



YOUTH & SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP IN GREECE

**Country report Academy
for Active Youth Association**



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1. Introduction

Involving youth in social entrepreneurship (SE) is a strategy that might aid in solving numerous challenges in society, but even more so - equipping them with the necessary skills and mindset for the job market or their own SE adventure to stay resilient in the face of an ever-changing world. This report is written within the project "Socially Agile". It will be combined with the findings of other countries in an international report, "Innovative approaches for fostering social entrepreneurship using agile methodology", to create a novel online course subsequently. The data was collected through desk research, an online survey with 52 young people and an online survey with 9 social entrepreneurs from Greece from January to March 2023.

2. Part 1: Description of the Ecosystem

The social enterprise ecosystem in Greece is still developing, but it has shown signs of growth and maturity in recent years. Social entrepreneurship is relatively new in Greece and has gained traction over the past decade.

The economic crisis of 2009 raised the importance of social contribution and solidarity, which led to the legislation of SE (Law 4019/2011) for the first time in Greece in 2011—as a consequence of the social and economic upheaval, the same year marked a significant milestone for Greek social entrepreneurship, as the number of social enterprises grew exponentially along with the support systems and mechanisms.

Some of the most pressing issues in Greece are being addressed by SEs working to alleviate poverty and increase employment opportunities while promoting and demonstrating an alternative economic model.

The first law regarding social entrepreneurship, Law 4019/2011, was enacted in 2011. Law 4019/2011 specified the framework for the operation of social businesses and established the social economy and social entrepreneurship sphere. In this context, the Social Economy sector was defined, and a new corporate form, the Social Cooperative Enterprise, has been established as an actor of the social economy and social entrepreneurship.

Since 2016, Law 4430/16 has been in force, based on which the Social Cooperative Enterprises comply with the operational definition of the European Union.

“Social and Solidarity Economy” is defined by Law 4430/2016 as “the set of economic activities based on an alternative form of organisation of production, distribution, consumption, and reinvestment relationships, based on the principles of democracy, equality, solidarity, cooperation, and respect for people and the environment.”

The conditions an organisation (regardless of its legal form) must satisfy to be considered a member of the social economy and to be included in the register maintained by the Ministry of Labor, and Social Affairs are outlined in Law 4430/2016. According to Article 3 of the Law, “Social and Solidarity Economy Bodies” are defined as the following:

✔ Social cooperative enterprise (SCE)

SCEs were also mentioned in the preceding law (4019/2011), albeit slightly differently. According to Law 4430/2016, SCEs (KoinSEp) are the “civic cooperatives of Law 1667/1986, which have as fundamental aim the collective and social benefit [...] and have ex lege entrepreneurial activity.”

SCEs are divided into two categories related to their special purpose:

a. Integration SCEs (KoinSEp Entaxis). Integration SCEs are then divided into two subcategories:

a.1. SCEs for the integration of ‘vulnerable’ groups in social and economic life that integrate social groups such as people with disabilities, drug addicts, rehabilitated drug addicts, released prisoners, juvenile offenders, etc.

a.2. SCEs for the integration of ‘special’ groups in social and economic life. This refers to victims of domestic violence, victims of trafficking, people experiencing homelessness, migrants, refugees and asylum seekers (for as long as their asylum application is pending), heads of single-parent families, etc.

b. SCEs for collective and social benefit purposes (KoinSEp Syllogikis & Koinonikis Ofeleias)

✔ Limited liability social cooperatives (KoiSPEs)

KoiSPEs are explicitly acknowledged as SCEs and as a key component of the Greek SSE spectrum by Law 4430/2016.

✔ Civil cooperatives

Civil cooperatives are associations with a financial purpose that target their members' economic, social and cultural development.

✔ Any legal form that is not a single-person entity but complies with a series of operational criteria.

This legislation paved the way for expanding social enterprise activity fields in Greece. It provided an updated framework for various organisations and businesses with a demonstrable social impact and addressing a social problem. It also introduced the concept of legal status by adopting a more operational, criterion-based logic, which means that virtually any legal form can alter its status to be part of the official SSE spectrum and register with the NRSSE. Compliance with a set of operational criteria is necessary. In brief, these criteria pertain to entrepreneurial activity on the private market (revenues from public bodies should not exceed 65% of total turnover over three years), democratic governance (one member, one vote), and a well-defined social purpose with profits allocated to collective and social benefit (up to 95% of annual profits).

Furthermore, while the former law (4019/2011) emphasised 'social economy' and 'social entrepreneurship', the current Law 4430/2016 is built around the concept of 'social and solidarity economy' and introduced defined and operationalised the terms 'social innovation' and 'social impact' for the first time in Greece. In addition, whereas the previous law (4019/2011) clarified "social economy" and "social entrepreneurship," the current law (4430/2016) is based on the principle of "social and solidarity economy" and for the first time in Greece introduced and operationalised the terms "social innovation" and "social impact."

✔ Civil cooperatives

Lastly, it is worth mentioning that in Greek legislative and administrative documents, the term 'social and solidarity economy organisation' is typically used over the 'social enterprise' term.

Based on the National Registry of Social and Solidarity Economy (NRSSE), there are 1.729 social enterprises in Greece (August 2022). Since 2018, there has been a decline in the annual number of registrations, whereas the trend before 2018 was strictly upward. This can be partially explained by a decrease in the initial excitement for establishing businesses in Greece's innovative sector. CSIn addition, Os' day-to-day operational challenges also contribute to the waning interest in these legal business forms.



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Several organisations, networks, and initiatives now support and promote entrepreneurship in Greece, but only some could be described as SEE specialist support systems. Some of them can be found below:

Name	Organisation Type	Type of Support	Description of Support
Impact Hub Athens	Accelerator, Workspace	Development and networking	A co-working space and community that supports social entrepreneurs in Greece. They offer workshops, training programs, and networking opportunities to help social entrepreneurs grow their businesses and create social impact.
Higgs	Accelerator, Incubator	Development and networking support	Higgs offers a range of services, including tailor-made educational seminars; individual advisory meetings with partners and management to address general or specific needs; sharing best practices and networking opportunities with major NGOs in Greece and abroad; opportunities for job shadowing and internships in large NGOs; daily support in the development of fundraising proposals directed at domestic and international donors; and third sector and social economy Awareness raising.

<p>Social Dynamo – Boddosaki Foundation</p>	<p>Training and mentoring services</p>	<p>Development and networking support</p>	<p>Social Dynamo is an award-winning hub which offers training, professional support, and networking. It aims to support organisations to become sustainable, increase their effectiveness and maximise their social impact.</p>
<p>Among</p>	<p>Consulting services</p>	<p>Development and networking support</p>	<p>The organisation encourages and facilitates systemic change through social innovation. It empowers organisations & (re)design projects and services to tackle social challenges in Greece with a more innovative approach.</p>
<p>Solidarity Mission</p>	<p>Consulting services</p>	<p>Development and networking support</p>	<p>Solidarity Mission empowers social entrepreneurs. Their programs and services target the creation and development of sustainable social enterprises and social innovations.</p>

PRAXIS Business Coaching Centre	Training and mentoring services	Development and networking support	<p>PRAKSIS BCC aims to reduce youth unemployment. It is an entrepreneurship support programme aimed at people from socially vulnerable and disadvantaged groups, enabling them to build a better tomorrow for themselves and their families through entrepreneurship.</p>
Cooperative Bank of Karditsa	Cooperative bank	Financial and funding support	<p>Cooperative Bank of Karditsa was initially established in 1994 as a credit cooperative and became a bank in 1998 with a strong emphasis on social enterprises.</p>
Pancretan Cooperative	Cooperative bank	Financial and funding support	<p>A cooperative bank with a focus on cooperatives and social enterprise financing.</p>

Action Finance Initiative	Access to funding and training		AFI provides access to financing, though microcredits, to those who have a business idea or project but need help with the necessary funds. At the same time, it supports these businesses by providing free training and support. Specifically, AFI promotes microcredits in Greece, offering access to micro-loans up to 12,500 euros to potential entrepreneurs independently of their commercial activity, level of innovation, investment category, and technology use.
The People's Trust Bank			The People's Trust is a privately funded non-profit organisation that supports start-ups and existing small businesses across all sectors, providing up to €15,000 in microfinance and free business development services.

The social enterprise ecosystem is a relatively new concept that has grown exponentially in the last decade. However, the legal and regulatory framework made it mature.

However, despite these positive developments, the social enterprise ecosystem in Greece still faces challenges. These include limited access to funding and investment, gaps in support structures and mechanisms, and limited awareness and understanding of the concept among the broader public.

3. Part 2: Youth and their Readiness/willingness to get involved in SE

The online survey was completed by 52 respondents from Greece. Among the respondents, 50% reported living in the capital city of Greece, while 40% lived in other cities, and 10% lived in small towns and rural areas. In terms of employment status, 67% of the respondents reported being employed, 10% were unemployed, and 12% were university students.

In terms of age distribution, 21% of the respondents were aged between 18 and 25, while 31% were aged between 26 and 30. The majority of respondents (48%) were above 30 years old.

These demographic results provide an overview of the sample characteristics of the online survey participants and can be used to contextualise the results of the study. It is important to note that the sample may not be representative of the larger population due to the self-selection bias inherent in online surveys.

As part of this study, participants were asked to indicate their familiarity with social entrepreneurship (SE). Of the 52 respondents, 11.5% reported not having heard of the concept before. Additionally, 35% indicated that they had heard of SE before participating in the survey but needed more knowledge about it.

On the other hand, 38.5% of the respondents reported knowing the concept well but needed a professional connection to it. Moreover, 8% of the respondents stated that they worked for an organisation or company closely connected to social entrepreneurship, while an equal percentage (8%) identified as social entrepreneurs.

These findings suggest that while a significant proportion of the sample is familiar with the concept of SE, a large proportion still needs to gain more knowledge or familiarity with the idea. Furthermore, most respondents familiar with SE are not professionally connected to it, indicating a potential knowledge gap between those familiar with the concept and those with experience in the field. Finally, the small percentage of respondents who work in organisations or companies closely connected to social entrepreneurship or who identify as social entrepreneurs highlights the potential importance of examining the experiences of those more actively involved in the field.

As part of the study, respondents were asked if they had ever considered becoming a social entrepreneur or being employed by one. Among the 52 participants, the majority (76%) responded affirmatively, while 24% responded negatively.

These results suggest a high interest in social entrepreneurship among the survey participants. In addition, the fact that three-quarters of the respondents have considered becoming a social entrepreneur or working for one indicates that a pool of individuals may be interested in pursuing a career in this field.

The participants who had indicated that they had considered becoming a social entrepreneur or being employed by one were asked to identify up to three factors that motivated them to pursue this career path. Of the respondents who answered yes to the previous question, 68% indicated that their primary motivations for considering or engaging in social entrepreneurship were empathy, care for the community, or other personal traits. Additionally, 59.5% of the respondents reported feeling individually responsible to contribute to change as an active citizen.

Furthermore, 43% of the respondents stated their motivation was the willingness or ambition to leave a lasting impact and solve a societal challenge. In comparison, 40.5% indicated their motivation was the willingness to earn more sustainably. Only 19% of the respondents reported previous experiences with social enterprises or inspiration from their work as one of their motivations for getting involved in social entrepreneurship.

These findings suggest that personal values and a sense of responsibility to contribute to social change are significant drivers for individuals considering social entrepreneurship as a career path. Additionally, many respondents are motivated by the potential to create a sustainable livelihood, indicating that social entrepreneurship may offer a viable career option for those seeking to combine financial sustainability with social impact. However, the relatively low number of respondents citing previous experience or inspiration from existing social enterprises as motivation may indicate a need for greater awareness-raising and role-modelling within the field to inspire and attract potential social entrepreneurs.

The participants who had indicated that they had not considered becoming a social entrepreneur or being employed by one were asked what kind of support they would require to consider taking part or starting their social entrepreneurship venture. Of the respondents who answered no to the previous question, 68% indicated that they would need access to resources (financial, human, etc.), and 50% stated that they would require knowledge and training about the concept of social entrepreneurship.

Additionally, 50% of the respondents reported that mentorship from an experienced social entrepreneur would be a valuable form of support, and 41% identified networking opportunities with like-minded people as a factor that would encourage their engagement with social entrepreneurship. Other factors, such as business management skills training and help finding a business idea or model, were mentioned by smaller percentages of respondents, with 23% and 27%, respectively.

Only 18% of the respondents mentioned the need for well-rounded support from the government or municipality for the start-up phase, indicating that policy support and enabling environments may be less of a priority. In addition, a small proportion of respondents (4.5%) stated that they had no interest in initiatives with social benefits or entrepreneurship in general, suggesting that this group may be less receptive to support promoting social entrepreneurship.

These findings suggest that knowledge, access to resources, mentorship, and networking opportunities are key forms of support that could encourage individuals not currently interested in social entrepreneurship to consider getting involved in this field.

Out of the 52 respondents, 40% responded that the events of past years events them more aware of the existing challenges in society, but they still need to take action to tackle them. 25% reported that they are now more aware of their responsibility towards society but have yet to take action to exercise it. 31% felt more connected to the community and its challenges. 11.5% have started contributing to addressing social challenges by volunteering or becoming a member of an NGO. 29% have considered starting or have already founded a social enterprise or included a service with social impact within their current job. Finally, 10% of respondents reported that their attitudes towards involvement in solving societal challenges have remained the same. These findings suggest that while recent events have raised awareness about social issues, there is still a need to motivate individuals to take concrete actions to address them.

Conclusions

1. **Awareness of social entrepreneurship:** While a significant portion of the respondents have heard about the concept of social entrepreneurship, a considerable number (11.5%) are unfamiliar with it.
2. **Interest in social entrepreneurship:** Most respondents (76%) expressed an interest in becoming a social entrepreneur or being employed by one, while a quarter of the respondents did not express interest in social entrepreneurship.
3. **Motivations for social entrepreneurship:** Empathy and care for the community emerged as the most important motivator for individuals to consider social entrepreneurship. Other important motivators included the willingness to leave a lasting impact or solve a challenge in society, feeling individually responsible for contributing to change as an active citizen, and the desire to earn a living more sustainably.
4. **Support needed for social entrepreneurship:** The respondents who did not express interest in social entrepreneurship cited a lack of knowledge about the concept, a lack of interest in initiatives with social benefits, or a lack of interest in entrepreneurship in general. Those interested in social entrepreneurship expressed a need for access to resources (financial, human, etc.), mentorship from experienced social entrepreneurs, and networking opportunities with like-minded individuals.

The impact of current events on attitudes towards social entrepreneurship: While a significant portion of the respondents reported feeling more aware of existing societal challenges, only a small percentage have taken action to address them. However, a notable proportion of respondents have considered starting or have already founded a social enterprise or included a service with a social impact within their current job.

Overall, the survey results suggest a high level of interest in social entrepreneurship among the respondents, particularly driven by empathy and care for the community. However, significant barriers exist for those who wish to pursue social entrepreneurship, such as needing more resources, knowledge, and support. The findings also indicate that the events of the past years have influenced the attitudes of some individuals towards social entrepreneurship, but more action is needed to address societal challenges.

4. Part 3: Learnings from existing SEs

An online survey conducted among social enterprises in Greece aimed to identify the gather insights on elements that foster successful and sustainable social entrepreneurship practice and the aspects that contribute to the start of such a venture; an online survey was sent out to active social enterprises in Greece.

The results indicate that the aspect that has played the biggest role in the overall success of the businesses is the possession of a business mindset and skills, which 89% of the respondents chose. This suggests that having an entrepreneurial mindset and possessing the necessary skills to run a successful business is crucial for the success of social enterprises.

Teamwork was the second most commonly cited factor, with 44% of respondents indicating that it has contributed to their success. This highlights the importance of collaboration and effective team management in the success of social enterprises.

Innovation and community engagement were both selected by 33% of respondents as factors contributing to their success. This suggests that social enterprises that prioritise innovation and community engagement are more likely to succeed in achieving their social mission.

The business model itself and partnerships were selected by 22% of respondents as factors contributing to their success. This indicates that having a well-designed business model and establishing effective partnerships with other organisations or stakeholders can also play a role in the success of social enterprises.

Finally, support from family and friends and mentorship and accelerator programs were both selected by 11% of respondents. While these factors may not be as significant as others, they can still contribute to the success of social enterprises by providing emotional support and guidance.

Overall, the results suggest that having a business mindset and skills, effective teamwork, innovation, community engagement, a well-designed business model, and partnerships are all important factors that can contribute to the success of social enterprises in Greece.

Regarding the challenges that social enterprises encounter from the responses of the social enterprises, the main challenges in managing their business are financial constraints such as finding funding and time requirements, lack of visibility and acceptance of social enterprises by public bodies, private sector, and society, finding qualified and specialised personnel, non-permanent partnerships, sustainability and liquidity, collective management, legal framework, and bureaucracy.

Based on the responses of social enterprises, the following are key takeaways for aspiring young social entrepreneurs:

- **Incorporate their personality into their business to make it unique.**
- **Avoid the legal form of a joint venture due to restrictions.**
- **Learn to adapt, train, and constantly evolve.**
- **Dare to pursue their dreams.**
- **Conduct a proper needs assessment and seek appropriate support.**
- **Emphasize collective action and team support.**
- **Develop a reliable business plan.**
- **Avoid rushing and moving too quickly.**
- **Keep their feet on the ground but keep their eyes on the sky.**

The key takeaways suggest that aspiring social entrepreneurs should focus on developing their businesses thoughtfully and strategically while embracing their individuality and being open to ongoing learning and evolution. Collaboration, proper planning, and a balanced perspective are also important factors in the success of a social enterprise.

The responses from the social enterprises show a mixed impact of the past events on their businesses. Some of them have faced negative effects such as a lack of financial resources, difficulty finding IT companies to deliver projects on time, and operations coming to a halt.

However, most of them have adapted to the changes brought about by the events and have continued their business operations, albeit with some changes. Some have transferred their actions to an online environment, while others have used the pandemic as an opportunity to increase their clientele. The events have also accelerated the digitisation of many operations and helped expand the activities of some businesses throughout Greece.

The key takeaways from these responses are that social enterprises need to be adaptable and daring in facing challenges. They need to be prepared to shift their operations to an online environment and leverage technology to continue their activities. They also need to be mindful of the impact of the events on their beneficiaries and take necessary measures to protect them. Additionally, they need to be prepared for changes in partnerships and financial resources and be open to exploring global opportunities.

In terms of how a more active involvement of youth could be a solution for these challenges, there are a few possible takeaways from the responses of the social enterprises:

- ✔ **Adaptability and innovation are key:** Several social enterprises highlighted the importance of being adaptable and constantly evolving, and this is an area where young people can potentially bring fresh perspectives and ideas. By encouraging young people to be creative and flexible in their approach to social entrepreneurship, they may be able to help businesses navigate unexpected challenges and find new growth opportunities.
- ✔ **Digital skills and expertise are crucial:** Many social enterprises noted the importance of digitisation responding to the events of the past few years, and young people are likely to have a high level of digital fluency that can be valuable in this context. Moreover, by encouraging young people to develop their digital skills and expertise, they may be able to help social enterprises to navigate the challenges of a rapidly changing technological landscape.
- ✔ **Collaborative approaches are needed:** A number of social enterprises emphasised the importance of collective action and teamwork in responding to challenges, and young people can potentially play a valuable role in this context by collaborating with other businesses and organisations to find innovative solutions to common problems. By promoting collaboration and partnership-building among young social entrepreneurs, it may be possible to create a more supportive and resilient ecosystem for social entrepreneurship overall.

5. Part 4: Conclusions

In conclusion, involving youth in social entrepreneurship (SE) can significantly benefit individuals and society. The social enterprise ecosystem in Greece has shown signs of growth and maturity in recent years, addressing pressing issues such as poverty alleviation and employment opportunities while promoting an alternative economic model.

To motivate youth to get more involved in SE, it is crucial to tap into their experiences and aspirations. Our survey results indicate that personal values, empathy, and a sense of responsibility to contribute to the community are key motivations for youth considering social entrepreneurship. They also express a strong desire to create a lasting impact and solve societal challenges while pursuing a more sustainable livelihood.

The experiences of social entrepreneurs can play a vital role in motivating youth and filling the gaps in the ecosystem. By showcasing the successes and impact of existing social enterprises, we can inspire and attract more young people to engage in SE. Furthermore, creating mentorship programs and providing training and networking opportunities through organisations like Impact Hub Athens, Higgs, Social Dynamo, Among, and others can further support and empower youth in their SE journey.

Despite the positive developments, the social enterprise ecosystem in Greece still needs challenges, including limited access to funding, gaps in support structures, and limited awareness among the broader public. Addressing these challenges will require collaborative efforts from various stakeholders, including government bodies, financial institutions, and educational institutions, to create an enabling environment for social entrepreneurship to thrive.

In conclusion, by leveraging the experiences of social entrepreneurs and addressing the challenges in the ecosystem, we can harness the potential of youth and foster their active involvement in social entrepreneurship. This will contribute to solving societal challenges and equip the youth with the necessary skills and mindset to navigate the ever-changing world and create a positive impact.



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