

## Social Cohesion and Development

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Local Social Policies

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Biannual Scientific Review, Spring 2020, volume 15, issue 1

# Κοινωνική Συνοχή και Ανάπτυξη

29

Εξαμηνιαία Επιστημονική Επιθεώρηση, Άνοιξη 2020, τόμος 15ος, τεύχος 1

FOCUS

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## ΟΔΗΓΙΕΣ ΠΡΟΣ ΤΟΥΣ ΣΥΓΓΡΑΦΕΙΣ

Τα κείμενα υποβάλλονται στα ελληνικά ή στα αγγλικά. Οι συγγραφείς δεσμεύονται ότι δεν έχουν δημοσιεύσει ή υποβάλει προς κρίση τα άρθρα τους σε άλλο έντυπο. Σε περίπτωση δημοσίευσης παρόμοιου άρθρου, αυτό δηλώνεται από τον συγγραφέα. Υποβάλλονται τέσσερα ταυτόσημα κείμενα και ένα σε ηλεκτρονική μορφή στην επόμενη διεύθυνση του εκδότη.

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Τα άρθρα αξιολογούνται από δύο τουλάχιστον ανώνυμους κριτές. Το όνομα και τα άλλα στοιχεία του συγγραφέα, καθώς και ο τίτλος του άρθρου πρέπει να υποβάλλονται σε ξεχωριστή σελίδα από το κυρίως σώμα (τίτλος, κείμενο, βιβλιογραφικές αναφορές). Τα υποβαλλόμενα άρθρα πρέπει να συνοδεύονται από δύο περιλήψεις, όχι μεγαλύτερες των 100 λέξεων, και πέντε λέξεις-κλειδιά στα ελληνικά και τα αγγλικά. Η έκταση των άρθρων πρέπει να κυμαίνεται μεταξύ 6-8.000 λέξεων, συμπεριλαμβανομένων των περιλήψεων και αναφορών. Τα χειρόγραφα των άρθρων που απορρίπτονται δεν επιστρέφονται.

Για τις αναφορές χρησιμοποιείται το σύστημα Harvard. Οι αναφορές στο κείμενο περιλαμβάνουν το επώνυμο του συγγραφέα και το έτος έκδοσης της δημοσίευσης, π.χ. (Esping-Andersen, 1990, Kleinman and Piachaud, 1993). Οι άμεσες αναφορές πρέπει να δίνουν και τον αριθμό της σελίδας ή των σελίδων, π.χ. Ferrera et al., 2002: 230. Σε περίπτωση περισσότερων αναφορών του ίδιου συγγραφέα για το ίδιο έτος, πρέπει να χρησιμοποιείται η διάκριση με α, β, γ κ.λπ. για το έτος. Οι βιβλιογραφικές αναφορές (όχι βιβλιογραφία) καταχωρούνται αλφαβητικά στο τέλος του κειμένου. Παρακαλούνται οι συγγραφείς να επιμελούνται την ακριβή αντιστοίχιση των αναφορών του κειμένου με τον αλφαβητικό κατάλογο των βιβλιογραφικών αναφορών στο τέλος του κειμένου και το αντίστροφο. Η αναφορά σε βιβλία πρέπει να δίνει το όνομα του συγγραφέα, το έτος έκδοσης, τον τίτλο του βιβλίου, τον τόπο έκδοσης και την επωνυμία του εκδοτικού οίκου. Π.χ. Scharpf F., (1999), *Governing in Europe: Effective and Democratic?* Oxford: Oxford University Press. Η αναφορά άρθρων σε περιοδικά πρέπει να δίνει τόμο, τεύχος, σελίδες, καθώς και τον τίτλο του άρθρου σε απλά εισαγωγικά. Για παράδειγμα: Atkinson A.B., Marlier E. and Nolan B., (2004), "Indicators and Targets for Social Inclusion in the European Union", *Journal of Common Market Studies* 42: 47-75. Αναφορές σε κεφάλαια συλλογικών τόμων καταχωρούνται με τον τίτλο του κεφαλαίου σε απλά εισαγωγικά, ακολουθούμενο από τον συγγραφέα και τον τίτλο του συλλογικού τόμου. Π.χ. Leibfried, S. and Pierson, P. (1995) "Semisovereign Welfare States: Social Policy in a multitiered Europe", in: Leibfried S. and Pierson P., (eds), *European Social Policy: Between Fragmentation and Integration*, p.p. 43-77, Washington D.C.: The Brookings Institution. Οι τίτλοι των βιβλίων και περιοδικών γράφονται με πλάγια γράμματα. Συνιστάται οι επεξηγηματικές σημειώσεις να είναι οι ελάχιστες δυνατές. Εάν κρίνονται απαραίτητες, τότε πρέπει να αριθμούνται στο κείμενο και να παρατίθενται στο τέλος του άρθρου. Επίσης, στο τέλος παρατίθενται και οι τυχόν ευχαριστίες. Άρθρα που δεν συμβιβάζονται με τις παραπάνω οδηγίες επιστρέφονται στον συγγραφέα για την ανάλογη προσαρμογή.

Τα **προς κρίση-παρουσίαση βιβλία** αποστέλλονται στην Μαρίνα Αγγελάκη, στη διεύθυνση του εκδοτικού οίκου.

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## ΚΟΙΝΩΝΙΚΗ ΠΟΛΙΤΙΚΗ

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Η σημερινή οικονομική κρίση επαναφέρει επιτακτικά προς συζήτηση τα ζητήματα της κοινωνικής πολιτικής και του κοινωνικού κράτους. Ο παρών τόμος, αν και σχεδιάστηκε πρωτίστως ως διδακτικό εγχειρίδιο, αποτελεί μια κριτική και συνολική εισαγωγή στα θέματα αυτά. Πολυεπίπεδες προσεγγίσεις εξετάζουν τις κύριες έννοιες, το περιεχόμενο και την εξέλιξη του σύγχρονου κοινωνικού κράτους. Παρουσιάζονται οι επιμέρους κοινωνικές και δημόσιες πολιτικές, όπως η απασχόληση και οι εργασιακές σχέσεις, η κοινωνική ασφάλιση, η υγεία, η κοινωνική πρόνοια και ο κοινωνικός αποκλεισμός, οι πολιτικές για τους μετανάστες και τους πρόσφυγες, η εκπαιδευτική πολιτική. Κοινωνικοί κίνδυνοι, κοινωνική προστασία, κοινωνική αλληλεγγύη, κοινωνικά προβλήματα, κοινωνική συνοχή είναι οι άξονες γύρω από τους οποίους δομούνται αυτές οι πολιτικές. Οι οριζόντιου χαρακτήρα κοινωνικές πολιτικές επικεντρώνονται στο φύλο, στην τοπική αυτοδιοίκηση, σε υπερεθνικό και ευρωπαϊκό πεδίο, στην κοινωνική οικονομία και στην επιχειρηματικότητα. Τέλος, αναλύεται ο ρόλος των βασικών πυλώνων και εργαλείων άσκησης και εφαρμογής κοινωνικών πολιτικών, όπως αυτός της κυβέρνησης, των συνδικάτων, της κοινωνίας πολιτών και των επιχειρήσεων. Τα κεφάλαια του τόμου, γραμμένα απλά και κατανοητά από έμπειρους πανεπιστημιακούς και ειδικευμένους στο αντικείμενο ερευνητές, προσφέρουν μια συνολική και περιεκτική εικόνα των αντίστοιχων πολιτικών, της εξέλιξης και της εφαρμογής τους.

# Local social policies: Between specialization and fragmentation

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Antonios Kostas, *Hellenic International University*

**I**n a world where insecurities mount and mechanisms to counteract tensions and resolve social problems fail to effectively meet challenges of the present, the need to reflect on accomplishments of the recent past might function as stimulus for fruitful dialogue. Indeed, this is the ambition of the issue at hand, which provides an opportunity to think critically over aspects for reinforcing social coherence. For that matter, the local dimension of social policies lies in the centre of attention, emerging as a dynamic field of research which shows cases of the crucial changes in the mechanisms of social protection and development. Arising elements are those which shape the current level of social provision and account for the creation of social (in-) security. The main question concerns the content and orientation of social policy, its role in the social evolution process as well as its effect on social inequalities and ultimately on interpersonal relations and social stratification. This is the key purpose of the study and analysis of social policies, the scope of which is every time defined by relevant justifications (Sakellaropoulos, 2019).

The present issue combines contributions from different aspects which converge in their starting point of thought. The focused, local dimension of each intervention is discernible to a different degree of intensity in its relationship to the wider socio-economic environment and in the policies expanding beyond national boundaries, which also form the research context of the case studies. Viewed separately, these references cast light on aspects of social policy transformation in a setting of intense social friction and weak social protection mechanisms.

On the one hand, providing for the most rudimentary means of survival is considered to be a critical parameter of any social policy. It constitutes both a direct measure and a final obstacle to intercept the menace of social exclusion and to battle the hazard of community distancing for people and groups which lack the privilege of material supplies. Still, it cannot suffice for the entirety of a social welfare system. In fact, the very content of this safety net defines the system orientation. Also, it constitutes per se an element of identity for the social policy and as such it is analyzed in the respective studies. On the other hand, employment accessibility as a vehicle for social development as well as the mechanisms which support and regulate work and financial multiplication both define employees' participation in the world of today. The relevant studies of the current issue approach this particular subject matter multidimensionally, by providing a supplementary description of the conditions so that employment accessibility, as well as, the terms of participation meet the demand for social cohesion. After all, interventions on local scale do not comprise unified and independent systems. On the contrary, they form part of wider mechanisms which, in turn, are prescribed by the wider environment, interacting with one another. Finally, this aspect is underscored by a study of networks which are developed locally among institutional authorities and highlight the importance of establishing communication channels.

The local dimension of social protection creates an open spectrum of thought around social policy. The unanimous position against the disruption of the traditional social state instigates the initial point of discussion. The weakening of the national welfare state as it had been traditionally constructed in post-war Europe fuels local empowerment against generalized statutory



regulations for the major part of the country. This procedure, however, might put at risk the unity of regulations, the outcome of interventions, and finally create conditions for the reproduction of inequalities, rendering them place-specific. For this reason, the framework established by the government seems to guarantee for the settlement of this inexpediency (Andreotti and Mingione, 2014; Alexandru & Johansson, 2106).

By referring to local level practices, we should distinguish those with a real local reference point and among these the ones whose implementation is particularly accredited to the local authorities (Loughlin, et.al, 2010; Jonh, 2001). More specifically, this area of action mainly relies on local self-sufficiency that is the institutional and financial potential of local authorities to design and implement interventions within the designated area of their jurisdiction. In terms of social policy, it is taken for granted that the way in which these interventions “communicate” with broader regulations of the social protection system, be it supportive or potentially impeding, is also crucial.

The spatially defined interventions are likely to showcase the practical nature of control and resources allocation by the respective local communities. This parameter consists of two axes of concern, the first relating to the terms and conditions of the providers mixture, that is the plurality of institutions which contribute to social protection and to the final composure of the welfare mixture (Powel, 2019). The second axis is prescribed by the first, specializing particularly in the planning and organization mechanisms of the mixture (Ascoli and Ranci, 2002). It refers to social policy governance on local level, the allocation of responsibilities, power, and ultimately accountability with respect to the outcome of the interventions (Daly, 2003).

The development of local safety nets is evident of the transformation of central welfare mechanisms. Social policy acquires new orientation, by gradually setting a minimum survival resources framework vital to social coherence, yet rather unable of providing the requisites for social development. As follows, the interventions for covering individual life needs do not suffice to promote collective development. Most likely, they are personalized measures which ensure the most mundane terms of survival, but fail to create conditions for ending the exertion of inequalities reproduction processes of every kind. In other words, these are emergency mechanisms, which however manage to thrive in an environment of generalized incompetence of the welfare system.

The articles of Pantazopoulos and Spyridopoulos explain the stance of the official sector towards the eruptive social needs, emerging as side effects of the 2010s crisis. Reinforcing the role of local government in the exercise of social policy in the Greek case is linked to a broader procedure to transform civic welfare not only in Greece but in the wider European area, as well (Skamnakis, 2020). It does not necessarily constitute a byproduct of the crisis, still though it accelerates. The two research papers although different and independent are yet able to complement one another, accounting for transformation direction and speed of acceleration. The interventional propositions are considered significant, still not effective in meeting social needs, and thus subsequently transforming the deficient nature of the social welfare system of the country. In addition, despite the local authorities’ involvement their role is restricted by a central administrative and funding framework, thus producing a gap between local character and local needs interconnection, a question that remains to be answered. Concluding, the series of the intervention proposals examined has supported the development of a minimum level of social provision, as shown by Pantazopoulos’ quantitative data as well as by Spyridopoulos’ qualitative analysis, both contributing to the understanding of the dynamic development of local mechanisms for the social protection, in contemporary Greece.

At the same time, work is restructured in terms of content and scope as the respective employment rights are differentiated. Today the labour markets continue to be layered, multisided and complex, while place identity maintains its pivotal role as a factor, although not exclusively. The occupational policies aiming at diminishing unemployment and its consequences on the individual and on society as well as on the household and the economy still remain a distinct aspect of social policy. Unemployment as a twofold social and economic issue lies in the heart of post-war social state practices, with a basic tool being that of full-time occupation. The withdrawal of the welfare state regulations and the prevalence of deregulation practices gradually disintegrated the triple full-time occupation–work insurance–protection of income. Instead, they have been replaced by a new triple now; dominant active policies/small-scale interventions/targeting of special groups of population (Dedousopoulos, 2018: 198-202), with the result of being differentiated in relation to range, methods and content.

Of course, the spatially designated interventions neither inevitably cancel the prospect of social coherence nor do they necessarily undermine the quality level for collective prosperity. The drafting of completed action plans for the economy, work and social reproduction with the involvement of local stakeholders has not been an unknown idea. All relevant information concerning local development strategies, the multiplier effect in economy, and occupation has already been described in detail since the 80's (Cochrane, 1987; Boddy, 1984). The degree of involvement, the content and orientation of local planning constitute debatable elements of the local strategies as well as individual qualities of the accompanying interventions. Nevertheless, it is the external environment that ultimately defines the context within which the latter are formulated, while also setting the requirements for their effectiveness. Yet, the connection to the wider space determined by the final outcomes and mainly the continuity between locality and its surroundings, still remains a topic for future research.

David Harvey has set four parameters whose composition defines the final strategy to be followed on local level. The first one refers to place positioning in work allocation, the second to the spatial allocation of consumption, the third to the link with the international routes of money and stock exchange capital and the fourth-particularly determinant in social policy the importance of reallocating the results of spatial effectiveness with regards to the broader environment, that is currently (still) the national state (Harvey, 2016:180-84).

There ought to be one more mention to the pace of adjustment in an ever-changing world, or else the response to the new circumstances as these are prescribed by the technological advancements, on the one hand, and by the given social requirements, on the other. The framework of interventions of the locally focused social investment is capable of supporting the aim for social coherence. Without substituting for social protection, life-long enhancement of employees' adjustment mechanisms to the new situation encapsulates a distinct approach to social policy, assigning a dynamic and ever-evolving character to the notion of the welfare state (Esping-Andersen, C. et. al., 2002). As far as the interventions implementation and social policies transformation is concerned, the role of public institutions continues to guarantee for the securing of social cohesion under the modern socio-economic circumstances (Hemerjick, 2012).

The mission for collective prosperity and social coherence is pursued via different routes, as mentioned accordingly in Staboulis and Kostas' as well as Ntasios' articles. The two first in their common work refer to the idea of adjustment through training on new skills, by highlighting the need to develop mechanisms for the on-going monitoring of the exploitation of comparative advantages through new tools, in each field. In essence, they point out the need to design processes

of life-long education as the core axis for development. In their results, however, they underscore something significant and this is the inconsistencies in the interpretation of results, even for the best practices. Elaborating on their important observation in its own right, society is not secured against the uneven allocation of the adjustment benefits or against the social impact that every change produces. This responsibility [of reassurance] rests with the broader welfare state and its particular regulations. Ntasios presents methodically the context for building a complete strategy for tackling unemployment locally. In his research study, he concludes by stressing the importance of local level to the social and economic evolution, also by flagging up ultimately the gravity of the local bodies' contribution to the planning and implementation of spatially designated interventions.

For the discussion of controversies between local policies and communication channels within the wider context it is worthy to consider Karvounis' article. In a setting where the expansion of social issues trespasses national boundaries, the significance of communication and collaboration mechanisms grows stronger all the more. It is understood that the vertical relations between local stakeholders and supra-national institutions as much as the horizontal relations among local authorities within the European environment both shape practices and influence the scope of policies. This network is constructed on levels of different pace, and thus subsequently on different outcomes in the respective national settings. The emphasis in the Greek case of raising awareness of obstacles in building mutually beneficial relations demonstrates certain peculiarities which give birth to and feed national deprivation. According to the data provided by Karvounis' work, a truly critical point regarding local policies becomes apparent; the need for extroversion and diversification, with the aim to surpass prolonged issues which are thwarting the desired networking between local institutions and their wider environment, and hence the enhancement of their role in the implementation of policies.

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## Biographical Notes

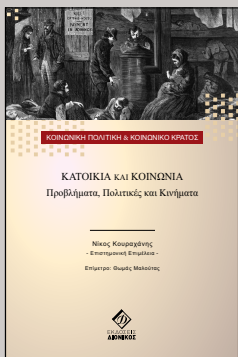
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ΝΕΕΣ ΚΥΚΛΟΦΟΡΙΕΣ  
ΠΑΝΕΠΙΣΤΗΜΙΑΚΑ ΣΥΓΓΡΑΜΜΑΤΑ 2019-2020  
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ΕΚΔΟΣΕΙΣ  
ΔΙΟΝΙΚΟΣ



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**Κατοικία και Κοινωνία**  
*Προβλήματα, Πολιτικές  
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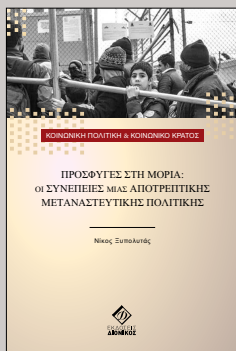


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# Social structures to tackle poverty in Greece: A quantitative interpretation

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## Οι κοινωνικές δομές άμεσης αντιμετώπισης της φτώχειας στην Ελλάδα: μια ποσοτική ερμηνεία

Σταύρος Πανταζόπουλος, Πάντειο Πανεπιστήμιο

### ABSTRACT

The present article focuses on the Social Structures to Tackle Poverty in Greece (hereinafter under the term "SSTPG") and their implementation during the period 2012-2017. On the one hand, the article sheds light on the results of the quantitative research conducted and, on the other hand, on the evaluation of the performance indicators of the program. The question that arises concerns the impact of SSTPG on the immediate beneficiaries, still also the degree to which the intended goals of the program were successfully met. The main conclusion reached in this article is that the SSTPG's contribution to the local communities of the respective Municipal areas has been significant. This fact alone is further justified via the evaluation of the indicators as well as through the genuine answers provided by the beneficiaries themselves, in the context of the quantitative research.

**KEY WORDS:** Interventions to tackle poverty, Social Policy at the local level, social policy assessment, SSTPG.

### ΠΕΡΙΛΗΨΗ

Το παρόν άρθρο επικεντρώνεται στις Κοινωνικές Δομές Άμεσης Αντιμετώπισης της Φτώχειας (εφεξής ΚΔΑΑΦ) που υλοποιήθηκαν στην Ελλάδα κατά το χρονικό διάστημα 2012-2017. Πιο συγκεκριμένα, παρουσιάζει τα αποτελέσματα ποσοτικής αξιολόγησης που διενεργήθηκε στις ΚΔΑΑΦ σε πέντε (5) Δήμους της Αττικής. Το άρθρο εστιάζει αφενός στα αποτελέσματα της ποσοτικής έρευνας που διενεργήθηκε και αφετέρου στην αποτίμηση των προθετημένων δεικτών του προγράμματος. Το βασικό ερώτημα που τίθεται είναι ποιος ήταν ο αντίκτυπος των ΚΔΑΑΦ στους άμεσα ωφελούμενους αλλά και η διερεύνηση του εάν καλύφθηκαν οι προθετημένες στοχεύσεις του προγράμματος. Το βασικό συμπέρασμα στο οποίο καταλήγει το παρόν άρθρο είναι ότι η προσφορά των εξετασθεισών Κ.Δ.Α.Α.Φ. ήταν σημαντική στις τοπικές κοινωνίες των Δήμων όπου λειτούργησαν. Το γεγονός αυτό εξήχθη και ποσοτικώς, μέσω της αξιολόγησης των δεικτών, αλλά και από τις απαντήσεις που έδωσαν οι ίδιοι οι άμεσα ωφελούμενοι κατά την ποσοτική έρευνα.

**ΛΕΞΕΙΣ-ΚΛΕΙΔΙΑ:** Κοινωνική Ανάπτυξη, Διακυβέρνηση, Δημοσιονομικό Έλλειμμα, Δημόσιο Χρέος, Πολιτικοί-Δημοσιονομικοί Κύκλοι, Παραοικονομία.

## 1. Introduction

The purpose of this article is to examine and evaluate the Programme «Social Structures to Tackle Poverty in Greece» and its effect in overcoming to the phenomena of social exclusion and poverty. The SSTPG is a Project that aimed to combat poverty and social exclusion in Greece, implemented during the period 2012-2017.

The above mentioned Programme is part of the "Europe 2020" Strategy, utilized by the EU, intending, among other things, to reduce, to at least twenty (20) million, the number of individuals who have already been or are currently at risk of poverty and social exclusion in Europe. In the framework of the "Europe 2020" Strategy, two (2) national priorities with their corresponding goals were set to be fulfilled within the year 2020. The first one concerns poverty and the target to reduce the number of people at risk of poverty, particularly referring to households without working members" to 450,000 by 2020 (reduction of the total rate from 28% in 2008 to 24% in 2020). The second one focuses on establishing a social security network as a counteract to social exclusion, which will ensure access for all to basic services such as medical care, housing and education.

Two (2) categories of people have been described as beneficiaries, the direct and the indirect ones. The direct beneficiaries were, in turn, divided into the following categories: Homeless and people in poverty or at risk of poverty. The homeless, according to the proposal, have been defined as all persons legally residing in the country, who either do not have access or have unwarranted access to a sufficiently privately owned, rented or allotted residence that meets the required technical specifications and is equipped with the basic water and electricity facilities. Homeless people include those who live on the streets, in hostels, those who are temporarily housed in institutions or other closed structures, as well as those who live in unsuitable lodgings. On the other side, the indirect beneficiaries are considered to be people employed in the SSTPG, catering for the direct beneficiaries.

The anti-poverty and social exclusion programmes in Greece need to be examined and evaluated in their implementation so as to assess whether and to which extent they have produced real benefits ultimately making improvement recommendations towards a more effective performance. Thus, the intention of the present study is to answer those questions, in order to fill in this scientific gap. There is a limited number of studies examining the pathogenesis of any programme regarding providing for socially disadvantaged beneficiaries. As a result, the conduction of the present study, consists an imperative need. The case studies referenced here involve the Municipalities of Glyfada, Metamorfoosi, Philadelphia - Chalcedon, Heraklion, Attica and Lykovrysi-Pefki.

## 2. The background

Since the beginning of the past decade, Greece has undergone a period of economic austerity followed by reductions in wages and pensions, not to mention the imposition of additional taxation measures. An immediate consequence of this situation has been the diminution of the Greek social policy, the increase in the number of citizens living in poverty (Matsaganis, 2004), the increase in the number of unemployed and of people in need of healthcare treatment (Econo-



mu, 2015). Taking into consideration the fact that the state is unable to serve the needs of vulnerable citizens (Matsaganis, 2012), the burden of their weight falls on society and the NGOs, the local administration and the EU welfare programmes (Skamnakis & Chardas, 2017).

As a matter of fact, the EU policies, both by institutional and financial means, do come to the rescue of the Greek social policies but cannot substitute the latter whatsoever. What is more, on a more macroscopic level, they fail to interpret correctly the specific and needs and priorities of sensitive groups of citizens. (Sakellaropoulos and Economou, 2006). Nevertheless, the state remains as key point of reference in any case, since one of the basic principles governing the operation of the EU dating back to its birth, has been that of subsidiarity (Sakellaropoulos & Angelaki, 2016).

On the one hand, the economic crisis of the past years has clearly highlighted the inadequacy of the established welfare state, with an apparent societal failure (Sakellaropoulos, 2011), whereas, on the other hand, equally striking is the impact of globalization on modern societies, exerting a significant influence on them, which has led to wage cuts and an increase in social inequalities (Economou & Feronas, 2006). As a result, the discrepancies in the exercise of national social policy created during this period, and the deficiency of the latter to project itself positively on society, has inevitably contributed to the strengthening of social solidarity (Feronas, 2019).

An immediate result of the former has been the emergence of the family as a network of social support (Ferrera, 1999) and also the remodeling of local administration with the responsibility of exercising social policy (Skamnakis & Pantazopoulos, 2015). Indeed, local administration along with NGOs are essentially contributing to the enhancement of people's lives, enabling society to overcome problems that the state is unable to solve (Loughlin, 2004, Spicker, 2004).

For several years now in Greece, both Regions and Municipalities, have been providing social services to their citizens (Stathopoulos, 1999:184), which comprise an integral and essential part of their responsibilities (Pantazopoulou, 1999:126-127). In this context, they have implemented EU funded Programs, which have served a fairly large number of citizens. Technically though, their implementation has evoked the necessity of assessment so that their role could be evaluated and any potential drawbacks amended (Kontiadis, 2006:57). At local government level, the Authorities are called upon to evaluate the services that they offer and reorganize them, in order to respond more accurately to citizens' requests, while also reinforcing the concept of social protection and solidarity.

In this context, assessment procedures are usually designed according to the services provided in Municipalities and Regions. Indicatively, the process of evaluation and reconstruction in the Municipality of Heraklion, Crete, was carried out with the purpose to improve the modus operandi of the social services of the particular Municipality. Practically, the project generated proposals for upgrading and restructuring the existing social services (Municipality of Heraklion, Crete, 2017). Similar partnerships have been applied to other Greek Regions where social policy programmes were in effect and have truly produced major improvements. These procedures assessed the existing structures and redesigned interventions to fortify the services offered. For instance, the Regions of Western Greece, the Ionian Islands, Thessaly and Crete are some to be reported.

However, the only evaluation study that has been conducted in relation to SSTPG, took place in the year 2015, on behalf of the National Strategic Reference Framework – NSRF and the Special Service for Strategy, Planning and Evaluation (EYSSA) of the Ministry of Economy, Development and Tourism. This study, although assessing the work of SSTPG (i.e. structures, employees, beneficiaries and costs) in depth, has yet overseen the last two (2) years of the Social Structures opera-



tion, thus overshadowing its mission to evaluate the SSTPG programme itself, with the purpose to investigate whether it should be continued or terminated.. Moreover, the statistics used with respect to the main indicators of poverty and inequality, refer to the year 2013, whereas the primary data were collected not after December 2014. Therefore, this study basically captures just the first two (2) of the total five (5) years of the SSTPG programme.

Last but not least, it has concluded that the main aim of SSTPG, (which was the provision of well-rounded services to the homeless and people in need or threatened with poverty), was neglected due to another specific goal, namely to provide employment to young unemployed people, reaching the point of 80% of eligible costs relating to employee payments. Ultimately, within that framework, the independent and autonomous continuation of the programme became impossible even though the performance indicators had been exceeded.

### 3. Research methodology and statistical analysis

**I**n the context of the present paper and for the successful completion of its research survey questionnaires have been distributed to SSTPG beneficiaries in the municipalities of Glyfada, Metamorfofi, Philadelphia - Chalkidona, Heraklion Attica and Lykovrisi - Pefki. The survey began with the provision of a pilot questionnaire in the aforementioned municipalities on 4/9/2017 and ended on 9/9/2017. The questionnaire was constructed around the following question: "What is the contribution of SSTPG programmes and do they fulfill their mission. The questionnaire also included feedback comments on the social structures' effectiveness provided by the beneficiaries themselves. According to the analysis outlined above, the effective control of the country's fiscal problem in the long run presupposes the following. Firstly, improving the public sector's productive process, notably by reducing the negative effects of its bureaucratic mode of production (budget control and public spending), which can be achieved by introducing a system of incentives and disincentives for the public sector management. Increasing public sector productivity and in particular increasing the productivity of the public sector employees can be achieved by improving its organization and administration methods, via the use of new technology, and by improving the quality and the use rates of the factors of production used and in particular of labor (education, retraining and specialization of public employees).

The basic reason for selecting that particular research method (i.e. questionnaire) has been its advantage of allowing the collection of raw material directly, yielding, in turn, quantified data. The specific time frame for the implementation of the survey has been chosen intentionally, leaving behind the void of summertime, a period when social structures admittedly demonstrate a decline in their performance.

For the description of the quantitative variables, the scientific terminology corresponds to average prices (mean), standard deviation (SD), median and interquartile ranges, accordingly. Absolute (N) and relative (%) frequencies are used to describe the qualitative variables. Also, students' t-test has been a means to compare quantitative variables between two groups. For the juxtaposition of quantitative variables among more than two groups, parametric analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used. Additionally, in order to monitor error type I, caused by overlapping comparisons, the Bonferroni correction method was employed, according to which the significance level is  $0.05/k$  ( $k$ =number of comparisons). Furthermore, Pearson's or Spearman's correla-

tion coefficient ( $r$ ) was also used to define the relationship between two quantitative variables. The correlation is considered low when the correlation coefficient ( $r$ ) ranges from 0.1 to 0.3, moderate when the correlation coefficient is from 0.31 to 0.5 and high when the coefficient is greater than 0.5. Next, linear regression analysis was used in order to detect independent factors related to satisfaction scores, resulting from the dependence coefficients ( $b$ ) and their standard errors (SE). Finally, significance levels are two-sided and statistical significance is set at 0.05; SPSS 22.0 was used for the statistical analysis.

In terms of participants, eighty-six (86) beneficiaries in equal numbers from social partnerships<sup>1</sup> (forty-three from the North and forty-three from the South) answered the pilot questionnaire. The results of the pilot questionnaire revealed that twelve (12) questions coincided with one another, being worded differently. For this reason, six (6) questions were removed, keeping another six (6) answerable questions in the questionnaire. In addition, two (2) questions were removed due to the fact that the majority of respondents refused to answer them. The questions concerned whether the Municipalities that carried out the Programme, interfered in the implementation process, as a whole.

Drawing on the beneficiaries' comments, the final questionnaire incorporated thirty (30) questions divided into five (5) categories: A. Demographic and socio-economic data, B. Services Frequency of use, C. Satisfaction from services, D. Access and Infrastructure and E. Social Structure Personnel. Of those thirty (30) questions, ten (10) are of closed type, seven (7) open-ended "yes" or "no", nine (9) closed type of measurement, two (2) closed multiple choice and two (2) open type.

First, closed-type questions are used because they can provide directly measurable data and also because the possible answers given are specific and prescriptive. Hence, they tend to exhaust all possible responses. Second, open-type questions corroborate the closed-type questions.

The wording of the questions adheres to the following methodological principles:

Simple language usage, as evidenced by the initial processing of the beneficiaries' data, where the majority of the SSTPG beneficiaries are upper secondary graduates. The questions are clear and precise in order to ensure understanding on the part of the interviewees. The questions are structured based on the aforementioned category and then divided into individual conceptual categories, thus achieving the best possible consistency and continuity.

On the other hand, personal questions, obscure words, ambiguous answers to each question, guided questions to specific answers, and questions that are hypothetical and unrelated to the aims and objectives of the research are overall avoided. In general, the questions have an intuitive background as their meaning has been easily understood by the respondents.

The distribution of the finalized questionnaires began on 25/9/2017 to the beneficiaries of the Glyfada SSTPG and ended on 1/11/2017. The following day the distribution of the questionnaires to the SSTPG of the Northern social partnership took place, with the particular process being completed on 15/12/2017.

For the selection of beneficiaries there was no consideration in terms of numbers supplied by the particular SSTPG structure they catered for, as there is a general disproportionality in beneficiaries' figures from one structure to another. The questionnaires were delivered to the Intermediation Office, which all beneficiaries belonged to compulsorily. Individuals who participated in the quantitative research were utilizing SSTPG throughout the aforementioned duration of the survey. After all, the purpose of the research has been a holistic evaluation of the Structures concerning all beneficiaries and not a fragmented one.

The total amount of beneficiaries registered in the Glyfada Corporate Structure were one thousand ninety-five (1,095). Of these, four hundred and thirty-seven (437) consented to participate to the present survey. Accordingly, in the Northern Corporate Structure, nine hundred fifty-seven (957) were the total direct beneficiaries. Of those, four hundred and twenty-four (424) participated. Ultimately, eight hundred and sixty-one (861) of them (almost 42% of the total population of beneficiaries) answered the survey's questionnaires.

In practice, the beneficiaries were approached upon their arrival at the Intermediation Office. The answers and results derived from the survey were put in contrast to the results of the 2011 ELSTAT census, both in terms of gender and age, in order to eliminate possible inequalities. In addition, all questionnaire responses were reviewed thoroughly to avoid errors out of carelessness. According to the above, the Quantitative Survey achieved:

- The participation of a representative sample of SSTPG beneficiaries.
- A satisfactory stratification of beneficiaries - users from all existing Structures.
- The involvement of the largest possible number of beneficiaries due to the targeted timing of the survey.
- The penetration to each municipality separately, as there has been an effort to include a proportion of residents from all municipalities.
- Finally, the involvement of the SSTPG employees, who have been encouraging the beneficiaries to respond to the questionnaires.

## 4. Results of the survey

Of the total one thousand and ninety-five (1,095) beneficiaries of the Glyfada Corporate Structure, four hundred and thirty-seven (437) agreed to answer the questionnaires, that is approximately 40% of the total population of beneficiaries, and 53% of those approached initially. In the Corporate Structure of the Northern Municipalities, the responses were four hundred and twenty-four (424), a number which corresponds to 44.3% of the total population. Therefore, the sample consists of 861 people with a mean age of 56.1 years (SD=14.7 years).

**Table 1: Demographic data of the respondents**

Sex	Male Female	N	%
			356
		505	58,7
Age, Standard Deviation		56,1 (14,7)	
Educational Level	Illiterate	25	2,9
	Elementary School Graduate	202	23,5
	High School Graduate	298	34,6
	Upper School Graduate	195	22,6
	Post High School Education	66	7,7
	Technological Institute Graduate	53	6,2
	University Graduate	22	2,6

Marital Status	Unmarried	239	27,8
	Married	308	35,8
	Divorced	235	27,3
	Widowed	79	9,2
Number of children, Standard Deviation, median		0,7 (1,1)	0 (0 - 1)
Citizenship	Greek	861	100,0
Employment Status	Employee	37	4,3
	Unemployed	660	76,7
	Retiree	164	19,0
If you are unemployed, how long have you not been having a job?	Up to 6 months	33	5,0
	7 to 12 months	52	7,9
	13 to 36 months	181	27,4
	More than 36 months	394	59,7
If you work, what position do you hold?	Employee in the private sector	13	35,1
	Self-employed	24	64,9
With whom of the following did you have an experience when joining the social structures?	Homeless	29	3,4
	Individuals threatened by poverty	14	1,6
	Individuals in poverty	723	84,0
	Individuals with disabilities	93	10,8
	Not belonging to a vulnerable social group	2	0,2
Place	Northern Partnership	424	49,2
	Southern Partnership	437	50,8

Source: Author's own processing.

Approximately 58.7% of the participants are women. 34.6% of the participants are high school graduates and 23.5% are elementary school graduates. 35.8% of the participants are married, while 27.8% are single. All participants are of Greek nationality. In terms of employment, 76.7% of the participants are unemployed and, more specifically, 59.7% of them have been unemployed for more than 36 months. Yet, at the same time, 4.3% of the participants are employees and, in fact, 64.9% of the are self-employed. The majority of participants (84.0%) joined the social structures as "people in poverty". Almost half of the participants, that is 49.2%, belong to the northern structures.

The most dominant reason for joining the SSTPGs was the fact that they were in a state of poverty. Still also, the percentage of people with some kind of disability was high (10.8%) as well, followed by the homeless (3.4%) and beneficiaries at risk of poverty (1.6%). As a last comment, 0.2% of the respondents does not fall into any of the above categories.

### 4.1 Frequency of use in services

Passing on to the use of services by the beneficiaries, the respondents were asked to answer how frequently they use each structure.

**Table 2: Frequency of use in structures**

	Frequency					
	Type of Service	Daily	Sometimes a week	Once a week	Sometimes a month	Once a month
	N (%)	N (%)	N (%)	N (%)	N (%)	N (%)
Time Bank	410 (47,6)	32 (7,8)	117 (28,5)	130 (31,7)	93 (22,7)	38 (9,3)
Social Grocery Store	597 (69,3)	38 (6,4)	138 (23,1)	201 (33,7)	176 (29,5)	44 (7,4)
Social Pharmacy	416 (48,3)	10 (2,4)	95 (22,8)	137 (32,9)	120 (28,8)	54 (13)
Social Kitchen Service	265 (30,8)	133 (50,2)	56 (21,1)	47 (17,7)	19 (7,2)	10 (3,8)
Public Garden <sup>2</sup>	86 (20,3)	9 (10,5)	15 (17,4)	54 (62,8)	6 (7)	2 (2,3)
Open Day Center for Homeless	44 (10,4)	3 (6,8)	5 (11,4)	7 (15,9)	12 (27,3)	17 (38,6)
Intermediation Office	861 (100)	376 (43,7)	206 (23,9)	184 (21,4)	48 (5,6)	47 (5,5)

Source: Author's own processing.

On the ground that respondents form part of the total user population, all participants are considered to have used the Intermediation Office. As far as the rest of the services are concerned, 69.3% of the participants have used the Social Grocery Store, 48.3% the Social Pharmacy and 47.6% the Time Bank. On a daily basis, the services used at higher rates are the Social Kitchen Service and the Intermediation Office, with a score of 50.2% and 43.7%, respectively. On the contrary, at a rate of 13% are the beneficiaries who have used the services of the Social Pharmacies once a month.

### 4.2 Satisfaction drawn by the services

On the level of satisfaction, the beneficiaries were asked to answer a series of questions aimed at evaluating the services and products provided by the Structures, specifying the level of their satisfaction.

**Table 3: Respondents' satisfaction from the structures**

		N	%
Have the structures met your needs?	Yes	41	4,8
	No	820	95,2
Are the provided services, tools, products and materials useful?	Yes	60	7,0
	No	801	93,0

Has the guidance and assistance delivered to you by employees in the structures been adequate during the grant process?	Yes	74	8,6
	No	787	91,4
Do you benefit from other types of anti-poverty structures (eg Church meals, NGOs, etc.)?	No	861	100,0
	Yes	0	0,0
Who has informed you about the social structures' activity?	By the Structures themselves	276	32,1
	By the Municipality	311	36,1
	From other sources	0	0,0
	From relatives and friends, other structures users	274	31,8

Source: Author's own processing.

Drawing on the responses, 95.2% of the participants stated that they have covered their needs via SSTPGs, a particularly high percentage. In particular, 93.0% of the participants has expressed the opinion that the services, tools, products and materials provided in/by the structures were useful, and 91.4% has argued that the guidance and assistance provided to them by employees during the granting process was sufficient enough. In terms of information dissemination, 36.1% of the participants said that they were informed about the structures through the municipality, 32.1% via the structures themselves and 31.8% following relatives and friends' recommendations or through other users of the structures.

As a step further, beneficiaries were then asked to indicate their level of satisfaction regarding the use of the services in the Structures, as well as to assess the quality of the services offered.

More specifically, 91.5% of the participants were moderately-very satisfied with the facilities in particular, while 87.9% with the services provided by the structures. It is noteworthy that the beneficiaries reported a 59.3% per cent to have been moderately-very satisfied with the staff in the structures, a fact which is rather questionable. Also, although there is a general satisfaction with services and facilities (i.e. 90%), with respect to staff evaluation, the percentage is reduced by thirty (30) points. These low satisfaction rates are probably caused due to the daily friction with the SSTPG staff.

On the opposite, however, the high satisfaction rates of the participants in terms of service quality, ranges from 91.5% to 100%. To elaborate on that, 91.5% of the participants were moderately/very satisfied with the quality of the Social Grocery and all of them were moderately/very satisfied with the Homeless Day Reception Center.

Accordingly, one out of two survey participants fully agreed with the proposal "Structure workers are interested in my problems", which suggests that there the relationship between the beneficiaries and the staff might have been at times problematic. Furthermore, the percentage of those who say that the Structures seem close to their home or workplace is relatively low, reaching a 64.7% in positive responses. It is also worthy to mention that 33.1% of users considered the structures not sufficiently equipped.

On the other hand, 99.3% of the beneficiaries agreed with the proposal "It is easy to navigate within the structures" while about 92% that the Structures were clean and easily serviced.

For the 70.0% of participants the waiting time has been up to 15 minutes, and for the 17.5% from 15 minutes to half an hour. The percentage of those who argued that one hour has been a short time to wait reaches 6.9%, while only 2.2% of the respondents exceeded one hour of waiting time. Next, the beneficiaries were asked to assess how important the various dimensions of the structures.

Thus, 77.2% of the participants considered the proposal "The opening hours should be convenient" to be important/very important, which proves that this dimension was of significant value to them. More than 99% interpreted the dimensions related to the services, such as waiting time and employees' behavior towards them, as extremely important. Generally, users defined as important the dimensions of services with regard to solving their daily and everyday issues.

Of special interest are also the responses concerning problem-solving on the part of the SSTPGs administration, as the interviewees were asked to provide feedback on the quality of support according to the benefits they have gained through the Structures. In detail, 89.1% of the participants argued that the social structures helped to address their problems. Also, 74.6% of the participants claimed that the social structures supported them to improve their psychological state and 69.9% to enhance their lives in general. On the contrary, the percentage of users who managed to find a job (12.4%), who managed to improve their financial situation (14.4%) and who, in their opinion, acquired some kind of knowledge (16.3%) was smaller. Yet, the most valuable result among the findings is the fact that 97.1% of the beneficiaries insisted that SSTPGs should not cease their operation thus clearly acknowledging their important role.

### 4.3 Access and infrastructure

Drawing on the field of infrastructure, users have been asked to assess the Social Structures in terms of accessibility.

**Table 4: Evaluation of social structures accessibility**

Depending on the Social Structure you have made use of, evaluate its accessibility	Very easy	Easy	Neither easy nor difficult	Difficult	Very Difficult	Easy/Very Easy (%)
	N (%)	N (%)	N (%)	N (%)	N (%)	
Time Bank	142 (34,6)	82 (20)	52 (12,7)	34 (8,3)	100 (24,4)	54,6
Social Grocery	222 (37,2)	101 (16,9)	59 (9,9)	38 (6,4)	177 (29,6)	54,1
Social Pharmacy	117 (28,1)	76 (18,3)	53 (12,7)	21 (5)	149 (35,8)	46,4
Social Kitchen Service	109 (41,1)	50 (18,9)	24 (9,1)	40 (15,1)	42 (15,8)	60,0
Intermediation Office	508 (59)	177 (20,6)	92 (10,7)	34 (3,9)	50 (5,8)	79,6
Public Garden <sup>3</sup>	4 (4,7)	8 (9,3)	18 (20,9)	21 (24,4)	35 (40,7)	14,0
Open Day Center for the Homeless	3 (6,8)	5 (11,4)	2 (4,5)	6 (13,6)	28 (63,6)	18,2

Source: Author's own processing.

The percentages of great ease in accessing the structures ranged from 14.0% to 79.6%. More specifically, 14.0% of the participants considered easy/very easy the access to the Public Garden and 18.2% to the Open Day Center for the Homeless. Also, 79.6% of the participants considered access to the Intermediation Office easy/very easy.

As shown above, in all Structures Services, the negative answers derive from an approximately 70% of the beneficiaries in the Northern Corporate Structure and from a 30% of the corresponding ones in the Southern Corporate Structure. Coupled particularly with the 86% of negative responses concerning the Public Garden and 81.8% regarding the Open Day Center for the Homeless -which though operated only in the Northern Structures- it is evident that users in the Northern Municipalities express great dissatisfaction in terms of accessibility to the social services.

Furthermore, 54.0% of the participants claimed that the Structures did not have appropriate building infrastructure, 46.2% that they lagged behind in material and technical infrastructure and 37.0% that there is poor transportation or that the Structures are difficult to be accessed. Again, in terms of accessibility, the vast majority of negative comments is recorded by beneficiaries from the Northern Corporate Structure.

#### 4.4 The SSTPG personnel

The next topic to be examined is the assessment of employees at the SSTPGs (i.e. the indirect beneficiaries). According to the survey, 75.5% of the participants described the staff in the social structures as generally very good/excellent. Also, 74.3% of the participants commended on the behavior of the personnel as very good/excellent. In addition, 29.5% of the interviewees considered the Structures workforce (i.e. number of staff) to be sufficient enough, while in relation to employees' qualifications, knowledge and skills 59.9% of the respondents answered positively.

#### 4.5 Satisfaction ratings

**Table 5: Type of respondents' satisfaction**

Minimum Value	Maximum Value	Average Value	SD	
Total Satisfaction (%)	28,3	81,2	57,7	8,1
Employee's Satisfaction(%)	24,4	97,6	71,1	14,3
Access Satisfaction (%)	0,0	71,4	27,8	15,3
Infrastructure Satisfaction (%)	20,0	100,0	84,5	13,9

Source: Author's own processing.

Interpreting the results, the total satisfaction score concerning the employees ranges from 24.4% to 97.6%, with an average at 71.1% (SD=14.3%). Also, the rate of satisfaction regarding the access varies between 0% and 71.4%, with the average price being 27.8% (SD=15.3%). Last but not least, feedback on the facilities ranges from 20% to 100% with the average at 84.5%



(SD=13.9%). Finally, the overall satisfaction score falls between 28.3% and 81.2%, with the average price being 57.7% (SD=8.1%).

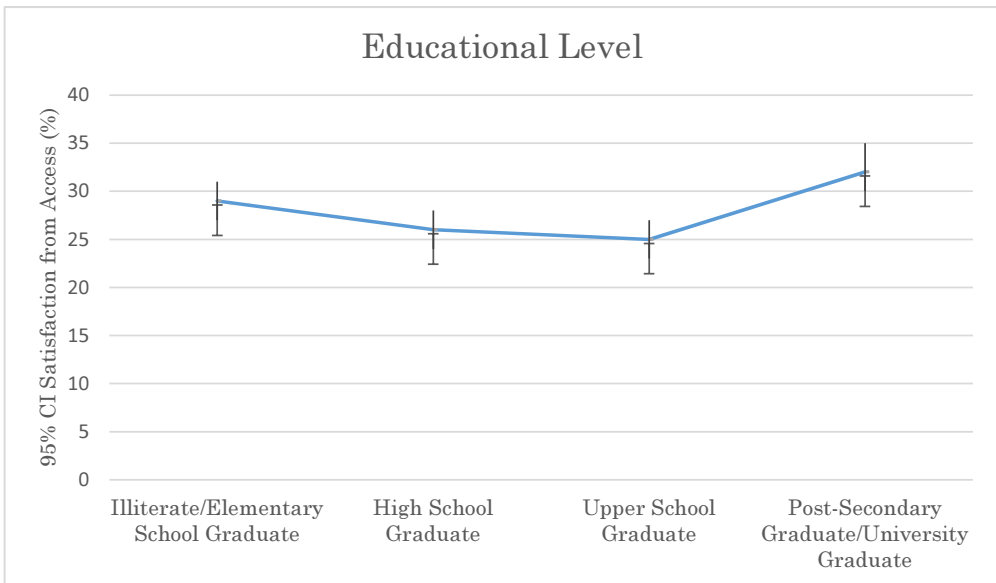
With respect to access quality, in particular, satisfaction rates are significantly lower compared to both employee-related ( $p < 0.001$ ) and facilities-related satisfaction ( $p < 0.001$ ). Drawing on the latter, satisfaction regarding the facilities is evidently lower than satisfaction concerning the staff ( $p < 0.001$ ).

#### 4.6 Correlation between satisfaction scores and participants' demographic data on the basis of the SSTPGs use

An apparently lower evaluation score, indicating significantly lower employee-related satisfaction is recorded by participants who had visited the Open Day Center for the Homeless. On the level of methodology, multifactorial linear regression has been employed with dependent variable the score of respondents' satisfactions in relation to the staff, and within dependent variable participants' demographic data as well as data on the use of social structures.

Also, in order to extract the results, the stepwise method has been used.

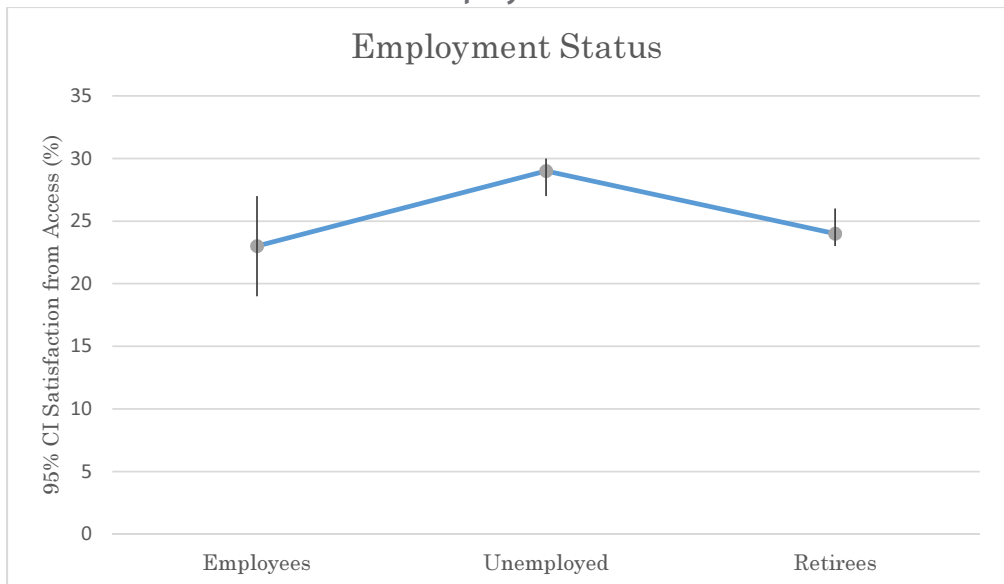
**Chart 1: Satisfaction in terms of accessibility, on the basis of the beneficiaries' educational level**



The correlation shows that only waiting time affects customer service performance. In particular, the more the participants waited to be assisted by a representative, the less satisfied they were. At the same time, the score of satisfaction related to accessibility expressed by the participants from Glyfada Municipality is significantly higher than that of the Northern Corporate Structure. Also, the satisfaction rates on accessibility present considerable differences

depending on their respondents' educational level and employment status. To expand on this, by applying the Bonferroni correction, it occurred that participants with post-secondary education and graduates from Technological Education Institutions /Universities demonstrate significantly higher scores, meaning that they were more satisfied with the access compared to high school graduates ( $p < 0.001$ ). Also, high school graduates present significantly lower scores than illiterate and elementary school graduates ( $p = 0.046$ ). Still, the unemployed were far more satisfied with the access in relation to retirees ( $p = 0.003$ ).

**Chart 2: Satisfaction in terms of accessibility, on the basis of the beneficiaries' employment status**



The data analysis shows that the respondents who have benefited from the Time Bank, the Social Grocery, the Social Pharmacy, the Social Kitchen Service, the Public Garden and the Open Day Center for the Homeless reach significantly higher rates, indicating an even greater satisfaction with SSTPGs access. What is more, the participants who were informed about the social structures by the municipality were far more satisfied with accessibility, while those informed by a relative, friends and acquaintances or by other users of the structures demonstrate a significantly lower satisfaction. Additionally, participants who were supported by the structures in dealing with their problems were significantly more satisfied with access. However, interviewees who consider transportation provided by the structures ineffective, obviously present less satisfaction in relation to the access. Also, the interpretation of findings shows that participants accompanied by children, whose waiting time was relatively short, were more satisfied with regards to accessibility.

Comparing the Municipality of Glyfada to the Northern Municipalities in terms of satisfaction drawn from the facilities, the score of their respondents' satisfaction is significantly higher in the first case. On educational level, the satisfaction concerning the facilities presents great dif-

ferences among participants. In particular, following the Bonferroni correction, it is proved that high school graduates reach a significantly higher score, i.e. more satisfied with facilities than elementary school graduates ( $p=0.026$ ).

Moreover, the overall satisfaction on the part of the participants from Glyfada Municipality reaches the highest level. Again, satisfaction differ so great extents in relation to the educational level and employment status of there spondents. More specifically, by applying the Bonferroni correction, it becomes evident that participants with post-secondary education and TEI / University graduates demonstrate a significantly higher scores, i.e. more satisfied in general, compared to high school graduates ( $p=0.024$ ). Still, again, the unemployed were overall far more satisfied than the retirees ( $p=0.014$ ).

## 5. Assessing the set goals

### 5.1 Performance indicators

Taking into account the number of beneficiaries in the two (2) Corporate Structures, it becomes evident that the SSTPGs under discussion showcase extremely positive results, on the whole. In the case of the Northern Corporate Structure, the pre-set indicators in all services are achieved. For the Social Grocery, the level of performance is estimated at a 105% of success, while the Social Pharmacy exceeds its monthly-set target with a 112% of success. For the Intermediation Office, the level of achievement reaches 106%, for the Social Grocery 121%, the Social Kitchen Service 186%, the Time Bank 166% and, finally, for the Open Day Center for the Homeless 140%.

**Table 6: Indicators and their fulfillment by partnership**

Indicator	Northern Partnership		% of achievement
	Target	Result	
Social Grocery	150 families <sup>4</sup> per month	182 <sup>5</sup>	121%
Social Pharmacy	100 beneficiaries per month	112	112%
Social Kitchen Service	100 beneficiaries <sup>6</sup> per day	186	186%
Public Garden	100 beneficiaries per year	105	105%
Open Day Center for the Homeless	50 beneficiaries per day	70	140%
Intermediation Office	200 beneficiaries per month	212	106%
Time Bank	200 beneficiaries per month	332	166%
	Southern Partnership		
Social Grocery	150 families per month	176	117%
Social Pharmacy	100 beneficiaries per day	134	134%
Social Kitchen Service	100 beneficiaries per day	201	201%
InterIntermediation Office	200 beneficiaries per month	203	101%
Time Bank	200 beneficiaries per month	213	106%

Source: Author's own processing.

On the other side, all Services of the Southern Corporate Structure managed to reach and exceed the indicators that had been set from the beginning. The Intermediation Office fulfilled 101% of the requirements, the Time Bank 106%, the Social Kitchen Service 201% and the Social Grocery 117%. Lastly, the Social Pharmacy achieved 134% of its set targets.

Each individual service is considered successful in both Corporate Structures, with the exception of the Intermediation Office which is marginally below expectations in either case. At this point, it should be noted that these percentages determining success refer to a population of beneficiaries not individually but as a whole.

**Table 7: Initial objectives and their achievement**

Indicator	Northern Partnership		Achievement of the Target (%)
	Target	Result	
Jobs created during implementation of the Programme	33	33	100%
Number of unemployed and socially vulnerable groups that benefited from ESF actions (index 5049)	550	1.457	265%
Number of people who benefit from social and professional actions of integration (index 5053) <sup>7</sup>	630	3.266	518%
Number of jobs co-financed	33	33	100%
Man-months of Indirect Employed Beneficiaries	24	49	204%
	Southern Partnership		
Jobs created during implementation of the Programme	21	21	100%
Number of unemployed and socially vulnerable groups that benefited from ESF actions (index 5049)	550	2.195	399%
Number of people who benefit from social and professional actions of integration (index 5053) <sup>8</sup>	750	4.256	567%
Number of jobs co-financed	21	21	100%
Man-months of Indirect Employed Beneficiaries	24	48	200%

Source: Author's own processing.

In terms of employability during the implementation of the SSTPG programme in both Corporate Structures the success rate was 100% while the number of unemployed and socially vulnerable groups that benefited from the Structures reached 265% and 399% respectively. In other words, 100% was the coverage of the index that concerns the number of job vacancies offered

in/by both Corporate Structures. Remarkable is the index regarding the number of people from socially vulnerable groups who have benefited from social and professional integration activities; percentage-wise, in either of the two Corporate Structures the rate of achievement in this was over 500% (518% in the Northern Corporation and 567% in the Southern).

From the available data it could be argued that the achievement rates of the previous indicators of the examined SSTPGs are much higher than those identified by the evaluation study of EYSSA. Indeed, the latter concluded that the index of individuals benefiting from social and professional integration actions was 213%, while the index of unemployed people benefiting from actions was 188% (265% and 399% in Northern and Southern Structures respectively).

Distinguishing the data collected from the SSTPGs under discussion, it becomes clear that the indicators achievement scores exceed those of the EYSSA research survey. For instance, in the Municipality of Glyfada, the EYSSA concluded that the achievement rate of the index 5049 was 123% and that of index 5053, 397% respectively. The corresponding percentages in the Northern Corporate Structure are 252% and 252% accordingly. Based on the available data, the survey conducted for the purposes of the present research paper draws the conclusion that the corresponding percentages for index 5049 and 5053 in the Southern Structures were 399% and 567% while in the North 265% and 518% respectively.

Here, it should be highlighted that the EYSSA evaluation study reports data on the SSTPGs until November 2015, a period during which the Social Structures were at their peak, concerning both services and products as well as in terms of number of Structures in operation. Thus, in relation to the SSTPGs there is a contradiction of results between the present research and the conclusions of the EYSSA evaluation study.

## 6. Discussion

The article has hereby showcased the assessment results of SSTPGs in five (5) municipalities around Attica. The total number of users-respondents to the survey has been eight hundred and sixty-one (861), about 42% of all beneficiaries who have made use of SSTPGs. The factors according which they were asked to evaluate the Social Structures concerned the quality of performance based on the provided services (satisfaction, frequency of use), the existing facilities (accessibility and satisfaction) and the staff –indirect beneficiaries.

The first basic conclusion is that in both Corporate Forms, greater use has been made of the Structures of the Social Kitchen Service, the Social Grocery, the Social Pharmacy and the Intermediation Office, with high percentage of use on a daily basis. The second conclusion refers to the services and products offered where satisfaction exceeds 90%. However, it should be mentioned that 33% of the participants claimed that the Structures were not sufficiently equipped, implying that there had been material and technical deficiencies.

Also, very important is the generalization regarding waiting time. More than 70% of users reported that they waited less than a quarter to be assisted, indicating that delivery of service took place within a reasonable time frame. Equally important are the conclusions on how they perceive the support they received from the SSTPGs. More specifically, 89.1% of the survey participants stated that social structures helped them solve their problems. Also, 74.6% of the respondents admitted that social structures contributed towards a more positive psychological condition and 69.9% towards a better life, in general. Yet, the most interesting of all the findi-

ngs has been that 97.1% of the beneficiaries acknowledged the SSTPGs role as vital, claiming that they have proved useful and hence that they should not cease their operations.

As far as accessibility to facilities and infrastructure is concerned, the conclusions appear to be pretty vague. On the one hand, 99.3% of respondents said that it was easy to navigate within the structures and about 92% said that the Structures were clean. However, only 14.0% and 18.2% of the participants in the Northern Corporation considered easy or very easy the access to the Public Garden and to the Open Day Center for the Homeless respectively, thus expressing their dissatisfaction particularly with the possibility of transfer there. In total, 37.0% responded that there was no good transportation network and that the Structures were difficult to be accessed. Also, 54.0% of the participants claimed that the Structures were lacking proper building infrastructure. In terms of SSTPGs staff evaluation, 75.5% of the interviewees generally described the employees as very good to excellent, with a 74.3% defining behavior of staff as very good to excellent. Finally, it should be stressed that 70.0% of the beneficiaries considered workforce in the structures to be inadequate, while 40.0% thought that employees did not possess sufficient knowledge.

Drawing on the correlation between beneficiaries' satisfaction and the data on the use of SSTPGs, it seems that the minimum satisfaction with staff performance comes from respondents who had visited the Open Day Center for the Homeless. On the other hand, though, significantly higher are the satisfaction scores with respect to access by survey participants of the Municipality of Glyfada. Of course, the latter differs vastly depending on the respondents' educational level and employment status. Particularly, it has been found that participants with post-secondary educational background and graduates from Technological Education Institutes or Universities express much higher satisfaction with accessibility than high school graduates. In turn, the latter exhibit significantly lower satisfaction compared to illiterate and elementary school graduates. Also, the unemployed have been far more satisfied with access compared to retirees.

Finally, the beneficiaries who have used the Structures of Time Bank and Social Grocery Repository demonstrated greater satisfaction overall. In terms of accessibility, users of the Social Pharmacy and Social Kitchen Service appear quite satisfied.

Comparing the initial SSTPG star gets with their operational performance, it is concluded that the expectations set for all Social Structures in operation have been fulfilled and, in some cases, even exceeded. In fact, the Structures have exceeded the identified indices by up to more than 100%, while for those concerning the social integration and the integration of beneficiaries the success rate goes beyond 500%.

## 7. Conclusions

**T**he main conclusion drawn by the present research is that throughout the SSTPGs operation the establishment of a social security network against social exclusion has been achieved, thus ensuring access to basic services such as medical care and food for people in need.

After all, this goal is one of the basic reasons for designing and implementing SSTPGs. Another aim served has been the SSTPGs assessment of effectiveness with measurable data. In the examined Corporate Forms at least, it was possible to retrieve percentages of achievement for the corresponding indices. Furthermore, the cooperation with the local community for the successful completion of the SSTPGs evaluation (i.e. research survey), as exemplified in the beneficiaries' responses, resulted in the mobilization and active participation of institutions and individuals. Un-

fortunately, though, the SSTPGs viability, being the most fundamental purpose of the Programme itself, has not managed to survive the funding cuts, thus causing the failure of the whole venture.

## Notes

1. The northern social partnership combating poverty operated in the municipalities of Metamorfosi, Philadelphia - Chalkidona, Heraklion Attica and Lykovrisi - Pefki with the NGO "Scientific Society for Social Cohesion and Development". The Southern social partnership operated in the Municipality of Glyfada with the cooperation of the NGO "Scientific Society for Social Cohesion and Development". They are referred to as northern and southern due to the geographical dispersion of the municipalities in Attica.
2. The data relate only to the Northern Structures, since only the Social Grocery and the Open Day Center for the Homeless were in operation.
3. The data are taken from the Northern Partnership.
4. The families' data are extracted from the monthly reports submitted by Partnerships.
5. These data refer to beneficiaries at an average per month.
6. One hundred (100) beneficiaries or portions per day.
7. This index includes the beneficiaries of the 5049 indices, their protected members, as well as other individuals who benefit without being classified under the 5049 index.
8. This index includes the beneficiaries of the 5049 indices, their protected members, as well as other individuals who benefit without being classified under the 5049 index.

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## Biographical Note

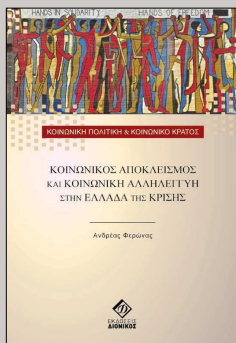
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ΕΚΔΟΣΕΙΣ  
ΔΙΟΝΙΚΟΣ

ΝΕΕΣ ΚΥΚΛΟΦΟΡΙΕΣ  
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Ανδρέας Φερόνας

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και κοινωνική αλληλεγγύη  
στην Ελλάδα της κρίσης**

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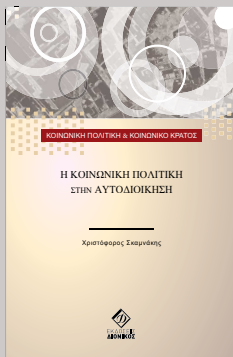
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# The new trajectory of social policy in Greece: An ambulance service or a sustainable pathway to social policy improvement at the local level?

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## Η νέα πορεία της κοινωνικής πολιτικής στην Ελλάδα: μια υπηρεσία πρώτων βοηθειών ή μια βιώσιμη πορεία προς τη βελτίωση της κοινωνικής πολιτικής στο τοπικό επίπεδο;

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### ABSTRACT

This paper examines whether the EU co-financed project “structures for the provision of essential goods: social grocery, common meals, social pharmacy” that is implemented horizontally in Greece since 2014, can navigate its beneficiaries out of the risk of poverty and social exclusion (AROPE). To this end, the paper surveys, through in-depth semi-structured interviews, beneficiaries of the project in the municipality of Pavlos Melas. The findings of the case study suggest that the project constitutes an important safety net, helping beneficiaries experiencing severe material deprivation address manifold needs, including social and psychological. However, at the same time, the project is limited in scope, fails to meet demand and rarely addresses the root causes of poverty. While the project is suggestive of the advantages that a local approach to social policy has to offer, its implications are not far-reaching.

**KEY WORDS:** AROPE, Kallikratis, local social policy, municipalities.

### ΠΕΡΙΛΗΨΗ

Το άρθρο εξετάζει το συγχρηματοδοτούμενο έργο «Δομές παροχής βασικών αγαθών: κοινωνικό παντοπωλείο, παροχή συσσιτίου, κοινωνικό φαρμακείο» που εφαρμόστηκε στην Ελλάδα κατά την τρέχουσα Προγραμματική Περίοδο και από το 2014, με κύριο στόχο την πλοήγηση των ωφελούμενων μακριά από τον κίνδυνο της φτώχειας και του κοινωνικού αποκλεισμού (AROPE). Η έρευνα, μέσω εις βάθος συνεντεύξεων με ημι-δομημένο ερωτηματολόγιο, πραγματοποιήθηκε σε ωφελούμενους του προγράμματος στο Δήμο Σπίρου Μελά. Τα ευρήματα της μελέτης-περίπτωσης καταδεικνύουν ότι οι παροχές του προγράμματος υφαίνουν ένα βασικό δίκτυο κοινωνικής ασφάλειας μέσω συνδυασμένων υπηρεσιών υλικής στήριξης αλλά και ψυχολογικής υποστήριξης. Την ίδια στιγμή οι περιορισμένοι πόροι του, αποτυγχάνουν να διαμορφώσουν συνθήκες μονιμότητας στους μηχανισμούς βοήθειας περιορίζοντας τα τυχόν οφέλη των στοχευμένων χωρικά παροχών.

**ΛΕΞΕΙΣ ΚΛΕΙΔΙΑ:** Πρόγραμμα Καλλικράτης, τοπική κοινωνική προστασία, δήμοι.

## 1. Introduction

The welfare system of the south European countries has been well-documented to show common characteristics such as statist/paternalistic and familialist/male breadwinner patterns that differentiate it from the welfare system of Northwest Europe (Ferrera, 1996; Petmesidou 2013). In the case of Greece, the historical consolidation of these characteristics resulted in a welfare system that has been historically inefficient in reducing poverty (Dafermos and Papatheodorou, 2010, 2011) and singularly unfit to absorb the consequences of the 2010 economic crisis (Matsaganis, 2012). The crisis has led to an exponential increase in the number of people at-risk-of-poverty-and-social exclusion (AROPE) (Eurostat, 2020), at a time when the Memoranda signed between Greece and the so-called Troika (EC, ECB, IMF) limited the capacity of the central government to respond. Fiscal concerns legitimized extensive cuts in social protection expenditure undermining the already anaemic social protection system of the country (Sakellaropoulos, 2018). In this context, the Greek government attempted to address rising social needs through a nexus of social policy projects implemented at local government level that relied continuously on the structural funds of the European Union (Chardas and Skamnakis, 2016). While these projects initially emerged as a front-line response to crisis, they have gradually been consolidated and become the norm in the field of social protection in the country. Despite this, to present, little is known as to their effectiveness to reduce AROPE, with the results of existing studies suggesting that they are limited both in terms of nature and scope (Skamnakis and Pantazopoulos, 2014; Skamnakis, 2016; Kourachanis, 2016). This paper probes these findings through surveying beneficiaries of one of the most widely implemented projects in a case study in the municipality of Pavlos Melas. In doing so, it contributes to the evidence-base on the effectiveness of the project to support people AROPE and puts the nature of social policy in the country into a critical perspective.

The paper is structured as follows: The second section considers the evolution of social policy in Greece in a historical and comparative perspective and summarises the most recent debates regarding its scope and nature, placing the case study within them. Section 3 discusses the methodology of the paper, including its strengths, limitations, and mitigation actions. Section 4 presents the findings of the paper. Section 5 discusses the findings vis-à-vis the literature on the nature of the new trajectory of social policy in the country. The section considers the evidence base which suggests that the social policy projects are limited in character and without significant long-term impact to address AROPE. Finally, Section 6 weighs the evidence, calling for a reorientation of the nature of social policy and bringing forward policy recommendations.

## 2. Social Policy and crisis in contemporary Greece

### *2.1 The evolution of social policy in Greece in historical and comparative perspective*

Many of the features of the social welfare system in Greece are rooted in the choices made in the social, economic and political field after the Second World War (Papatheodorou, 2009: 225). In the country's post-war development, the state emerged as a huge apparatus treating welfare provisions not on the basis of citizenship rights but rather as a privilege to those having political bargaining power or access to its clientele clusters (Petmesidou, 1996: 329). This led to the development of vertical state-society relations based on personal affiliations, sometimes resulting in significant dif-

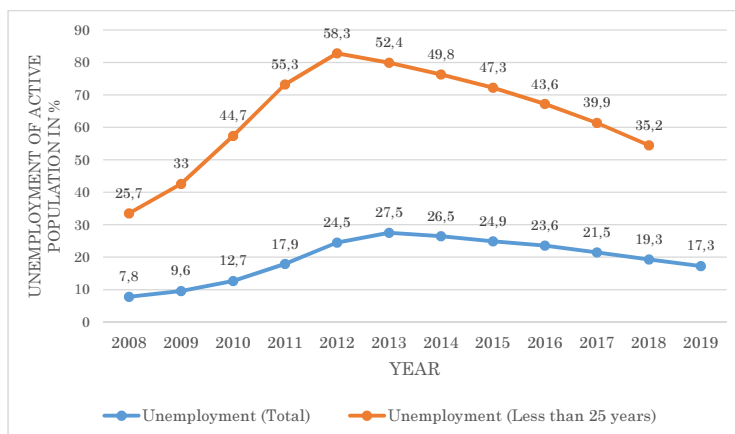
ferences on welfare protection entitlements, even within the same socio-professional group (Adam and Papatheodorou, 2016: 273). In this highly fragmented welfare system, family was embedded as a key-unit compensating for the inefficiencies of the social protection system (Skamnakis and Pantazopoulos, 2014: 99). Not only did the family house have a material and symbolic significance but as Papadopoulos and Roumpakis note (2013: 215), it also constituted a shock absorber in response to the country's rudimentary social assistance regime (Matsaganis, 2000).

The properties described above are not unique to Greece. Rather, the development pathway of the Greek welfare system shares common traits and trajectories with other south European countries, namely, Spain, Italy and Portugal (Papatheodorou, 2009: 238). In a seminal paper, Ferrera (1996: 18) classified these countries as a separate cluster in the universe of the welfare states, called the south European model of welfare. This classification holds a certain level of abstraction and there is a longstanding debate since the early 1990s on whether it indeed, holds merit (for an overview of this debate, see Karamessini, 2007). Nonetheless, these attributes differentiate the south European model from both the social-democratic model of the northwest countries (based on universal coverage) and the conservative-corporatist model of central European countries (based on patterns of occupational income maintenance) in terms of its capacity to reduce poverty (Dafermos and Papatheodorou, 2010; Andriopoulou and Tsalkoglou, 2010; Balourdos and Naoumi, 2010).

## 2.2 The economic crisis and a shift of trajectory: the post-2010 trajectory

The characteristics of the Greek welfare system resulted in an anaemic system of social protection that was highly at odds with the economic and social consequences of the 2010 economic crisis (Chardas and Skamnakis, 2017). The crisis caused the country's GDP to tumble by 25% between 2008 and 2013 (Eurostat, 2020a), with a chain reaction to the unemployment and poverty rates. In particular, as Figure 1 shows, there was an exponential increase in unemployment, especially for the young population.

**Figure 1: Unemployment (in % of active population) in Greece 2008-2018.**



Source: Eurostat (2020b).

In addition, using the 2007 poverty threshold, Adam and Papatheodorou (2016) found that in 2011 more than a third of the population was below the poverty threshold. At the same period, there was a noticeable increase in income inequality and material deprivation, with two of out five people being unable to respond to unexpected expenses (Papatheodorou, 2015).

These developments came hand-in-hand with the retreat of the central government from the provision of social services and the beginning of a new trajectory in social policy in Greece (Feronas, 2019). In this, local government, assuming new responsibilities emerging from the administrative reform of Kallikratis, emerged as key-player in the provision of social services, compensating for state's inefficiencies. This shift in trajectory found local government (municipalities) under bilateral pressures. On the one hand, their budgets were drastically decreased (Skamnakis and Pantazopoulos, 2015). On the other hand, the demand for social protection services was increased (Hlepas, 2018). In this context, municipalities had to leverage funds from multiple stakeholders (such as civil society, business, EU funds) as any state expenditure on social protection had to be compatible with the conditionalities of the Memoranda and the middle-term fiscal strategy of the country (Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, 2014:109). This made EU Structural Funds particularly important, as they provided municipalities with the financial means to develop a nexus of social policy projects to respond to the mounting social needs (Chardas and Skamnakis, 2016).

### ***2.3 The new trajectory of social policy in Greece: current debates***

These policy developments have received critical attention from several authors and have become part of a debate regarding the nature and scope of the new trajectory of social policy in Greece.

One strand of criticism considers the institutional dimension of the trajectory (Chardas, 2014; Hlepas 2016, 2018). This strand notes the failure of the administrative reform of Kallikratis to reshuffle the cards of authority in favour of local government due to the crisis. It argues that policies are still a subject-matter of central government and that municipalities act simply as local distribution agencies (Skamnakis, 2011; Chardas and Skamnakis, 2017). This comes in contrast with the principles of decentralization embedded in the regulatory framework of the EU Cohesion Policy (Chardas, 2014). Also, and importantly, it attests to the fact that the traditional central governance patterns in the country remain at the expense of the development of local government autonomy (Psycharis, Zoi and Iliopoulou, 2015).

Another strand considers the implications of the new trajectory in the field of social protection and care. Within this strand, Chardas and Skamnakis (2017) note that the nature of the new social policy projects was initially shaped by the consequences of the economic crisis. As a result, these projects focused almost exclusively on addressing essential needs that were exacerbated at the time, such as housing, medicine, and food. However, as these projects continued to receive funding, they have gradually crystallized in the field of social policy in the country, deteriorating it into a fragmentary net for those worst-off. Skamnakis (2016) investigating local childcare policies in Greece found that they have a residual character and fail systematically to meet demand. A similar observation was made by Kourachanis (2016) in relation to homelessness policies, begging the question if these are actually having a positive impact or simply recycling an extreme social problem. Finally, the persistent reliance of these projects in EU Funds and donations raises several concerns about their sustainability and employment conditions (Petmesidou, 2013).

This paper is embedded within and aims to contribute to the second strand of critique, putting the nature of social policy into scrutiny. To this end, it examines the capacity of the project “structures for the provision of essential goods: social grocery, common meals, social pharmacy” to support its beneficiaries out of AROPE through a case study in Pavlos Melas. The project is relevant for the debate on the nature of social policy, as it forms a pillar of the nexus of social policy projects that have been developed during the crisis, with the vast majority of municipalities in the country operating at least one element of the project in the period 2014 – 2020.

### **3. Research methodology**

#### ***3.1 Data collection***

The paper used in-depth semi structured interviews to collect the data. The method is appropriately geared towards the research question, as the latter aimed to elicit personal narratives that would have made a focus group less appropriate because of the potential for social desirability bias (Braun and Clarke, 2013: 113). Furthermore, in-depth interviews in comparison with fixed methods such as self-administered surveys, allow participants to elaborate on their views and can thus generate insights that go beyond the researcher’s knowledge or what is known through the literature review (Bauer and Gaskell, 2000). Data collection took place between July and August 2019.

#### ***3.2 Sampling***

The paper used purposive (non-probability) sampling, including 10 in-depth interviews with beneficiaries of the project in the municipality of Pavlos Melas. The participants of the study were drawn from different age groups, sex, education levels and some of them were using multiple elements of the project. The number of interviews sought to maximise the opportunity to understand the range of opinions, i.e. capture the different representations of the issue within the timeframe of the paper (Bauer and Gaskell, 2000: 41). In this respect, the paper claims an acceptable degree of theoretical saturation, as the ten interviews allowed the typification of common patterns across the data and no new major themes appeared to emerge from the interviews (Bauer and Gaskell, 2000: 41; Robson and McCartan, 2016: 166-168). Given the time constraints, generating more data could lead to what Bauer and Gaskell (2000: 34) cite as “data dungeon”, i.e. the collection of more data that can be sufficiently analysed within the timeframe of a project. Nonetheless, the sampling is not representative and the transferability of the findings and recommendations beyond the municipality of Pavlos Melas must be treated with a degree of circumspection.

#### ***3.3 Data analysis***

The paper used thematic analysis to analyse the data. In particular, using the model developed by Attride – Stirling (2001) the basic (lower order) themes of the paper were clustered into organising (medium order) themes, which in turn were clustered into global (higher order) themes. These are represented in the findings section as web-like maps that illustrate the salient themes of each of the three levels, as well as the relationship between them (Attride – Stirling, 2001: 388).

Thematic analysis sets explicit criteria to the research process and in doing so, increases the legitimacy of the qualitative research process, the latter often accused of being obscure and esoteric (Bauer and Gaskell, 2000: 336). In particular, thematic networks, by making explicit the procedures employed in going from text to interpretation increase the internal and external validity of the research (Bauer and Gaskell, 2000). In addition, thematic analysis is independent from epistemological or theoretical prepositions and thus offers flexibility in examining the research question (Braun and Clarke, 2006: 78). Finally, the method is less complex and time-consuming than other methods of textual analysis such as Foucauldian discourse or ethnographic analysis and therefore offers more fruitful grounds for replication.

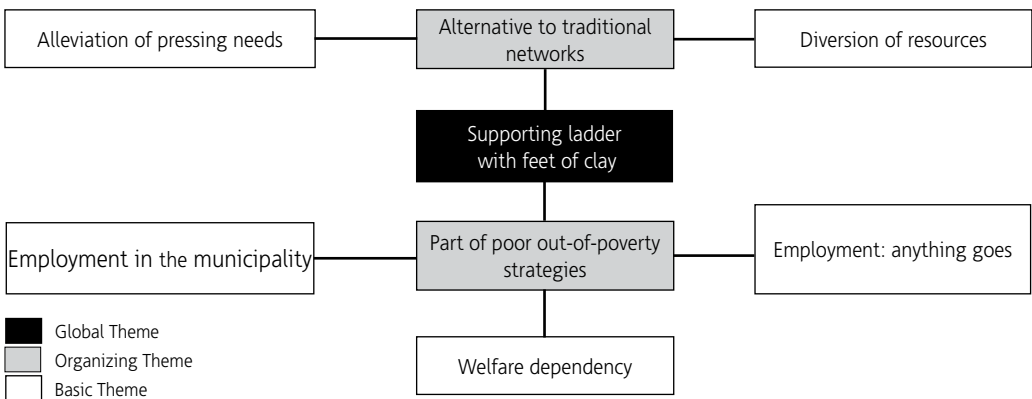
Data analysis followed Frith’s and Gleeson’s (2004) inductive, data-driven approach to allow room for the inclusion of data that may not tidily correspond to the research question and to mitigate the researcher’s bias. Finally, to enhance the robustness of the data, the paper following Bryman’s (2016: 385) recommendation used respondent validation.

### 4. Findings

The findings of the paper are presented in thematic networks that have been developed starting from basic themes and working inwards towards a global theme. Basic themes are the lowest order of themes. They include accounts of the interviewees’ experiences and their interpretation of these experiences. Organising themes cluster these accounts and summarise the principal assumption of a group of basic themes. They show in a more abstract and revealing way the predominant narrative in the textual data, i.e. what is going on in the beneficiaries’ everyday lives. Finally, global themes are super-ordinate, macro-themes, that encompass both organising and basic themes and illustrate the main conclusions of the paper.

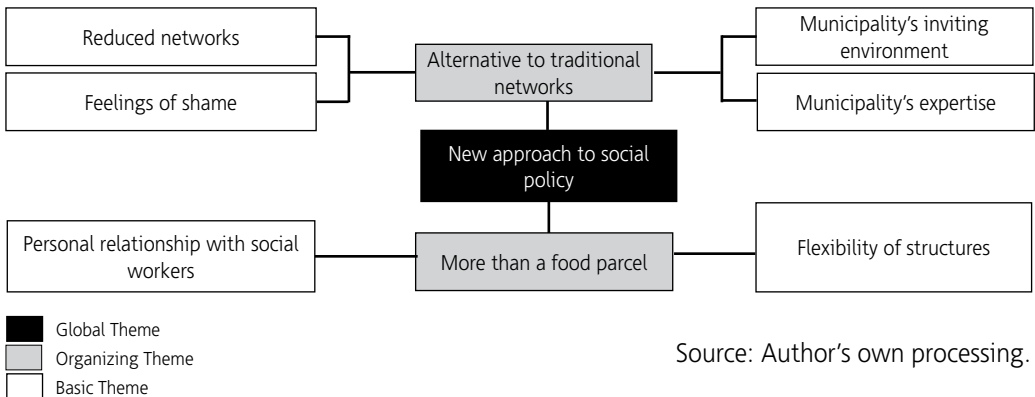
Through the thematic networks, the paper explores how beneficiaries experience the project and assesses its capacity to help support them out of AROPE. The results of this exercise are presented in the Figures 2 & 3 below and discussed in more detail in the remainder of this section.

**Figure 2. Can the project help support its beneficiaries out of AROPE?**



Source: Author’s own processing.

**Figure 3. How do beneficiaries experience the project?**



Source: Author's own processing.

## 4.1 How do beneficiaries experience the project?

### Global Theme I: A novel approach to social protection

The findings suggest that the project offers a novel, positive approach to social protection. Beneficiaries found in the project an alternative option to their traditional support networks. This option went beyond their initial expectations and contrasted with their previous experience in state services. In particular, beneficiaries were not only able to meet pressing material needs but also form resourceful relationships with staff of the project in an inviting environment that attenuated feelings of shame and fostered social inclusion.

### Organising theme I: Alternative to traditional networks

Traditional networks such as family, kinship or friends were found to maintain their supporting role as shock absorbers for the beneficiaries' financial difficulties. Nonetheless, the resources of these networks were reported to have reduced during the crisis. Next to feelings of shame, this constituted for beneficiaries a push factor away from such networks. On the other hand, the municipality's inviting environment and its capacity to manage complex issues were reported as important pull-factors that attenuated feelings of shame and created an atmosphere of trust.

#### *Reduced networks*

Many beneficiaries reported receiving financial or in-kind support from their networks either prior to, or simultaneously to the use of the project. Nonetheless, the capacity of these networks has been increasingly attenuating, making beneficiaries reluctant to approach them.

For example, Anastasia (41) said:

*"My relatives have their own troubles, who can help you with the crisis? Everyone struggles for himself."*

#### *Feelings of shame*

Next to reduced networks, feelings of shame and embarrassment were also reported as an important push-factor to the project.



For example, Nick (64) said:

*"I will tell you what is going on. All my relatives are rich; educated, and rich. Let's assume that I would pay them a visit. The first thing that would come into their minds would be that I was in need of money. Man, I got hurt. Do you know what animals do when they get hurt? They go into a bush to lick their wounds until they recover. I did not want to explain what happened or receive criticism, even from my close friends and relatives; I did not want to lose my dignity for something that I did not want to come across as, that is, a beggar. But that's how they would think of me."*

David (46) said:

*"I had nowhere to live. I have a mother. But my mother has learned to live alone; I also have sisters, but they were staying with their families, I did not want to be a burden. Thus, I stayed for a couple of months in some friends, then in some other places I found, and so on."*

### *Municipality's expertise*

Some participants explained their choice for turning to the municipality for assistance on the grounds that the latter was in the position to respond to complex needs.

Sonia (47) said:

*"I always sought help from these structures, because I think that they are more helpful than talking to a friend. A friend is okay to have a chat, but he cannot support or guide you as to what you should or should not do. This is my personal experience: he cannot support you in the same way as these structures do, either if you are seeking psychological or economic advice [...] frankly, for any aspect."*

### *Municipality's inviting environment*

Finally, the inviting environment of the municipality was also cited as an important element of the project. While some beneficiaries reported feelings of shame, these appeared to be context-dependent and not associated with the behaviour of the social workers. On the contrary, the atmosphere in the three structures attenuated feelings of shame and led the foundations for a more personal approach between initially hesitant participants and the staff of the municipality.

Kostas (52) said:

*"I was aware that structures such as social groceries, pharmacies and similar ones existed. However, when you do not know how these structures work, you are a bit hesitant. Personally, I could not imagine that there would be such a welcoming environment; coming here feels like visiting a friend [...] this has nothing to do with the behaviour I experience in state services."*

## Organising theme II: More than a food parcel

At the time of the interviews, all ten participants were experiencing severe material deprivation. Therefore, their main driver for participating in the project was access to essential goods, such as food parcels, household products, common meals and medication. Nonetheless, the project was not reported simply as an outlet for dispensing food, but rather as a portal to manage manifold needs, including social and psychological. Beneficiaries reported having frequent short-term, informal talks with social workers and to a lesser extent, long-term counselling sessions. Through those, beneficiaries filled in critical information such as available welfare services, benefits and vacancies. In addition, through their daily communication with social workers, beneficiaries re-

ceived emotional and psychological support, that was often cited as equally important to the in-kind support of the project. In conclusion, the project was not experienced as unidimensional and there were elements suggesting that it sometimes went beyond confronting the material symptoms of poverty to addressing more complex needs.

### *Relationship with social workers*

Investing in a relationship with social workers was not the case for every beneficiary, with some beneficiaries only seeking access to the in-kind benefits of the project.

For example, Maria (64) quoted:

*"I am a very distant person. I do not talk about my personal problems; I prefer keeping them to myself. I just go there, pick up my food-parcel and that's all; no conversations."*

However, Sonia (42) said:

*[...] "I want to tell you that it is not only about the food. When my child was in surgery, the social workers called me; I answered the phone and asked what did they want me for, as I had already told them that I would not be able to pick up my food-parcel. It turned out that they had called me to find out how the surgery worked-out. Even now, it makes me shudder. I didn't receive calls from close friends; yet the guys called me to support me emotionally. It's not only the food that supports you. You get emotional support. They also tell you about other available services in which you can go."*

Finally, social workers often directed participants to other services which they could use for their benefit. For instance, Anastasia (41) said:

*"I am having an excellent relationship with him [the social worker]. He helps me to gather the requested documents regarding job openings and advices me on how to proceed."*

### *Flexibility*

Contrary to statutory welfare schemes, the social grocery had some flexibility in the delivery of its services. For instance, social workers could accommodate food parcels for families facing exceptional circumstances. In addition, they had flexibility in the delivery time of the food-parcels or medication and appeared to have an open ear for requests or complaints.

Sonia (42) said:

*"The doctor suggested that my child should have infant's formulas to gain some weight, if he was to avoid medical prescription. These formulas, I just can't (emphasis) [...] They cost around three, four, even five or six euros. I explained to the social workers my problem, and they provided me with these formulas, albeit I was not entitled to them, as I do not have a baby. Do you know how much this has helped me? I would have otherwise needed 15 to 20 euros in order to get them."*

Kostas (52) said:

*"They have listened to us. The previous catering was horrible; it was like catering for animals. I would throw it immediately in the garbage; I was sad about this, as people are hungry out there, but I would throw it and cook something else. Social workers referred the complains and now the catering has changed. Now, it feels like eating at a restaurant, there's a huge difference."*

However, David (46) said:

*"As regards the common-meal, what I would like is having little more. Because you are only given a meal once a day, and it is like a kid meal. Have you seen it? Have you been to the social grocery?"*

## 4.2 Can the project navigate its beneficiaries out of AROPE?

### Global Theme II: supporting ladder with feet of clay

The findings suggest that the project constitutes an important safety net that allows its beneficiaries to address essential and otherwise insurmountable needs. Nonetheless, the project is limited in scope and appears to offer to its beneficiaries merely the means to manage poverty, rather than lift themselves out of it. In addition, the project can promote ambiguous out-of-poverty strategies on behalf of the beneficiaries as well as in some instances, lead to welfare dependency. Therefore, while the project is arguably a supporting ladder, it appears that its feet are made of clay.

### Organising Theme I: Necessary patch

All ten beneficiaries and especially lone parents with dependent members were struggling to make ends meet. In this respect, beneficiaries described the project as a vital patch to either alleviate current hardship or save income for other essential needs. However, this patch was often not enough and was combined with statutory welfare services, projects run by municipalities or other entities and occasional work in the informal sector.

#### *Alleviation of immediate needs*

Whist almost 10 years have passed since the outbreak of the financial crisis, some participants reported their experience in the current period as the most difficult, with many of them struggling to respond to essential, everyday expenses.

Rebecca (42) said:

*"Today she got paid (her mother) and a week from now we will run out of money. It is the same story, time and again."*

Sonia (47) said:

*"Fifteen days ago, so to speak, I literally had nothing to cook (emphasis). I had my common meals as usual and my kids were not hungry. But what about the weekend? Fortunately, the food-parcel was given to me just in time [...] I had nothing to cook and the parcel happened to have eggs, bread [...] This was literally a ray of light. I had been disappointed at the time, and this was a ray of light."*

#### *Diversion of resources*

In some cases, participants were using the services of the project to free some of their disposable income for other needs. These needs most often included paying rent, electricity, water bills or other needs of similar nature. In other cases, participants were using services to make time for other activities, such as seeking employment, working in occasional jobs or child-rearing. Finally, in some cases participants were able to make short savings with the view to improve their future prospects.

Kostas (52) said:

*"My finances are better this period that I don't have to pay for food and medication. My medication costs around 80 euros per month. This money will be used for other necessities, especially on rent."*

David (46) said:

*"I have opted for the common meals instead for the social grocery in order to free some of my time; It is the time that matters the most to me, rather than the money. I would need time to cook and do all this stuff, because I am living alone."*

Sonia (42) said:

*"My husband is now trying to get another driving license, in order to find a job with a higher salary. That's the only way we can move forward. By ourselves. Neither the state is going to help you, nor somebody else. It's just us. That's what I am telling you, these structures help us save some money, so we can eventually stop using them."*

## Organising Theme II: Part of poor out-of-poverty strategies

While most often participants were using the project to address essential needs, the project was also seen as part of wider out-of-poverty strategies for beneficiaries. However, the project did not appear to provide the beneficiaries the means to navigate out-of-poverty. Beneficiaries were often on a constant pendulum above and below the poverty threshold. The project may have provided beneficiaries with a sense of security. This, however, was often temporary, as beneficiaries did not feel confident in their capacity to recover financially in the short or on the long term. Perhaps surprisingly, given the small sample size, the beneficiaries' plans for the future can be clustered into three categories.

### *Employment in the municipality*

Amongst the beneficiaries seeking employment, some were particularly, and sometimes exclusively looking to get short-term or permanent contracts in the municipalities.

Katherine (22) said:

*"All I want is to get a job in the municipality, even if this has to do with the cleaning sector or garbage collection. All I want is to get a job. I have recently applied in the municipality of Oreokastro. They didn't get me on-board. Now I am waiting for similar calls from other municipalities."*

Anastasia (41) said:

*"I am waiting for calls from municipalities; I would like an 8-month contract; I have applied many times, but I have been unsuccessful [...] I have already worked three times with an 8-month contract; if I am successful in getting such a contract one more time, I will get a permanent position, since I am a lone parent with many dependent children."*

### *Employment: anything goes*

On the other hand, other beneficiaries showed no particular preference as to whether they would like to work in the public or the private sector.

For example, Rebecca (42) was actively seeking employment in both sectors. She said:

*"I am actively looking for a job. I have literally applied everywhere, you cannot imagine. In coffee shops, everywhere [...] I am of course registered at the unemployment base of OAED, I am also looking on the internet."*

Rebecca (42) also added

*"What are the prerequisites to get a job in the municipality? It feels like you need to have 5 kids and an 80-months unemployment record. It has not been long since I have applied, and I was a runner-up, having 30 months of unemployment. The next time, I am sure that I am going to be successful."*

### *Welfare dependency*

Welfare dependency refers to beneficiaries who were either not job-ready or incapable of working. The dependency of these beneficiaries on the structures was increased as their situation did not allow them to recover financially in the short term. In addition, welfare dependency is sustained where beneficiaries did not have an out-of-poverty strategy.

Samantha (33) said:

*"I have to confess that I haven't thought of that; I have not thought that, argh, it's going to stop, what I am going to do; because I believe that even in the case the project stops, something else will probably substitute it; they are not going to leave people helpless."*

Nick (64) said:

*[...] "Apart from that, I am very happy, I have no plans at all. I am having a job for the next 8-months. I have everything that I need in my house. I can survive, I am healthy. Everybody loves me [...] After these 8-months, only God knows. My dear friend, there's always a before and an after in life. If you always consider what happened before and what's going to happen next, all you manage to do, is ruin your life."*

## 5. Discussion

This paper sought to explore the views of the beneficiaries of the social policy project 'structures for essential goods: social grocery, common meals, social pharmacy' in the municipality of Pavlos Melas. Through the case study, the paper sought to assess the potential of the project to navigate its beneficiaries out of AROPE and contribute to the existing debates on the nature of the new trajectory of social policy in the country.

The findings of the paper suggest that the project constitutes an important safety net, as it supports beneficiaries who would otherwise go hungry or experience persistent material deprivation. Nevertheless, it appears that the project is not simply an outlet for dispensing food and medication. Rather, it supports its beneficiaries in manifold ways, including social and psychological. More concretely, through short, informal discussions with social workers, beneficiaries received additional support and found out about available training programs, vacancies, and other services they could use to navigate themselves out of poverty. At the same time, they could benefit from counselling sessions, albeit this appeared to take place less frequently.

The project forms an alternative option for those lacking support from their traditional networks, the resources of which have been reported to reduce significantly during the crisis, an observation predicted by earlier studies (Papadopoulos and Roumpakis, 2009, 2013). In addition, the project fosters an environment attenuating feeling of shame, creating an atmosphere of trust and promoting a personal approach to social inclusion. These elements exist despite the project's regulation by provisions set in the upper tiers of government and were reported to contrast with the beneficiaries' experiences with other state services.

These findings signal that a local approach to social protection can be an effective way to address AROPE. To this end, moving towards decentralisation and enabling municipalities to assume a more central role in the design and delivery of policies should receive careful consideration from policymakers in the upper tiers of government.

Be all that as it may, the case study is illustrative of critical flaws in the design of the project and more importantly, in the country's approach in managing poverty and social exclusion. These flaws come down to the fact that the country does not appear to have a coherent strategy to combat the root causes breeding poverty and social exclusion and instead resorts in addressing the symptoms of these phenomena.

In particular, beneficiaries of the project were found to experience long-term financial hardship, rather than short-term crises. This hardship was often rooted in the consequences of the economic crisis in the labour market and especially in the blue-collar sector. More concretely, following their job losses during the crisis, beneficiaries were found unable to live in a stable state in which they were routinely capable of managing their expenses. On the contrary, they were found to live in a situation trying to avoid poverty and social exclusion through pooling resources from multiple networks (including governmental and non-governmental associations, the Greek church, statutory welfare services, family networks and others). Beneficiaries often reported to combine those resources either with cash-in-hand or short-term contracts in the public sector (municipalities), funded by EU appropriations.

The targeting of such contracts on behalf of the beneficiaries attests to the fact that as the blue-collar private employment sector has reduced, their none or few qualifications cannot allow them to pursue sustainable employment elsewhere. This can drive beneficiaries in welfare dependency or ill-defined out of poverty strategies. In particular, as the hiring process in the public sector often takes into consideration the unemployment record of a candidate, beneficiaries may intentionally use assistance from various networks alongside cash-in-hand jobs, as doing so may increase their chances of securing future employment in the local government. While this constitutes a perverse way to navigate poverty, in light of no sustainable alternatives for people experiencing AROPE, it is expected to become the norm.

The project in question, albeit developed during the crisis to alleviate people AROPE, appears to rather reinforce than form an exception to the country's approach in relation to poverty and social exclusion. In particular, the case study found that the project rarely addresses the root causes of poverty and suffers from critical flaws that appear to neglect the very dynamics of poverty and social exclusion.

First, through its annual, means-tested selection of applications, the project privileges candidates with zero balance financial statements to candidates with small financial statements. While this seems righteous, it neglects that beneficiaries with small financial statements due to their temporary contracts will be denied access for to the project for a consecutive year, by when their contracts will most likely have expired. This creates a pendulum of poverty, in which beneficiaries are found on a precarious continuum, above and below the poverty threshold. In this context, the project and the role of social policy is appearing to demote into a mechanism of rotating, rather than addressing poverty, a sort of a pre-modern philanthropy (Kourachanis, Laliati, Skamnakis, 2019).

Second, the project is limited both in terms of nature, time and scope. Beneficiaries, despite using the project, were still struggling in making ends meet, and often had to combine it with occasional cash-in-hand jobs or assistance from traditional or other types of networks. In addition, the time-span of the project did not allow them to experience a stable feeling of security, as none of them felt confident in their capacity to achieve a sustainable way of income neither in the short nor in the long term. Further to that, the scope of the project was often limited to informal and less frequently, to formal counselling sessions, but did not integrate active labour market policies.

Finally, the project only covers a limited number of AROPE applicants in the country. This was also confirmed in Pavlos Melas, as the project was unable to meet demand, with applications consistently exceeding the available places. In this respect, it should be noted that the number of applications may understate potential demand, as poor dissemination strategies, feelings of stigma, embarrassment, and others may hinder beneficiaries from applying (for example, see Loopstra and Tarasuk, 2015).

These findings echo the concerns of several authors who point out that social policy in Greece is descending into a social safety net for the worst-off (Skamnakis and Pantazopoulos, 2015; Skamnakis, 2016; Chardas and Skamnakis, 2017) and suggest that the new trajectory of social policy in the country appears to rotate than address poverty. In this poverty-rotation, people are on a precarious continuum in which they are often referred to projects where they can temporarily fill water (benefit-schemes) to an otherwise leaky bucket (root-causes of poverty remain intact).

To reverse this situation, a major re-orientation of the direction of social policy is necessary. This direction should have at its heart re-skilling and active labour market policies that can offer participants stable employment beyond temporary contracts in the local government. In addition, such a direction should leverage local governments, encourage the use of data to tailor policies and include appropriate longitudinal evaluation frameworks that can benchmark targets and ensure the accountability of resources. Finally, such a direction could also harness a closer cooperation between local government, the manpower employment organisation and industry stakeholders.

## 6. Conclusion

**A**fter the onset of the crisis, the Greek government's drive for fiscal consolidation led to the development of a nexus of social policy projects in response to the increasing social needs. These projects, albeit implemented by municipalities, did not shift the power ratio from the central towards local government while they raised critical questions regarding the nature and direction of social policy in the country. This paper, linking its case study findings with those of existing studies, argues that social policy in country appears to descend into an ambulance service, rather than form a sustainable pathway to economic and welfare improvement. The paper calls for a reorientation of this direction and puts forward suggestions that could be used in order to combat AROPE and avoid its adverse impacts on the social fabric such as intergenerational poverty or immobility.

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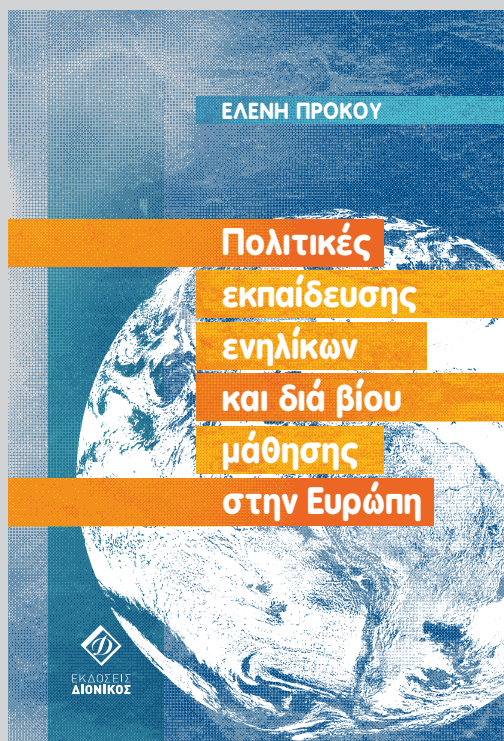


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Ελένη Πρόκου

## Πολιτικές εκπαίδευσης ενηλίκων και διά βίου μάθησης στην Ευρώπη

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Το βιβλίο αυτό επιχειρεί να αναλύσει και να ερμηνεύσει τις πολιτικές για την εκπαίδευση ενηλίκων και τη διά βίου μάθηση στην εποχή της παγκοσμιοποίησης. Στο κέντρο του ενδιαφέροντός του είναι η Ευρώπη, υπό την έννοια τόσο της συγκριτικής μελέτης των εν λόγω πολιτικών σε επιλεγμένες ευρωπαϊκές χώρες όσο και της ανάλυσης και ερμηνείας της ευρωπαϊκής πολιτικής για τη διά βίου μάθηση. Ιδιαίτερη έμφαση δίνει στις επιδράσεις της πολιτικής της Ευρωπαϊκής Ένωσης για τη διά βίου μάθηση στην Ελλάδα, καθώς και στην περιγραφή του θεσμικού πλαισίου λειτουργίας των βασικών φορέων εκπαίδευσης ενηλίκων στη χώρα μας.

Το παρόν βιβλίο φιλοδοξεί, έτσι, να συμβάλει στην κατανόηση της εξέλιξης του πεδίου της εκπαίδευσης ενηλίκων/διά βίου μάθησης στην Ευρώπη και την Ελλάδα, και να θέσει το πλαίσιο προβληματισμού για περαιτέρω έρευνα στις πολιτικές για το εν λόγω πεδίο. Απευθύνεται σε εκπαιδευτικούς, φοιτητές, εργαζόμενους και γενικότερα σε όσους ασχολούνται με την εκπαίδευση.

# The evolving nature of work in the Agri-food-stuffs Sector. The impact of Precision Agriculture and the necessity of acquiring new skills through Lifelong Learning

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## Ο μεταβαλλόμενος χαρακτήρας της εργασίας στον Αγροδιατροφικό Τομέα. Η επίδραση της Γεωργίας Ακριβείας και η αναγκαιότητα απόκτησης νέων δεξιοτήτων μέσω Διά Βίου Μάθησης

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### ABSTRACT

The article focuses on the necessity of acquiring a combination of “vertical” and “horizontal” skills, which are of vital importance in the new production management processes and work in the Agri-foodstuffs sector, so as to ensure an efficient relationship between the human resources and the current technological applications. The aim of this paper is to research and pinpoint the opportunities and weaknesses of the required new skills in relation to new technologies in the wider context of the agri-food labour market, and to which extent these skills can feasibly be developed through Lifelong Learning Educational Programmes. The research method of this paper is a qualitative “focus groups” interview method.

**KEY WORDS:** Agri-food, skills, education, new technologies, smart agriculture.

### ΠΕΡΙΛΗΨΗ

Το άρθρο επικεντρώνεται στην αναγκαιότητα απόκτησης συνδυασμού «κάθετων» και «οριζόντιων» δεξιοτήτων, απαραίτητων για τα θέματα της νέας οργάνωσης παραγωγής και εργασίας στον αγροδιατροφικό κλάδο, ώστε να διασφαλίζεται η επιτυχημένη σύμπραξη του ανθρώπινου δυναμικού με τις εξελισσόμενες νέες τεχνολογικές εφαρμογές. Η εργασία στοχεύει, μέσω της διαδικασίας διεξαγωγής εμπειρικής έρευνας ομάδων εστίασης (focus groups), να εξετάσει και να εντοπίσει τα τις ευκαιρίες και τις αδυναμίες των νέων δεξιοτήτων σε σχέση με τις νέες τεχνολογίες στο ευρύτερο πλαίσιο της αγοράς εργασίας του αγροδιατροφικού κλάδου και κατά πόσο αυτές οι δεξιότητες είναι εφικτό να αναπτυχθούν μέσω προγραμμάτων Διά Βίου Μάθησης.

**ΛΕΞΕΙΣ-ΚΛΕΙΔΙΑ:** Αγροδιατροφή, δεξιότητες, εκπαίδευση, νέες τεχνολογίες, έξυπνη γεωργία.

## 1. Introduction

The continuous evolution of the Information and Communications Technologies (ICTs) is estimated that will induce an intense necessity to create new educational protocols both in formal and non-formal education, with the emphasis placed on the development and further practice of certain “horizontal” and “vertical” skills. At the same time, the imperative of these imminent changes is reinforced not only due to technological reasons, yet also by several demographic and socio-economic factors.

It is evident that the afore mentioned influence directly the already existing managerial models, while they also constitute a significant motive for the creation of new sustainable professional activities (i.e. Precision Agriculture, Telemedicine etc.) for the opening of additional job vacancies. Nevertheless, they might also present serious challenges, since they demand immediate and versatile adaptation from all parties involved (strategy planning agencies, educational organizations, businesses, decision-making stakeholders, citizens etc.). Throughout this procedure, many professions and fields of work will go through a holistic transformation, which some will but others will not survive, thus affecting the quantitative as well as qualitative inflows and outflows of the labour market.

The essential question of the present article, entails the examination and study of the degree to which the acquisition of “vertical” and “horizontal” skills is required by the human resources, particularly with respect to new production management issues and in conjunction to the new and ever-evolving technologies in the everchanging environment of the Agri-foodstuffs labour market, as a result of the 4th Industrial Revolution.

Sub-questions of this paper, involve the estimation of the extent and of the ways through which the new technologies are applied to Greek agricultural and livestock farming properties; also, the detection of opportunities and threats in the development of new skills around these new technologies through Lifelong Learning Schemes, which the contemporary Greek farmer should possess to be able to implement the latter more effectively, in the wider context of Agri-foodstuffs labour market.

In the last decades, the structure and organization of the food production systems demonstrates a rapid shift of the production paradigm towards fulfilling the requirements and needs of modern consumerist audience (consumer-driven), yet also serving as a combining response to an array of alterations and developments that take place within economy, society, technology and the institutional and legal framework. These developments, particularly in the field of technology, have subsequently incurred favourable conditions for the mitigation of restrictive factors, such as the perishability, sensitiveness and the seasonal nature of products, the huge geographical dispersion as well as the distancing between the points of production and consumption, etc. (HFE, 2013).

Given the fact that the human population is estimated to reach 9.7 billion worldwide by 2050, the current food production is then consequently expected to increase to approximately 60% (Schönfeld et al., 2018). Hence, there is a general trend to design supervision programmes not only for the already existing crops but also for the new artificial cultivations, both in Greece and in the EU (Capital, 2017).

Therefore, the intense use of farmland with the goal to feed the ever-raising global population, has achieved the increase of agricultural productivity over the past decades. Still, in this

task, there is a main ally and that is the Information and Communications Technologies (ICTs) evolution, which has provided the potential of diversified intervention applications with the purpose of production optimization as well as the appropriate use of available rural properties, thus enabling their maximum exploitation depending on the prospects offered (Stafford, 2000).

Since its first applications at the beginning of the '90s, the Precision Agriculture (or Smart Agriculture or Intelligent Agriculture, as it is alternatively called) has been functioning as a modern method of crops management, according to which the input (pesticides, fertilizers, seeds, irrigation water) and the cultivation techniques are both applied on the basis of the requisites of the soil and crop, as those differentiate through space and time (Whelan & McBratney, 2000) while combined to the reduction of environmental footprint at the same time.

In other words, the Precision Agriculture assists the farmer in the decision-making process as well as towards a better administration of the agricultural property (Gemtos et al., 2002) since it provides the ability of accurate, effective and economical agriculture via the respective automations (Schönfeld et al., 2018). Thus, the production maximization is made possible with a simultaneous minimization of the odds of failure due to natural disasters, errors and factors related to crops cultivation, weather conditions and farming equipment (Sung, 2018).

In Greece, the Agri-food sector firmly comprises one of the most important parts in the Greek processing and one of the main driving forces for the Greek economy. As an inextricable component of the Agri-foodstuffs chain it is affected, yet also it strongly affects itself the remaining areas of financial activity (primary and tertiary sector), with respective consequences for the national economy as a whole (HFE, 2013).

Without doubt, the Agri-foodstuffs business area apparently involves high risk that may correspond to external factors, such as geo-climatic conditions (Anastasiadis & Poole, 2015) which, in turn, are deterring for prospective entrepreneurs and new investors in the field. Based on subsidization and offers in "unlabeled" products, the Greek agri-food sector has been developed by less than 1% per annum throughout the previous 25 years representing merely 0,3% of the international production, compared to 0,8% in 1993. What is more, the Greek Agri-foodstuffs sector includes small and fragmented properties (National Bank of Greece, 2015). Indeed, most of agricultural or livestock farming units in Greece are small, predominantly family businesses, often characterized by limited organization. Besides these basic preventing factors, the Greek agri-food sector must also deal with the continuous rise in primary sources costs following the economic crisis and the constant attenuation of the consumers' expenditure, imposing the need to improve the production efficiency.

Additionally, an extremely serious matter, is the fact that up to recently the majority of human resources occupied in the primary sector had incomplete knowledge and was unfamiliar with the new technologies or other specialized innovative ways of production. Born out of the incessant financial crisis, the ability to adjust as demonstrated by the agricultural households, the producers, the agricultural organizations, the communities and local economies is a reflection of the so-called resilience of the farmland territories. The elasticity is evident in that the rural areas are able to absorb the pressure and re-structuring while experiencing the changes, thus maintaining their functionality, organizational features, identity and flexibility of activities (Schouten et al., 2009; Folke et al., 2010).

The promotion of Smart Agriculture and of Precision Agriculture is a key target of European politics for the next years. Apart from the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) forecasts, in April 2019 a partnership agreement for "a smart and sustainable digitalized future for European ag-

riculture and countryside” was signed by 23 EU member-states, thus signifying the systematic efforts which are to be made in this field.

Equal initiatives, at politics level, have also been put to practice in Greece. The most representative examples being the “Three-parties Collaboration Memorandum” for Precision Agriculture among the Greek Ministry of Digital Policy, the Greek Ministry of Rural Development and the University of Thessaly signed in 2018, and the project “Digital Transformation of the Agricultural Sector” still under consultation. Nevertheless, Greece has not taken advantage of the worldwide trend for a more advanced and efficient farming production, such as the optimization of production and quality as well as the endurance to illnesses (Karabini, 2017). Hence, the technological enhancement of the agricultural production is inferior in comparison to other EU countries, basically for two reasons: The agri-food sector consists of small and fragmented properties (National Bank of Greece, 2015) and the majority of the human capital in the primary sector is not equipped with the necessary education-training to use new technologies or other specialized and innovative ways of production.

The impact of the digitalization of agriculture, is expected to affect employability rates as well as the work qualifications of farmers and other professionals involved in agriculture (Walter, 2017). Modern agriculture demands farmers not just to use or accumulate knowledge, yet it rather asks from them to be the experts in agriculture issues. In essence, the farmers should be in the position to manage complex rural eco-systems in a competitive markets environment, while also implementing eco-friendly practices.

Methodologically, the paper aims to investigate, through via a focus groups interview research method, the contribution and value of the new skills in new technologies, through Lifelong Learning Educational Programmes, in the wider context of the agri-food labour market.

The main goal of this empirical study, is to answer questions on the degree and the way that the new technologies have proved useful to the Greek agricultural and livestock farming businesses. At the same time, its purpose is to pinpoint the benefits and hazards related to the subject matter and more importantly to identify: 1) the new skills that the Greek farmer of today has to develop so as to be able to use the new technologies effectively, and 2) to which extent these skills could further be expanded in a feasible manner, through Lifelong Learning Schemes.

## **2. Case study: Acquiring new skills in the agri-foodstuffs sector through lifelong learning in the American School of Agriculture**

### ***2.1 Research methodology***

**T**he selected method of research is that of focus groups interviews, which is defined by Krueger (1988) as a carefully organized conversation, designed to draw perceptions and convictions on a specified topic of research, within a permitting and non-detering environment. The focus groups research is not a group interview with an interviewer posing questions to the interviewees; it is a team conversation in which participants are invited to discuss a particular matter with one another through an interactive process, which can either be “vertical”, that is researcher-participants interaction but mostly “horizontal” among the members themselves (Wilkinson, 1998). The interaction among members of the team diminishes the influence of the researcher over the procedure and amplifies the gravity of the participants’ responses. It is useful to clarify



that the recorded group conversations need not reach general conclusions, opinion convergence, or the formulation of a common interpretation of the shared experience or of others' beliefs, as it often happens when employing the specific technique (Frey & Fontana, 1993).

In the present research, the focus groups per se established the setting for vivid interaction and communication among participants, something which is the basic reason for choosing this specific technique (Kitzinger, 1994). Also, there has been a multidimensional dialectic relationship as many interviewees were asked simultaneously, where beyond the articulation of their own narrative and their interaction with the rest, they also presented the boundaries, limitations and oppositions to an external world, which they do not control or fully shape (Baniou, 2018).

The particular method has been selected because of certain advantages (Morgan, 1997, Krueger, 1988): a) Focus on a specific area, b) formulation of hypotheses emerging from ideas and collective data, c) gathering and assessment of information from various sub-groups of the generic target audience population, d) feedback from previous case studies.

In order to best conduct this study, two separate research tools were put to use, appropriately adjusted to two targeted focus groups, namely the agronomists and the farmers-producers.

The research tool for the agronomists' focus group consists of 17 questions which fall into the following categories: a) General (Are you aware of the impact of the 4th Industrial Revolution on the labour market changes in the agri-food sector?). b) Introductory (Do you know which of the smart technologies and software programmes are used in the agricultural and live stock farming properties drawing on your personal experience?). c) Transitional (Which horizontal skills do you think that somebody should possess beforehand, so as to be able to use a smart device or a smart software programme?). d) Key-Questions (In which way do you believe that someone could develop these skills if they haven't done so already?). e) Closing-Questions (From all that has been discussed what is most important to you?).

Respectively, the research tool that has been used in the farmers'-producers' focus group is made up of 15 Questions: a) General (Do you know what Precision Agriculture or Smart Agriculture stands for?). b) Introductory (Have you used smart technologies or smart software programmes in the agricultural processes?). c) Transitional (Do you believe that somebody should know how to use the new technologies in the agri-food sector?). d) Key- Questions (Would you attend a educational programme of long or short duration on these topics?). e) Closing-Questions (From all that has been discussed what is most important to you?).

The procedure adopted in the research, first of all dictated the formation of the two focus groups and the allocation of members. With the assistance of experts from the American School of Agriculture the most experienced agronomists and farmers in issues of Precision Agriculture and Smart Agriculture were selected. Then, different meeting times for each of the teams were assigned.

The first focus group interviews including agronomists, zootechnicians and Adult Education Trainers from the American School of Agriculture with specialization, took place on 23/04/2019 at the premises of the American School of Agriculture, following verbal notification and invitation by the person in charge of the European Adult Education Programmes addressed to the members of the Department.

The second focus group interviews involving vineyard producers of the Cooperative Organization "Krya Vrysi", was conducted on 01/06/2019 in their headquarters, after its president was informed and invited over the telephone by the person in charge of the European Adult Education Programmes. In turn, the president of the Cooperative Organisation notified the rest of members about the research, again over the telephone.



During the implementation of the focus groups research method, the key role was that of the group members, given that the researcher-interviewer was only asking the questions and the interviewees were expressing their own knowledge and experience without any external influence. The research sample comprised of two groups on the basis of their professional identity. In particular, the first group consisted of expert agronomists, zootechnicians and Adult Education Trainers from the American School of Agriculture in Thessaloniki (6 women and 2 men with an average age of 40-45 years old). Regarding the educational level, 67% of the sample is PhD holders, while 33% has postgraduate studies related to agronomy and livestock breeding. As far as their work experience in the Agri-foodstuffs is concerned, 75% of the sample has been working as agronomists or zootechnicians for almost 15-20 years, whereas 25% of the sample has been having a career in the latter positions for the last 2 years.

The second group, includes the vineyard producers of the Cooperative Organisation "Krya Vrysi", who are in partnership with the American School of Agriculture for the past 2 years. More specifically, it is made up of 6 men and 2 women, with an average age of 45-50 years old. 75% of the sample has been in professional occupation in the Greek agriculture for 30-25 years, whereas 25% for the previous 5 years. As for the educational level of the second team, it is obviously lower than that of the first, since 50% of the sample has completed Secondary Education, 33% Primary Education and only 17% are holders of a specialization from Public Vocational Institution.

## **2.2 Research results**

With regards to the focus group of Agronomists and Adult Education Trainers from the American School of Agriculture in Thessaloniki, they point out themselves that they have a theoretical knowledge on the applications and implications of the 4th Industrial Revolution and of the 5th Generation technologies in the Agri-foodstuffs sector. For such kind of issues, they are informed basically through private study and research as well as through several conferences. However, they stressed that practically they are still at a "pre-school" stage of knowledge since the particular subject has been introduced in the Greek reality very recently.

In relation to the question of which technologies they have seen being applied to agricultural and livestock farming properties during their work experience, the participants mentioned the automated process of irrigation, feeding and milking. Also, they referred to the use of smart meteorological systems, highlighting that they have not been practiced as much as needed in the Greek agri-food sector.

With respect to the positive effect that the application of the new technologies has on the rural sector, they stated their opinion that "most benefits occur during the productive process". In particular, as positive aspects were recorded the cost-effectiveness and error mitigation thanks to the automated procedures, the profitable production, the exact facts and figures of farm properties and animal breeds, the reduction of the required working hours, the higher levels of euphoria and the contribution to the protection of the environment, thanks to the controlled portions of fertilizers and pesticides. At the same time, they also stressed that the most serious threat embedded in the adoption of smart applications in the agri-food sector lies in the incorrect interpretation of the smart software programmes data by the farmers.

As for the factors that prevent the implementation of smart technologies in their own agricultural and livestock farming properties, there was a reference to unawareness and lack of knowledge on the part of the farmers in relation to the most effective use and application, the

high cost for purchasing and installing the appropriate equipment as well as the skeptical or even negative attitude demonstrated by farmers when meeting something innovative.

Finally, on a know-how basis, they pointed out themselves that “farmers should acquire new skills including the knowledge of using computers and (smart) mobile phones, smart machines and smart software programmes”. Also, they stated that these specific skills can only be developed through special training and optimally via a combination of curriculum education to further education (i.e. long-term educational programmes and continuous professional education).

Moreover, as far as the focus group of farmers is concerned, it has been shown that they have partial knowledge of the matter both theoretically and technically, whereas they have already made the first steps by installing smart meteorological systems and ground sensors as well as devices for automatic irrigation, crop-dusting and fertilization. However, their knowledge about Precision Agriculture in a more general sense is incomplete, since they stated themselves that they are unaware of other applications of the new technologies or software programmes which they could use.

Throughout the discussion, many of the positive aspects of the Precision Agriculture applications on their own farmland were mentioned, such as: full knowledge of their rural properties facts and figures, cost and errors attenuation during the production procedure, increase of revenues via the rise in the quality of goods which the automated processes ensure, reduction of the working hours and decrease in the consumption of pesticides and fertilizers, which incur lesser cost production yet a more positive environmental footprint.

Thus, it is worthy to note that the participants in both focus groups were in many respects aware of the Precision Agriculture content, more on a theoretical and partly on a hands-on level. In particular, the focus group of the farmers obtained this theoretical knowledge via the practical application of the Precision Agriculture technologies.

Technically, both teams have used some of the Precision Agriculture applications and technologies like the meteorological stations, the chartering of rural properties via underground sensors and the automated activities of irrigation and fertilization. Nevertheless, there are other applications that have not been put to use yet, such as robotics and robot vehicles, either because of neglecting their existence or due to their high cost, also even out of one’s own reservations.

Furthermore, both team members identified as positive impact of the precision agriculture applications the complete and valid information concerning the rural properties, the more economical and profitable production, the cost and errors attenuation during the production process and the environmentally friendlier agriculture, all of which are compatible with the referenced bibliography. In addition, the farmers’ focus group members argued that the reduction of working hours is a significant positive aspect of the precision agriculture applications. However, this comes in contrast to data from secondary sources, since scientists and researchers believe that this particular trend is expected to cause serious damage to the labour sector, because it will instigate the replacement of human activity by automated machinery activity.

Concerning the difficulties which they faced during the implementation of the new technologies in their rural properties, members of both focus groups, agreed that the most important difficulty arises from the lack of expertise, training and subsequently from the high cost to purchase and install the new equipment, a fact which is confirmed by the bibliography.

Particularly, regarding the education and professional skills area, it is worthy to note that the survey participants identified as the necessary qualifications the advanced digital skills, the data interpretation ability and the know-how in use of the new farming machines. However, according

to the works cited, the contemporary farmer has to develop a wide range of skills, such as the decision-making ability, the problem-solving ability and the social skills, in order to be able to execute effectively the tasks required by the implementation of the Precision Agriculture applications.

For the acquisition of those skills, all participant members agreed that the role of the continuous and targeted education is crucial. More specifically, they find ideal the combination of curricular education to Continuous Professional Occupation Training. Throughout the discussion, the necessity to re-structure the syllabus not only of the fundamental, but also of the continuous professional occupation training was brought to light, since the Precision Agriculture and the new technologies have not been included in both so far. Also, they proposed that the educational programmes should emphasize mainly on the hands-on experience and less on the theoretical background. Moreover, the need to provide long-term educational programmes on Precision Agriculture issues was also expressed, given that it is a recently evolved field. Finally, as far as the role of "self-learning" is concerned, it is useful to point out that the focus group of the farmers thinks of the latter as unachievable due to the perplexed nature of the precision agriculture applications, something which is in contradiction to the agronomists' team, where part of their theoretical knowledge was obtained though private study and research.

Taking into account all of the above, there is an imperative to pave the way for alternations and improvements both in the format and in the content of the Lifelong Learning Schemes. More specifically, in relation to the content of each educational programme there is an urgent need to incorporate the acknowledgement of current developments in the Precision Agriculture, the trainees' familiarization with the implementation of innovative technological systems, while at the same time to constantly develop and upgrade the digital skills. Regarding the training in Precision Agriculture issues, the interconnection of fundamental to continuous occupational education is required to enable the follow-up with recent trends. In any case, each of the provided educational schemes, in order to instill essential knowledge, should theoretically concentrate on issues around the Precision Agriculture, yet also be organized in such a way that would permit a hands-on experience of the new knowledge.

### 3. Conclusions

**F**ollowing the concise presentation of the theoretical aspects on the transformation of the wider labour market environment for the agri-food sector in conjunction with the results from the focus groups survey analyzed, certain conclusions are drawn below.

Within the correct farming practices and sustainable development framework, it is made easy for the Greek farmers to apply the Precision Agriculture for the sake of themselves as well as for the benefit of national agriculture, successfully employing the equipment and applications of the latest technology; thus, not only further increasing their income, but also contributing to the country's financial profile (Hedley, 2015). Therefore, the adoption of smart agriculture and precision agriculture applications by the Greek farmers might on the one hand be limited, still rather dynamic so as to create a productive and long-term sustainable sector. In order for that to be realized, it is necessary to stimulate all the interested bodies and to intensify the efforts towards enlightening the farmers and designating the appropriate cultivations which could take better advantage of the smart agriculture technologies.

Nonetheless, an acceptable presupposition for the successful transformation of the wider labour market context of the Agri-foodstuffs sector is the ultimate shaping of the single digital market, particularly at a moment when lack of basic digital skills is acknowledged, especially in the context of immensely increased requirements. Since the advanced technological systems are likely to form special and ever-updatable skills, Lifelong Learning and Training is admittedly vital for employees. Thus, besides the usually high cost to implement new technologies in individual properties, restricted knowledge and skills may, in fact, prove serious obstacles, especially in the developing countries. In order to reinforce the offer of the required skills, it is important to promote occupational training schemes and lifelong learning. At the same time, the demand for a wide variety of specializations and expertise throughout the value chain spectrum is evident, ranging from the operational structure via system design, the visualization and managerial processing of production functions to human interaction. In this environment, the transformation of the curricular education for the Agri-foodstuffs sector and the enrichment of the programme syllabus with innovative elements, which lead to the acquisition of up-to-date skills and information, are imperative.

In any case, for the human resources to conform with the Precision Agriculture guidelines in the agri-food sector, it must be considered that there is a set of other interfering parameters which are linked to the socio-demographic profile of the farmers (Barnes et al., 2019). Pierpaoli et al. (2013) have shown, through empirical studies, that the key factors involved in the adoption of these applications by the farmers are the level of education, the age and the degree of familiarization with computer use.

More particularly, farmers with a high educational background or those who have attained a type of agriculture training or specialization, tend to be better recipients of the new technologies, especially since education acts positively for the acquisition of technological and business skills (Barnes et al., 2019). Also, Kutter et al. (2011) state that skills in computer literacy and relevant applications have a great influence on the intention to adopt smart agriculture systems, since the weak ability of handling the data [otherwise] constitutes the main source of reluctance.

Taking into consideration the above limitations, it would be recommendable for the future research to be oriented towards the further examination of the parameters which affect the integration of smart agriculture and precision agriculture practices in Greece, by sampling a greater population both in numbers and in geographical terms. Last but not least, the subject of any future research should be the examination of the role of other interested legal bodies, such as research institutions, public organizations, educational institutions, collaborative farming businesses etc. in the promotion of smart agriculture practices and in the adjustment of the domestic human resources to its requirements.

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ΠΡΟΛΟΓΟΣ: ΑΓΓΕΛΟΣ ΣΤΕΡΓΙΟΥ

# ΚΟΙΝΩΝΙΚΗ ΑΣΦΑΛΙΣΗ

*Μια εισαγωγή στο θεσμό*



ΕΚΔΟΣΕΙΣ  
ΔΙΟΝΙΚΟΣ



Κουμαριανός Βαγγέλης,  
Συμεωνίδης Γιώργος  
Αγγελάκη Μαρίνα

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«Συνήθως, τα βιβλία για την κοινωνική ασφάλιση είναι χρηστικά πονήματα, οι λεγόμενοι στη γλώσσα των νομικών «τυφλοσούρτες», δηλαδή πρακτικοί οδηγοί που «σέρνουν τους τυφλούς» στα γραφειοκρατικά μονοπάτια του e-ΕΦΚΑ. Τι κρύβεται, όμως, πίσω από τις δαιδαλώδεις και λεπτομερείς ρυθμίσεις της νομοθεσίας; Η παράθεση σωρού εγκυκλίων αρκεί για να καταλάβουμε περί τίνος πρόκειται; Και βέβαια όχι. Αντίθετα, λίγα βιβλία, όπως το παρόν, των Βαγγέλη Κουμαριανού -ο οποίος έχει αναλάβει και το κύριο βάρος του εγχειρήματος-, Γιώργου Συμεωνίδη και Μαρίνας Αγγελάκη, αναλύουν την κοινωνική ασφάλιση ως διαχρονικό θεσμό, υποστηρίζουν το θεσμικό κομμάτι με την ανάλυση των οικονομικών μεγεθών, προσεγγίζουν την εξέλιξη του ελληνικού συστήματος υπό το φως των credo των Διεθνών Οργανισμών. Η κύρια αρετή του βιβλίου είναι ότι παρουσιάζει με πλήρη και ευσύμπτο τρόπο το ελληνικό σύστημα, εντάσσοντάς το συγχρόνως σε μια γενικότερη προβληματική και θεωρία της κοινωνικής ασφάλισης. Οι συγγραφείς, άριστοι γνώστες της πράξης και της θεωρίας, έχοντας θητεύσει στο πεδίο αυτό επί σειρά ετών, ηλεκτρίζουν το ενδιαφέρον του αναγνώστη για ένα φαινόμενο που είναι συγχρόνως κοινωνικό, οικονομικό, πολιτικό, νομικό, πολιτισμικό και ανθρωπολογικό».

Από τον Πρόλογο του Άγγελου Στεργίου, Καθηγητή Δικαίου Κοινωνικής Ασφάλισης στο ΑΠΘ.



# The importance and role of job creation at local level under the economic crisis conditions. Study and implementation of a Local Action Plan for Employment (LAPE) in the Municipality of Volos

Nikos Ntasios, *Panteion University of Social and Political Sciences,*

## Η σημασία και ο ρόλος του τοπικού επιπέδου στη δημιουργία θέσεων απασχόλησης σε συνθήκες οικονομικής κρίσης. Μελέτη και εφαρμογή Τοπικού Σχεδίου Δράσης για την Απασχόληση (ΤΣΔΑ) στο Δήμο Βόλου

Nikos Ntasios, *Panteion University of Social and Political Sciences*

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### ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to explore the possibilities of decentralization and departure from social policies, with an emphasis on employment policies, in the framework of an integrated strategy to tackle rising unemployment. In this context, this paper attempts to promote an integrated strategy for the "localization" of employment policies linked to productive reconstruction at micro-region level (i.e. Municipality of Volos) through the design and implementation of a Local Action Plan for Employment. The study exemplifies the basic design requirement of an LAPE by exploring through a "sectoral research" the potential for job supply.

**KEY WORDS:** Unemployment, local development, local action plan, employment policy at local level.

### ΠΕΡΙΛΗΨΗ

Αντικείμενο της παρούσας εργασίας αποτελεί η διερεύνηση των δυνατοτήτων αποκέντρωσης και αναχωροθέτησης των κοινωνικών πολιτικών, με έμφαση στις πολιτικές απασχόλησης, στο πλαίσιο μιας ολοκληρωμένης στρατηγικής αντιμετώπισης της εντεινόμενης ανεργίας. Στο πλαίσιο αυτής επιχειρείται μέσω του σχεδιασμού και της εφαρμογής ενός Τοπικού Σχεδίου Δράσης για την Απασχόληση η ανάδειξη μιας ολοκληρωμένης στρατηγικής «τοπικοποίησης» των πολιτικών απασχόλησης και η σύζευξή της με την παραγωγική ανασυγκρότηση σε επίπεδο μικρο-περιφέρειας (Δήμος Βόλου). Η εργασία καλύπτει την βασική προϋπόθεση σχεδιασμού ενός ΤΣΔΑ διερευνώντας μέσω κλαδικής μελέτης την δυναμική προσφοράς θέσεων εργασίας.

**ΛΕΞΕΙΣ-ΚΛΕΙΔΙΑ:** Ανεργία, τοπική ανάπτυξη, τοπικό σχέδιο δράσης, τοπικές πολιτικές απασχόλησης.

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## 1. Introduction

The present article intends to explore the possibilities of creating new and sustainable jobs at micro-region level via the implementation of Local Action Plans for Employment (LAPE). The role of Local Government in mobilizing “local social capital” in order to develop local strategies for Employment and Social Inclusion, in a historical period of economic crisis and exacerbation of unemployment, is particularly highlighted.

Since the 1990s, in the framework of the European Employment Strategy, local and regional partnerships have been established in many EU countries to design local development programmes and integrated spatial investments based on the comparative advantages of the reference areas.<sup>1</sup> Differences in political, institutional and social profiles have determined the sustainability and effectiveness of these strategies in their development. Collaborative forms of employment, in the field of the social and solidarity economy, are increasingly recognized as important forms of job creation at local level, providing services to people subject to social exclusion (Doulia, 2015). This study attempts to implement an LAPE in the Volos Municipality area, produced upon comparative sectoral research in companies of three reference areas, namely the Cyclades Prefecture, the Municipality of Zografou (Athens) and the Municipality of Volos (Magnaesia), for the detection of local employment offer. The analysis of the LAPE shall be complemented with the use of local research findings to identify and prioritize the target groups’ needs, which have been the critical points to be addressed. This local research has been based on statistics that reflect the social and developmental profile of the region (i.e. Municipality of Volos) as well as on empirical data from local employment records.

Following this introduction, a brief reference to the theoretical background of the examined issue will be made and then the methodology, the research results, the analysis of the implemented LAPes and the conclusions on the potential opportunities resulting from the adoption of similar strategies, will be reflected upon.

## 2. Defining "local". From global to local

### *2.1 The local dimension in the European Employment and Social Protection Strategy*

Locality as a concept entails all those qualities that shape the nature and social character of local communities. Natural environment, local geography, social composition, economy, cultural identity, history and collective culture are factors that make up locality (Daoutopoulos, 2005).

Initially, The Treaty of Amsterdam has exhibited a different approach to employment policy in Europe (European Union, 1997). During the European Summit in Luxembourg back in 1997<sup>2</sup>, this approach was defined by thematic priorities followed by 'guidelines' on employment, with the 11th Guideline later in 2001 serving as reference point for regional and local action on employment. According to the latter, 'all local actors, including the social partners, are invited to mobilize in order to identify job creation opportunities at local level and strengthen their cooperation for this purpose'.<sup>3</sup>

Under the “Open Method of Coordination” policies in the framework of the European Employment Strategy,<sup>4</sup> the European social model received significant boost during the first decade of 2000. The Lisbon Strategy after 2000 set as a new vision “a Knowledge-Based European Economy,<sup>5</sup> which preserves the European social model, ensures environmental protection and

achieves full employment". Expectations concentrated on a shift from a centralized supranational welfare state to more decentralized forms, reflecting the national specificity of the 25 social systems respectively. The implementation of social policy would be carried out on local scale, yet the common objectives would be set and accounted at European level (Sakellaropoulos, 2003).

These objectives have proved quite ambitious, especially in relation to the real performance of the European Union (EU) economies in the first decade of 2000 particularly the Greek one, and even to the broader policies that theoretically have sought to implement this strategy throughout.<sup>6</sup> In 2005 it was discovered that the strategy decided in 2000 had not had the expected results. In reality, the Lisbon Strategy had not existed as a set of European policies attached to objectives, whereas it was the very different national states that had sought to achieve the overall vision themselves.

The Spring Council of March 2005 renamed the Lisbon Strategy, as a "Strategy for Growth and Jobs", but did not change the general approach: its implementation still relied on the nation states that had to draw up three-year National Reform Programmes while the new 'guidelines' adopted summarized the key options not on the basis of the 2000 announcements but on a more neoliberal agenda.<sup>7</sup>

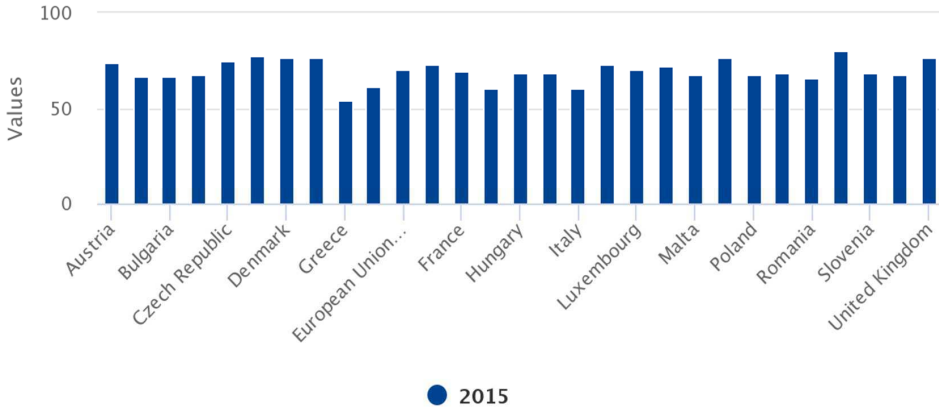
The reformulation of the Lisbon Strategy into the European Strategy of 2020,<sup>8</sup> has set five primary objectives that would guide national objectives and ought to be achieved in order to stimulate growth and increase employment in European Member States: 1. Increase the employment rate of the population of 20-64 years, from 69% in 2010 to at least 75% in 2020; 2. Invest 3% of EU GDP in research and development, in particular for the sake of strengthening private sector investment in R&D and 'European innovation partnerships' between the EU and the Member States; 3. Achieve the '20/20/20' climate and energy targets, i.e. to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 20% compared to 1990 levels (or by 30%, if an international agreement is reached), to increase the share of renewable energy sources in ultimate energy consumption by 20% and to increase energy efficiency to 20%; 4. Reduce the rate of early school leaving from 15% in 2010 to less than 10% in 2020 and increase from 31% to at least 40% the proportion of the 30-34 year-old population completing higher or equivalent education; 5. Reduce by 25% the number of Europeans living below national poverty levels, relieving more than 20 million citizens of this situation.

The economic crisis of 2008 in the West World and the complete prevalence of the neoliberal agenda in the light of troika's policies to tackle the debt crisis across the Eurozone have led to a total failure of the social targeting of the 2020 Strategy.

### 2.1.1 Assessing the 2020 Strategy on Employment and Social Protection.

For Greece, the deviation from the social objectives of the 2020 Strategy is summarized in the following (European Commission, 2017): Employment: In 2008, when the Europe 2020 strategy was adopted, the employment rate in the 20 to 64 age group had been 66.3%. In 2014 it fell to 53.3% and in 2017 it was close to 58% (with part-time and various forms of "flexible" work having increased markedly). Greece is already lacking 17 points out of the 28 EU target and 12 out of the national target set, at 75% as an employment rate.

Figure 1: Employment rate by sex, age group 20-64\*

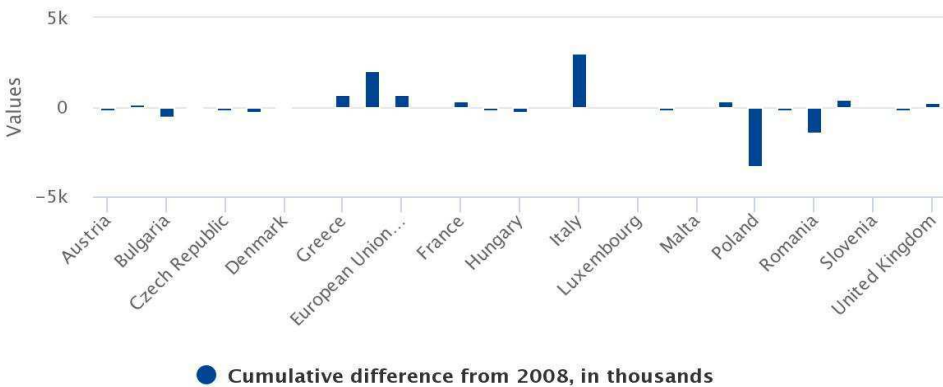


Source: Eurostat, 2017.

\*[EU objective: 75% employment (Charts on the achievement of the Europe 2020 objectives by country)].

Poverty and Social Exclusion: The official national target aims at reducing the number of people at risk of poverty and social exclusion by 450,000 until 2020 compared to 2008. On the contrary by 2017, people at risk of poverty had increased by 655,000. Official figures released by Eurostat in 2017 show that 31.8% of the population, or else 3.4 million people, in Greece were at risk of poverty or social exclusion. In 2008 the corresponding figure was merely 28.1%.

Figure 2: People at risk of poverty or social exclusion\*



Source: Eurostat, 2017.

\*(EU objective: 20 million fewer people facing social exclusion).

Tackling unemployment, which is already affecting the Western world and is expected to be intensified by the removal of pandemic protection measures,<sup>9</sup> requires generous funding from the Central Banks, national reconstruction plans and the creation of new sustainable jobs such as the circular economy, green growth and so on, mostly locally and in new areas.

The 17 objectives of the new 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda<sup>10</sup>, which will form the basis for the development of the 2020 Strategy in the new programming period (2021-27), could be achieved provided that two things precede; first, an effective response to social inequalities, unemployment and social exclusion that threatens Europe's social stability, and second restoring issue of the universal application of the minimum guaranteed income as a priority in social policy.<sup>11</sup>

### 3. Methodology research

**A** Local Action Plan incorporates in its design a set of phases and steps with the most critical ones being those of defining the spatial framework in which it will be implemented, the establishment of the "Local Human Resources Council" - a partnership involving local "social capital" -, public consultation with social actors and citizens, financial tools and outcome indicators of actions that cover existing and new jobs.<sup>12</sup>

One of the most critical issues that should be addressed in the planning phase is that of identifying dynamic labor supply and demand trends and clearly capturing the characteristics of the target groups from which the beneficiaries will emerge. In the context of the research carried out in this study, there has been an effort to bridge this gap, and this fact itself constitutes its added value.

Primary statistics: National Statistical Services' census, monthly OAED census from ERGANI and the annual Reports of the National Labor Institute should be taken into account but cannot determine the dynamic trend of labor supply at industry level or on individual enterprise basis.

Therefore, the following are proposed: (a) a "a comparative sectoral research" targeting local enterprises in order to diagnose from the experience of the entrepreneurial players themselves (local entrepreneurs) the prospects and dynamics of the economic sectors and thus the trends of local labor supply, in conjunction with (b) a "local survey" so as to prioritize the needs of target groups, drawing on statistics and reflecting on the social profile of the intervention area as well as on empirical data of employees in employment promotion and counseling structures.

#### 3.1 Results of the sectoral labor supply survey

The "comparative sectoral research" was conducted in 268 companies,<sup>13</sup> from three regions, namely, the Cyclades Prefecture and the Municipalities of Zografou and that of Volos, linked to 11 categories of double-digit STAKOD codes. Companies were grouped into 8 categories based on 11 variable-parameters included in the questions of the relevant questionnaire.

These variables concerned the: 1. Extent to which the owner's educational and professional experience is relevant to his business. 2. Extent to which the company's human resources are exploited. 3. Employment of more workers apart from the owner himself. 4. Degree of professional specialization required to deal with competition. 5. Number of members employed from the owner's family (family business). 6. Economic performance-profitability. 7. Prospects of the

industry according to the owner. 8. Age of young people (18-40 years) employed. 9. Number of workers-technicians' employed.

The configuration of the above variables resulted in 8 groups of the sampled enterprises, Groups: A, B, C, D, E, F, G & H, where each group displays dynamic characteristics or deficiencies in relation to the 16 variables, according to the data displayed in Table 1.

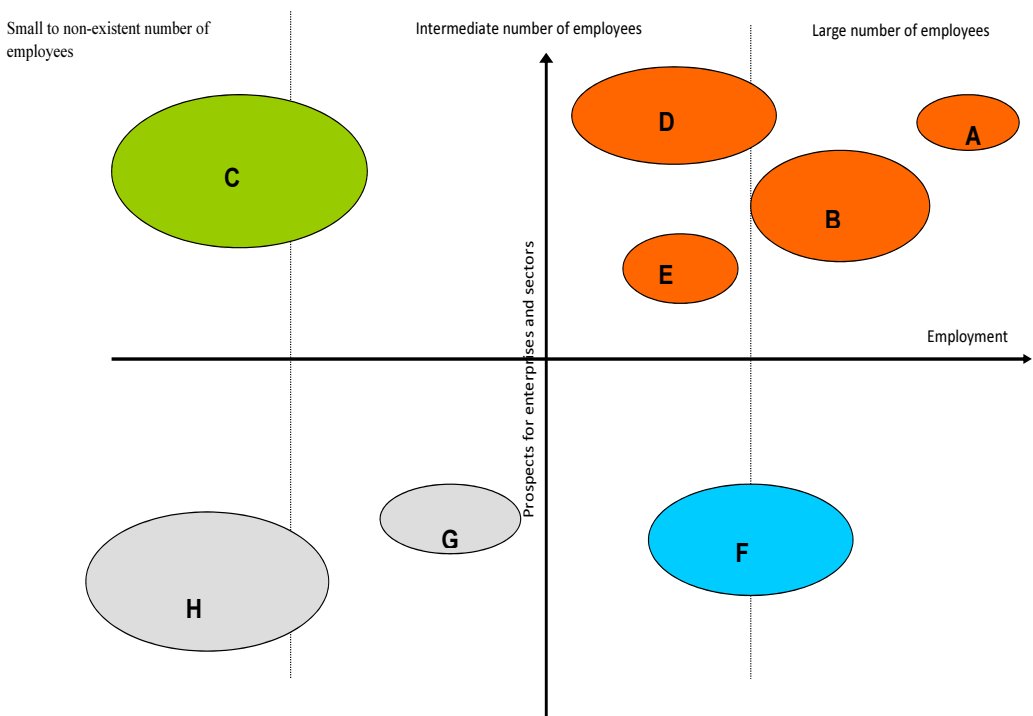
**Table 1: Group sample enterprises in relation to questionnaire variables**

variables	Business groups							
	12	48	68	37	27	8	14	54
	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
Relevance	+	--	-	++	+	+	--	-
Human Resources Exploitation	-	+	+	+	+	~	-	-
Staff Employment	+	+	-	~	+	+	~	-
Number of Permanent Employees	++	+	--	+	+	+	-	--
Specialties	+	+	~	+	+	-	~	~
Family Employment	-	+	+	-	-	+	+	~
Financial Performance	+	+	+	+	-	-	-	-
Branches Perspectives	++	+	+	++	--	+	--	--
Business Perspectives	++	++	+	++	-	+	-	--
Active Employees	+	++	--	~	++	+	-	--
Craftsmen-Workers	-	++	--	-	++	++	-	--
Activity Branches	Education / Provision of Services	Hotels-Restaurants / Trade	Trade	Constructions/ Education / Provision of Services		Wood-Metal/ Food	Hotels/Restaurants	Retail
Entrepreneur Age	-	-	-	~	-	++	+	-
Duration of business operation	New (+)	Old (~)	1990-96 (~)	Old (~)	Rather Old	New (++)	Old (-)	Old (-)
Legal BusinessForm	SA		Individual Company		GP	Individual		Individual
Market						National	Local/National	Local

Placement of the clusters analysis on the axes relating to (a) employment levels and (b) to the sustainability prospects of enterprises is presented in Figure 3. This diagram creates four sub-regions with dynamic groups of enterprises which show a tendency to positive labour supply and economic perspective and involve the following sectors: 1. Education and Services in the regions M. of Zografou and M. of Volos (Group A). 2. Hotels and Catering (Group B) in all reference areas (M. of Volos, Zografou and Cyclades). 3. Provision of Services/ Education and Construction (Group D) in all reference areas (M. of Volos, Zografou and Cyclades). 4. Wood, metal, car and food supply in M. of Volos (Group F).

The above findings also demonstrate that from the 3 reference areas, the Municipality of Volos is the area with the greatest potential in the job offer at the given time period and that was where the Local Employment Plan (LEP) was implemented as a Key Study.

**Figure 3: Illustration of business groups (cluster) in the system of the two dominant axes of factor analysis**



## 4. Implementation of the Local Employment Action Plan (LEAP) in the Municipality of Volos

### 4.1 Employment -Unemployment - Social profile

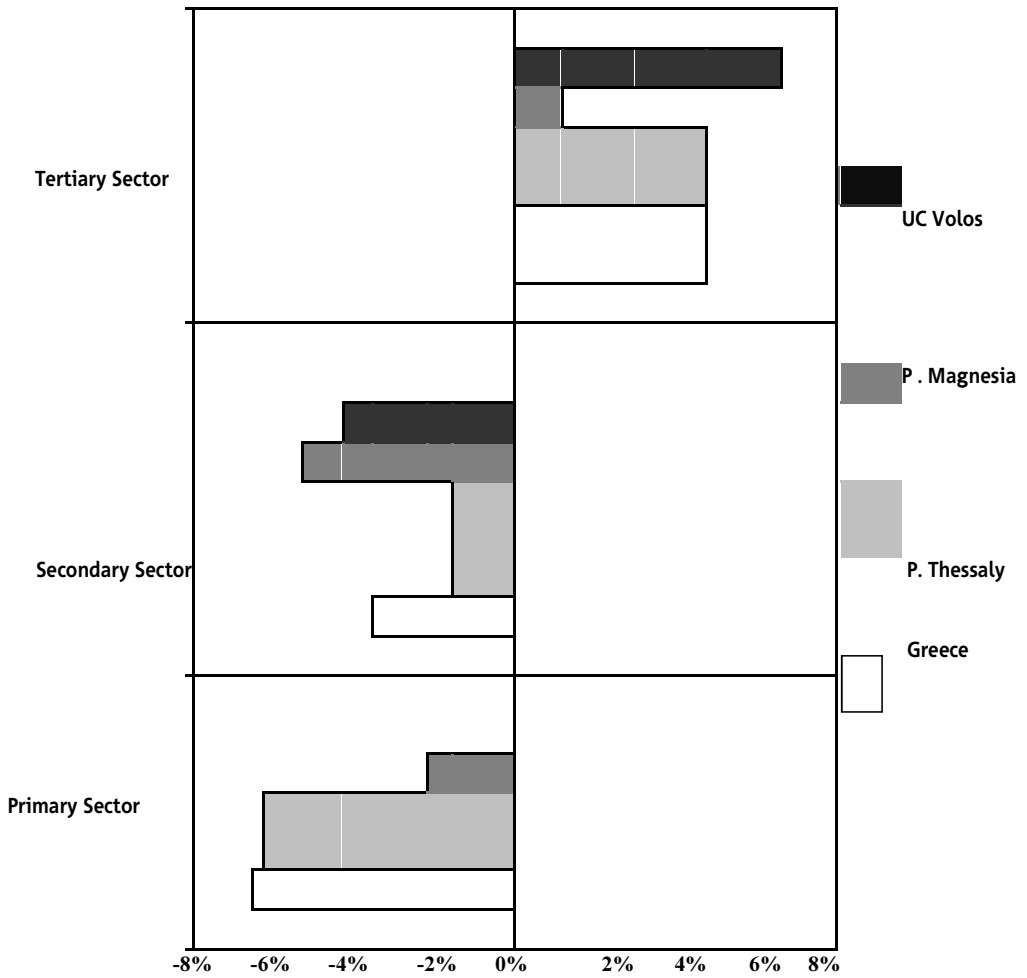
**I**n the early years of the financial crisis, back in 2013, the average annual unemployment rate in the Prefecture of Magnesia reached a percentage of 37.5%, when the national average was close to 28%.<sup>14</sup> This high rate results mainly from the blow to the trade and construction sectors, while the loss of jobs in the industrial sector is more limited, after a prolonged period of de-industrialization in the region during the 1990s.<sup>15</sup> Until 2001 the largest percentage of workers in the Volos Urban Complex (UC) was employed in the tertiary production sector, where the participation rate is not only consistently higher than that of the country, region and prefecture, but also shows growth trends (Figure 4), while the participation rate in the primary sector remains constantly very low. Equally important is the employment rate in the secondary sector, -about a quarter of the active population of UC Volos-, along with the equivalent of Magnesia, which, however, declined faster than that of the region and the country.

Between 2014 and 2017, the Prefecture of Thessaly exhibits the most rising trend in the employment of catering services, with an ever-increasing ratio of recruitment and redundancies. Retail trade, in addition to motor vehicles and motorcycles trade, is the next sector in increased labor supply. The third major sector based on the new vacancies created is the food industry; - the industry ranks third for the years 2014-2016, while in 2017 it fell to the fourth place-. Finally, wholesale trade, as well as trade in motor vehicles and motorcycles, occupies the third place in 2017 with a gradual upward trend. The Municipality of Volos ranks first in 2015 and generally shows an upward trend of new job positions with the exemption of the year 2016, where it declines.<sup>16</sup>

#### 4.1.1 Quality characteristics of unemployment

The unequal distribution of unemployment by sex is an important finding reflected in Figure 5, where the number of registered unemployed women in U.C of Volos is about two and a half times higher than that of the corresponding men in the 2001-2006 reference period.<sup>17</sup> Looking at the distribution of the unemployed by age groups for 2001, it is noted that in each spatial unit the largest participation in unemployment is the 20-24 years old group (difficulty entering the labor market), followed by the corresponding 45-49 year-olds (structural unemployment resulting from business closures or seasonality) (Table 3). An important aspect is that of the unemployment of vulnerable social groups of the local population, especially the Roma, those released from prison, drug addicts, and guardians of single-parent families, the disabled and refugees-migrants.<sup>18</sup>

Figure 4: Employment change by production sector (2001-1991)



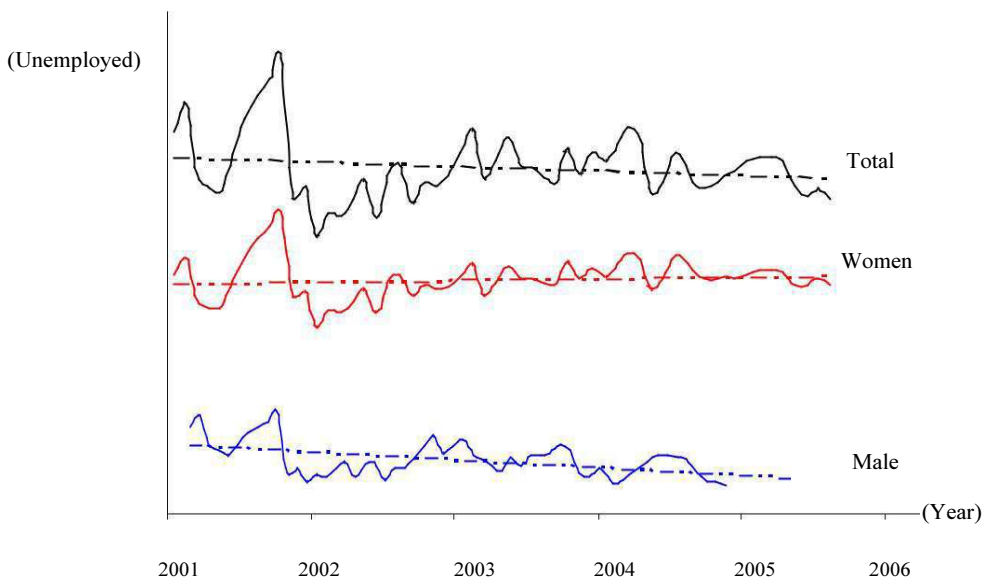
Source: National Statistical Office (1991, 2001).



**Table 3: Employment by age group (2001)**

Age Group	Greece		P. Thessaly		P. Magnesia	
TOTAL	4.102.091	100,00%	266.460	100,00%	71.495	100,00%
15-19	63.002	1,54%	3.905	1,47%	1.221	1,71%
20-24	370.500	9,03%	21.564	8,09%	6.365	8,90%
25-29	572.401	13,95%	33.612	12,61%	9.378	13,12%
30-34	629.104	15,34%	37.861	14,21%	10.825	15,14%
35-39	569.853	13,89%	35.622	13,37%	9.889	13,83%
40-44	556.517	13,57%	37.069	13,91%	10.189	14,25%
45-49	479.487	11,69%	32.617	12,24%	8.635	12,08%
50-54	394.051	9,61%	27.865	10,46%	6.985	9,77%
55-59	240.259	5,86%	18.978	7,12%	4.289	6,00%
60-64	145.760	3,55%	12.647	4,75%	2.360	3,30%
65-69	52.654	1,28%	3.302	1,24%	864	1,21%
70-74	25.090	0,61%	1.230	0,46%	464	0,65%
75+	3.271	0,08%	181	0,07%	26	0,04%

Source: OAED of Volos, 2006.

**Figure 5: Registered unemployed by sex in U.C of Volos**

Source: OAED of Volos, 2006.

On the basis of the analysis for the quality characteristics of unemployment in the region, an additional survey was carried out during the same period (2005) on the profile and needs of the target groups in employment promotion structures, i.e.: A. women and young people and B. vulnerable social groups.

Analysis of the research findings identified the need for increasing the employment of the above target groups. Targeting constitutes the critical point to be resolved in the LAPE under configuration. Swot analysis identified: (a) the existing problems as defined by the disadvantages and risks for each target group and (b) the possibilities that may arise on the basis of advantages and opportunities created for them. Actions pertaining to each objective are identified and assigned with a cost, justified by result indicators.

For an integrated approach, it is proposed to accompany the LAPE with an independent strategy designed to stimulate the entrepreneurship of small and medium-sized enterprises –especially, the ones affected during the financial crisis - by giving priority to those included in the dynamic groups, resulting from the “sectoral labor supply survey” (Methodology). This strategy, which includes a set of economic, technical and institutional support interventions, is considered to be of particular importance, given the prospects for the supply of new jobs.

The above strategy is part of a broader framework for local development planning and opportunities created in the context of the crisis, possibilities in the direction of a new production model with characteristics endogenous, ecological and collaborative. This planning at the spatial level of the LAPE implementation will finally produce and shape the specialized counselling and training packages of the target groups as well as the content of vocational education and lifelong learning for this spatial unit.

## ***4.2 Applying the LAPE for the area of Volos Urban Complex***

In the Municipality of Volos, a significant number of stakeholders participate actively in human resources training and in the promotion of employment and social inclusion. Most of them belong to the wider public sector and have already gained serious experience in the pursuit of training and in employment policies through European Programmes financed by the European Social Fund (ESF).<sup>19</sup> In order for the intervening power of these bodies to be as effective as possible, the establishment of a “Local Council for the Development of Human Resources” is suggested, in which all policy stakeholders, social partners and the university will participate under the Municipality auspices.

Indicative participant members in the proposed Local Council are representatives of: a. local and regional authorities; b. public education and employment bodies (OAED); c. private education, training and lifelong learning institutions; d. workers' trade unions (Labor Centre); e. Chambers, f. research and technology centers; g. the Church, social actors, cooperatives of unemployed and vulnerable groups and active citizens.

The University's contribution to the recording of dynamic labor market trends and educational needs as well as to the creation of permanent training structures (such as an institute for lifelong learning and vocational training) is important.

International experience shows that the main trigger for participation in LEAP partnerships derives from interventions to upgrade public infrastructure and the operation of local social participation institutions (e.g. General assemblies, local referendums, participatory budgets, etc.) (Hatzimichalis, 2018).

### 4.3 Actions to address critical issues

Following the analysis of problems and capabilities by critical issue below, the relevant actions concerning (a) the beneficiaries and (b) the employment support structures participating in the Local Human Resources Development Council are also identified.

<b>1st Critical issue: Tackling women's and young people's unemployment</b>		
	<b>Targets</b>	<b>Actions</b>
<b>Beneficiaries</b>	Informing (individual) recipients about issues in the labor market.	Organizing meetings at the premises of training bodies, OAED and other structures involved in the promotion of employment. Updating a survey on the needs of the local labor market. Use of research results to train consultants in employment support centers. Publishing activity of employment support centers and "Career Day" fairs.
	Development of lifelong counselling and career guidance services. Strengthening women's employment in the Third Economy Sector	Organizing events and awareness seminars
	Addressing housing problems	Adopting of examples and good practices of social housing through building or urban cooperatives. Tracking of empty houses
<b>Structures</b>	Improving the knowledge and skills of young unemployed people as well as the ability to support and reinforce the process of job search by experienced executives	Empowering social economy enterprises and women's entrepreneurship. Systematic cooperation between the educational and training bodies of the region and the local enterprises in the implementation of the traineeship of the training programmes.
	Counselling for the unemployed	Support for the creation of integrated structures of employment support centres (ESC) at local level under local council's supervision.
	Sustainable operation of local employment support centers	Upgrading employment support services with experienced fixed-term staff. Integration of new technologies. Updating information material.

<b>2nd Critical issue: Tackling unemployment among people belonging to vulnerable social groups (V.S.G)</b>		
	<b>Targets</b>	<b>Actions</b>
<b>Beneficiaries</b>	<p>Personalized approach of individuals from vulnerable social groups.</p> <p>Improving the knowledge and competences of people among V.S.G.</p> <p>Training, counseling and legal support.</p>	<p>Establishment of mobility support infrastructures for disabled people.</p> <p>Staffing of existing employment support structures (with staff specialized in V.S.G.</p> <p>Awareness referring to residents and professionals for the employment of people of vulnerable social groups – Corporate social responsibility.</p> <p>Design and implementation of integrated programmes for people with V.S.G background, regarding decent housing and living, the coverage of food and energy needs, social inclusion and access to the labor market.</p> <p>Training disabled people in professions related to local culture and history.</p> <p>Training Roma in recycling, composting and re-use programmes.</p>
<b>Structures</b>	<p>Mapping specific fields and objects to promote social entrepreneurship/ Specific incentives.</p> <p>Organization of empowerment workshops as well as creation of employment support services for people among V.S.G.</p> <p>Creating a shelter for abused women.</p> <p>Enhancement of a toxic-dependent support centre within therapeutic communities.</p> <p>Grant possibilities to enhance the entrepreneurship of people belonging to the V.S.G.</p> <p>Awareness campaigns</p>	<p>Submission of documented funding proposals for the creation of empowerment workshops, as well as services to support abused women ( i.e. shelter for abused women).</p> <p>Raising awareness of the local community to remove stereotypes against people from V.S.G.</p> <p>Creation of primary social care for the provision of personal services to children, women, disabled people and the elderly (Social Cooperative Enterprises)</p>

The implementation of the actions of the 3rd Critical issue: “Stimulating entrepreneurship in small and medium-sized enterprises” will begin to be implemented by the group of the “Local Human Resources Development Council” in the business sectors which according to the comparative sectoral research survey have shown dynamic prospects and thus potential for increasing employment supply. The groups of participant businesses are: 1. In the primary sector: 1.1 Food production. 2. In the secondary sector: 2.1 Metal processing; 2.2 Wood processing; 2.3 Construction; 2.4 Car industry. 3. In the tertiary sector: 3.1 Hotels- Tourism; 3.2 Catering industry; 3.3 Educational Services.

At the same time, the employment consultants under the auspices of the local council, after (a) working out the profiles of the unemployed and (b) proceeding to individual counseling, will then move on to identify the monitoring group of the relevant training actions discussed in the 1st: "Tackling unemployment among women and young people" and in the 2nd Critical issue: "Tackling the unemployment of people belonging to vulnerable social groups (E.C.O.)".

The relevant actions include:

<b>3rd Critical issue: Stimulating entrepreneurship in Small and Medium Enterprises</b>		
	<b>Targets</b>	<b>Actions</b>
<b>Beneficiaries</b>	Framework of educational needs at businesses and sectors level (Cooperation between Municipality and Chambers). Training within the framework of corporate responsibility, sustainable development and circular economy	Sectoral intra-operational training programmes
	Training of self-employed and workers in the basic use of foreign language terminology, communication policy and cultural history of the city	
<b>Structures</b>	Linking university - research and technology centres for the needs of local SMEs. Adapting an institutional procurement framework – public tenders to support local production. Collaboration between a local network and international national organisations.	Drafting of a local endogenous production reconstruction plan with the active participation of all potential actors.
	DG Growth of the E.U. Startups framework support. Alternative applications of financial instruments ( i.e crowdfunding) <sup>20</sup> . International contacts with alternative credit institutions (Ethical- Cooperative Banks, etc.) <sup>21</sup>	
	Business clusters. Connecting tourism to local-regional production especially of the primary sector	
	Social media/local stations. International educational and cultural programmes as a means of showcasing local products.	
	Highlighting quality and history in brands (brandname)	

#### 4.4 Towards a development strategy for "localization" and endogenous productive reconstruction

Taking into consideration (a) the productive reconstruction of the wider intervention area, (b) social and spatial cohesion and (c) sustainable development - in the specifications of "Local Agenda 21"<sup>22</sup> and the "EU 2030 strategy" - the key developmental objectives proposed are referred to in Table 4.

**Table 4: The development objectives of the Prefecture of Magnesia<sup>23</sup>**

- Reconstitution of the regional industrial identity
- Upgrade to an important center for services, education, research and technology
- Development to an international center of cultural and historical interest
- Expansion of multiple forms of tourism – with emphasis on educational, cultural and ecological tourism
- Development of sustainable (organic) agriculture and livestock farming
- Protection of natural ecosystems and reconstruction of infrastructure – shielding to tackle climate change
- Development of collaborative and cooperative forms of economy based on the historical tradition of the wider region

Within the framework of the local development strategy, the cooperative sector can be developed across the spectrum of the above-mentioned development objectives by contributing to the creation of new and sustainable jobs.<sup>24</sup> The "third sector", in order to meet this objective, should be linked – as attempted with the local development experiment in Anavra (Rakkas, 2014) – to the great communal and cooperative tradition of the region<sup>25</sup> set as an example of "modernization of tradition" towards the direction of productive reconstruction.

In the primary-agri-food sector, the direction of production of quality-organic products on a local scale on the basis of the traditional multi-cultivation model can give content to a "new agriculture" (Woods, 2011). In other words, a strategy combining incentives for relocation, the exploitation of 'school land' and of unused equipment from agricultural associations as well as the creation of new dynamic groups of producers on local scale. The influx of locally produced quality products into tourism consumption – a crucial issue for the survival of small producers and accommodation facilities in tourism over the next period – as well as practices of "Community supported agricultural production"<sup>26</sup> would help to limit imported products by creating a more self-sufficient and safe nutritional model.

In the secondary sector, the use of Information and Communication Technologies combined to the possibility of accessing open source software by small and independent producers could give impetus to the production of quality industrial products suiting consumer needs and preferences. The use of 3D printers both decentralized and on a small scale, allows the production of household products and the coverage of public supplies such as medical equipment, machinery and/or energy systems adapted to local production and consumption requirements.<sup>27</sup> The "mas-toric (i.e. craftsman) art"<sup>28</sup> - a peculiar aspect of the Greek production - with roots dating back to the 19th century in the area of Volos could be made feasible again in the new model of peer networks, which together with the exploitation of bankrupt industrial - craft units and their "slow" mechanical equipment could boost the creation of new "working cooperatives".<sup>29</sup>

In terms of energy production, cooperative schemes could undertake the renovation of houses along with energy saving projects the installation of small-scale Renewable Energy Sources (RES), the exploitation of traditional energy technology (windmills/wind pumps) and earthquake protection, within the framework of potentials for "energy cooperatives".

Mythical Jason and the "Argonautical Campaign", the refugee tradition and the religious monuments of the city, the industrial tradition in tobacco, metal, tanning and textiles all viewed at the respective museum premises could render the area a cultural and educational center of universal dimension.<sup>30</sup> The railway connection with Milies could further contribute to the development of educational-cultural tourism,<sup>31</sup> familiarizing visitors or students of other countries with the great educational school of Milies, the "Pandidaktirio" of Filippidis, Gazis and Kostantas, the legacy of Rigas Ferraios Velestinlis, the works of the great folk painter Theophilos, the bridge of De Kiriko – father of the surrealist Italian painter – and with many other monuments of the region's popular culture.

Recycling, composting, reusing and repairing should be organized at neighborhood level by activating local environmental groups, thus contributing to saving money, addressing the ecological crisis and creating real jobs in the context of the "circular economy"<sup>32</sup> as well as to providing solutions for the vulnerable social groups in the reference area.<sup>33</sup>

## 5. Conclusions

**T**hrough its adopted approach, the present study has intended to contribute to the formulation of an original methodological tool for the preparation and implementation of a Local Action Plan for Employment (LAPE) under conditions of crisis in the traditional Social State, filling the gap of dynamic detection and labor supply in a specific spatial unit (Municipality of Volos).

More specifically, it is recommended to consult and train unemployed people (young people, women, and special groups of the population) in dynamic sectors of the local economy as identified by sectoral field research such as: in the production of food via biological-natural methods, in the processing of metal and wood – traditional sectors of the local industry – in the construction sector and in the car industry, with applications of the circular economy in tourism and catering.

A broader development strategy proposed for the region of Volos involves: (a) the restoration of its industrial identity (focusing on the defense industry and the creation of a ship repair zone in the Port of Volos); (b) its emergence as an educational and cultural pole of international status; (c) the promotion of alternative forms of tourism by pairing it with other sectors of the economy, in particular the primary sector; (d) sustainable development and innovation with an emphasis on public infrastructure and the circular-green economy.

The cooperative tradition of Volos can give impetus to new projects of social and solidarity entrepreneurship by creating real and sustainable new jobs. Local-regional employment and social inclusion policies require continuous evaluation and redesign, interwoven with actions to upgrade and/or expand public infrastructure as well as with national social and economic policies (e.g. minimum guaranteed income).

The Greek experience of similar initiatives being exclusively supported by European Structural Funding resources and the lack of a more holistic and targeted spatial intervention has led to reduced efficiency in the creation of new and sustainable jobs and in tackling structural unemployment.

For Local Governments, a critical point in the near future will be to secure individual resources or local funds so as to address the complex and amplifying problems that will multiply in

the phase of the forthcoming economic downturn, although the State is given a great opportunity to redirect the workforce from sectors vulnerable to major crises of the globalization model.

## Notes

1. 89 Territorial Employment Agreements (ESAs) upgraded to pilot projects in 1997. <http://inforegio.cec.eu.int/pacts>.
2. On the issues discussed at the Luxembourg Summit see: [https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/el/PRES\\_97\\_288](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/el/PRES_97_288).
3. Communication from the Commission to the Council, the European Parliament, the Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions - Strengthening the local dimension of the European Employment Strategy /\* COM/2001/0629 final \*/ Document 52001DC0629.
4. For the definition of the term see: [https://eurlex.europa.eu/summary/glossary/open\\_method\\_coordination.html?locale=el](https://eurlex.europa.eu/summary/glossary/open_method_coordination.html?locale=el).
5. For the objectives of the Lisbon Strategy see: <https://www.espa.gr/el/Pages/DictionaryFS.aspx?item=397>.
6. Policies related: investing in knowledge and innovation, harnessing the potential of SMEs, improving employability with flexibility and security and the best possible management of energy resources <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EL/TXT/HTML?uri=LEGISSUM:g24246&from=EN>.
7. According to the 2005 National Reform Programme of Greece "the elaboration of the NRP was based on a new development model, which looks forward to the development of sound private business initiative, competitiveness and extroversion" European Social Fund, Electronic Library. <http://www.esfhellas.gr/el/Pages/eLibraryFS.aspx?item=1756>.
8. For the five Objectives of Europe 2020 see: <https://www.espa.gr/el/pages/staticEurope2020.aspx>.
9. 59 million jobs at risk in the EU reports a publication by the McKinsey Global Institute (MGI), April 2020. It refers to occupations for which returning to normality will take longer, due to social distancing measures: <https://www.mckinsey.com/industries/public-sector/our-insights/covid-19-and-jobs-monitoring-the-us-impact-on-people-and-places#>.
10. For the EU's approach in implementing the UN Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development see: [https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/international-strategies/sustainable-development-goals/eu-approach-sustainable-development\\_el](https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/international-strategies/sustainable-development-goals/eu-approach-sustainable-development_el).
11. INE GSEE Study "Basic guaranteed income and minimum guaranteed income policies in EU-15, 2010".
12. See above (2).
13. The research was conducted by the Employment Promotion Network – Development Partnership "In Action", within the framework of the EQUAL Initiative A Phase 2004-2005, with partner bodies being OAED, OEEK, KEDKE, EETAA, the rural research laboratory of the Department of Spatial Planning Engineering, Urban Planning and Regional Development of the University of Thessaly and private training bodies – in which the author of the present article has also been involved.
14. ELSTAT Survey, 2017.



15. The crisis in the industrial sector of the region was addressed by reducing work shifts or even by converting contracts into individual agreements, although in a few cases also with redundancies (see special newspaper Magnesia tribute to the industry of Volos, 2015).
16. 2018 Annual Report of the National Institute of Labor and Human Resources for the Region of Thessaly, period: 2014-2017.
17. The depiction of unemployment characteristics for the U.C of Volos is based on primary data from OAED of Volos (2006) as well as on data from the 2006 Research-Informatics Employment Observatory (PAEP) for the prefecture. The reference period was selected in conjunction with sectoral research (see Methodology).
18. Inventory of vulnerable social groups in the Prefecture of Magnesia by the Vocational Training Centre (VTC) of Prefectural Committee of Popular Education (NELE) Magnesia, 2005.
19. For the social profile of the LAPE intervention area, the characteristics of the target groups, the data on social exclusion and the actors active in the field see: "Regional Strategic Plan for Social Integration with a Detailed Plan for Action and Implementation of Interventions to Combat Poverty and Deepening Social Cohesion in the Region of Thessaly" Region of Thessaly, 2015.
20. The main categories of financial instruments are microloans, guarantees, risk sharing loans (all forms of including microloans) and equity financing investment schemes. (Association of Management Consulting Companies of Greece- SESMA).
21. E.g. Banca Etica, European Micro Finance Network, Greek Cooperative Banks.
22. It was drafted in June 1992 by the leaders of 100 countries and representatives from more than 10,000 NGOs in Rio, Brazil, as part of the UN Summit with the purpose to promote the principles of sustainable development. (Daoutopoulos, Local Development, 2005). An important source of information on international, European and regional initiatives in the context of local Agenda 21 on the International Council for Local Initiatives website: [www.iclei.org](http://www.iclei.org).
23. Strategic Development Plan of Volos, 2007-2013, University of Thessaly.
24. Law 4430/16 and Law 4019/11 Social and Solidarity Economy, L. 4384/16 Agricultural cooperatives.
25. See. Klimis, A. "Cooperatives in Greece" in the Social Solidarity and Regional Development Network (KAPA), Center for the Support and Development of Cooperative Enterprises. <http://www.diktio-kapa.dos.gr/>.
26. For Community Support Agriculture see European CSA Research Group.
27. In the current pandemic crisis, the University of Thessaly has already begun the production of 7 thousands of face shields and respirators to protect doctors and nursing staff from Covid 19 using CNC cutting and 3D printers, with the support of students and volunteers.
28. See. Institute for Endogenous Productive Reconstruction: [ednogenesis.blogspot.com](http://ednogenesis.blogspot.com).
29. Law 4513/2018.
30. For the design of cultural policy at local and regional level see Bitsani E. "Cultural Management and Regional Development".
31. For the design of an alternative tourist model see Apostolopoulos K. 2009.
32. See European Commission 2019, "Implementation of the Circular Economy Action Plan".
33. Fields of development action of Local Government Organizations in Law 4555/2018 for the Self-Government "KLEISTHENIS".

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## Biographical Note

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# Paradiplomacy and social cohesion: The case of the participation of the Greek municipalities in European city networks

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## Παραδιπλωματία και κοινωνική συνοχή: η περίπτωση της συμμετοχής των ελληνικών δήμων στα Ευρωπαϊκά δίκτυα πόλεων

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### ABSTRACT

The recognition of the international role of the paradiplomatic initiatives of local authorities, in combination with the limited academic attention of paradiplomacy for city networking, set the framework of the present article. Its main theme is focused on the participation of the Greek municipalities in European social city networks during the programming period 2007-2013. The general research finding of the article is that the participation of Greek municipalities in European social city networks entails changes at the levels of structures, policies and procedures, but the above results are filtered by the endogenous framework of mentalities, bureaucratic procedures and organisational deficits of local government.

**KEY WORDS:** European city networks, city diplomacy, soft governance, administrative reforms.

### ΠΕΡΙΛΗΨΗ

Η αναγνώριση του διεθνούς ρόλου των παραδιπλωματικών πρωτοβουλιών των τοπικών αρχών, σε συνδυασμό με το περιορισμένο ακαδημαϊκό ενδιαφέρον της παραδιπλωματίας για τη δικτύωση των πόλεων τις τελευταίες δεκαετίες, συνιστούν το πλαίσιο της παρούσας μελέτης, η οποία ασχολείται με τη συμμετοχή των ελληνικών δήμων σε ευρωπαϊκά κοινωνικά δίκτυα πόλεων στη διάρκεια της προγραμματικής περιόδου 2007-2013. Το γενικότερο ερευνητικό συμπέρασμα της μελέτης είναι ότι η ευρωπαϊκή δικτύωση των δήμων συνεπάγεται αλλαγές σε επίπεδο δομών, πολιτικών και διαδικασιών, ωστόσο, τα ανωτέρω αποτελέσματα φιλτράρονται από το ενδογενές πλαίσιο νοοτροπιών, γραφειοκρατικών διαδικασιών, και οργανωτικών ελλειμμάτων της τοπικής αυτοδιοίκησης.

**ΛΕΞΕΙΣ-ΚΛΕΙΔΙΑ:** Ευρωπαϊκά δίκτυα πόλεων, διπλωματία πόλεων, ήπια διακυβέρνηση, διοικητικές μεταρρυθμίσεις.

## 1. Introduction

Ivo H. Daalder, former U.S. ambassador to NATO (2009-13) has recently asserted that cities are playing a significant role in “addressing the many global challenges that our nations and others must confront—from climate change and cyber security to terrorism and pandemics...” (Dossani and Amiri, 2019). City diplomacy is a particularly good match for the numerous pro-

grammes and initiatives of the State Department to enhance national security and prosperity of U.S. citizens through non-coercive methods of statecraft, such as public diplomacy - see the recent City and State Diplomacy Act (Karvounis 2020, pp.55-65). Attempts to understand and explain local/regional competences in foreign relations have been predominantly carried out under the heading of 'paradiplomacy' (see among others Duchacek 1990; Soldatos 1990; Michelmann 1990; Keating 1999; Hocking 1993; Aldecoa 1999a; Paquin and Lachapelle 2005; Lecours 2002). Yet, so far, this paradiplomacy research agenda has been very constructive in conceptualising mainly the external activities of regions and in making descriptive inventories of their paradiplomatic activities and instruments.

In this contribution, however, we argue that the paradiplomacy framework and its future research agenda should be broadened and complemented by the impact of the city diplomacy. Empirically, we build our argument on the Greek experience. More specifically, in this article we present an account of the impact of the paradiplomatic activities of the Greek municipalities on the policy domain of social cohesion, in the framework of their participation in European city networks during the 2007-2013 programming period.

International city networks have contributed to the circumstances under which the decisions affecting the functioning of the political, economic, cultural and other domains become less dependent on nation state regulations, but more forced by powers that bloomed tremendously in the last few decades at supranational and subnational (regional/local) levels. There are various examples of these networks that promote a number of priorities: social issues (eg. Cities Alliance-Cities without Slums), information society (eg. Global Cities Dialogue), peaceful coexistence of people (eg. Sister Cities International-Global Citizen Diplomacy Network) and so on. Despite their disparity, however, international city networks share common aspirations: exchanging experiences and knowledge, enhancing the skills of their members' executives, exerting influence, securing international representation and defending their interests.

First, we present an overview of the paradiplomacy literature. We then step beyond and propose that the paradiplomacy framework should be combined and complemented with the city diplomacy theoretical framework in order to explain how municipalities' external activities are developed in the particular circumstances of the international city networks. Next, we turn back to the Greek case and apply our research strategy to a narrative of the impact of the participation of the Greek local authorities in European city networks in the social policy domain. From this, we suggest the added value of city networking depends on the internal barriers that put limits on the paradiplomatic activities of the municipalities.

## 2. Paradiplomacy

**R**obert Keohane and Joseph Nye, in the early 1970s, were among the first who had argued in their co-edited *Transnational Relations and World Politics* about the possibility of "transnational relations" among non-state actors like multinational corporations (MNCs). In this sense, Keohane and Nye opened the floor for further discussions about new players in international relations. Yet, the interest in studying the international activities of subnational governments and municipal authorities (frequently called paradiplomacy) has grown since 1980s. Two major trends in international relations have mostly been the main reasons for that academic interest. The first, outward, has promoted integration among countries, creating regional and supranational blocs

(see EU). The second trend, inward, has generated increased decentralization of federal and unitary states, providing greater authority to non-central authorities. In this context, sub-national authorities (regional/local) are treated as emerging or established actors in domestic politics. As the US experience of subnational diplomacy has made clear above, this is hardly surprising since local/regional authorities are most noticeable for their design and/or implementation of public policy within the boundaries of their decentralized territory, and for their interaction with the central state. Sometimes forgotten is the fact that local/regional authorities also operate within the broader international context, that they can be international actors. Besides, paradiplomacy is an integral part of regionalization and is no longer restricted solely to the federal or decentralized states, as most scholars have assumed. Paradiplomatic activities can be viewed as an outcome of the growing role of cities and regions, which has been apparent at the economic or political as well as social and cultural levels (Sanalla 2014, p. 162). For some years now, the broader debate suggests the idea that cities play a vital role in addressing the world's problems, with hallmark books as Edward Glaeser's *Triumph of the City* (2011) and Benjamin Barber's *If Mayors Rule the World* (2013).

Nevertheless, paradiplomacy studies have focused primarily on postmodern federal states, in which subnational units proactively engaged in foreign relations. They largely ignore unitary Westphalian states. As a matter of fact, the initial serious surveys on the role of subnational governments in external affairs appeared in the beginning of the 1970s and were mostly concentrated in North American academia (Levy 1975; Swanson 1976; Burmester, 1978; Sample and Trani, 1980). The 1970s was the period of genesis of paradiplomacy studies, when political scientists began to seriously consider regional governments as new actors in international affairs. This turn happened in the context of the "great transnational revolution" in international relations theory, as well as under the impact of the "Quiet revolution" and "New federalism" – those changes in domestic politics that took place in Canada and USA, respectively, at that time. The researches on paradiplomacy that were conducted in the 1970s predominantly based on case study analysis of the involvement of Canadian provinces and US states in international affairs (Kuznetsov, 2014, p.43). But the real progress in the quality of paradiplomacy studies came to light during the 1980s, when a group of North American political scientists, including Ivo Duchacek, Hans Michelmann, John Kincaid, Panayotis Soldatos and others, besides providing a narrative of regional international activity, also attempted to conceptualize the phenomenon of paradiplomacy and tried to create some explanatory theoretical patterns in order to understand the causes and consequences of constituent diplomacy for federal systems (Duchacek, 1984; Soldatos, 1990; Kincaid, 1990; Soldatos and Michelmann, 1992; Michelmann, 1989; Fry, 1989). So, the first definition of paradiplomacy was produced by Ivo Duchacek and Panayotis Soldatos (1990). They concurred in that "paradiplomacy is a concept that refers to international activity by sub-national actors (federated units, regions, urban communities, cities). This concept supports, complements, corrects, duplicates or challenges the nation states". Later the security issue was added to the definition of paradiplomacy. Noe Cornago (1999), a professor at the University of the Basque Country, talked about "sub-state governments' involvement in international relationships, through the establishment of formal and informal contacts, either permanent or ad hoc, with foreign public or private entities, with the aim to promote socio-economic, cultural or political issues, as well as any other foreign dimension of their own constitutional competences". In the 1990s, the global changes in world politics, like the fall of the Iron Curtain and the high-speed strengthening of the European Union as a new supranational regime, drastically increased

the role of subnational entities in many parts of the globe, particularly in Europe and in new post-communist federations like Russia (Keating 1999; Borrás-Alomar, 1994; Hocking, 1999; Aguirre, 1999; Aldecoa and Keating, 1999; Stern, 1994). The activities in the international arena of the Basque Country and Catalonia in Spain, Flandreau and Wallonia in Belgium, Tatarstan in Russia and other regions, attracted a lot of attention from the side of the European researchers, and, as a result, paradiplomacy studies expanded outside North American academia. The concept of the "Europe of the Regions" became dominant in the European discourse at that time and brought more recognition to the idea of high diversity in Europe at the subnational level (Keating, 1999; Borrás-Alomar et al., 1994; Hocking, 1999; Aguirre, 1999; Aldecoa and Keating, 1994). In the 2000s the scholarly interest in paradiplomacy geographically spread worldwide and the field gained its new academic stalwarts among researchers from Latin America and Asia (Zhimin, 2005; Zhu, 2005). It is especially interesting to mention the publication by Jain Rurnedra in 2005 of the monograph *Japan's Subnational Governments in International Affairs* (Rurnedra, 2005). The innovatory component of this work consists not only in the fact that it is the first comprehensive research on constituent diplomacy in Japan, but, more importantly, that Rundera's research breaks away from the rather strong prepossession in the literature of the previous decades that the phenomenon of paradiplomacy is an attribute of federal or quasi-federal states, like Canada or Spain, but not common for unitary nations like Japan.

Thus, more than 45 years have passed since the first studies of paradiplomacy appeared and, although some scholars have analyzed the internationalization of the noncentral government using comparative politics or international relations' theories, the vast majority of these studies are still taking place only in federal countries and on specific cases (Lecours, 2002). Still, in the 1980s, and in parallel to the scholars' attention to paradiplomatic activities of the regions, a great surge of intercity collaboration came up when a variety of city networks emerged. These networks were different from what existed before in the sense that they were outward-looking: they helped cities to organize themselves around particular issues, so that together they could have a significant impact on a European or global scale. It was the time when city diplomacy started to abandon the traditional peacekeeping cause.

### 3. City diplomacy & City networking

#### 3.1 *The concept of City diplomacy*

There are very few definitions of the concept of 'city diplomacy'. In fact, the concept has never been seriously treated and described. Most of the definitions given to city diplomacy are functional, limited to the activities of cities. The definitions mainly come from specific organizations and international city associations active in promoting such actions.

Specifically, in Recommendation No. 234 of 2008, the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe defines city diplomacy as "a tool of local authorities and their associations to promote social cohesion, conflict prevention, conflict resolution and post-conflict reconstruction in order to create a stable environment where citizens can live together in a state of peace, democracy and prosperity" (Congress of Local and Regional Authorities 2008a). In its No.251 (2008) decision, the Congress argued that "city diplomacy expresses the growing importance of the city as a political actor at the international stage. Cities and their networks are involved in initiatives to build and consolidate peace in other areas" (Congress of Local and Regional Authorities 2008b).



In the same year, the 1st World Diplomacy Conference of Cities was organized by the international network of United States Cities and Local Authorities (UCLG), the International Cooperation Office of the Union of Dutch Local Authorities (VNG) and the City of The Hague. The Conference was held in The Hague (11-13 June 2008), following the relevant preparatory conferences in Perugia (2006) and Barcelona (2007). It adopted the Hague Agenda for City Diplomacy, which set out the definition of city diplomacy given by the Council of Europe (VNG 2008).

The Committee of the Regions (2009a) maintained that "modern diplomacy is no longer expressed and practiced by national governments, given the need for dialogue, cooperation and coordination to achieve the objectives of peace, democracy and respect for human rights in Europe. At all levels, closer cooperation between national governments and local and regional authorities is a natural but also necessary direction for a multilevel and more effective approach and strategy". Indeed, the CoR emphasized that "cities and major cities play an important role in international cooperation provided they cooperate with other municipalities in international networks".

Similarly, the Glocal Forum described city diplomacy as a form of decentralization of international relations management where municipalities were seen as key players, especially in conflict zones. Although the Federation of Canadian Municipalities did not define urban diplomacy in this way, it approached the international role of local authorities in terms of war and peace (Bush 2003).

These definitions are examples of extremely restrictive approaches to city diplomacy, focusing on security (conflict prevention, peacekeeping, post-conflict reconstruction actions), cooperation with developing countries, culture and entrepreneurship.

On the other hand, the Netherlands Institute for International Relations identified six dimensions of urban diplomacy: security, development, economics, culture, networks and representation (Van der Pluijm and Melissen 2007, pp. 19-33). As Van der Pluijm and Melissen have argued (2007, 11), "city diplomacy can be defined as the institutions and processes by which cities engage in partnership with actors at the international political scene in order to represent themselves and their interests vis-à-vis others".

Indeed, according to Sizoo (2007, pp.6-8), cities play different roles in the international arena: as lobbyists, exerting pressure on international organizations, while promoting and defending the interests and concerns of their residents; as mediators, negotiating agreements between local authorities; and as partners in projects, participating with other local authorities to promote or implement specific policies.

La Porte argues that the specific initiatives of city diplomats are similar to those of any diplomat or representative of an international body: collect information to better understand international developments; provide information for their region; represent their city in international organizations; negotiate agreements with other cities; and implement a variety of conflict prevention and peace enforcement actions (La Porte 2011, p.8). Saskia Sassen (2002, 1991) points out that even the so-called World Cities (eg New York, London), which are able to regulate their affairs more autonomously than others, increase their influence when they belong to networks that facilitate the exchange of know-how with other cities.

Indeed, Van der Pluijm and Melissen (2007, p. 15) point out three reasons why a city chooses its diplomatic representation: First, to serve the interests of the city itself and its citizens in matters of security, due to the influx of large numbers of immigrants or to the need for environmental protection measures. Secondly, to meet the needs of citizens who may wish to participate in collaborative projects to support developing countries. Third, to express solidarity with actions



in other cities because they either face particular difficulties (e.g. natural disasters) or share common interests (e.g., participate in demonstrations on local problems).

City diplomacy is embodied in different forms and fields: intermunicipal agreements; cultural exchanges; town-twinning; EGTCs; and (thematic/geographical) city networks. This latter form of city diplomacy is the research focus of our present article.

### *3.2 Concept and practice of international Cities networks*

City networks have become widely understood in the literature as formal or less formal collaborative initiatives to exchange information and disseminate experiences in urban policy, and sustainable development (Labaeye and Sauer 2013, p. Vii). As Sassen has pointed out, whether they are large, 'global' or small cities, their international influence is even greater within networks (Sassen, 2002, 1991). Indeed, Perulli et al. (2002, p. 69) point out a number of areas in which international city networks are active: urban and sustainable development, environment, culture, transport, information and communication technologies, tourism, health. Even when looking at Europe alone, there is a multifold of city networks existing today. An example of an early pioneer is EUROCITIES, which was founded in 1986 by six European cities as a network through which cities could share knowledge and influence EU policymakers. Other examples are the climate-oriented networks of Energy Cities and Climate Alliance that began in the 1990s, when local climate action became an important issue for many European cities. A recent example is the European Network of Living Labs that brings together the many living labs that are currently emerging throughout Europe. Finally, also the EU itself contributed to the establishment of several city networks, of which the URBACT ones is a prominent example. These examples of European city networks, together with many others, create a dense web of connections between cities in Europe.

Atkinson and Rossignolo (2010) refer to international city networks as 'mild forms of governance' and proceed with a conceptual delimitation and an analysis of their added value. Conceptually, international cities networks can be defined according to (a) their structures: horizontal, vertical and polycentric (Dematteis 1994; Dematteis and Guarrasi 1995); (b) their nature as creators of synergies and complementarities (Camagni and Salone 1993); and (c) their function as sources and conveyors of knowledge (Trullén and Boix 2003).

For his part, Barber highlights three features of international city networks. Firstly, the networks of local authorities are not limited in their composition to 'recruiting' only local authorities. On the contrary, in European city networks we may find a wide range of bodies such as 'universities, chambers of commerce and private sector bodies' (Barber 1997, p. 22). Secondly, the role of persons and support given by the local communities in establishing effective networks is prominent; this is also highlighted by Payre (2010, p. 264). The third feature of these networks is the Brussels office as an 'embassy' and a mini-representation of these local councils (John 1994; Hooghe and Marks 1996, pp. 82-85).

Bouteligier defines networks in terms of functions and internal organization: exchange of experiences, knowledge and best practices; improving cities 'operational capacity; and representing cities' interests internationally (Bouteligier 2011, p.15).

We could generally argue that an international city network is a multilateral international cooperation of local authorities, more or less structured, focused on one or more issues of common interest, and aims at improving business and operational dynamics of all stakeholders through exchange actions, influence and targeted projects, in the short or long term.

The present research is moving in this direction, aiming to cover this poverty of empirical studies in this field. The empirical part of this article attempts to evaluate the learning process and to highlight the limits of the paradiplomatic activities of the Greek municipalities which participated in European socially oriented city networks.

## 4. The paradiplomatic activities of Greek municipalities in European city networks

**D**uring the programming period 2007-2013, 114 Greek municipalities took part in 136 European city networks (Karvounis 2017b). This article places indicatively particular emphasis on those Greek municipalities which participated in city networks whose statutory purpose was the promotion of social cohesion.

### *(a) Design of urban health policies*

The Municipality of Maroussi participated in the city network "Building Healthy Communities" (URBACT II), which aimed to create an inter-municipal network of cities that would support the 10 partner cities (Lecce-Italy, Maroussi-Greece, Bacau-Romania, Baia M-Romania, d -Poland, Lidingo-Sweden, Barnsley-United Kingdom, Belfast-United Kingdom, Madrid-Spain), through actions to exchange experience and know-how to actively address and improve the planning and implementation of urban health services provided for European citizens. The total duration of the project was 37 months (PHASE I & II) and was completed on 19/7/2011. In the final project / network evaluation report, the Municipality of Maroussi appeared to have promoted actions to launch a mobile medical testing unit, as well as social inclusion initiatives.

### *(b) Improving disability services*

Headed by the Municipality of Andravida-Kyllini and the partnership composed of the Municipalities of Mesto (Czech Republic), Cellino San Marco (Italy), Guimaraes (Portugal), Nantes-Metropoles (France), Salzburg (Austria), Pamplona (Spain), South Bublin (Spain) County Council (Republic of Ireland), Gdynia (Poland), Velenje (Slovenia), Bijeljina (Bosnia and Herzegovina) and Smolyan (Bulgaria) the city network "United European Citizens" (UNIZENS), in the framework of the European Programme for Europe 2007-2013', encouraged co-operation between Member States to eliminate barriers to social inclusion. As a result of the project, people with disabilities gained access to facilities used for the programme, the citizens became more aware of the social problems and the municipality more open-minded, allowing European citizens from different countries to visit and get to know the area (Karvounis 2017a, p.109).

The Municipality of Igoumenitsa (Municipality of Igoumenitsa 2015) participated in the city network called 'Fo(u)r Europe' ('Unity in diversity - social exclusion is a European issue'), in the framework of the European programme "Europe for Citizens, 2007-2013", which also included the cities of Velbert (Germany), Chatellerault (France), and Corby (United Kingdom) (Karvounis 2017a, pp. 83-84). The four cities have, inter alia, exchanged experiences and innovative actions on people with disabilities.

### *(c) Integrated intervention in degraded areas*

The Municipality of Nea Ionia, Volos, participated from May 2008 to December 2009 in the “Urbameco Cities” (URBACT II), a city network composed of the municipalities of Constanta (Romania), Lodz and Wroclaw (Poland), Tatabanya (Hungary), Birmingham (Hungary) United Kingdom), Arnhem (Netherlands), Göteborg (Sweden) and Greater Lyon (France). The URBAMECO network focused on strategies and plans that could promote sustainable integrated urban regeneration, with a particular focus on developing the local economy as a key element in combating social exclusion. For its part, the Greek Municipality prepared a local action plan for integrated interventions in four degraded areas (Aliveri, Refugees, Xirokampos, New Delta). The themes of the action plan included broadening citizens' dialogue and participation, protecting the environment, enhancing employment and social cohesion, local crime prevention councils, improving the attractiveness of small and medium-sized enterprises and monitoring actions (Municipality of Nea Ionia 2009).

### *(d) Roma action*

Furthermore, the Department of Social Policy, Innovative Actions, Public Health and Gender Equality of Heraklion has been supporting the municipality's participation in the Council of Europe's Roma Alliance for Integration of Roma since 2011. This network has successfully assisted the municipality in planning actions for the Roma population. Indeed, in November 2013, the municipality was awarded the second DOSTA Award! of the Council of Europe for its actions and structures in the field of human rights protection, in particular on actions and structures concerning Roma. Specifically, the actions of the municipality concerned the Roma and Vulnerable Support Center, which has been located in Bodrum since 2006, providing social, primary care, education and employment support for Roma; a series of actions (“I am a Roma” Programme) organized, focusing on raising public awareness of Roma rights and culture through the media and education system; and networks on Roma issues with the aim of analyzing good practices and exchanging ideas.

### *(e) Employment policies for young people*

The municipality of Thessaloniki participated in the “MyGen @ Work” city network (URBACT II) with the participation of 11 European cities (Rotterdam, Antwerp, Riga, Glasgow, Gdansk, Warsaw, Tampere, Maribor, Turin, Thessaloniki). A key concern of the network was to promote employment for young people in a changing labor market, focusing on business talents and mindsets. In the framework of this network, different city agencies (TEI, farmers, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, Chamber of Commerce, Young Entrepreneurs, Ergon, etc.) collaborated within the Local Support Group, developing synergies to acquire know-how and promote youth employment. Actions were presented, workshops were held and good practices were disseminated among young people in Thessaloniki.

### *(f) Inclusive City*

The municipality of Haidari participated in the “NeT-TOPIC” medium-sized European city network (Sesto San Giovanni-Italy, Haidari-Greece, Sacele-Romania, Kladno-Czech Republic, Salford-United Kingdom, Nanterre-France, Barakaldo-Spain), in the framework of the European programme URBACT II. The aim of the network was to highlight solutions for major issues in urban and suburban areas. Through this network, the main project of the municipality entitled “Haidari for all - Haidari

for all" matured to a great extent, initially set by the municipal authority and based on the following axes - areas of application: Culture - cultural heritage , education, environment, accessibility and equal opportunities. As part of the project, an Urban Local Support Group was created and prepared actions for the above policy domains, with the objective of making these actions in accordance with the needs of the citizens but also the specificities of the municipality (Barreiro 2015, p. 15).

### *(g) Rural employment policies*

As a crowning point of long-standing cooperation and twinning with the German municipality of Detmold, the municipality of Oreokastro participated in the City Network for the Financial Crisis (C.E.P) in the framework of the Europe for Citizens, 2007-2013. The project entitled "Customized employment project for cities; opportunities for growth-C.E.P." was a network of cities from seven (7) EU Member States (Belgium, France, Germany, Greece, United Kingdom, Lithuania, Portugal) aiming to exchange experiences and strategies to enhance employment and create opportunities in the various partner cities. All in all, cities already faced the economic downturn and its immediate impacts on unemployment, migration, especially on the young and aging populations. By participating in this network, the municipality gained significant benefits in boosting employment, especially in its rural areas, transferring good practices (Municipality of Oreokastro 2015, p. 48).

### *(h) Intercultural policies against exclusion*

The Council of Europe's Intercultural Cities (CoE) programme was the result of a political debate process that led the organization to issue the White Paper on Intercultural Dialogue (Council of Europe 2008). The European Commission's preparations for the European Year of Intercultural Dialogue (2008) also contributed to the design of the programme. The launch of the programme took place in Liverpool in May 2008 with a two-year pilot project. The purpose of the programme was to inspire cities to challenge the conventional negative view of migration and diversity and to provide them with the tools to design their policies and practices. The programme was based on the principle that diversity can bring a multifunctional advantage of economic, social and cultural innovation to urban communities. But this can only happen when different cultural traditions have the opportunity to meet, interact and collaborate locally. In addition to that, cities were called upon to get rid of the overriding reason that equated diversity with crisis, terrorist threat, illegal immigration and to focus on things that affected people's quality of life on a daily basis, such as public services. .

The programme, as a peer-to-peer learning and assessment network, operates at two levels: it allows policy makers from different cities to share their experiences, successes and failures internationally in a mutually supportive environment. The results of cities' participation in the network were the formulation of strategies, the expansion of the partnership and the emergence of innovations.

In this context, the municipality of Patras has been involved in the Council of Europe's Intercultural Cities Network since 2008, addressing the multicultural character of modern cities and highlighting actions in individual policy domains, including services for citizens, education, volunteering, and culture. In this case, the benefits of the municipal authority were limited to sharing good practices and experiences with other network partners and participating in transnational projects. Patras has been for the last 25 years a living city for many people coming from Europe, mainly Albania, Romania, Bulgaria and Russia, as well as people from Nigeria, Syria, China, and India. Planning actions for vulnerable social groups, such as immigrants, women and young

people, are areas of action that include services for citizens, education and culture. In particular, a key role in this effort was played by the Patras Inclusion Council, a valuable tool for the participation, representation and promotion of migrants' views locally (Municipality of Patreon 2013).

On this basis, the anti-rumor model launched by Barcelona has been adopted by the municipality due to its flexibility and adaptability, in education, communication and awareness-raising activities, culture and sport. The result of the city networking was the improvement of the services of the social structures and the creation of an initial strategic framework for interculturalism in Patras, which acts as an "umbrella" for any related action.

## 5. The limits of the paradiplomatic activities of the Greek municipalities in European City networks

**A**t the same time, however, the positive aspects of the paradiplomatic activities of the Greek municipalities were filtered by the particular circumstances that impeded the longevity of these results and which, to a great extent, identified the reform potential of these networks and their members.

The problems that arose in the European city networking of Greek municipalities were related to political choices, the inability of their personnel to voice a technocratic discourse in the organizational units of municipalities, organizational and staffing organizational deficits, bureaucratic constraints, and a cultural context that was not tolerable for change. For instance, what emerged from meetings with the staff of the Thessaloniki Municipality's Operational Planning & ICT Directorate was that, despite the opportunities and prospects that existed for Greek cities from the European city networking, particular difficulties and problems arose in the procedures for the procurement of goods and services; in expenditure control (Court of Auditors); in the recruitment process; and in the certification of expenditure (Co-funded Projects Certification and Verification Authority). What is more, the city of Heraklion faced "inadequate staffing of the European Programmes Office" and a "lack of culture for inter-municipal co-operation" (Municipality of Heraklion 2013, p.44). At the same wavelength, the municipality of Xanthi met major difficulties in disseminating knowledge and information among its executive officers, in promoting the benefits of introducing and practicing a new management model aimed at optimizing the efficiency and productivity of municipal services, and in the adaptation of executives to the implementation of modern management and operation systems (Municipality of Xanthi 2014, pp. 263, 264, 265, 267, 271). The same conclusion came up in the case of the municipality of Egaleo where there was a "lack of an organized unit" to exploit trans-European networks, although the need for "networking and developing partnerships at European level" was still considered important in the field of social policy (Municipality Egaleo 2015, p.107).

Similarly, despite the benefits of implementing a quality assurance system in the municipality of Nea Ionia Volos, difficulties of change and resistance to the "new" have been identified, as there has been intense criticism from employees as to whether such a system from technocratic point of view could adapt to the specificities of a social service. In this context, the municipality of Kastoria has also been unable to assimilate, at the operational level, the openness of multi-lateral partnerships by providing for similar administrative support structures and enhancing the internal development of the municipality as an organization. The lack of a qualified staff and the

fragmentation of sectoral items have limited the opportunities for participation and exploitation of those partnerships and programmes. Furthermore, despite the efforts made by the municipality of Komotini, through the URBACT II programme, to improve the living conditions of Alan Koyu, a Roma Muslim slum, the attempts to relocate it have failed. Lack of trust on the part of the public, lack of an informed public and an active civil society all result in weakening and undermining these initiatives.

To these factors we may add the economic crisis that led to the municipalities of Athens, Maroussi, and Ag. Paraskevi to leave or cut off cooperation with European city networks due to their inability to meet their financial obligations.

## 6. Conclusion

The present article focused on the results of the city networking of the Greek local authorities at European level during the programming period 2007-2013. Therefore, the problems encountered at the municipal level in relation to the relationship between municipalities and the EU and its networks were not a matter of choice for or against Europe and its multilateral partnerships. Actually, the city networking paradiplomatic activities of the Greek municipalities exhibited the local authorities' willingness to defend structures, attitudes and in general a culture that undermined the results of their, paradoxically, expressed willingness to participate in the process of European integration through these international partnerships. It was mainly those 'systemic' problems, structural deficiencies and cultural norms that inhibited or mitigated the potential of the paradiplomatic multilateral initiatives and their reform opportunities at local level.

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## Ιωάννης Βαβούρας και Χαρά Βαβούρα, *Οικονομική Πολιτική*

Αθήνα: Εκδόσεις Παπαζήση, 2019

Το βιβλίο που έχει συγγράψει ο Ιωάννης Βαβούρας, Ομότιμος Καθηγητής και τ. Πρύτανης του Παντείου Πανεπιστημίου Κοινωνικών και Πολιτικών Επιστημών, και η Χαρά Βαβούρα, Δρ. Οικονομικών, με τίτλο «Οικονομική Πολιτική» έχει ως κύριο σκοπό την ολοκληρωμένη και εις βάθος ανάλυση της θεωρίας και των βασικών προβλημάτων της οικονομικής πολιτικής. Η θεωρητική πλαισίωση της οικονομικής πολιτικής συνυφαίνεται με ειδικότερα ζητήματα εμπειρικού περιεχομένου. Είναι ένα επιστημονικό πόνημα εξαιρετικής ευρυμάθειας, καθώς και σύζευξης των ερευνητικών δεδομένων με κυρίαρχες θεωρητικές προσεγγίσεις. Το βιβλίο αποτελείται από 13 κεφάλαια, τα οποία συναρθρώνονται γύρω από τους κεντρικούς άξονές του, ακολουθώντας μια κλιμακωτή λογική εμβάθυνσης.

Ειδικότερα, το βιβλίο διαρθρώνεται σε τρία μέρη. Το πρώτο μέρος που αποτελείται από τα κεφάλαια 1 έως και 6, παρουσιάζεται η θεωρία της οικονομικής πολιτικής. Προσδιορίζεται εννοιολογικά ο όρος, οριοθετείται η έννοια των φορέων της οικονομικής πολιτικής, ενώ δίνεται ιδιαίτερη έμφαση στην ανάλυση των υποδειγμάτων οικονομικής πολιτικής σταθερών και μεταβαλλόμενων στόχων. Επίσης, αναλύει με τη χρήση παραδοσιακών και νεότερων θεωρητικών υποδειγμάτων τις διασυνδέσεις μεταξύ στόχων και μέσων, καθώς και τους τρόπους με τους οποίους ο συνδυασμός αυτών αναμένεται να προάγει την κοινωνική ευημερία κάτω από τους υπάρχοντες περιορισμούς. Τέλος, αναδεικνύει τη σημασία της διακυβέρνησης, η οποία αναφέρεται στον τρόπο σύμφωνα με τον οποίο ασκείται η εξουσία σε μια χώρα, ενώ η καλή διακυβέρνηση συνδέεται με τον οικονομικό και κοινωνικό μετασχηματισμό. Συνεπώς, συμπεραίνεται ότι η αναπτυξιακή προοπτική των χωρών καθορίζεται τόσο από μακροοικονομικούς παράγοντες όσο και από διάφορες θεσμικές μεταβλητές.

Το δεύτερο μέρος αποτελείται από τα κεφάλαια 7 έως και 12 εμβαθύνοντας στα σημαντικότερα προβλήματα της οικονομικής πολιτικής, τα οποία συνιστούν τους αντίστοιχους θεμελιώδεις της σκοπούς. Η θεωρητική ανάλυση συμπληρώνεται από την εκτεταμένη παράθεση στοιχείων ιδιαίτερα αναφορικά με την πορεία της ελληνικής οικονομίας, τα οποία εξετάζουν και προεκτείνουν τα ζητήματα που αναπτύσσονται σε κάθε κεφάλαιο. Παράλληλα, γίνονται συγκρίσεις με την ευρωπαϊκή εμπειρία και πρακτική, ώστε να κατανοηθεί η σύγχρονη οικονομική πραγματικότητα με τη χρήση εμπειρικών δεδομένων. Θα πρέπει να τονιστεί ότι η οικονομική πολιτική της χώρας μας χαρακτηρίζεται από ασυνέπειες ως προς τους στόχους της και αναποτελεσματικότητες ως προς τα μέσα που χρησιμοποιούνται, ενώ σύμφωνα με τους Συγγραφείς αυτές οι αδυναμίες έχουν πλέον καταστεί δομικές.

Στο τρίτο μέρος, που αποτελείται από το κεφάλαιο 13, παρουσιάζεται η διαμόρφωση της οικονομικής πολιτικής στο πλαίσιο της Οικονομικής και Νομισματικής Ένωσης (ΟΝΕ). Δίνεται ιδιαίτερη έμφαση στη διερεύνηση της νομισματικής και της δημοσιονομικής πολιτικής. Εξετάζεται, επίσης, το ζήτημα του συντονισμού της γενικότερης οικονομικής πολιτικής των κρατών-μελών της Ευρωπαϊκής Ένωσης και κατ' επέκταση των περιορισμών και δυνατοτήτων που απορρέουν ειδικότερα από τη συμμετοχή της Ελλάδας στην Ευρωπαϊκή Ένωση και την Ευρωζώνη. Επιπρόσθετα, παρουσιάζεται η διάρθρωση του κανονιστικού πλαισίου άσκησης οικονομικής πολιτικής στην ΟΝΕ, καθώς και οι θεσμοί που πλαισιώνουν τη νέα οικονομική διακυβέρνηση της Ευρωπαϊκής Ένωσης και τους μηχανισμούς χρηματοδοτικής της ενίσχυσης.

Θα πρέπει να επισημανθεί ότι το βιβλίο αυτό αποτελεί αναθεώρηση του επίτομου εγχειριδίου με τίτλο «Οικονομική Πολιτική», που εκδόθηκε το 2013 από τις Εκδόσεις Παπαζήση, τη βασική διάταξη του οποίου και ακολουθεί. Όπως επισημαίνουν και οι Συγγραφείς στον Πρόλογο, στην τρέχουσα έκδοση έχουν επικαιροποιηθεί πλήρως τα στοιχεία των κεφαλαίων 7 έως και 12, στα οποία αναλύονται τα σημαντικότερα προβλήματα κατά την άσκηση οικονομικής πολιτικής με ιδιαίτερη έμφαση στην ελληνική οικονομία, αλλά και του κεφαλαίου 13, όπου αναλύονται οι αρχές διαμόρφωσης της οικονομικής πολιτικής στο πλαίσιο της Ευρωπαϊκής Ένωσης με επικέντρωση στο οικοδόμημα της Ευρωζώνης. Παράλληλα, υιοθετήθηκε το Ευρωπαϊκό Σύστημα Εθνικών και Περιφερειακών Λογαριασμών της Ευρωπαϊκής Ένωσης (ΕΣΛ 2010), σύμφωνα με το οποίο καταρτίζονται πλέον τα στοιχεία των εθνικών λογαριασμών σε ολόκληρη την Ευρωπαϊκή Ένωση. Επίσης, η εξέταση του ισοζυγίου πληρωμών και της διεθνούς επενδυτικής θέσης βασίζεται στη νέα μεθοδολογία κατάρτισης BPM6 (της 6ης έκδοσης του Εγχειριδίου του Ισοζυγίου Πληρωμών του ΔΝΤ). Στο κεφάλαιο 13, η διερεύνηση της νέας οικονομικής διακυβέρνησης της Ευρωπαϊκής Ένωσης μελετάται εκτενέστερα λαμβάνοντας υπόψη τις εξελίξεις σε αυτό το πεδίο και επιχειρείται μια πρώτη αξιολόγησή της σύμφωνα με τα έως τώρα δεδομένα. Στο ίδιο κεφάλαιο παρουσιάζεται η θεσμική διαδικασία αποχώρησης ενός κράτους-μέλους από την Ευρωπαϊκή Ένωση.

Θα πρέπει να επισημανθεί ότι το βιβλίο αναδεικνύει τους βαθύτερους γενεσιουργούς παράγοντες της κρίσης χρέους της χώρας και τις συνθήκες για μια βιώσιμη έξοδο από αυτήν. Πιο συγκεκριμένα, οι Συγγραφείς παρουσιάζουν τη δική τους κριτική θεώρηση σχετικά με τα αίτια της δημοσιονομικής κρίσης, η οποία μαζί με τα υψηλά δημοσιονομικά ελλείμματα και τη διόγκωση του δημόσιου χρέους εκφράζει τις δομικές αδυναμίες του δημόσιου τομέα, ευρύτερες θεσμικές αγκυλώσεις, όπως και πολιτικοκοινωνική αστάθεια, η οποία συνδέεται με την ποιότητα ή την ηθική της διακυβέρνησης. Άλλωστε, εντός του βιβλίου διατυπώνεται ότι «τα δημόσια ελλείμματα στην Ελλάδα δεν είναι κατά βάση το αποτέλεσμα τυχαίων οικονομικών διαταραχών, διαρθρωτικής αστάθειας ή κυβερνητικών σφαλμάτων στη χάραξη και εφαρμογή της οικονομικής πολιτικής». Αντίθετα, το δημοσιονομικό πρόβλημα της χώρας είναι κατ' εξοχήν πολιτικής και κοινωνικής φύσεως.

Εν κατακλείδι, το βιβλίο αποτελεί μια πρωτότυπη, πλήρη, ενδελχική και ταυτόχρονα εύληπτη επιστημονική πραγματεία θέτοντας ένα σημαντικό πλαίσιο ερμηνείας σχετικά με τα κρίσιμα θέματα τα οποία πραγματεύεται το παρόν πόνημα και τους αναλυτικούς σκοπούς του για την ασκούμενη οικονομική πολιτική στην Ελλάδα συναρμοσμένη με το ευρύτερο Ευρωπαϊκό περιβάλλον. Η επιστημονική του πληρότητα (συνδυασμός θεωρητικής και εμπειρικής έρευνας), ο διδακτικός του χαρακτήρας και η χρήση ρέοντα λόγου το καθιστούν σύγγραμμα αναφοράς και πολύτιμο διδακτικό εγχειρίδιο για προπτυχιακούς και μεταπτυχιακούς φοιτητές των Κοινωνικών Επιστημών, προσφέροντας τις απαραίτητες κατευθύνσεις για την απόκτηση θεμελιωδών θεωρητικών γνώσεων και στέρεων ερευνητικών βάσεων. Παράλληλα, συνιστά ιδιαίτερα χρήσιμο εργαλείο για όσους συμμετέχουν στις εγχώριες πολιτικές διαδικασίες ή σε ένα ευρύ φάσμα τομέων της δημόσιας πολιτικής και στους τρόπους λήψης και εφαρμογής των αποφάσεων. Κατ' αυτό τον τρόπο, το βιβλίο εισάγει στον εγχώριο ακαδημαϊκό προβληματισμό σημαντικά επιστημονικά δεδομένα ενώ παράλληλα τίθεται στο επίκεντρο του επιστημονικού διαλόγου εμπλουτίζοντας την επιστημονική συζήτηση με αφηγηρία την κατανόηση της διαδικασίας άσκησης οικονομικής πολιτικής και των παραγόντων που την επηρεάζουν στο σύγχρονο εγχώριο και ευρωπαϊκό γίγνεσθαι.

## Μαρία Καραμεσίνη - Jill Rubery (Επιμέλεια)

### *Γυναίκες και Λιτότητα. Η οικονομική κρίση και το μέλλον της ισότητας των φύλων*

Αθήνα: Νήσος, 2015

Σπάνια ένας συλλογικός τόμος συνδυάζει τόσες πολλές προσεγγίσεις του φαινομένου που εξετάζει, όσο ο συλλογικός τόμος που παρουσιάζεται εδώ. Οι επιμελήτριες του τόμου, Μαρία Καραμεσίνη και Jill Rubery επέλεξαν να συγκροτήσουν τον τόμο σε τρεις ενότητες: το θεωρητικό πλαίσιο, την ανάλυση των στοιχείων και την ανάπτυξη των δημόσιων πολιτικών. Επέλεξαν επίσης να συνδυάσουν σημαντικές μεθοδολογικές προσεγγίσεις, την συγκριτική έρευνα (πολλών χωρών της ΕΕ), την οικονομική προσέγγιση (της αγορά εργασίας) και την κοινωνική προσέγγιση (της φροντίδας και της πρόνοιας). Και όλα αυτά, για να διερευνήσουν αποτελεσματικά τις συνέπειες της πρόσφατης οικονομικής κρίσης στις γυναίκες και στις πολιτικές ισότητες. Πράγματι, η μελέτη των έμφυλων σχέσεων στην περίοδο των ραγδαίων αλλαγών που σημειώθηκαν στην ευρωπαϊκή κοινωνία τη δύσκολη περίοδο 2008-2014 απαιτεί εκ των πραγμάτων διεπιστημονικές προσεγγίσεις, αφού η διάσταση του φύλου διαπερνά και διαμορφώνει το σύνολο των τομέων της οικονομικής και κοινωνικής ζωής. Μακάρι να υπάρξει σύντομα μια παρόμοια ανάλυση των επιπτώσεων της πρόσφατης υγειονομικής κρίσης που κλόνισε ακόμα μια φορά τις εύθραυστες ισορροπίες του φύλου στις κοινωνίες μας. Παρουσιάζονται εδώ συνοπτικά τα 6 από τα 16 κεφάλαια του συλλογικού τόμου τα οποία θεωρώ ότι ενδιαφέρουν περισσότερο την ελληνική επιστημονική και ερευνητική κοινότητα.

Στο πρώτο μέρος του τόμου «Ανάπτυξη του αναλυτικού πλαισίου» το κεφάλαιο της Jill Rubery «Από τις 'γυναίκες και ύφεση' στις 'γυναίκες και λιτότητα'. Ένα πλαίσιο ανάλυσης» προτείνει ένα νέο αναλυτικό πλαίσιο για την εξήγηση των, όπως αποδείχθηκε, διαφορετικών επιπτώσεων της λιτότητας όχι μόνο στις ανισότητες φύλου αλλά και σε διαφορετικές ομάδες γυναικών. Το πλαίσιο αυτό αμφισβητεί τόσο την άποψη ότι οι γυναίκες υφίστανται γραμμικά τις αρνητικές συνέπειες της ύφεσης, όσο και εκείνη που ισχυρίζεται ότι η μείωση του χάσματος του φύλου πρέπει να συνεχισθεί ακόμα και όταν οι συνθήκες ζωής και εργασίας και των δύο φύλων συμπιέζονται σε χαμηλότερα επίπεδα. Το νέο θεωρητικό πλαίσιο που προτείνει η συγγραφέας ενσωματώνει τις διαφορές ως προς την ιδεολογία του φύλου στις διάφορες χώρες και έτσι μπορεί εξηγήσει καλύτερα τις αντιφατικές επιπτώσεις των μέτρων λιτότητας στις γυναίκες και στην ισότητα. Σε αυτό το πλαίσιο η μορφή που παίρνουν οι έμφυλες σχέσεις καθορίζουν τις συνέπειες της χρηματοπιστωτικής κρίσης, όχι μόνο βραχυπρόθεσμα (ανεργία κλπ) αλλά και μακροπρόθεσμα, αφού σε αυτές οφείλονται ορισμένες σταδιακές θεσμικές αλλαγές στον τρόπο οργάνωσης της εργασίας και της φροντίδας.

Στο πρώτο κεφάλαιο του δεύτερου μέρους «Υφεση και Λιτότητα: Εμπειρίες στην ΕΕ και σε επιλεγμένες περιπτώσεις χωρών», η Francesca Bettio και η Alina Verashchagina παρουσιάζουν συνοπτικά την Ευρωπαϊκή Έρευνα για τις επιπτώσεις της οικονομικής κρίσης στις γυναίκες που διεξήχθη το 2013 από τα δύο δίκτυα εμπειρογνομόνων της Επιτροπής για την ισότητα των φύλων στην απασχόληση και την κοινωνική συνοχή. Η έρευνα αφορά σε όλες τις χώρες της ΕΕ και δείχνει τρεις σημαντικές τάσεις: (α) τη μείωση του χάσματος φύλου (εκτός του τομέα της απλήρωτης οικιακής εργασίας και φροντίδας) με παράλληλη μείωση του επιπέδου των μεγεθών (ποσοστών απασχόλησης, μισθών κλπ), γεγονός που υποδεικνύει την σχετική προστασία των γυναικών από τον ισχύοντα επαγγελματικό διαχωρισμό (β) την αλλαγή του ισχύοντος οικογενειακού προτύπου, αφού πολλές γυναίκες έγιναν ο μοναδικός

«προμηθευτής εισοδήματος» στην οικογένεια, μη αποσυρόμενες από την αγορά εργασίας και (γ) την απομυθοποίηση του ρόλου των γυναικών ως «βαλβίδων ασφαλείας» στην κατάτμηση της αγοράς, ενώ παράλληλα αποδείχθηκε ότι αυτόν τον ρόλο έπαιξαν οι νέοι/ες εργαζόμενοι/ες και οι μετανάστες/τριες. Με αυτό το σκεπτικό διδαχθήκαμε ότι η σημαντικότερη επίπτωση της κρίσης δεν ήταν τόσο η αύξηση της ανισότητας των φύλων, όσο η αναστολή του ρυθμού ένταξης των γυναικών στην αγορά εργασίας, γεγονός που σχετίζεται άμεσα με την υποβάθμιση των κοινωνικών υπηρεσιών που έφερε η λιτότητα. Τα αποτελέσματα της κρίσης κλόνισαν τις κυρίαρχες θεωρητικές απόψεις για τον ρόλο των γυναικών ως «κοινωνικά απόβλητων» αλλά και την αποτίμηση της εργασίας των γυναικών με αποκλειστικό κριτήριο το χάσμα του φύλου στα βασικά μεγέθη της αγοράς εργασίας. Η μέτρηση των αποκλίσεων από τους επιθυμητούς στόχους και όχι από τα ποσοστά των ανδρών αποδείχθηκε περισσότερο χρήσιμη.

Επίσης στο δεύτερο μέρος του τόμου, το κεφάλαιο της Μαρίας Καραμεσίνη με τίτλο «Διαρθρωτική κρίση και προσαρμογή στην Ελλάδα: Κοινωνική οπισθοδρόμηση και προκλήσεις για την ισότητα των φύλων» αναλύει διεξοδικά την εξέλιξη των μεγεθών της απασχόλησης των γυναικών σε συνάρτηση με την δημοσιονομική προσαρμογή των ετών 2010- 2014. Η συγγραφέας καταλήγει σε επτά σημαντικά συμπεράσματα που συνοψίζονται εδώ: (α) η κρίση ανέκοψε την ένταξη των γυναικών στην αγορά εργασίας εκτοξεύοντας την ανεργία τους στο υψηλότερο επίπεδο στην ΕΕ (32%), (β) η κρίση έπληξε περισσότερο την απασχόληση των ανδρών από αυτή των γυναικών, (γ) Οι γυναίκες δεν λειτούργησαν ως εφεδρικός στρατός εργασίας και αντιστάθηκαν δυναμικά στην μείωση του οικογενειακού εισοδήματος, (δ) Οι συνθήκες εργασίας και οι εργασιακές σχέσεις «θηλυκοποιήθηκαν» και έγιναν πιο επισφαλείς για πολλούς άνδρες εργαζόμενους ενώ ο περιορισμός των κοινωνικών δαπανών και οι πρόωρες συνταξιοδοτήσεις στο δημόσιο τομέα έπληξαν περισσότερο τις γυναίκες (ε) οι πολιτικές ισότητας δεν κατόρθωσαν να αντισταθίσουν τις αρνητικές συνέπειες της κρίσης και την υποβάθμιση των δομών φροντίδας των παιδιών, (στ) η κρίση διάβρωσε το μοντέλο των «δύο κουβαλητών» επιφέροντας αλλαγές στον καταμερισμό της εργασίας μέσα στην οικογένεια και τέλος (ζ) αποτελεί ειρωνεία το γεγονός ότι η μείωση των ανισοτήτων φύλου που επιτεύχθηκε στην αγορά εργασίας έγινε σε περιόδους επιδείνωσης των όρων εργασίας για όλους, γεγονός που απαιτεί αναστοχασμό σχετικά με το νόημα της ισότητας των φύλων και τις προτεραιότητες της πολιτικής ισότητας.

Το τρίτο μέρος του τόμου «Προκλήσεις πολιτικής και οι προοπτικές για την ισότητα των φύλων» περιλαμβάνει τρία κεφάλαια. Στο πρώτο κεφάλαιο της Paola Villa και του Mark Smith «Πολιτικές στην εποχή της κρίσης. Πολιτική απασχόλησης και ισότητα των φύλων στην Ευρώπη» παρουσιάζεται η ιστορική εξέλιξη των ευρωπαϊκών πολιτικών ισότητας των φύλων από το 1997, έτος συγκρότησης της «Ευρωπαϊκής Στρατηγικής για την Απασχόληση» στην οποία η ισότητα των φύλων αποτελούσε τον έναν από τους 4 άξονες. Σχεδόν 20 χρόνια μετά, η Στρατηγική «Ευρώπη 2020» δεν περιλαμβάνει ούτε καν αναφορά στο φύλο ή στο gender mainstreaming. Οι συγγραφείς εντόπισαν τους πολιτικούς παράγοντες αυτής της δραστηρικής υποβάθμισης και της ανατροπής της αναγνωρισιμότητας που είχε η ισότητα των φύλων στην ΕΕ. Οι λόγοι έχουν σχέση με τις ευρύτερες πολιτικές εξελίξεις και με την εκάστοτε έκβαση της σύγκρουσης ανάμεσα στις κοινωνικές και οικονομικές προτεραιότητες της πολιτικής απασχόλησης, η οποία και αυτή στην πορεία υποτάχθηκε στην οικονομική πολιτική, ακόμα και σε επίπεδο επίσημων κειμένων. Ευρύτεροι πολιτικοί λόγοι όπως η διεύρυνση της ΕΕ αρχές τις δεκαετίας του 2000 αλλά και, κυρίως, η οικονομική κρίση επέσπευσαν την καθοδική τροχιά και «αποκάλυψαν» το σαθρό έδαφος στο οποίο στηρίζονταν οι πολιτικές ισότητας.

Το δεύτερο κεφάλαιο της Diane Perrons και της Ania Plomien «Φύλο, ανισότητα, κρίση. Προς μια πιο ισότιμη ανάπτυξη» προτείνεται ως απάντηση στην κρίση ένα νέο μοντέλο ανάπτυξης που αναγνωρίζει τους δεσμούς ανάμεσα στην οικονομία και την κοινωνία, στην ανάπτυξη και την πρόνοια, την παραγωγή και την αναπαραγωγή εξασφαλίζοντας μια κοινωνία βιώσιμη και δίκαιη και οικονομικά και κοινωνικά. Ο Keynes επανέρχεται στο προσκήνιο ως προσέγγιση που μπορεί να συνδυάσει την οικονομική ανάπτυξη με τις κοινωνικές δαπάνες και ενισχύεται από τις θεωρίες του Καρλ Πολανγί και της Nancy Fraser. Η διπλή κίνηση του καπιταλισμού ανάμεσα στην απελευθέρωση και την ρύθμιση των αγορών προσφέρει το θεωρητικό υπόβαθρο της κρίσης για την ορθότητα ή όχι των μέτρων λιτότητας. Σε αυτό το πλαίσιο, η λύση της δημοσιονομικής επέκτασης του Ομπάμα απέναντι στην κρίση αναδεικνύεται περισσότερο πετυχημένη από την λύση της επιβολής πολιτικών λιτότητας της ΕΕ. Ο παράγοντας φύλο και οι έμφυλες σχέσεις αποτελούν δομικό στοιχείο της κίνησης αυτής και κατά συνέπεια και οι εκάστοτε εκδοχές της, όπως άλλωστε και οι δημοσιονομικές επιλογές για την αντιμετώπιση της κρίσης επηρεάζουν διαφορετικά τη καθημερινή ζωή των ανδρών και των γυναικών. Οι συγγραφείς αναλύουν επίσης τον ρόλο των κοινωνικών ανισοτήτων και αυτών του φύλου στην δημιουργία της οικονομικής κρίσης. Σε τελευταία ανάλυση, μια φεμινιστική οπτική της κευνσιανής προσέγγισης θα έκανε πράγματι τη μεγάλη διαφορά, αφού χρειάζεται το σοσιαλδημοκρατικό μοντέλο κοινωνικής προστασίας για να καρποφορήσει. Σε αυτό το πλαίσιο η ένταξη της ισότητας στους δημόσιους προϋπολογισμούς (gender budgeting) αναδεικνύεται πολύτιμο εργαλείο ανάκαμψης και προμοδοτείται ως σημαντική παράμετρος «αντοχής» της ισότητας στους χαλεπούς καιρούς της οικονομικής κρίσης.

Το τρίτο κεφάλαιο συνοψίζει τα προηγούμενα κεφάλαια και αναλύει τις άμεσες, εν εξελίξει και μακροπρόθεσμες συνέπειες της κρίσης και των πολιτικών λιτότητας στην ισότητα των φύλων. Για το λόγο αυτό η Μαρία Καραμεσίνη και η Jill Rubery διερευνούν τα καθεστάτα φύλου πριν την κρίση του 2007-8 και τον τρόπο που άνδρες και γυναίκες έχουν αντεπεξέλθει μέχρι τώρα σε αυτήν και αναλύουν τα στοιχεία και τις τάσεις των πολιτικών απασχόλησης με στόχο να διατυπώσουν προβλέψεις για το μέλλον. Το καθεστώς φύλου περιγράφει περισσότερο φαινόμενα από ότι αριθμούς, στατιστικές, ποσοότητες, αμοιβές και ποσοστά. Περιγράφει τρόπους συγκρότησης της καθημερινής ζωής που διαμορφώνουν την οικογένεια, την αγορά εργασίας, τους έμφυλους καταμερισμούς και διαχωρισμούς στην απασχόληση, τη δυαδικότητα του φύλου που μας καθορίζει, αλλά και μας καταπιέζει. Οι τάσεις στα καθεστάτα φύλου, φροντίδας, χρόνου εργασίας υποδηλώνουν μια μετακίνηση προς ένα οικουμενικό μοντέλο του ενήλικου εργαζομένου, καθώς συγκλίνουν τα ποσοστά απασχόλησης ανδρών και γυναικών παρά τις διαφορές ανάμεσα σε κράτη. Όμως, οι διαφορές που παραμένουν ως προς τη θέση τους στην απασχόληση, καθιστούν τις γυναίκες πιο ευπαθείς στην ύφεση παρά την εντύπωση που δημιούργησαν οι πολύ αρνητικές επιπτώσεις της πρώτης φάσης της κρίσης στην απασχόληση των ανδρών. Ο τρόπος οργάνωσης της φροντίδας, η αύξηση των μονογονεϊκών οικογενειών, των ελαστικών μορφών εργασίας κλπ κρατούν ακόμα υψηλές τις ανισότητες των φύλων στην αγορά εργασίας και το βαθμό «ευπάθειας» των γυναικών στις πολιτικές λιτότητας. Στο κεφάλαιο αυτό επιχειρείται η απάντηση στο βασικό ερώτημα του συλλογικού τόμου, δηλαδή κατά πόσο η κρίση και η λιτότητα αποτελούν κρίσιμη καμπή για το καθεστώς φύλου και το κοινωνικό καθεστώς. Μετά την διεξοδική ανάλυση των τάσεων στις πολιτικές λιτότητας στις χώρες που μελετήθηκαν, εντοπίστηκαν διαφορετικές «απαντήσεις» σε κάθε χώρα ανάλογα κυρίως με την ένταση των πολιτικών λιτότητας και τις συνέπειές τους στον τρόπο οργάνωσης της κοινωνικής φροντίδας ή στα συστήματα συνταξιοδότησης που προσδιορίζουν το βαθμό από-οικογενειοποίησης της φροντίδας και το ύψος των οικονομικών απολαβών από την εργασία. Συμπερασματικά, οι συγγραφείς

αποφαίνονται, ότι ο λόγος για τον οποίον ο πολιτικός στόχος της ισότητας των φύλων υποχώρησε στην κρίση, ήταν ότι δεν είχε προηγουμένως αγγίξει την δομή του συστήματος. Οι πολιτικές λιτότητας, που οδήγησαν σε περιορισμό της απασχόλησης στο δημόσιο τομέα και των κοινωνικών δαπανών, επιβάρυναν τις γυναίκες πολύ περισσότερο από τους άνδρες και από όσο έδειξαν οι στατιστικές της αγοράς εργασίας, που αγνοούν τον έμφυλο καταμερισμό της αναπαραγωγικής εργασίας και της οργάνωσης της καθημερινής ζωής.

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