

**Anastassios Chardas**

**DPhil University of Sussex**

**a.chardas@sussex.ac.uk**

**Paper to be presented at the Regional Studies Association (RSA) Annual  
International Conference, Newcastle University, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, 17-20  
April 2011**

**Title: Exploring the differential enforcement of the EU's Cohesion  
Policy added value: Administrative and institutional adjustments  
in Greece and Ireland.**

**Abstract:** This paper aims to explore the divergent added value that the implementation of the European Union's (EU) Cohesion Policy had in two of the original Cohesion countries, Greece and Ireland, through the examination of the role that domestic institutional capacities played in that process. The implementation of the Structural Funds entails the transposition of the four principles that govern their operation in the domestic political and administrative systems of the recipient countries. The principles of partnership, additionality, programming and concentration but also the management tools that are implicit in those principles provide the regulatory framework that needs to be adopted by the member states. These signify the 'added value' that arrives at the domestic level and intends to promote changes in the domestic governance structures. Nevertheless, the ways in which these principles are applied in each case differ and are highly contingent on previously existing patterns of state and administrative capacities. Following this logic, the paper argues that the significant difficulties that Greece has faced in absorbing the funds in accordance to the four principles can be explained with reference to elements that determine the country's institutional and administrative capacities. The existence of a highly centralised administrative system and low levels of administrative capacities at the sub-national levels are two of the issues discussed in this context. In the case of Ireland there have been better patterns of adjustment in accordance to the principles hence enhanced added value for the domestic institutional system. This happened because of the existence of governmental and administrative structures that

facilitated the integration of the four principles in the domestic efforts for regional and sectoral economic development. These relate with patterns of consensual political style and increased administrative effectiveness based on coordination between the objectives of the national development policy and the EU regional policy. The paper focuses on the patterns of implementation of the previous round of structural funds intervention, that of the third Community Support Framework 2000-2008.

### **Introduction**

The European Union's Cohesion Policy aims at combating problems of socioeconomic development through the instigation of projects of physical and social infrastructure. However, its importance lies not only in what the policy does – it is the most important mechanism with explicit redistributive as well as developmental elements at the EU level – but also how it does it. The structural funds provide assistance to the recipient countries in accordance to certain criteria which have significant implications for all the policy actors involved. This is what is described in the relevant literature as the 'added value'<sup>1</sup> of the policy, delineating the qualitative impact that it has on the domestic institutional structures, as they emanate from the regulatory framework that governs its operations. If that is the case the pre-existing domestic institutional arrangements act as important mediating factors through which the final outcomes of the intentions pursued through these qualitative characteristics are determined. The aim of this paper is to assess the added value of cohesion policy in two of the original cohesion countries, namely Greece and Ireland.

The reasons for the choice of these cases is that although these countries had started from a similar position in terms of socioeconomic development in the early 1990's the picture at the end of the third programming period- 2006- was significantly different. In particular, Ireland has followed a significant growth pattern during the 1990's, which is indicated not only by the GDP growth rates but also by the increase of the employment rate. Greece's development on the other hand has been moderate but not insignificant. It has managed to catch up with the rest of the EU-15 in a number of macroeconomic

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<sup>1</sup> Bachtler and Taylor, 2003; Mairate, 2006; OIR, 2007, Bachtler and Gorzelak, 2007.

indicators having though inadequate performances in the unemployment and productivity rates. True, the identification of the impact that the cohesion policy played in these outcomes is far from straightforward. Nonetheless, the aim of the paper is to justify the position that the differential patterns of the implementation of the structural funds were important in creating the policy frameworks that lead to these growth differentials. The structure of the paper is as follows; in the next section the two theoretical components that inform the empirical results of the paper are discussed. Therefore, the literature that discusses the EU cohesion policy added value and the studies that examine the implementation of the policy with reference to domestic institutional and administrative capacities are elaborated. The next section attempts to provide empirical substantiation to these theories by discussing institutional aspects of the implementation of the structural funds in Greece before the inception of the third CSF. These provided the legacy on which the third CSF was implemented which is analysed in the fourth section. The next two sections attempt similar discussions about the Irish case and the country's institutional experiences with managing and implementing the structural funds. The last part concludes and offers a discussion about the comparative elements that distinguish the Greek and the Irish cases.

### **Elaborating on added value and institutional capacities**

An accurate definition of the term added value has not yet been provided. The Commission itself describes the added value that accrues from the Cohesion Policy as related not only to the financial expenditure incurred but also to the method of implementation of the programmes. As it puts it in the Third Report on Economic and Social Cohesion:<sup>2</sup>

Beyond the net impact of policy on GDP or employment, (the Cohesion Policy's) added value arises from other aspects, like the contribution made to regional development by factors such as strategic planning, integrated development policies, partnership, evaluation and the exchange of experience, know-how and good practice between regions.

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<sup>2</sup> CEC, 2004, p.138.

The most systematic attempt to capture the specificities of what the term added value describes in the context of the Cohesion Policy is made by Bachtler and Taylor.<sup>3</sup> Although they admit that what can be included in the term is highly subjective, they attempt to provide a definition of it as:

Something which has been enabled or which could not have been done without Community assistance.<sup>4</sup>

Furthermore, they examine the concept in relation to five parameters: those of cohesion, politics, policy, learning and operational added value. They also point out that the added value of the Cohesion Policy inevitably varies greatly across different geographical parts of the EU, with the impact being dependent on a combination of domestic administrative and programming arrangements.

The examination of the domestic institutional and administrative arrangements as contributing to the policy outcomes aimed by the cohesion policy has only recently started gaining increased attention. Studies of this type have mainly developed with reference to the administrative preparedness as they were applied practically through the PHARE programme for the countries that entered the EU with the waves of enlargement of 2004 and 2007.<sup>5</sup> Moreover, a separate but similar research agenda has developed with reference to the domestic institutional conditions of the CEE countries that can contribute to the effectiveness of the cohesion policy.<sup>6</sup> Also, a further study<sup>7</sup> has developed an innovative conceptual framework in order to capture the role played by domestic administrative capacities in determining the outcome of the structural funds. These patterns are captured in connection with four stages of programme actions, namely management, programming, monitoring and evaluation. Similarly, a study funded by the Commission<sup>8</sup> attempts to capture the added value of the cohesion policy in the operational procedures followed in the member states in the processes of programming, project selection, monitoring, evaluation, financial control, performance reserve,

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<sup>3</sup> Bachtler and Taylor, 2003.

<sup>4</sup> *ibid*, p.9.

<sup>5</sup> Horvat, 2005, Wostner, 2008.

<sup>6</sup> Dimitrova, 2002, Erikson et al. 2005, Hughes et al. 2004.

<sup>7</sup> Milio, 2007 for Italy.

<sup>8</sup> OIR in association with LRDP and IDOM 2003.

information and publicity. Finally, the evaluation of the operational influences exerted through the Management and Implementation (MIS) of the cohesion policy attempted comparative assessments along similar research parameters.<sup>9</sup>

The MIS are the Managing Authorities (MAs), the Monitoring Committees (MCs), the Certifying Authorities (CAs) and the Audit Authorities (AAs). These institutions were created with the reform of the structural funds regulations in 1999 and they intend to encapsulate the spirit of the four principles and the management tools that were discussed above and -if possible- provide sufficient spillovers to the institutional systems of the countries where they are set up. Thus, the added value of the cohesion policy is practically filtered through these organisations and the aim is to influence wider aspects of institutional operations in the recipient countries. The Commission does not actively participate in the frontline implementation of the programmes but has delegated this task to the national and local authorities. Those however do not deliver the results; instead, they choose final beneficiaries that produce the end product, whilst in the structure that deals with the implementation there are also the Intermediate Bodies (IBs) that act as intermediaries between the MAs and the MCs on the one hand and the final beneficiaries on the other. The IBs can be either existing organisations – such as banks, local authorities or private consultancies, which undertake projects of this type as part of their broader operation – or organisations created with the explicit aim of participating in the programme. This section discussed the concept of the added value intended through the EU cohesion policy and the studies on administrative and institutional capacities. Moreover, the practical institutional mechanisms that were created in order to diffuse the added value at the domestic level were briefly discussed. The next section attempts to apply these theoretical parameters for the case of Greece by discussing the general parameters of institutional interventions in the field of regional development policies.

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<sup>9</sup> EPRC in association with Metis, 2009.

### **Institutional and administrative capacities in Greece before the third CSF**

On the whole, the Greek state has traditionally been centralised in the way that it has managed its territorial capacities;<sup>10</sup> indeed for some commentators it is the most centralised state in Europe,<sup>11</sup> and it has been so since its establishment in 1830.<sup>12</sup> As a result, Greece has traditionally had ‘a maximum national and a minimum sub-national apparatus.’<sup>13</sup> During the 1980s there have been some reluctant steps towards awarding greater autonomy to sub-national levels, which were aided by the introduction of the Integrated Mediterranean Programmes (IMPs) and later the first Community Support Framework (CSF). These were accompanied by the introduction of the NUTS II regions as a basic requirement for the distribution of funding. However, these changes have generally been minimal and affected very little the institutional capabilities of the sub-national authorities.

The initiation of the second CSF signalled the acceptance on behalf of the Commission that the main impediment for the successful implementation of the cohesion policy in Greece was its inadequate public administration. Hence, the Commission pushed the Greek government towards the creation of a network of administrative structures with as much independence from the core civil service of the country as possible. Thus, four independent management and monitoring organisations were established, all based in Athens: the Management Organisation Unit (MOU), the Hellenic Centre for Investment (ELKE), the Joint Steering Committee for Public Works (MEK) and the Expert Agent for the Sampled Quality of Infrastructure Projects (ESPEL).<sup>14</sup> These organisations had very limited effects on the institutions responsible for the implementation of the second CSF hence did little to diffuse the added value intended through the cohesion policy. More important were the institutional changes that took place at the sub-national levels of the regions, the Local Government Association (LGAs) and the prefectures.

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<sup>10</sup> Psycharis and Simatou, 2003, p.647.

<sup>11</sup> Featherstone and Yannopoulos, 1995, p.252.

<sup>12</sup> Ioakimides, 1996; Chlepas, 1999; Andreou, 2006.

<sup>13</sup> Papageorgiou and Verney, 1993, p.140.

<sup>14</sup> Lalioti, 2002, p.68.

In 1997, Law 2503/97 on the ‘Organisation and Management of the Regions’ provided further responsibilities to the NUTS II regions in the areas of planning, preparation and execution of programmes of economic development, and social and cultural affairs. Essentially, this was putting into practice the 1986 Law that had introduced the regions and had not been fully implemented.<sup>15</sup> Again these reforms sought to establish regional and local authorities which were insulated from central political interference. Moreover, in 1994 a new law established local elections for the leaders of the prefectures and the prefecture councils. Finally, at the lowest territorial level, that of the LGAs, the government attempted to modernise the system of local government by amalgamating municipalities and communes. The changes that came as a result of the territorial reorganisation of the country are described in Table 1 in page 17.

### **Institutional and administrative capacities in Greece in the third CSF**

During this period there were no further domestic reforms in the reformulation of the political geography of the country. Hence, the territorial and political context in which the programmes of the third CSF were implemented remained the same as described in Table 1. Nevertheless, this was not the case with the institutional developments that emanated directly from the EU cohesion policy. The MIS were established in this period even though in theory this should have been the case since the mid 1990s. Broadly, the institutional network created in order to support the design and implementation of the Greek third CSF comprised five interrelated organisations: the Managing Authorities (MA), the Monitoring Committees (MC), the Payment Authority (PA), the Committee for Fiscal Control and the Management and Organisation Unit (MOU), which was discussed above. The institutional authorities involved in all the stages of the third CSF and their interrelationships are described in the Figure 1 in page 32. MOU is not included in the figure since its operation was outside the everyday implementation of the programme.

The CSF MA was given responsibility for the general running and coordination of the programme. Essentially, this was the Ministry of Economy’s regional policy department which had been in charge during the three previous programming periods. Under the third

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<sup>15</sup> Petrakos and Psycharis, 2006, p.15.

CSF it was endowed with significant administrative and financial resources in order to carry out its operation.<sup>16</sup> Broadly, the tasks it had to follow during the third CSF were the supervision of the actions of each MA, the everyday contact with the Commission, the evaluation of the programme and the approval of any extensions or alterations that a sectoral or regional OP would recommend. In addition to the CSF MA, a new MA was established in the relevant regions or the ministries for each regional and sectoral Operational Programme (OP). The MCs were also reorganised and their role became more clearly identified. The aim of creating the MCs was the institutionalisation of the principle of partnership and the improvement of the inclusion of representatives from civil society in the design and implementation of the CSF. Each OP was assigned a separate MC which would monitor the implementation of the respective programme, whilst the progress of the third CSF as a whole was monitored by the CSF MC.

Therefore, the two main pillars of the institutional network that was created to support the operation of the third CSF were the MAs – one for the CSF and one for each OP – and the MCs – also one for the CSF and one for each OP. In addition to these, however, the PA and the Committee for Fiscal Control were introduced as secondary supporting organisations. Both these institutions were established in order to improve the transparency of the programme and avert any corrupt practices. They were the result of specific demands by the Commission in order to promote the objectives related to the ‘sound management’ of the programme.<sup>17</sup>

Finally, an important institutional change, aimed at creating a supporting mechanism, was the introduction of the Management Organisation Unit (MOU). This was decided in the second CSF but it started its operation towards the end of the second programming period and the start of third CSF.<sup>18</sup> The aim of creating MOU was to strengthen the administrative and management capacities of the authorities created as part of the third CSF. The creation of MOU was directly related to the identification of the weaknesses

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<sup>16</sup> Andreou, 2006, p.252.

<sup>17</sup> Interview with former Commission official.

<sup>18</sup> It was introduced by Law 2372/1996 which was redrafted by Law 2860/2000.



and rigidities of the Greek civil service.<sup>19</sup> Although intended to complement and not substitute the already existing civil service, it was clear that the public sector bodies that existed at the end of the second CSF were unable to perform the tasks required by the programme.<sup>20</sup> As was briefly discussed in the previous section, the strategy adopted by the Commission officials responsible for the Greek CSFs was to find ways to bypass the core civil service and create administrative services with as much autonomy from the central state as possible.<sup>21</sup> The establishment of MOU in the mid 1990s was seen as the ideal way for achieving these objectives.

MOU would operate as a semi autonomous public service body with the ability to attract personnel from the private sector. It would be used as the main institutional channel through which the Commission would infuse the Greek CSFs with innovative methods of management and implementation. The short term objective by the Commission was for MOU to assist in the successful implementation of the Greek CSFs. It had become clear that the endemic characteristics of excessive politicisation, inadequate coordination and the government's difficulty in communicating with the civil society were the primary contributing factors in the limited impact that the first two CSF had in the country. However, in the long run it was hoped that the introduction of MOU would provide sufficient spillovers to the wider civil service of the country. The objective was for MOU to introduce administrative 'good practices' that would be adopted from the wider civil service.

Each of the organisations that were introduced with the third CSF would interact with one another, in accordance to the regulatory framework governing the operation of the structural funds and also with the Intermediate Bodies (IBs) and the final beneficiaries. In the remainder of the section, I discuss the issues that hindered the operation of this institutional network as they were established through fieldwork research carried out in two stages between 2004 and 2008. These issues created impediments in the diffusion of the added value aimed by the cohesion policy. The findings of the fieldwork are that the

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<sup>19</sup> Lalioti, 2002.

<sup>20</sup> Interview with former Director General of MOU.

<sup>21</sup> Interview with former Commission official.

intended effects that were to be achieved through the introduction of this separate institutional network were limited. Rather, the patterns of centralisation and insufficient coordination that had been established in the previous programming periods prevailed. The theme of the centralisation of institutional activity is discussed next.

*Patterns of institutional centralisation*

The establishment of managing and paying authorities were undoubtedly positive steps towards the improvement of the performance of the regional and sectoral OPs. However, the fact that the MAs were placed under the direct control of the ministries and the regions responsible for the implementation of the sectoral and regional OPs signalled the reinforcement of the centralising tendencies of the Greek state. The Secretary General of each MA was appointed by the central government and at the same time would also serve as the head of each MC. Moreover, the civil servants that worked in the MAs on secondment could be transferred back to their previous positions by a simple decision taken by the secretary of the MA, whilst the ones that arrived from the private sector were employed on the basis of two year contracts.<sup>22</sup> The Greek civil service is built on the theoretical basis of the Napoleonic system, which has the permanent positioning of its employees as one of its basic cornerstones. Hence, the employees of the regional and sectoral MAs worked under circumstances of flexibility which were unusual for the civil service in the country. This fact in itself provided constraints on their ability to act autonomously from the central state.

This issue was also revealed by interviewees in the Commission who admitted their difficulties in dealing with the MAs during the monitoring of the programmes because no decision would be taken unless the highest official would agree.<sup>23</sup> Sometimes that would involve the minister or the secretary of a regional authority, whilst in other cases, and especially in issues that affected political decisions related to the national economy, the permission of the Greek Prime Minister (PM) was required.<sup>24</sup> A similar impression was given by all the interviewees employed in the MA of the regional OP of Western

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<sup>22</sup> Andreou, 2006, p.256.

<sup>23</sup> Interview with Head of Unit of 'DG Agriculture' in the European Commission.

<sup>24</sup> Interview with former Director General of DG Regio.

Macedonia<sup>25</sup> and another employee who had worked in the regional OP for the region of Attica.<sup>26</sup> They all agreed that the Ministry of Economy would constantly interfere in their operations through the CSF MA but also through the regional MC. As far as the CSF MA in particular was concerned, it was clear that the central managing authority tended to intervene in the everyday activities much more than the regional MAs would have wanted.

Interestingly enough however, this was not seen as necessarily negative or indeed as contributing to the ineffectiveness of the system. This is because the employees of the regional MA recognised the severe difficulties that they were facing in terms of properly trained personnel. The issue of the lack of specialised knowledge by the regional MAs, as well as in general by the sub-national authorities involved in the implementation of the regional OPs, was raised by an interviewee employed in the CSF MA thus:

It is all very well for the regional and local representatives to be asking for more responsibilities to implement programmes... However, I cannot understand how they will be able to manage a large scale infrastructure project such as an airport... Whether we like it or not our administrative structure is such that the people who know how to build an airport work at the centre. Whenever we have attempted to move those people to the regions, either the know-how was not transferred with them or they did not want to move since they had already organised their lives in Athens.<sup>27</sup>

Another interviewee<sup>28</sup> who had worked in a regional MA claimed that the strong role that the Ministry of Economy retains through the CSF MA is justified, given the small size of the country and the traditional strong role that the central state has had in the Greek political history. As he claims:

We need to understand that the Greek regions are not like the German or French regional authorities [in terms of their administrative capacity]...also since 50% of the country's population resides in Athens it is logical that this is reflected in the administrative distribution of powers.

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<sup>25</sup> Interviews with employees of the OP for 'Western Macedonia'.

<sup>26</sup> Interview with former employee of the OP for 'Attica'.

<sup>27</sup> Interview with Head of Unit of the CSF MA.

<sup>28</sup> Interview with former employee of the OP for 'Central Greece'.

An employee of the European Commission's DG Agriculture<sup>29</sup> with extensive experience in dealing with the MAs of the regional OPs corroborated the argument that the CSF MA tended to involve itself in the management of the programmes much more often than it should have done. As he points out:

Institutionally, our interlocutor is the MA of the regional OP. For example, if we have a problem with a project in the regional OP of Eastern Macedonia and Thrace we will call the employee of this MA. When, however, a few days later we receive a phone call from an employee of the CSF MA who tells us: ‘‘about the problem that you had with this project in Eastern Macedonia and Thrace, here is the answer’’ we begin wondering what is going on.

Three more employees of the CSF MA<sup>30</sup> pointed out that the biggest problems in terms of the quality of the available personnel are identified at the lowest territorial level, that of the LGAs. As one of them put it:

the local government in Greece is miles away from what it should have been in organisational terms, in terms of proper auditing controls, management of the expenses etc... the ‘Kapodistrias’ plan made some first steps but there is much more that needs to be done by further reforms if extensive corruption at that level is to be combated.

Finally, the head of the Payment Authority<sup>31</sup> pointed out that when it comes to the auditing that they implement, most of the problems that the PA is facing come from the LGAs and the prefectures. As he says:

...sometimes we receive official documents written by hand – not only do they not use a computer but they do not even use a typewriter... the ‘Kapodistrias’ plan has undoubtedly improved many things but still the administrative capacities at that level sometimes resemble those of the 1950s.

To summarise, the low administrative capacities of the sub-national authorities were cited by the interviewees of both the CSF MA and the regional MA. However, there also seemed to be a consensus that this was the primary reason why the centralised tendencies of the CSF MA were needed in order to ensure the minimum effectiveness of the programmes. This state of affairs, however, creates a chicken and egg situation; it is not clear whether the reduced responsibilities of the sub-national authorities or the

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<sup>29</sup> See above.

<sup>30</sup> Interviews with employees of the CSF MA.

<sup>31</sup> Interview with the Head of the Single Paying Authority of the CSF.

centralising attitude of the central state were responsible for its reproduction. Therefore, on the one hand, those who distrusted the sub-national authorities seemed to have been justified in not wanting to allow them more scope for autonomous action in the context of the CSF. This was so especially since there were fears – not always unjustified – that the regional programmes would be used in order to satisfy local clientelistic interests rather than for developmental purposes.<sup>32</sup> On the other hand, however, the representatives of the lower tiers inquired how the reforms of the sub-national government can proceed if they were not allowed any room for policy learning. However, if the interviewees of the MAs of the regional OP were less likely to express frustration about the stifling interference of the CSF MA it was a different case when it came to the MAs of the sectoral OPs. This issue is discussed next.

*Difficulties in the co-ordination between the CSF MA and the sectoral MAs.*

The bulk of the funds of the third CSF were diverted to the sectoral OPs, which had a horizontal character and covered the territory of the whole country. To be sure, these interventions had significant developmental implications for the regional and local economies where the regional OPs are implemented. Nonetheless, the MAs that managed the sectoral OPs were all located in Athens. This was a factor that differentiated the patterns of the sectoral OPs' interaction with the CSF MA in comparison with the interaction between the central managing authority and the regional MAs. In particular, the MAs of the OPs that were managed by the Ministry of Planning, Environment and Public Works (YPEXODE) and the three separate Ministries of Labour, Education and Development seemed to have been unwilling to accept the dominant position of the Ministry of Economy as expressed through the CSF MA. Competition, rivalry and mutual suspicion characterised inter-ministerial relationships throughout the previous programming periods and have resulted in a lack of cooperation and coordination.<sup>33</sup> These problems seem to have continued or even become exacerbated during the third CSF.

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<sup>32</sup> Interview with Head of Unit of the MA of the CSF.

<sup>33</sup> Petrakos and Psycharis, 2006, p.15.

Three OPs were managed from the YPEXODE, and one each from the Ministries of Education, the Ministry of Labour and the Ministry of Development. Furthermore, there was a Special Service for the co-ordination of the programmes financed by the European Social Fund (ESF) which coordinated the actions of the Ministries of Labour and Education. Also, a series of not-for profit, semi-public organisations that belonged to the YPEXODE managed projects of physical infrastructure and participated in the process of implementation as Intermediate Bodies (IBs).

The YPEXODE seemed to have a distinctly different approach to the third CSF than that of the Ministry of Economy. However, the problems were not confined to those between the YPEXODE and the Ministry of Economy. Similar problems were identified when it come to the relationships between the YPEXODE and the OPs managed by the Ministry of Labour and the Ministry of Education. On the one hand YPEXODE favoured an approach based on physical and spatial planning whilst on the other the Ministry of Economy and the other Ministries had the responsibility for economic and social development and were more favourably inclined towards the qualitative elements of economic and social development. The technical approach of the former frequently contradicted the qualitative approach adopted not only by the Ministry of Economy but also by other Ministries responsible for the implementation of actions in relation to employment and education.

YPEXODE tended to present a thorough picture when evaluating its OPs, projecting clear and measurable outputs as evidence of the success of the programmes. This would tend to annoy the authorities that managed the other sectoral OPs, especially since the rates of absorption were employed by the Commission in order to evaluate the programmes. This further exacerbated the lack of coordination and created fragmentation and inconsistencies between the developmental objectives of the relevant OPs.

Apart from the problems of differences in the developmental 'philosophy' amongst the MAs of the two main Ministries there were problems of a lack of co-ordination amongst the MAs responsible for the implementation of qualitative actions. These tended to

exacerbate the antagonisms that characterised the relationships between the MAs of the sectoral OPs. One of the characteristics of the patterns of the implementation of the third CSF in Greece was the constant reorganisation of the finances that were assigned for each OP. Specifically there was a trend to transfer funds that did not ‘run’ to those with better rates of absorption. Because of their nature, the physical infrastructure projects were more likely to benefit from financial reallocations, to the detriment of OPs that supported qualitative actions.

An employee of the Special Service for the co-ordination of the actions of the ESF has a direct view on this issue.<sup>34</sup> The main function of the Service in which she worked was to co-ordinate the policy actions of the MAs of the Ministries of Economy, Labour and Education as well as specific actions in regional OPs and to link these with the Commission’s actions. In this regard she was keen to point out that the co-ordination between the MAs of different sectoral OPs faces many difficulties. As she put it:

There is a clear lack of coordination between the MAs, especially in those cases where two or more MAs share responsibilities...There is a mentality and an administrative culture that does not allow employees of different MAs to work together and I am not very hopeful that this will ever change... sporadically we do encounter examples of good coordination between individuals in different MAs, be it of sectoral and/or regional OPs.

The unofficial relationships that were established between middle ranking civil servants were an important factor, as they seemed to have provided the motivation for certain individuals employed in the MAs of different OPs to collaborate. Essentially, through this process the programme as a whole would move forwards despite the difficulties and the frequent antagonisms between the ministries.

True, the individual relationships that develop amongst the employees of any organisation have an impact on the latter’s performance. However, when asked specifically about the issue of the relationships that develop between the MAs, almost all the interviewees replied that the personal ‘chemistry’ between the employees is the most

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<sup>34</sup> Interview with the author

important factor in determining the patterns of communication between themselves and their colleagues, and far more important than the institutional position of each individual.

To summarise, the current section identified two issues that hindered the coordination and cooperation of the authorities involved in the implementation process of the third CSF. Firstly, the different approaches of the MAs that participated in the management of the programme – the CSF MA on the one hand and those belonging to the YPEXODE on the other – impacted directly on the internal communication between the relevant authorities. Secondly, there was a lack of coordination between the MAs that managed sectoral OPs of qualitative actions, and this frequently created antagonisms and inconsistencies between the policy actions of the MAs. The next section addresses similar institutional issues for the case of Ireland.



**Table 1. Tiers of Local Government and decentralised structures in Greece**

<p>Municipality and Communes</p> <p>First tier of self government (Local NUTS V tier). 1033</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fully elected</li> <li>• Underwent drastic amalgamation in 1999 through the ‘Kapodistrias’ plan. 5825 municipalities and communes (438 and 5387 respectively) became 1033 municipalities and communes (900 and 133 respectively)</li> </ul>
<p>Prefecture</p> <p>Second tier of self government (prefectural NUTS III tier)</p> <p>51 prefectures grouped into 50 self government organizations</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Led by a single Prefect appointed by the central government until 1982</li> <li>• Increased participation with appointed members in the Prefectural Council established in 1982. The Prefect remains appointed by the central government.</li> <li>• Since 1994 fully elected tier of self government.</li> </ul>
<p>Region</p> <p>Third tier of decentralization (regional NUTS II tier)</p> <p>13 Regions</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Non- existent until 1986</li> <li>• Legislated in 1986 but did not fully function until 1997</li> <li>• Fully functional since 1997 with a Secretary General appointed by the central government and appointed members of the Regional Council</li> </ul>

*Source: Petrakos and Psycharis (2006) p.12*

**Institutional and administrative capacities in Ireland before the third CSF**

The Irish state has also been a centralised one and the central state has had the overall responsibility for the management and coordination of regional economic policies. Regional policy in Ireland has traditionally been synonymous with national development policy and any measure that would influence socioeconomic activity has been designed and managed from the central government. True, in the 1960s the Regional Development Organisations (RDOs) were introduced in order to accompany regional policies. Also, the Industrial Development Act (IDA) entailed certain specific interventions with regional significance, whilst in 1972 the government introduced an overall regional strategy. Nevertheless the RDOs were not endowed with any significant developmental functions and were abolished in 1987.

At the local level there was limited participation in the form of the local authorities – counties in all regions and sub-counties in some areas- which did not have any responsibility for issues that could promote socioeconomic development.<sup>35</sup> After the Irish accession in the EC in 1973 a series of organisational schemes were introduced that operated at the regional or the local level and had some limited socioeconomic development functions. However, these were also controlled by the central state and did not enjoy any fiscal autonomy. Overall, until the late 1980s the country has had limited experience of implementing regional policies. Also, the central government had limited enthusiasm for consultation and negotiation with regional and local socioeconomic interests.<sup>36</sup>

As a result of the programming requirement for the receipt of the funding arriving through the first CSF Ireland was designated as Objective One region and was seen as one region. All the preparations for the programme were made by the central government albeit with some regional participation that was channeled through the seven sub regional review groups that were created on an ad hoc basis for that purpose. Similar processes were followed in the second programming period although even since the early 1990s

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<sup>35</sup> Rees et al. 2006, p.55.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

there have been calls for the establishment of new and more permanent regional authorities. In 1991 the Barrington report on 'Local Government Reorganisation and reform' recommended the creation of a new three tier system of sub national government at regional, county and sub-county levels. As far as the regional level was concerned the establishment of eight new regional authorities was recommended. The local authorities were indeed created in 1991 and in 1994 the eight Regional Authorities started operating. The RAs are responsible for the management, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the regional Operational Programmes funded through the structural funds.

During the 1990s there has been an increasing interest in the role that the regional institutional authorities can play in complementing and providing regional dimensions to the national industrial policies that followed the partnership agreements of 1987. During this time, the Irish economy has followed significant progresses in its patterns of economic growth which has been largely attributed to the specific mix of developmental policies that were followed. These were incorporated in a broader plan for economic development with the state playing an active role in managing and promoting these plans.<sup>37</sup> The bottom up participation of the social groups that were the result of the social partnerships developed after the crisis of the 1980s has also been an important component in these processes.<sup>38</sup> However, these processes were not only the result of the specific policy mix adopted by the state. The expansion of the Irish state's activities to areas in which it previously had limited participation also assisted in that respect<sup>39</sup> as well as the consensus that developed in the Irish polity regarding the participation of the country in the EU.<sup>40</sup>

The combination of these factors contributed to an increased interest in regional institutional processes that was exemplified by the publication of 'Better Local Government: A Programme for Change'. Before that, the Culliton Report 'A Time for Change: Industrial Policy for the 1990s' had called for the strengthening of the

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<sup>37</sup> O'Rian, 2004.

<sup>38</sup> Hardiman, 2002; Teague and Donaghey, 2009

<sup>39</sup> Hardiman and Scott, 2010.

<sup>40</sup> Adshead, 2005.

participation of the local government in the economic and industrial governance of the country. These processes were given additional impetus after the introduction of the second CSF and the fact that it was made clear that the Commission assigned primary importance in the sub national participation.

### **Institutional and administrative capacities in Ireland in the third CSF**

During the second CSF- in 1998- the Irish government took the decision to divide the country in two NUTS II regions each with their own OP. These would replace the single NUTS II region that was the country before. Also, it was decided to increase the importance of the operation of the RA's which previously had a consultative and review remit.<sup>41</sup> Thus, two new regions were established, one covering the Border, Midland and West (BMW) part and the other the South and East (S&E) of the country. Moreover, two Regional Assemblies were established to take over the role of the programme MAs. These institutions basically replaced the previously operating RA's. The decision to divide the country in this way was taken so as to avoid forfeiting the structural funding. Following the impressive economic growth of the 1990s, when the decision for the allocation of the third CSF funding was taken by the Council, Ireland as a whole would breach the 75% threshold for the allocation of the funds. Hence the BMW region continued enjoying Objective One status and the S&E would enter the phasing out stage in 2004. In addition to the two RAs the eight Regional Authorities that were created in 1994 continue to operate as NUTS III regions. Representatives sit on the Monitoring Committees and have a general role for the coordination of public services in their area.

On the other hand, contrary to what happened in the Greek case, Ireland did not create separate organisations in order to manage and implement the programmes arriving from the EU cohesion policy. Instead, EU funding was included in existing administrative systems with existing organisations that were managing plans for economic development taking up EU cohesion policy management tasks as well.<sup>42</sup> Therefore, national ministries and other domestic organisations took up the role of managing the EU funds, which was

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<sup>41</sup> Adshead, 2005.

<sup>42</sup> EPRC in association with Metis, 2009, p.48.

used in order to fund existing programmes. However, the EU funding was monitored separately in order to satisfy the relevant requirements by the Commission. This process followed the broader patterns of internalisation of the requirements exerted by the participation to the EU in the domestic political system of the country. In order to avoid duplication and confusion, the Irish authorities resorted to grafting EU requirements to the existing administrative structures rather than creating new ones.<sup>43</sup>

Overall, there were two regional OPs- one for each NUTS II Irish region- and three sectoral OPs- Economic and Social Infrastructure, Productive Sector, Employment and Human Resources Development. The CSF as a whole was managed by the Department of Finance and each regional OP by the relevant Regional Authority. The OP for Economic and Social Infrastructure was managed by the Department of Environment and Local Government and the OP for Employment and Human Resources Development and that of Productive Sector both was managed by the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment. In addition there was one MC for each OP and one for the CSF as a whole which comprised representatives from the RAs, the local counties and socioeconomic interests. Additionally, there was an EU Operational Committee in each of the eight NUTS III Regional Authorities. These would monitor the progress of the third CSF in their region. Finally, the responsibility for the financial management was shared by different ministries -each Fund had their own Paying Authority- and the Managing Authorities and the Implementing Bodies.

In addition, the second tier of sub-national administration operating in Ireland is the one at county/city level. In particular there are 29 county councils, five city councils, five Borough Councils and 75 Town Councils. These are responsible for the provision of a range of services such as roads and irrigation but have limited resources in terms of economic development. Furthermore, apart from the territorial changes initiated as a direct result of the regulations governing the cohesion policy, significant steps towards the decentralisation of the country were taken by the domestic Irish government.<sup>44</sup> After

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<sup>43</sup> Laffan, 2001.

<sup>44</sup> McMaster, 2008, p. 102.

the mid 2000s the Irish government undertook a significant plan for the relocation of government departments outside Dublin.

The main distinctive feature of the implementation of the structural funds in Ireland has been the integration of the domestic efforts for industrial and socioeconomic development within the CSFs. As mentioned above, this has followed the broader patterns of grafting EU policy requirements to the domestic political and administrative systems.<sup>45</sup> Therefore, after the early 1990s the National Development Plans (NDPs) have been used to form the basis of negotiations between Ireland and the European Commission. During the implementation of the CSFs all rounds of coordinative assistance were implemented as part of the NDPs and the national developmental efforts.<sup>46</sup> Besides, the existence of an Irish NDP can be attributed to the influence of the cohesion policy requirements as part of the CSFs.<sup>47</sup> In that way the Irish government employed the EU structural funding productively as it provided the national resources for the implementation of a wider plan of industrial and socioeconomic transformation. Apart from the financial implications however, the integration of the EU funding to the NDP also had significant operational repercussions for the Irish administrative and governance structures.

Particularly, a more analytical approach to policy has developed in areas of governance and administration where Ireland has traditionally been lacking behind. This was the case in broader administrative and institutional terms but also in more specific aspects of administrative interaction. In connection with the former, Adshead<sup>48</sup> points out that:

Membership of the EU has impinged... in the persons of Irish civil servants in a number of ways...In a few years the Irish civil service changed from something that would not look out of place in a Dickensian novel to a much more modern and outward looking organisation.

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<sup>45</sup> Laffan, 2001.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid, p.99.

<sup>47</sup> EPRC in association with Metis, 2009, p.47.

<sup>48</sup> 2005, p.165

In connection with more specific aspects of administrative interaction the effects of integrating EU cohesion policy requirements to the domestic policy making have also been substantial. In relation with the principle of partnership the participation of the sub-national as well as other social actors in the implementation of the programmes was substantially improved. This process was assisted by the increased role assigned to the MCs which were heavily involved in promoting programme effectiveness especially in major projects of physical infrastructure.<sup>49</sup> Generally, the patterns of involvement of socioeconomic partners has improved considerably in what used to be a centralised country, which is exemplified by the more effective operation of the principle of partnership.<sup>50</sup> This of course reflects the broader patterns of consensus building that as was discussed above has developed during the 1990s and has provided one of the factors for the achievement of significant economic growth. Thus, through the requirement for consultation of social partners, private enterprises and regional and local actors, the outcome of the programmes has been improved. Moreover, there was less scope for the short term manipulation of the programmes' developmental objectives by political and non bureaucratic actors.<sup>51</sup>

Furthermore, the integration of the EU funding to the NDP has considerably improved the capacities of the Irish managing authorities to plan and coordinate their actions especially in the area of programme preparation. Therefore, multi annual budgeting as required by the regulatory framework governing the cohesion policy has been internalised in the Irish administrative system.<sup>52</sup> Also, the incorporation of the regulatory requirements of the structural funds to the domestic political system has improved the processes of monitoring and evaluation. Especially in relation with the latter there is now a requirement for the evaluation of the EU funded but also the domestically funded programmes which in the past was non existent. The Commission has repeatedly praised

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<sup>49</sup> Ibid, p.52.

<sup>50</sup> EPRC in association with Metis, 2009.

<sup>51</sup> McMaster, 2008, p.108.

<sup>52</sup> EPRC in association with Metis, 2009.

Ireland for the successful deployment of the requirement for the evaluation of its public policies and the cohesion policy is credited for the initiation of these policy transfers.<sup>53</sup>

Finally, there were significant changes that accrued to the Irish domestic administrative and political practices as a result of the principle of programming. It reinforced the importance of flexible administrative responses based much less on formal ways. This has allowed for the creation of policy networks that are more adaptable and amenable to change hence can produce policy innovation. This is possibly the result of the fact that Ireland is a small sized country 'where everyone more or less knows everyone'.<sup>54</sup>

On the other hand, the establishment of the two Regional Assemblies and the allocation of responsibilities for the management and implementation of the relevant OPs have signalled significant processes of regionalisation and the enhancement of the role of sub-national authorities. As was stated above Ireland has always had a centralised approach in managing regional policies; hence the allocation of the two non-central government bodies for the implementation of the programmes was significant in altering these dynamics. This was the case especially since the two RAs showed considerable adaptability in operating in accordance to the regulations stipulated by the cohesion policy, particularly those relating with the principle of partnership.<sup>55</sup>

The enhanced role assigned to non-governmental actors representing regional and local socioeconomic interests has been an integral requirement of the regulatory framework governing the structural spending since the early 1990s. As with the broader patterns of the interrelationships developed between the EU and the Irish state, the principle of partnership found fertile soil in the domestic political and institutional arrangements that developed during the 1990's. As was discussed in the previous section the social partnership agreements of the late 1980s are frequently cited as important contributing factors in the impressive rates of economic growth that the country has followed. Thus, the principle of partnership was grafted in the Irish political and administrative practices

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<sup>53</sup> Rees et al., 2006.

<sup>54</sup> Adshead, 2005, p.167.

<sup>55</sup> EPRC in association with Metis, 2009, p. 45.



and it is unclear whether the domestic or the EU induced stimuli assisted in creating this outcome. As Rees et al<sup>56</sup> put it:

Ireland's social partnership model which emerged in response to the national economic and social problems of the 1980s has been reinforced by involvement in EC affairs. The strong emphasis on partnership incorporated in EC regional policy since 1988 has reinforced and supported the consensual approach to policy-making in Ireland and has legitimised and entrenched the culture of concentration at both national and local levels.

To conclude, the regulatory requirements of the cohesion policy in Ireland can be characterised as one of 'pragmatic adaptation.'<sup>57</sup> There was a successful interplay between the added value intended by the cohesion policy to influence the governance arrangements of the recipient countries and the decisions that were taken at the domestic level. After the socioeconomic difficulties encountered by the country in the 1980s a series of developmental policies were promoted by the Irish state with the explicit aim to diversify its economic base and improve the country's growth, employment and productivity prospects. These developmental initiatives were sustained by a social and industry context that was favourable to the patterns of cooperation promoted through these ways. The combination of these top down and the bottom up institutional factors contributed in the creation of conditions favourable for the permeation of the EU cohesion policy regulatory requirements. These started arriving in the country at the same time when these policies started bearing results and were integrated in those actions. However, this does not mean that the importance of the external stimuli offered by these forces can in any way be disregarded. Rather, they offered a useful combination for the improvement of both the internal administrative and bureaucratic practices and the interaction of the recipient states' bureaucracy with the surrounding socioeconomic environment. Thus, the added value of the EU cohesion policy has exercised considerable influence to the Irish systems of governance.

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<sup>56</sup> 2006, p.68.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

## **Conclusion**

This paper attempted a comparison of the divergent ways in which the added value of the EU's cohesion was internalised in Greece and Ireland through the examination of the domestic institutional and administrative capacities. The main argument that was made was that a series of domestic mediating factors contributed in the differences in the manner in which the domestic governance arrangements were affected in the two cases. Particularly, in the Greek case the added value became internalised in an institutional system that was very centralised, uncoordinated and fragmented. The significant effects of the four principles that govern the operation of the structural funds as well as the management tools implicit in those did not alter the previously existing institutional characteristics. This has followed the broader patterns of the internalisation of the EU norms to the Greek domestic political and administrative system.

True, there have been some important policy innovations exemplified for example by the application of the principle of programming. This was a policy area in which the Greek institutional system has always suffered. Moreover, the patterns of participation of socioeconomic actors in the policy process were also improved through the enforcement of the principle of partnership. However, the domestic reforms that were needed in order to provide the necessary domestic policy context that would improve the patterns of enforcement of the added value were not taken. Therefore, the main conclusion that is drawn from the paper is that for Greece to benefit from the EU participation there needs to be a sustained programme of institutional reforms that will be implemented. In this case we refer specifically to administrative reforms that will provide the necessary domestic mediating factors that will improve the prospects of better internalisation of the added value emanating from the EU cohesion policy.

This is what has happened in the Irish case which was also examined in the paper. As was seen above, the added value aiming at the improvement of the domestic institutional capacities was integrated in the domestic political and administrative systems. After the difficulties that the Irish economy had faced in the 1980's the Irish political system reacted with a series of top-down developmental initiatives. An overarching programme

of socioeconomic and industrial transformation was drawn and implemented that provided the necessary policy context for the impressive rates of economic growth that Ireland has achieved throughout the 1990's and early 2000's. Most importantly, these developmental initiatives were sustained by a reformed public administration that significantly changed its internal operational practices. Furthermore, a series of social partnership arrangements were agreed and respected during this period that provided the bottom up social consensus needed for the reformed civil service to achieve its developmental objectives.

The added value of the cohesion policy was internalised in this domestic policy framework and provided a further stimuli for the institutional changes that were achieved. Therefore, the two forces -the domestic reforms that the Irish state undertook and the added value aimed by the EU cohesion policy- proved complementary. Both aimed at improving the internal and coordinating capacities of the Irish state. In the case of the EU cohesion policy's added value this was achieved through the incorporation of the principles and the management tools. These have significantly altered the elements of the Irish public administration that were not functioning effectively and provided significant avenues for the bottom up participation of socioeconomic actors through the principle of partnership. However, similar policy objectives were aimed by the domestic developmental initiatives. The enhancement of the country's civil service through the relevant reforms was promoted as was the achievement of a minimum of social consensus for the reforms undertaken.

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Figure 1. Community Support Framework III Operation Agencies

