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The transformation of Regional Policy in Greece: A new policy paradigm in a European context, 1993-2013

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In the last few decades globalization and economic change have been intensely altering the role, scope and aims of state and state policies, including regional economic policy. This consideration is tested in the case of Greece in the years of “modernization” and European Integration up to the crisis (1993-2013).

After the Maastricht Treaty (1992), the dual need for fiscal discipline and European convergence in the context of the economic and monetary integration, have shifted the interests of government policies, from economic development to macroeconomic stability and liberalization of domestic markets. The paper supports the view that this new political - economic paradigm, has had a clear impact on the one hand, on regional economies, as well as on the essence, priorities and principles of domestic regional policy.

More specifically, the paper discusses the transformation of regional policy in Greece in the years that follow European economic unification and up to the crisis and demonstrates the main features of a policy paradigm, targeting deregulation of internal economic-spatial relations, and promoting by all means, competitiveness and external adjustment to globalization for the country as a whole. The new policy model, as it is described focuses primarily on efficiency and growth criteria, at the national level, instead of equity and justice, or balanced socioeconomic development between regions and at the same time, it reflects and enables the retreat of central state intervention, in matters of development and redistribution within.

The paper is structured as follows. First, it presents the overall political-economic framework for an era that is marked by the “modernization” policy, and European integration. Second, it discusses some basic developments in the political economy of the EU and highlights changes in the directions of common regional and Cohesion Policy in the same period. Third, it elaborates on the main policy instruments and explains the main characteristics of the new regional policy model in the case of Greece.

Conclusively, the paper aims at a historical investigation and a critical overview of contemporary regional policy in Greece, depicting the basic features of a paradigm shift that is also common and found, in its basic rationale, also in other European countries in earlier years. In this way, regional policy is viewed and explored, as a subject and as a determinant of social-economic and political change, so much within the country, as much as in the context of the EU, and as it is embedded and reformed in -time and place- specific economic and political environments.

Key words: Economic policy, regional policy, Greece, European integration, EU regional and Cohesion Policy, historical perspective.