

GREECE

Local development

Location

Leonidio

Programming period

2014 – 2020

Priority

P6 – Social inclusion & local
development

Measure

M19 – LEADER/CLLD

Funding (EUR)

Total budget 61 179.12

EAFRD 58 120.16

National/Regional 3 058.96

Project duration

2018 – 2019

Project promoter

Civil non-profit organization
“Short Mediterranean
Stories”

Contact

info@shortmedstories.com

Website

www.melitzazz.gr/en/

An example of a LEADER financed local festival that became a tool to promote cultural heritage and create the conditions necessary for sustainable local development.

Summary

Melitzazz Festival started as an initiative to promote the local gastronomy of the Tsakonian region in the Eastern Peloponnese. The success of the LEADER funded festival became a driver for sustainable local development for the area.



Over the years the festival gradually established its identity, enriching its content and selecting different themes each year: ‘Folk songs and dances’ (2010); ‘Exhibition of local products’ (2011); ‘Mediterranean cuisine’, ‘Musical adaptations’ (2012); ‘Tsakonian carpets’, ‘Melitzazz junior’ (2013); ‘Cine-Melitzazz’ (2014); ‘Jazz Liquor - Entering old mansions of Leonidio’ (2015); ‘On the road’, ‘Child climbing wall’ (2016); ‘Loving Melitzazz’ (as in Loving Vincent), (2017); ‘Labyrinth dance’ (2018).

Results

The Melitzazz strategy has helped to:

- highlight the value and uniqueness of the Tsakonian heritage in order to strengthen its regional identity.
- attract tourists.
- improve the quality of life of the local population and boost the local economy.
- In 2018 approximately 6 000 people attended the festival.

Context

Several actions have been designed and supported under the 'Melitzazz strategy' over the last ten years, in order to improve understanding of and promote Tsakonian heritage. Tsakonia is an area in Eastern Peloponnese, Greece, gifted with unique characteristics. The strategy is an initiative of the Regional Development Company of Paronias. It started under the local LEADER+ program as the 'Tsakonian Festival', aiming at the promotion of local gastronomy and the local Tsakonian aubergine (PDO product) of Leonidio, the capital of Tsakonia, a traditional and historical settlement. The strategy evolved during the LEADER 2007-2013 period after starting in 2010.

What makes the strategy special is its award-winning design and implementation of a broader range of initiatives to promote Tsakonian heritage. Each year a different aspect of the heritage is selected for promotion. Studies are conducted, local experts are involved, infrastructure work take place where needed, and local enterprises participate and contribute. It is an integrated strategy that inspires, leads to investments and leverages private funds, not only focussing on a single festival but on furthering local development. Some of unique characteristics of the area addressed by the strategy include:

- Nature: the National Park of Paronias-Moustos and a Natura 2000 site are part of the area, including places of magnificent beauty and the Climbing Park of Leonidio.
- Tradition: its seven towns and villages have officially been characterised as 'traditional villages'.
- Language: the area has its own language, the Tsakonian dialect, which comes directly from the ancient Greek/Doric language. The language is still spoken.
- Gastronomy: it has a significant agriculture production with PDO and PGI products (aubergine, olives, olive oil and feta cheese).
- Architecture: it has a unique architecture with mansions and towers. In 2006, the Melitzazz festival supported a study on the local architecture and buildings. Closed buildings were opened and visitors could enter and take part in music, cinema, art and gastronomy events.
- Weaving: the famous Tsakonian carpets are woven in the unique Tsakonian vertical loom (wood weaving machine).
- Art: famous Greek artists have their origins in this area including the poet and writer Kostas Ouranis, musician

Manolis Chiotis, painter Nestor Varveris etc. In Melitzazz 2017 they promoted local painter Nestor Varveris by displaying his life and work, in parallel with Vincent Van Gogh's. The premiere of the famous movie 'Loving Vincent' at 12.07.2017 was made in Leonidio.

- Dance: The Tsakonian dance is one of the most popular Greek traditional dances. With its roots in ancient Greece, the Tsakonian dance was inscribed on the National Inventory of Intangible Cultural Heritage of Greece in 2015, under the UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage (2003) (more info: <https://goo.gl/u6pUei>). It still is the only Greek dance on this list.



The Melitzazz strategy helped to:

- Highlight the uniqueness of the Tsakonian tradition and heritage.
- Provide the opportunity for traditional Tsakonian Dance to enter UNESCO's National List of Cultural Heritage.
- Organise transnational conferences about the Tsakonian dialect and heritage.
- Develop tourism focussed web sites and applications.
- Carry out the digitisation of the famous Tsakonian archive.

The project is:

- In the process of joining the Guinness World Records.
- Presented at conferences as a good practice case study.
- Studied by graduate students focussing on culture and local development.

Partners of the strategic plan are the Development Company of Paronias and the Municipality of South Kynouria. The project is supported by many local bodies and enterprises, such as the Trade Association of Leonidio, the Dance Group of Leonidio, the Agricultural Cooperative of Leonidio, the Civil non-profit organisation 'Short Mediterranean Stories' (created by a LEADER Transnational Cooperation Project in 2014) and many more.

Main Results

The overall aim of this initiative is to promote Tsakonian heritage and the special characteristics of the region by through infrastructure and festivals.

Specific objectives are to connect the local tourist image with the area's agricultural production, cultural heritage and its development effort, as well as to enhance cooperation between producers, entrepreneurs and tourists.

Activities

The main approach applied is to present the area and its features through the innovative, award-winning cultural festival Melitzazz which invites visitors to explore a new destination and get acquainted with the area, its heritage and its people through contemporary visuals and events and unexpected themes.

For 2018, the main theme of the event was the Tsakonian dance, which has been registered in the National Index of Intangible Cultural Heritage of Greece since 2015. The festival organized an event-attempt to set a Guinness World Record as 'The largest Tsakonian dance'. It attracted 1 301 dancers who danced throughout the town of Leonidio.

Events that took place in the first ten days of July 2018, included workshops, speeches, music events, artistic exhibitions and exhibitions promoting local tradition.

For 2019, the main subject of the events will be another element of the Tsakonian tradition, most likely the particular local architecture with the towers, mansions and their famous pebble yards.

The event will include workshops, musical and artistic events and concerts, art exhibitions, films projection, various events to showcase the local architecture (or any central theme of the year).

Main results

The Melitzazz strategy has helped to:

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- Attract tourists;
- Improve the quality of life of the local population and boost the local economy; and
- In 2018 approximately 6 000 people attended the festival.



The Melitzazz festival achieved some significant awards and recognition. It:

- Has been recognised and honoured with the European label EFFE 2015-2016 and 2017-2018, by being included in a network of selected European festivals.
- Has been honoured with the label of 'European Year of Cultural Heritage 2018'.
- Was awarded the silver award in 'Best City Awards 2016/ Cat. Tourism/ Culture/ Tradition'.
- Is studied and presented in several events as a case study of alternative promotion of areas.
- Has been the subject of five postgraduate works and studies including the 'modern and sustainable promotion of agricultural areas' and the 'interactive relationship between culture and local development'.

Additional sources of information

www.youtube.com/user/melitzazz

www.facebook.com/pg/melitzazz/photos/

www.tsakonianarchives.gr/

www.fabbricaculture.gr/

www.discovertsakonia.gr