

## 1. The Region of South Aegean (RoSA)

RoSA, one of the 13 regions of the Hellenic Republic, is formed by the Prefecture of the Dodecanese and the Prefecture of Cyclades and covers the south-eastern part of the Aegean Sea, encompassing an overwhelming majority of Greek islands. Rhodes island is the capital of the Prefecture of the Dodecanese, which comprises of about 200 islands, 22 of which are inhabited. The Dodecanese area is 2.600 Km<sup>2</sup>, with Rhodes covering 54.2% of the total. The 3 main islands, Rhodes, Kos, and Karpathos, cover  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the total area of the Dodecanese. Rhodes island covers an area of 1.400 Km<sup>2</sup>, its coastline is 220 Km long and has a population of 119.640 inhabitants.



Greece & Prefecture of the Dodecanese map



The Prefecture's economy is mainly based on tourism services, with 73% of the active population being employed in the tertiary sector, reflecting 82.1% of the Prefecture's GDP. There are large demographic disparities, since 86% of the Prefecture's population is found in the 3 major islands (Rhodes, Kos & Kalymnos), while only Rhodes concentrates 65% of the total population of the Dodecanese. Income differences among the Dodecanese islands are also quite significant; Rhodes' income per capita was increased by 41% compared to the national

average and by 20% compared to the Dodecanese average (National Statistics 2005 data). RoSA's socio-economic objectives are mainly focused on tourism diversification to more sustainable and environmentally friendly approaches, RES infrastructure facilities development, regional clinics' enhancement and promotion of agricultural products labelling (PDO, PGI, TSG) and agriculture diversification.

## 2. Rhodes Botanical Garden

Rhodes Botanical Garden (RBG) falls under the jurisdiction of the Region of South Aegean. RBG was based on a pre-existing old Italian Garden with rich cultural heritage, which, has existed for a few years under the form of a Nursery for the Prefecture of the Dodecanese (recently reformed under the KALLIKRATIS administrative plan, put into force in January 1<sup>st</sup> 2011), covering the needs of both the Prefecture and the local public. Since the decision was made to convert part of the Nursery grounds into a public garden, the idea has caused a lot of positive reaction from the citizens of the city of Rhodes and the surrounding area.



Plants' nursery and laboratory photos

Having already an established commercial relationship between the Nursery and local businesses, that includes the provision of the garden's produce in olives, vine and citrus fruits to local wine, juice and olive oil production units, there are thoughts of expanding these ties and using them to promote the Garden.

RBG priorities mainly focus on (a) audience development, in terms of social inclusion and community involvement, (b) spatial planning and its contribution to policy making and policy implementation, (c) clustering and connection to cultural landscape elements, NGOs and business links, and (d) active responses to climate change, since it is a sensitive ecosystem prone to droughts and flash floods.



Plant nursery



Bank of vineyards' propagating material

RBG implements and participates in a number of environmental education and social awareness activities. Specifically, in terms of tree planting, RBG grows 250.000 ornamental and forest trees annually, and provides them for free to schools, organisations, military campgrounds, municipalities of the Dodecanese islands, thus, raising environmental awareness. RBG also organises voluntary reforestation activities to Rhodes island sites hit by older and recent wildfires with the participation of boy-scouts, schools, Finnish Association of Rhodes, Dutch Association of Rhodes, Environmental Association of Rhodes, Cultural and Sports' Associations, bee masters' association, local people, local mass media and private donations. Environmental education activities extend to students of all educational levels and are supported by follow up activities - visits in schools with available green spaces planted from students under RBG's guidance. Moreover, RBG has started to develop a traditional varieties' seed bank (e.g., Santorini fava bean, etc.) with plants that tend to disappear from the Aegean Sea area in cooperation with the eco-community "Pelliti" and GBGN for seeds and botanical species propagating material' exchange and knowledge transfer. Finally, RBG participates in environmental activities organised in Rhodes island by other bodies, such as beach cleaning.

### 3. Regional Parks and recent developments

In the Region of South Aegean, there are 4 Parks and gardens in Rhodes, apart from Rhodes Botanical Garden; Butterflies' Valley Park, Rodini Park, Rodiaki Epavli Park, Peripheral town walls and ditch Park, Hippocrates Botanical Garden in Kos island and the island of Tilos which is characterised as an ecological park.

The Butterflies' Valley Park is managed by the "Piges Kallitheas SA" Managing Authority, which belongs to the Municipality of Rhodes, while the Rodini, the Rodiaki Epavli and the Town walls and ditch Parks are managed by the Environmental Department of the Municipality of Rhodes. RBG is managed by the "Aegean Land SA", in which RoSA is the major shareholder. The Hippocrates Botanical Garden in Kos island is managed by the International Hippocratic Foundation. The Parks are open all year except for national holidays.

The objectives of the parks are mainly focused on environmental practices and the connection of parks with social participation and ecotourism activities. Specifically, the parks aim to the promotion of Greek biodiversity, protection of endangered plants, knowledge transfer and exchange of experience and propagating material among national and international botanical gardens. In addition, all parks and gardens aim at the sustainable management and efficient conservation of biodiversity and its incorporation in all levels of national development planning, with respect to the Strategy for Biodiversity Conservation.

One of the most important development objectives, under the Strategic Development Plan of the Prefecture of the Dodecanese 2007-2015, is the promotion of integrated initiatives and the implementation of development plans for the protection, management and tourism development of environmentally important areas.

#### 4. Programmes related to Parks and Gardens

The aforementioned parks are going to implement or have implemented projects under national and EU funded schemes regarding environmental and social activities. The Butterflies' Valley Park and the Rodiaki Epavli Park have been granted under the National Strategic Reference Framework 2007-2013 (N.S.R.F.) with projects related to the protection of the environmental natural heritage, aiming at the natural resources' promotion and protection, strategic environment and risk prevention and nature trails and paths preservation. Moreover, RBG is participating in the LEADER Programme 2007-2013, with activities focused on the preservation, restoration

and enhancement of cultural characteristics (traditional small bridges, small fountains, etc.).



Environmental education activities in kindergarten & high school students

## 5. Relevant bodies to Parks and Gardens

RBG is a member of the Greek Botanic Gardens Network (GBGN), founded during the 2<sup>nd</sup> Symposium of the Greek Botanic Gardens that took place in Chios island, in 2010. The network's objective is to contribute to the implementation of environmental policies in regional, national and international level and promote the Strategy for the Conservation of Biodiversity. Moreover, in national level, the network aims at contributing to the strategic development policies regarding plant biodiversity and the participation of local communities in Parks' management. As a result of the GBGN 2<sup>nd</sup> Symposium and with the presence of Dr Suzanne Sharrock, (Botanic Garden Conservation International - BGCI), GBGN was integrated in the BGCI network.

Members of GBGN are also other known Gardens, such as the Hippocrates Botanical Garden in Kos island, the Julia & Alexander N. Diomedes Botanic Garden in Attica Region, the Balkan Botanic Garden Kroussia in Western Macedonia, the Aegean Botanic Garden in Chios island and the Philodassiki Botanic Garden, in Athens, Attica.

Additionally, the Environmental NGO Ellada Kathari ("Clean up Greece"), member of the Mediterranean Action Plan of the UN environmental programme, is supporting parks and gardens with main objective to raise public awareness about the environment with environmental education, tree planting and clean-up activities.

Finally, the eco-community "Pelliti" supports all parks as its major activities focus on the collection, preservation and

dissemination of local plant varieties, the free seeds'exchange and the creation of local groups consisted of public and private bodies, schools, individuals and every kind of organisations.

## 6. Important Parks and Gardens

- Botanic Garden of Athens University, Athens, Attica.
- Julia & Alexander N. Diomedes Botanic Garden, Athens, Attica.
- The Balkan Botanic Garden at Kroussia Mountains, Kilkis, Western Macedonia.
- Park for the Preservation of Flora and Fauna, Technical University of Crete, Chania Crete.
- National Garden (formerly known as Royal Gardens), Athens, Attica.
- Hippocrates Botanical Garden of Kos Kos island, South Aegean.
- Aegean Botanic Garden, Chios island, North Aegean.
- Philodassiki Botanic Garden, Athens, Attica.

## 7. Connection to Hybrid Parks

The parks in Rhodes and Kos islands as long as Tilos island are very relevant to Hybrid Parks, since they also support and enhance cooperation for the conservation of biodiversity, plant species and experience exchange. Moreover, these parks also aim to social inclusion and community involvement and expansion of business links and diversification of tourist product. Finally, RBG's cooperation with students in a number of activities indicates the importance of their inclusion in Hybrid Parks' project. More specifically, the sites which are relevant to Hybrid Parks are:

- Butterflies' Valley Park, Rhodes island.
- Rodini Park, Rhodes island.
- Rodiaki Epavli Park, Rhodes island.
- Peripheral town walls and ditch Park, Rhodes island.
- Hippocrates Botanical Garden in Kos island.
- Tilos island.
- Local schools.



Prefecture of the Dodecanese & RBG staff

RBG is a garden under formation, willing to learn and implement best practices from all gardens and parks participating in the Hybrid Parks project within the framework of the INTERREG IVC funding scheme and offer its knowledge and experience as a newly formed Mediterranean case study to the partnership.

#### 8. Useful links:

Region of South Aegean (Greek, English):

<http://www.notioaigaio.gr/per/>

Municipality of Rhodes (Greek, English):

<http://www.rhodes.gr/>

Greek National Tourism Organisation (Greek, English):

<http://www.visitgreece.gr/>

Butterflies' Valley Park, Rhodes island (English):

<http://www.faliraki-info.com/sights/butterflies.htm>

Rodini Park, Rhodes island (English):

<http://www.faliraki-info.com/rhodes/rodini.htm>

South Aegean on Wikipedia (several languages):

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/South\\_Aegean](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/South_Aegean)

More information about Hybrid Parks and INTERREG IVC

[www.hybridparks.eu](http://www.hybridparks.eu)