



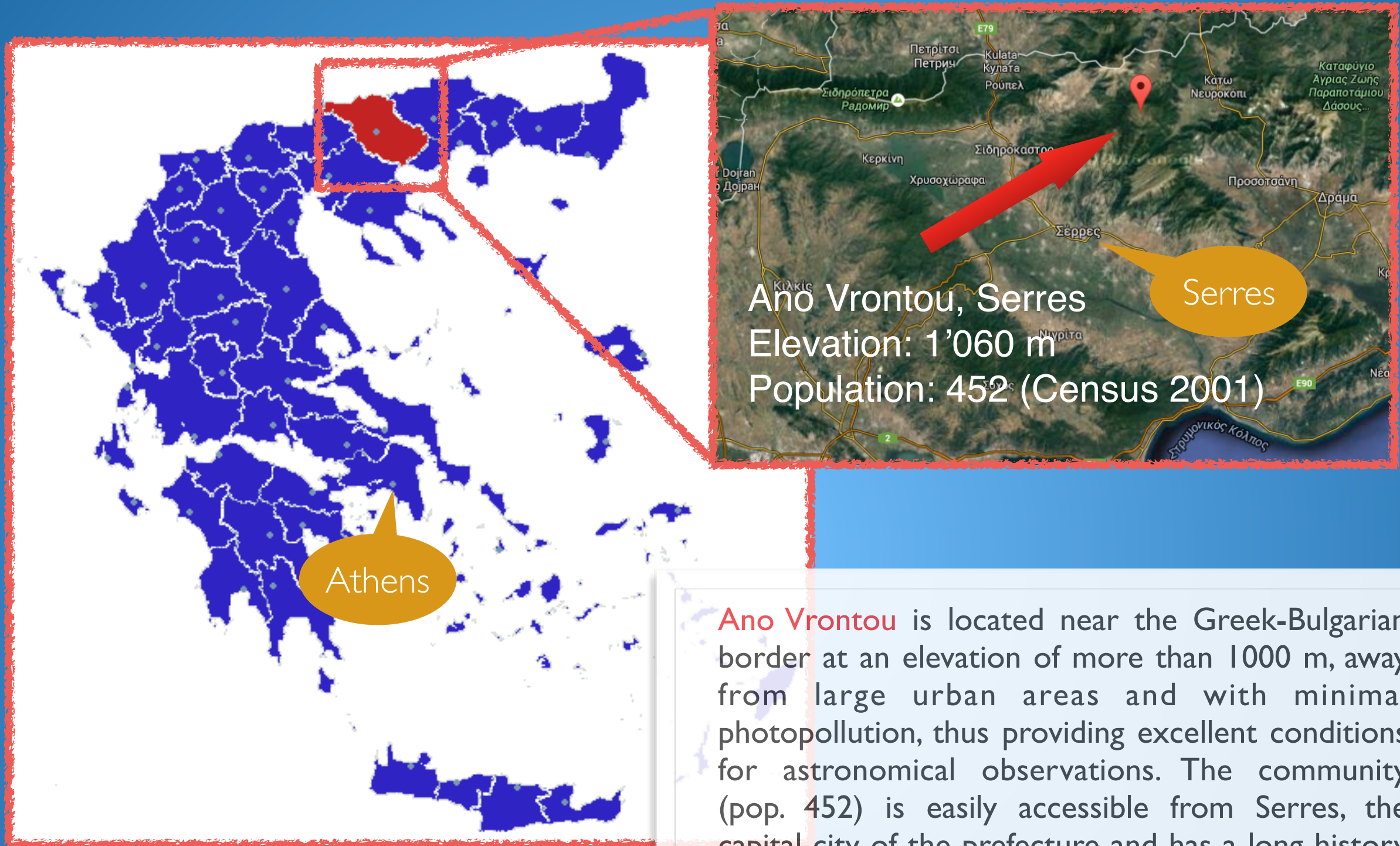
PROMOTING ASTRONOMY TO A DIVERSE RURAL COMMUNITY:

Early assessment of outreach and scientific activities of the Astronomy Initiative “*Astropyli*” in Serres, Northern Greece

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“ASTROPYLI” AT ANO VRONTOU, SERRES

The UNESCO-supported Astronomy Club “Astropyli” in the rural community of Ano Vrontou in Serres, Northern Greece, was established ten years ago. The initiative was founded having as principal motivation the promotion of astronomy and science to the general public by means of outreach activities, supplemented by several cultural, environmental and scientific events.



Ano Vrontou is located near the Greek-Bulgarian border at an elevation of more than 1000 m, away from large urban areas and with minimal photopollution, thus providing excellent conditions for astronomical observations. The community (pop. 452) is easily accessible from Serres, the capital city of the prefecture and has a long history though the centuries being a commercial node in the late Byzantine and the Ottoman Empires. The permanent population spans all age groups and increases significantly over the summer months due to city people owning vacation houses.

THE CASE AND AN EARLY ASSESSMENT

Challenges:

- Large generation gaps
- Wide spread of educational level
- Remoteness of locale
- No major Astronomy Institution nearby

At the beginning

- Technical and organizational difficulties
- Limited equipment and infrastructure
- Limited funding
- Tough to infiltrate common public

HOWEVER

- Several **amateur clubs** and **authorities** backed the project
- Lots of **volunteers**
- Several **prominent** researchers provided free consultation and support
- **World-class** astrophysicists have been invited and gave public lectures (such as Krimigis, Seiradakis etc)
- High-school teachers supported **labs** and **practical training**
- Some **funding** showed up recently!



THE NEAR FUTURE FOR “ASTROPYLI”

Ten Years After

- Several new **telescopes** were acquired by amateur astronomers in the community
- A historic building in Ano Vrontou was provided by the municipality, renovated and will act as the central point of an **Astronomical Park**
- A new **planetarium** has been acquired and will be available to schools of the wider area, tourists and the public
- Several new scientific and **outreach actions** are targeting the community acting as satellites to Astropyli's events
- Scientific knowledge is now **easier to be communicated** to the people of the community
- Astropyli looks **strong** and very... **ambitious!**



ASTROPYLI
10 YEARS



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26-27-28 AUGUST 2016