level:

- **European:** Island Impact Assessment for critical policies, such as state aid, agricultural, competition, environment, Services of Public Interest, Special additional funding, Monitoring & evaluation of results
- **National:** specific development strategy with a spatial dimension instead of horizontal policies that consider cities, islands, rural, coastal, mountainous and border areas as the same
- **Regional:** coordination & specialization of sectoral policies, promotion of entrepreneurship & innovation, support mechanism for municipalities
- **Local:** Integrated Action Plan per island for sustainable & resilient development (the opportunity of the Greco Islands program)

The assessment of the current situation leads to different **ALTERNATIVE SCENARIOS: The islands are**

01

BUSINESS AS USUAL

Continuation of tourism growth with limited changes – adaptations to new conditions and technologies/infrastructures – Leisure tourism

Very Weak Sustainability

02

REFORM

Managing growth with constraints imposed by the adoption of EU Agenda 2030 principles. Reducing pressures and increasing competitiveness with green and digital transformation

Weak Sustainability

03

TRANSFORM

Limitation or even stopping of tourism growth taking into account signs of exceeding carrying capacity and overtourism – Promotion of local identity and experiences tourism & blue economy for the well-being of societies

Strong Sustainability

spaces for investments

or

places for living?



What strategy for Greek islands? Two main axes

**Wellness / Well-being tourism
based on sea and warm water**

ΘΕΡΜΑΛΙΣΜΟΣ & ΤΟΥΡΙΣΜΟΣ ΕΥΞΕΙΑΣ



Blue Economy



that take advantage of the special characteristics of each island



Wellness / Well being tourism based on sea and warm water

- **Health activities** (traditional balneotherapy, post-treatment as well as rehabilitation services, alternative therapies, etc.)
- **Activities related to the body, soul and spirit** (e.g. yoga, tai chi, gentle forms of exercise, self-improvement, coaching, etc.)
- **Activities related to the nutrition** (e.g. weight management, detoxification, tasting and obviously the entire agri-food sector)
- **Outdoor activities related to the environment**, its preservation and promotion, (e.g. discovery of nature, hiking trails, cycling, water sports, diving, aviation, etc.)
- **Activities related to the discovery of local culture, myths, history, monuments** and everything related to them, **traditions and arts** with different cultural experiences in painting, music, dance, cuisine, language, etc.
- **Activities related to the physical living of visitors** living in the traditional houses of the surrounding villages, participating in traditional activities, volunteering, local life, etc.



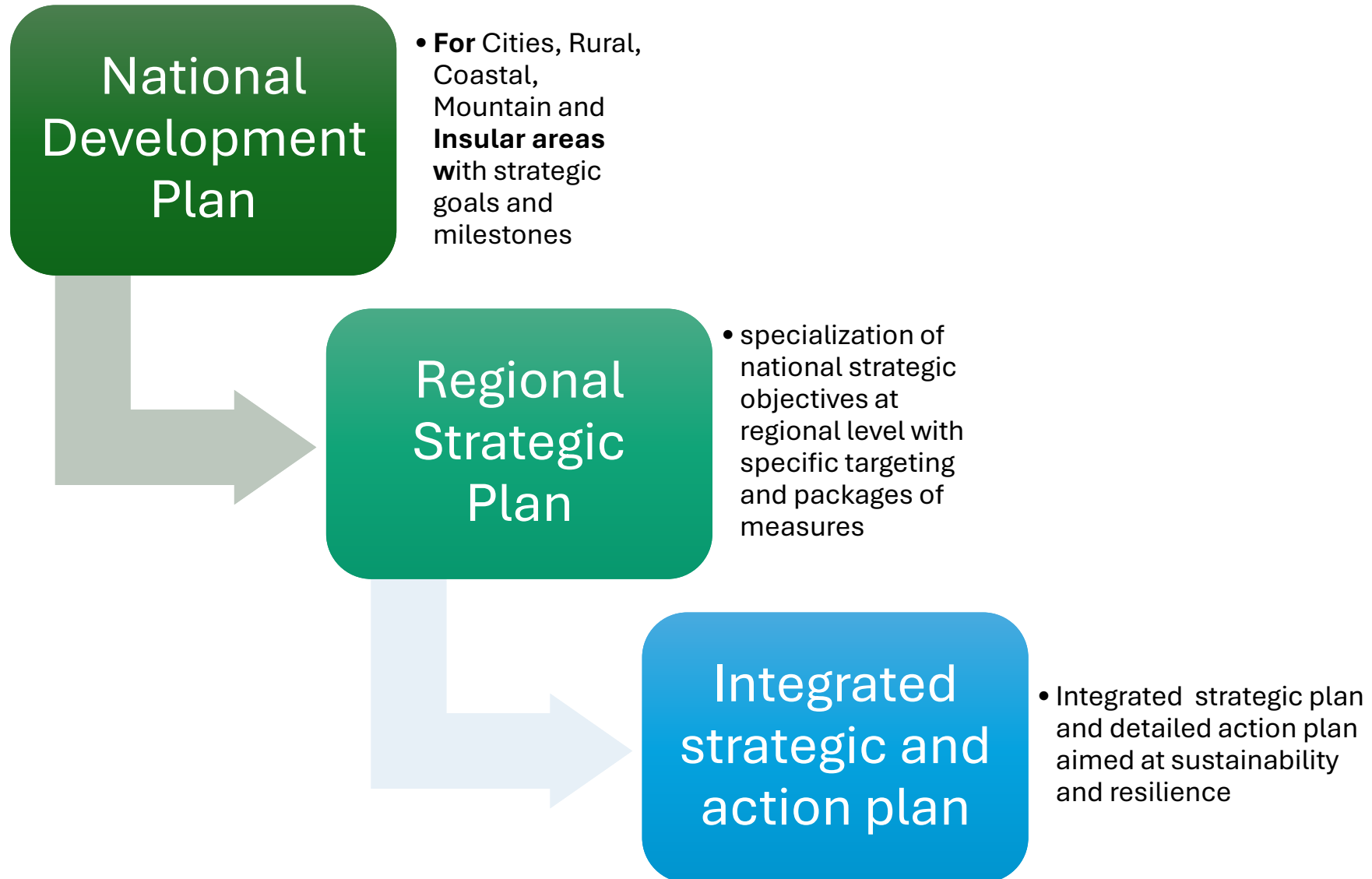
Blue Economy

- **protection and promotion of marine ecosystems** with actions that attract scientific teams and special visitors
- **sustainable fishing and sustainable aquaculture**, which will enhance the image of the islands
- **coastal and fishing tourism**, with actions that will be addressed to tourists who want to gain experiences beyond the beaches
- **marine and nautical tourism**,
- **diving and observation of marine biodiversity**,
- **promotion of maritime tradition and other sea professions** and their connection with the myths and history of the islands.

**..... and 8
main
horizontal
axes**

- **Creation of a training and lifelong learning system** that reflects the productive and geomorphological specificities of the islands, so that even the most remote resident can be effectively trained
- **Creation of a support system for vulnerable groups** based on data from the Social Inclusion Observatory
- **Improvement of the connectivity of the islands** among themselves and with the outside world with projects such as upgrading local shipping lines, separation of port uses, upgrading passenger reception facilities, completion of tourist port and mixed-use port facilities, creation of logistics on the scale of the islands to improve the movement-export of goods, upgrading of telecommunications networks, seaplane network)
- **Water management** that includes the reuse of used water
- **Solid waste management** with the aim of a circular economy
- **Environmental management** with the aim of reducing risks for natural disasters (fires and floods) and adaptation to climate change
- **Energy upgrading of buildings & promotion of electric mobility** in public and private means of transport in order to drastically reduce the energy footprint of the islands
- **Energy transition from fossil fuels through Energy Communities**

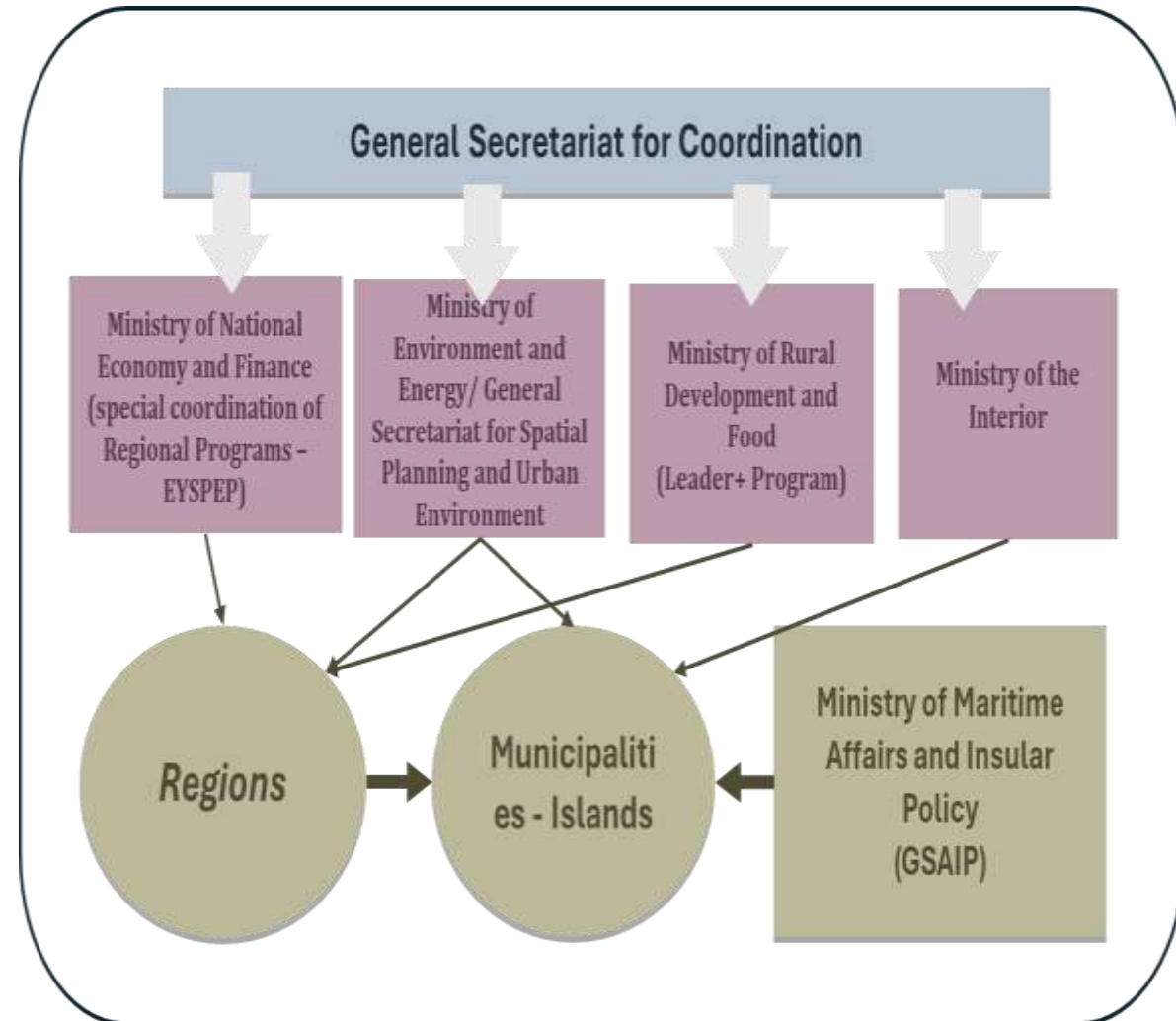
Need for a national development plan with a spatial dimension and aimed at attractiveness for businesses and residents



Island governance: need for diversity to enhance effectiveness – The Island Equivalent

Island policy needs:

- Central government changes
- Institutional arrangements & self-government function: The planning role of the Region and the executive role of the municipalities
- Legislative arrangements – Insularity clause (e.g. island agricultural policy)
- Additional funding to address the cost of insularity



Governance issues

The current **system of governance**, as legislated and implemented, has not met the needs of the islands.

The operation of an **island Region** that has neither regional projects nor an easy and quick presence on the islands as is the case with a mainland one, with the same rules and the same structures, cannot be effective, **mainly in urgent situations as are the “natural disasters”**.

Strengthening island municipalities for projects and interventions that necessarily have a “local” character and transforming the Region into a programmatic and support structure with know-how seems to be the only way out.

The creation of institutions and legislation adapted to the specificities of the island area as well as a “hard” education of the locals with the mandatory activation of the **5-fold helix**, while decision-makers are often criticized for not cooperating with each other, is certain to yield better results.

Thank you for your attention

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