



Combating Inequalities through Innovative Social Practices  
of and for Young People in Cities across Europe

## **WP7 Case Study: Innovative Practice**

**‘TOPEKO’**

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**City: Athens**

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## Cover page

<b>INNOVATIVE PRACTICE/PROJECT TITLE</b>	
<b>Local Actions for social integration of vulnerable groups in the Municipality of Elefsina (TOPEKO)</b>	
<b>City</b>	Elefsina
<b>Pilot type</b>	<b>New elements in existing policy/practice</b>
<b>Type of target group</b>	The project focuses on the following type/target group of people based on the typology provided in the Strategy Plan for WP6: Living day by day, opportunistically. Given up hope and lacking competences, social support and motivation to change; <b>Other:</b> unemployed and vulnerable groups of people in the area of Elefsina
<b>Type of practice</b>	<b>Stimulating and enabling entrepreneurship;</b> <b>Other:</b> training in specialized skills which resulted from the identification of specific local needs in the area
<b>Aims/objectives in brief</b>	TOPEKO programs ‘Local actions for vulnerable groups’ is a state initiative that aims to address local needs focusing on social integration of vulnerable groups of people. Therefore, it aims to mobilize local government in order to ensure the creation of jobs and professional training for vulnerable groups of people (e.g. long-term unemployed, immigrants, etc.). More particularly, the current program aimed at integrating 80 unemployed people into the labour market, drawing largely on the comparative advantages of the secondary sector in the area (manufacturing, industry) with emphasis on entrepreneurial development opportunities in the areas of alternative waste management, reuse and resale of products.
<b>What needs, what inequalities</b>	The project is aimed at the multifaceted support of the unemployed (through training and counselling), who will be supported in an integrative manner before the founding of their enterprises (Social Cooperative Enterprise) by placing them in jobs in dynamic sectors of the local economy (such as the social economy and the green economy) on the basis of identified development needs in the area of Elefsina.
<b>What (activities in brief)</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Expert analysis of the local labour market</li> <li>2. Networking of beneficiaries with businesses</li> <li>3. Training program in alternative waste management, repair and reuse of products and recycling materials</li> <li>4. Training programs on principles of social and individual entrepreneurship</li> <li>5. Initial Counselling sessions: Host actions and selection of beneficiaries for their participation in the project</li> <li>6. Counselling aimed at psychosocial support and social</li> </ol>

	<p>integration of beneficiaries</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>7. Consulting aimed at employability and employment of beneficiaries</li> <li>8. Business plan - preparing business plans for the establishment of individual or other type of business/enterprise</li> <li>9. Business plan - preparing business plans for the establishment of social cooperative enterprises</li> <li>10. Consulting of the newly founded enterprises at the early stages of operation</li> <li>11. Counselling of beneficiaries</li> <li>12. Coordination and Project management</li> <li>13. Publicity, and awareness raising activities for recruiting target groups and dissemination of the action plan (Communication Plan)</li> </ol>
<b>Who (actors)</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Coordinator: Headway Consulting Economists Ltd.</li> <li>2. Municipality of Elefsina</li> <li>3. Municipal Public Benefit Enterprise of Elefsina</li> <li>4. Regional Vocational Training Centre for Lifelong Learning-Region of Piraeus (KEK Piraeus)</li> <li>5. Pan-Hellenic Association of Environmental Protection (PASEPPE)</li> <li>6. Ecological Recycling Organisation - Non-Profit Organization (OEA)</li> <li>7. Family and Childcare Center (KMOP)</li> </ol>
<b>How (involvement of the actors, their roles)</b>	<p>Headway Consulting Economists Ltd.: Coordinator, contributing to the development of business plans</p> <p>Municipality of Elefsina: Networking with local and other organizations, Publicity actions</p> <p>Municipal Public Benefit Enterprise of Elefsina: Networking with local and other organizations, publicity</p> <p>KEK Piraeus: Training</p> <p>PASEPPE: Networking with local companies specialized in environmental protection issues</p> <p>OEA: Development of Business Plans, Business Counselling Support</p> <p>KMOP: Selection of beneficiaries, counselling of beneficiaries (psychosocial and professional)</p>
<b>Scope: number of the participants of practice(s)</b>	80 beneficiaries
<b>Duration (when the project/practice started)</b>	<p>Started 10/2012</p> <p>Ends 6/2015 (further to extension request)</p>
<b>RESOURCES</b>	
<b>Financial</b>	<p>In EUR in total divided into investment (equipment, purchase of premises), maintenance and operation (staff, rents, consumables)</p> <p>Total cost: 390.000€</p> <p>Investment: -</p>

	<p>Staff: 223.574,39€  Trainees allowance: 74.439,2  Services: 41.045,27  Indirect costs: 50.941,14</p>
<b>Personnel</b>	<p>Staff – number of people involved, in FTE per month</p> <p>4.5 FTE per month for the whole project</p>
<b>Other</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Professional staff (trainers, consultants, psychologists)</li> <li>- Venues for training programs and counselling sessions that meet the necessary requirements as to education, health and safety standards</li> </ul>

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# Introduction

Local actions for vulnerable groups of people (TOPEKO) is an initiative run by the Operational Programme ‘Human Resources Development 2007-2013’ developed and managed by the Ministry of Labour, Social Security and Welfare. The project aims to address local needs focusing on social integration in specific geographical areas in Greece. Therefore, it aims to mobilize local government in order to ensure the creation of jobs and professional training for vulnerable groups of people in the said areas.

More specifically, local actions for vulnerable groups of people in the municipality of Elefsina are implemented by the development partnership “Thriasios” (DP-Thriasios), involving a number of public and private stakeholders / actors. Activities are implemented based on a detailed action plan, targeting specific areas for intervention at the local level.

The project involves four stages of implementation. The first stage refers to the selection of beneficiaries based on quantitative and qualitative selection criteria. The second stage refers to the provision of psychosocial and professional counselling/guidance to beneficiaries. The next stage involves vocational training of beneficiaries based on identified skills and preferences in order to be promoted and re-integrated in the labour market. Finally, the last stage involves supervision of beneficiaries’ progress further to their integration in the labour market. Re-integration in the labour market is achieved by providing three options/orientations to beneficiaries: a) Business development – self-employed status, b) Employment- employee status or c) Social Cooperative Enterprise (SCE) – establishment of a Social Cooperative Enterprise with other people.

## 1. Evaluation methodology

External evaluation of all Local Actions for Vulnerable Groups of People (TOPEKO) is performed by external evaluators under the Management Authority of the Special Service for Social Inclusion and Social Economy (EYKEKO) which is the Intermediate Management Body all TOPEKO projects.

Internal evaluation methods of the project included:

- Questionnaires assessing actions, distributed to beneficiaries for completion (evaluation of training instructors, support staff, consultants and of the overall training program)
- Reports of Activities (report evaluating the training activity, report evaluating the counselling activity)

External evaluation of all TOPEKO projects is performed by external evaluators, as mentioned above. The external evaluation is under implementation and is not yet completed. Monitoring of the Action is the work of the coordinator. In this context the partner, who is the Coordinator asks the partners/managers of each activity to produce quarterly reports for each activity. On the basis of these reports the Coordinator prepares the semi-annual project implementation and financial reports and submits to EYKEKO (Management Authority) hard copies and electronic copies of the interim project monitoring and certification reports through the integrated electronic information system of the project (<http://www.ops.gr>). At the end of the project the Coordinator submits the final monitoring report regarding project implementation and financial management.

The evaluation process includes both internal and external evaluation as mentioned above. Internal evaluation is performed during the implementation process of the project and involves the completion of questionnaires further to each activity, and the monitoring process (as described above), whereas the external evaluation is performed by external evaluators further to the end of the project. The responsible body for the monitoring process and the internal evaluation is the Coordinator of the

project, whereas the responsible body for the external evaluation of the project is the Management Authority (EYKEKO).

## **2. Project/Practice Design**

### ***2.1 Social Issue(s) addressed***

The project aims to tackle unemployment in vulnerable groups of people in the area of Elefsina and at the same time create new jobs in growing sectors of industry, such as alternative waste management, reuse and resale of products. Emphasis is also placed on entrepreneurship opportunities in alternative waste management for the beneficiaries of the program.

The specialized training of beneficiaries in alternative waste management, repair, reuse of products and recycling of materials, and in key development principles in individual and social entrepreneurship, achieves the dual aim of developing beneficiaries' skills for their dynamic reintegration into the labour market and the creation of well-qualified staff in a sector that has significant growth potentials in the West Attica region.

Under the proposed plan, the anticipated new jobs are created primarily through new social cooperative enterprises (with application of Law. 4019) and new businesses by freelancers and entrepreneurs who will engage in collecting, sorting, repairing, reusing and recycling of products and materials.

Meanwhile, a work placement of unemployed people is also achieved either through opening employee positions in relevant industries (having an employee status) or through internship/placement programs, by giving the opportunity to unemployed people to acquire work experience in relevant companies operating in the area of 'traditional' manufacturing as related to the process of products and waste (eg. storage, transport, industrial activities).

The 80 beneficiaries of the program, are unemployed and belong to vulnerable groups of people in the Municipality of Elefsina who are facing chronic structural labour market weaknesses and are thus threatened by social and professional exclusion. The beneficiaries of the project belong to one or more of the following population groups:

- Long-term unemployed over 45 years old.

In Elefsina, according to the Manpower Employment Organisation of the area, the majority of unemployed people (about 60%) are over 45 years old. A significant proportion of long-term unemployed over 45 years old in Elefsina are former employees of companies in the secondary industry sector which operated in the area and were affected by the economic crisis.

- Single parents

In the region of Elefsina the number of single parent families according to the Social Services of the municipality is considerably high and indicates an increasing trend during the last five years, mainly due to the presence of women who, after a divorce, have returned to the city of origin or place of residence of their parents.

- People in a state of poverty / at risk of poverty

According to the Development Association of West Athens (ASDA), the income per capita in Western Attica is much lower than the country average (about 15%) and 25% lower than the average in the region of Attica.

- People with religious and cultural differences

People with religious and cultural differences refer mainly to Greek Muslims who are Greek citizens within the geographical limits of the Greek territory. It is estimated that approximately 150 Greek Muslim families are residing in the area of Elefsina.

## ***2.2. Project goals and plans***

TOPEKO programs do not target young people in particular. In general, TOPEKO programs target unemployed people who belong to one of the following vulnerable groups:

- Long-term unemployed over 45 years old with low qualifications
- People with Disabilities
- Women victims of domestic violence
- Women / Men victims of trafficking
- Head of single-parent families
- Immigrants, repatriates, refugees
- People with religious and cultural differences
- Asylum seekers
- Released prisoners
- Former drug users
- HIV positive people
- Homeless people
- People living in the state of poverty / at risk of poverty
- People subject to discrimination based on sexual orientation and / or gender identity.

Also it was considered important to the success of the program that candidates /beneficiaries are residents in the area in which the intervention is implemented or reside in neighbouring areas/municipalities. Specifically, regarding the program in the municipality of Elefsina the study of the local labour market identified the following categories as the main vulnerable groups in the area:

- Long-term unemployed over 45 years old
- Head of single-parent families
- People living in a state of poverty or at risk of poverty
- People with religious or cultural differences

The effectiveness of the achievement is measured by placing 80 beneficiaries of the Action in employment for at least three months. Also part of the financing of the Action is associated with the achievement of this objective.

In the monitoring process, there are two official indicators for measuring the project's results, which are also stated in the official reports submitted to the Managing Authority (EYKEKO). These indicators involve:

1. Number of unemployed people from the above vulnerable groups who benefit from ESF actions (NSRF indicator)
2. Number of unemployed beneficiaries in the context of 'local social inclusion actions for vulnerable groups' promoted in employment or employment assistance program.

Also while submitting the six-month project monitoring report, the Annex Table 23 (XXIII) in accordance with the EC Regulation 1828/2006 should also be completed with the characteristics of participants who completed the project or dropped out (vulnerable group, age, education level etc.).

As this program targets unemployment, which is a major issue not only in the area of Elefsina but in the whole country, it can be argued that the program is meaningfully targeting one of the most crucial social issues and that the goals are sufficiently concrete, targeting a specific number of beneficiaries in the area. In addition, a clear achievement and measurement plan is involved in the implementation of the project.

Key components of the successful implementation of the program is the counselling aimed at psychosocial support and social integration of beneficiaries and the training actions, which involve:

- Training on alternative waste management, repair, reuse and recycling of products and materials (72 hours theory and 24 hours practice).
- Training in basic principles of individual and social entrepreneurship development (35 hours theory and 12 hours practice).

These actions aimed at social and professional reintegration of beneficiaries through the acquisition of specialized knowledge in the field of alternative waste management, which is considered a sector with growth potential in the area of Elefsina. These activities have a direct effect on education as it gives beneficiaries the opportunity to gain knowledge, training and expertise in a specialised area of potential development. These activities have also an additional effect on employment, as this is the main objective of the whole project.

The starting point of the project is the study carried out on the local labour market in the area of Elefsina which highlighted the development needs of the area and the vulnerable population groups in need of support (Action 1).

The Publicity action (Action 13) is implemented throughout the project and refers to the information and awareness raising of the local community and the target group. Based on the implementation of the appropriate information activities to attract potential beneficiaries from the local community, the next step involved the selection of beneficiaries (Action 5) which had a total duration of two months (October-November 2012). Further to the selection of beneficiaries, psychosocial support and counselling of beneficiaries took place, followed (Action 6) by counselling regarding professional orientation (Action 7) which had a total duration of six months.

In addition, Actions 3 and 4 are a key part of the project since they involve the training of beneficiaries and began further to the completion of the counselling activities. Action 3 "training program in alternative waste management, repair and reuse of products and recycling materials" lasted five months (June 2013 to October 2013). Action 4 "Training Program on Basic Principles of Social and Individual Enterprise Development" had a total duration of 3 months (September 2013 to November 2013).

An integral part of the project is also the networking of beneficiaries with economic and professional bodies in the wider area through the organisation of conferences, workshops, project implementation advertisements etc. (Action 2). The action of networking had a total duration of 22 months (December 2012- September 2014). The proposed plan also involved actions to support young entrepreneurs and beneficiaries through the preparation of business plans, professional support and consulting during the initial process of business establishment and the counselling of beneficiaries who have been promoted in the labour market in existing job positions (Actions 8, 9, 10, 11). Action 8 "Business planning - preparing business plans for the creation of personal or other form of business" and action 9 "Business planning - preparing business plans for the establishment of social cooperatives" began in April 2013 and was completed in March 2015 . Actions 10 "Counselling of enterprises founded in the early stages of operation" and 11 "Counselling of businesses that employed beneficiaries" are currently implemented and will be completed in June 2015 at the end of the project. Throughout the project's duration the coordination of partners and implemented actions played a particularly important role (Action 12).

This information is summarized in the following table:





### ***2.3 Competences and resources required***

The project targets vulnerable groups of people regardless of education level and other skills (e.g. knowledge of a foreign language, computer skills, etc.) and aims to strengthen the capacity of these groups, providing expertise in key sectors of the economy in the geographic area of intervention. The only skill required is knowledge and understanding of the Greek language.

The personnel/staff involved in the project, such as the counsellors and the trainers, have a relevant specialisation and experience as required by their role in the project.

The total cost of the project amounts to 390.000 € which is divided into the following costs:

- Partners Costs/Personnel: 223.574,39 €
- Trainees Costs: 74.439,20 €
- Services / Activities: 41.045,27 €
- Indirect Costs: 50.941,14 €

Appropriate infrastructures are required for the provision of both counselling and training services to beneficiaries. The venue of the program meets the necessary education, health and safety standards and requirements to ensure the successful implementation of the actions. Also the project covers transportation and subsistence costs for participants who need to move from their area of residence to attend the training programs, apart from those who reside in the cities where training is implemented. Finally, part of the expenditure also involves educational notes, books, and subcontracting costs as expenses for events, rental of equipment, catering and publicity costs (publications in the local press, press releases, production of printed information materials, posters, brochures, etc.).

### ***2.4 Degree of organization***

Micro-level: At micro-level, the project targets individual beneficiaries from vulnerable groups of people in the area of intervention. It provides counselling (psychosocial and vocational) support and guidance for each individual through individual sessions and intervention approach.

Meso-level: Taking into consideration that the entire project is designed to contribute to the empowerment of people and businesses of a specific intervention area, in this case the area of intervention is the Municipality of Elefsina (meso-level - municipality level).

Macro-level: At macro level, the project is based on a detailed study identifying the development needs and interventions in the area, thus providing employment opportunities to beneficiaries and industry development opportunities in the area.

The project takes a top-down approach, involving an organized and coordinated effort with formal and official organisation involving companies, social cooperatives, business associations, the municipality and other public bodies and agents. These programs are considered 'innovative' due to the fact that no such previous programs existed.

### ***2.5 The logic of intervention***

The project is aimed at training, empowering and integrating in the labour market vulnerable groups of people in the Municipality of Elefsina, acting at multiple levels:

- a) at economic level by reimbursing beneficiaries for their participation in training and combating unemployment

- b) at psychosocial and professional level by providing support and empowerment
- c) at educational level by providing specialized training

In this context, the program is largely contributing to social integration practices, adopting a redistribution of resources approach and social integration approach and relevant policies (RED, SID).

## 2.6 Transfer adaptations

N/A

## 3. Organisational context of implementation

Seven partners participated in the implementation of the program, with the following responsibilities:

- Headway Consulting Economists Ltd.: Coordinator, contributing to the development of business plans
- Municipality of Elefsina: Networking with local and other organizations, Publicity actions
- Municipal Public Benefit Enterprise of Elefsina: Networking with local and other organizations, publicity
- KEK Piraeus: Training
- PASEPPE: Networking with local companies specialized in environmental protection issues
- OEA: Development of Business Plans, Business Counselling Support
- KMOP: Selection of beneficiaries, counselling of beneficiaries (psychosocial and professional)

The total amount per action is indicated in the following table:

Action Number	Title of Action	Total Cost per Action
1	Special Study Analysis of the Local Labour Market	4.320,00
2	Networking of Beneficiaries with businesses-enterprises	29.258,25
3	Training program in alternative waste management, repair and reuse of products and recycling materials	99.839,32
4	Training Program on Basic Principles of Social and Individual Enterprise Development	36.659,47
5	Initial Counselling: Hosting and selection of candidates for participation in the program	5.455,20

6	Counselling aiming at psychosocial support and social integration of beneficiaries	31.147,75
7	Counselling aiming at labour market integration and employment /occupation of beneficiaries.	31.147,75
8	Business Planning for the establishment of four Social Enterprises in the sector of Green economy and transportation of products.	19.200,00
9	Business Planning for the establishment of five Social Enterprises in the sector if waste management, process and resale of recyclable products.	24.000,00
10	Consulting and support of the newly established enterprises in their initial steps of operation.	11.100,00
11	Consulting and support of the businesses that employed beneficiaries	22.992,00
12	Coordination and Management of the Project	38.988,00
13	Publicity and Awareness raising activities for attracting target groups and informing the public regarding the program	35.892,26
<b>Total Budget for the above suggested actions</b>		<b>390.000,00</b>

This project and all other TOPEKO programs started their implementation as pilot projects. Shortly after a new category of programs were proclaimed and initiated, TOPSA programs, which are based on the same design but involve different target groups.

The capacity of the program depends on a number of factors, such as the area where each program is implemented, including the local labour market, the collaboration of each partnership and the motivation of beneficiaries. Counsellors and trainers have a relevant specialisation and experience as required by their role in the project. For example counsellors for psychosocial support have a degree in social work or psychology, trainers in alternative waste management have a degree or master's degree in Environmental Studies etc. In that respect, both personnel and financial resources are sufficient.

Efficient coordination of activities and good cooperation among all project partners were top priorities of this project. All partners undertook the responsibility of implementing the actions which best corresponded to their expertise, based on which they could provide the best possible outcomes. This program can be placed under the larger policy framework for combating unemployment.

Originally, there was planning at central level for beneficiaries of TOPEKO programs to be further integrated in employment programs proclaimed by the Manpower Employment Organisation. These programs involved the employment of TOPEKO beneficiaries by existing companies or by newly established social enterprises for a four month duration. These programs were launched later than expected and subsidized part of the employer's costs for the above job positions during the four time duration of the employment.

## 4. Project implementation and outputs

### 4.1 Targeting of the program

For attracting potential beneficiaries who belong to the above mentioned groups, the project utilized the following techniques, tools and publicity activities, such as:

- Creation of press releases with the project time plan, objectives, activities and participation requirements,
- Publication of a call in the press for declaration of interest
- Post of the above call in branches of the municipality, associations and organizations relevant to the target groups, public services, and one stop shops (KEP) in the area.
- Post of information material on partners' websites and associate partner organizations
- Production of informative posters and posting them in public places and public services.

The selection of beneficiaries was decided by a Selection Committee established for this purpose which included project partners' executive members. The essential procedure of the selection phase consisted of:

1. Appointing executives for the collection of applications, conducting interviews with candidates and submission of proposal statements and reports to the Selection Committee
2. Submission of candidates' application forms
3. Receipt of candidates' application forms in a specified location and check for completeness and meeting of essential requirements as described in the invitation call of the Managing Authority.
4. Conducting interviews with prospective beneficiaries.
5. Identifying the specific needs of beneficiaries. At the time of the application, initial information was recorded for each beneficiary and a profile was outlined based on the information accompanying each application. The application of the candidate and other information were recorded in individual files, based on which the counsellor had to determine: the eligibility of the candidate to participate in the program, the requirements for promoting the beneficiary to further employment actions and ultimately integration of beneficiaries in project activities.
6. Drafting a list with the proposed and originally selected beneficiaries and send it to the Selection Committee.
7. Final selection of beneficiaries from the Selection Committee, based on standardised criteria regarding family income, duration of unemployment, family status-dependent family members, age, education status, foreign languages, additional training/qualification.

The evaluation, selection and placement process of candidates was based on a point system, combining a) the completeness of necessary documents accompanying the application form, and b) the individual interview process.

The beneficiaries selection criteria listed below involve two general categories:

A. *Quantitative Selection Criteria*

- Duration of Unemployment
- Education
- Professional experience
- Family income
- Marital status

These criteria account to 70% of the total points of the candidate.

Please see below an analysis of the rating criteria:

1. Family Income (maximum 22 points): The lower the family income the higher the points rated. Maximum points were 22, which corresponded to an annual family income

equivalent to 3.000€ In addition, if the annual family income was higher than 18.000€ 0 points were rated.

2. Duration of Unemployment (maximum 22 points): Duration of unemployment was rated with 22 points if the status of unemployment existed for 12 months, while 15 points were rated for the minimum duration of unemployment, which was 6 months. For duration of unemployment lower than 6 months, the candidate was rated with 0 points.
3. Marital status (maximum 14 points): Maximum points rated were 14 given the existence of at least of one of the following criteria:
  - Member of a vulnerable group in risk of social exclusion: 4 points
  - 1 (underage) child: 1 point
  - 2 (underage) children: 2 points
  - 3 (underage) children: 4 points
  - 4 (underage) children or more: 6 points
  - Other financially dependent family members: 1 point
  - Dependent family member with a disability: 3 points
4. Education (maximum 7 points): The highest rating was given to candidates who held a Phd, while the lowest rating (1) was given to candidates who had completed secondary education.
5. Foreign language (max 1 point): Maximum point (1) was rated to candidates who had sufficient knowledge of at least one foreign language.
6. Additional training (max 1 point)

#### *B. Quality Selection Criteria (based on the interview)*

- Interest to participate in the program

These criteria account to 30% of the total points of the candidate.

The rating which accounts for 30% of the total rating for participation in the program depended on factors such as:

- Desire of the candidate
- Capabilities of the candidates
- Description of the training activities that the candidate wishes to attend
- Total evaluation of the candidate (personality) and his/her personal needs.

In order to attract potential beneficiaries who belong to the above mentioned groups, the project utilized the following techniques, tools and publicity activities, such as:

- Creation of press releases with the project time plan, objectives, activities and participation requirements,
- Publication of a call in the press for declaration of interest
- Post of the above call in branches of the municipality, associations and organizations relevant to the target groups, public services, and one stop shops (KEP) in the area.
- Post of information material on partners' websites and associate partner organizations
- Production of informative posters and posting in public places and public services.

Other publicity tools involve:

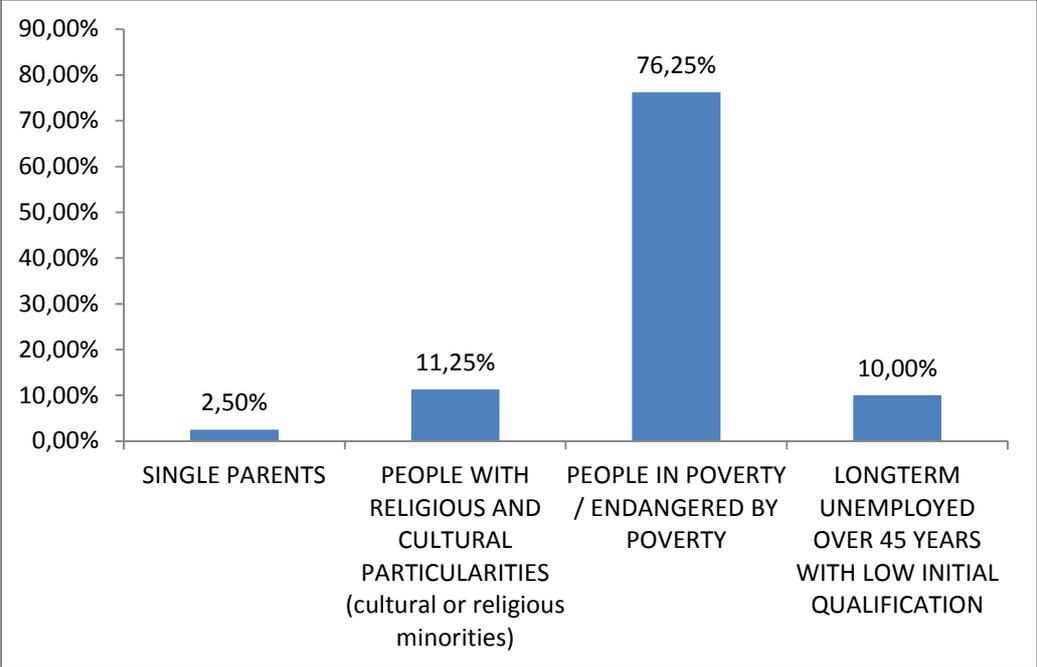
- Printed material (brochures, posters, press releases)
- Information events (seminars, conferences) throughout the implementation of the program
- Electronic audiovisual material (multimedia production, audiovisual aids)
- Ad hoc briefings

## ***4.2 Addressing needs***

The fact that beneficiaries derive from vulnerable groups of people created many and diverse expectations from the consultation process. Different methodologies were utilised, depending on the particularities of each group, and a personalized approach was adopted aimed at empowering beneficiaries to resolve previous social, psychological, legal and social problems affecting them, in order to enable them to participate in the activities of the Project (training, business planning to establish individual or social enterprises) and become active in the local labour market. Counselling aimed at utilising employment as a means of social inclusion and integration of beneficiaries by (re) positioning them in the labour market. At this stage, useful conclusions were drawn about the reasons and life circumstances that led beneficiaries into ‘social exclusion’ which gave them the power to overcome difficulties associated with their social and labour marginalization. In this context, identification of the problem and relevant contributing factors and awareness of these by the beneficiary were of essential importance.

Besides the monitoring and internal evaluation tools stated above, the success factor and results of this program was largely determined by the number of beneficiaries who completed the program. The total number of beneficiaries who attended and completed the psychosocial and professional counselling sessions is 80. The total number of beneficiaries who attended and completed the training is 79. The total number of beneficiaries who established and participated as legal representatives or members in Social Cooperative Enterprises is 30. Finally, the total number of beneficiaries employed in existing jobs is 20.

**Table 1: Categorisation of beneficiaries by vulnerability group**



**4.3 Empowerment, engagement and choice**

The project is aimed at unemployed people of all ages deriving by vulnerable groups of people. A number of these beneficiaries were between 16-35 years old as the economic crisis has strongly

affected this population group. Specifically the project involves seven beneficiaries belonging to the age group of 16-24, while 30 participants are between 24-35 years old.

Beneficiaries had the possibility of choosing from the second training program whether they wanted to attend the training leading to the establishment of a social enterprise or to the establishment of an individual or another form of enterprise (e.g. Ltd., SA, etc. )

Young people aged up to 35 years were more open to explore new opportunities and move in establishing their own enterprise. In addition, a number of young people (aged 35) chose to attend the training course in social entrepreneurship and to participate as a member in establishing a Social Cooperative Enterprise (KOINSEP)

Young people are not principal agents in this program. Although young beneficiaries were included in the project, the actions of the specific program are not targeted specifically for young people.

#### ***4.4 Stakeholders involved***

The main stakeholders of the project are citizens, businesses and public bodies of the Municipality of Elefsina (especially the cleanliness and waste recycling industry) that will benefit from these actions. Stakeholders were informed on the progress and the development of the project objectives throughout the implementation period. In particular, they were invited to information sessions and conferences, where their participation and attendance was most desired. In addition, PASEPPE invited all businesses/members of the association to attend the Workshop Forum in order to be informed about the project and the beneficiaries, the training they received, and possibly establish future collaborations with potential entrepreneurs-beneficiaries of the program or create employment opportunities for other beneficiaries.

Although the Municipality of Elefsina considers that the project is a great opportunity for the development of waste management and recycling sector, participation of various stakeholders in this sector (businesses, citizens and other stakeholders) was low compared to the estimated developmental benefits offered by the implementation of this project that can be utilised by all residents in the area. However, the support of the entire project is expected to increase with the onset of the social enterprise activities (KOINSEP), and when the people in the area begin to see the results of the project in practice (e.g. organizing “bazaar for reuse and resale of products, improve the city's image through better waste management, etc.)

#### ***4.5 Competences and resources involved***

**(Please see relevant information under section 2.3)**

#### ***4.6 Process evaluation criteria***

As mentioned above, the main beneficiaries of the project are the citizens, businesses and public institutions in the area, who will benefit from long-term benefits of the project. Nevertheless, during project implementation it was not clear to all stakeholders what the local benefits from this project were, which led to misunderstandings, lack of interest, political barriers and even obstacles to the smooth operation of the project. At the end, the purpose of the project was understood by all stakeholders (employees in the municipality, unions, and public officials of the municipality) and the benefits that it could offer both to the Municipality of Elefsina and employment growth in the local labour market. So, through the implementation of workshops and ad hoc meetings with different stakeholders obstacles were overcome, and the program of actions was properly implemented.

Another obstacle to the proper implementation of the project is the delay in the announcement of Manpower Employment Organisation (OAED) programs designed to give incentives to existing businesses to absorb the unemployed beneficiaries of TOPEKO programs.

#### ***4.7 Innovativeness***

The main innovation of the project is based on creating partnership between private and public actors at the local level following the specialized study of the development and labour market needs in the Municipality of Elefsina. This cooperation is also associated with the New Law on Social Economy (Law. 4019/2011) representing a great opportunity for people affected by the economic crisis to seek an outlet in social entrepreneurship and self-employment. This action can be considered as innovative due to the fact that it combines the element of social enterprises into a local context landscape, aiming at social integration and redistribution of resources. This type of practice is an institutional solution involving the collaboration of a number of stakeholders for its implementation. The key dimensions addressed in this practice are mainly the engagement of unemployed people belonging to social vulnerable groups in order to re-integrate them in the labour market.

The target group of this practice can be mainly described according to WP6 typology as:

- living day by day, opportunistically. Given up hope and lacking competences, social support and motivation to change

In addition, because the action is implemented at local level, informal networks were established at municipal and neighbourhood level. Also informal networks were established between beneficiaries and local stakeholders with the potential to enhance the results of the program. For example many beneficiaries exchanged information with their family members for joint participation in the program, or became partners in the foundation of a Social Cooperative Company. Furthermore, beneficiaries and businessmen communicated their goals in the local community which was of great importance for the future success of their plans.

Also, this program gave the opportunity to beneficiaries to create nine social enterprises KOINSEP in alternative waste management, in order to form an integrated Green Point, based on the European experience. The Municipality of Elefsina, if they decide to collaborate with the social enterprises, will have the opportunity to innovate at national level on issues of alternative waste management and reuse. Operational plans of the social enterprises prepared by project partners demonstrate how in our country, and particularly in Elefsina, sustainable reuse and alternative waste management activities can be created that can contribute to achieving the legal obligations of the country to face in the best way the problem of waste management and create new, permanent and useful jobs.

#### ***4.8 Success factors and conditions, critical implementation barriers***

One of the major changes involved the number of companies being formed and their legal form. Following the identification of needs of the beneficiaries, the advantages of the new company model (KOINSEP-social enterprise) and the funding opportunities by co-funded programs, it was decided with the beneficiaries to proceed with the foundation of social cooperative enterprises only, and not of individual companies or other forms/types of business. So the action referring to the preparation of business plans for the establishment of individual or other companies (Ltd., SA, etc.) has been amended accordingly including the preparation of nine business plans for the recommendation of nine social enterprises.

Another important change is the extension given for the completion of the project. This extension was given horizontally to all TOPEKO programs because of long delays in the proclamations and the calls for opening the programs of OAED regarding the absorption of TOPEKO beneficiaries from local companies including incentives to subsidize part of the labour costs.

Both staff members and the existing logistics infrastructure met the predefined standards for the appropriate implementation of the program. One of the success factors of TOPEKO programs is the design prior to the project implementation as well as the cooperation between the private sector, cooperatives with great experience and expertise of public bodies and chambers who play an important role in the intervention area (such as the Municipality of Elefsina, the Municipal Public Benefit Enterprise and PASEPPE).

From the beginning of the project an effort was made to establish a good coordination of actions and an effective cooperation between all actors. In addition, the action aimed to provide the best possible outcome and benefits based on the experience of each partner. Also special attention was given to the planning and organization of Meetings, Forum activities and ad hoc meetings in order to make the most of the participation of the Municipality of Elefsina, Municipal Public Benefit Enterprise (KEDE) and PASEPPE during the implementation of the actions for networking.

## **5. Project results/outcomes**

The main objectives of the project were:

The establishment of the Social Cooperative Enterprises under the programme and the business plans. 60 out of 80 beneficiaries in the project were promoted in the creation of nine social enterprises (KOINSEP). All beneficiaries were supported during the foundation of the social enterprises. So far four social enterprises are established out of nine. Two more social enterprises are expected to be established while some beneficiaries have changed their initial decision and decided not to proceed with the establishment of a social enterprise.

The scopes of the four social enterprises established are presented below:

1) The creation of a modern and functional recycling center (Green Point) in the Municipality of Elefsina (7 members/beneficiaries).

Seven (7) members/beneficiaries established the social enterprise with the basic objective to store temporary materials and products provided by citizens. The social enterprise will be able to provide services of waste destruction and will also resell materials and products as raw materials. It can also resell the corresponding products to other social enterprises for further management.

2) Integrated management of household products

Eight (8) beneficiaries established that social enterprises with the main objective being the integrated management of household products such as discs, cassettes, compact discs, books, magazines, brochures, sporting goods, household items, storage items, antiques, ornaments, gifts, seasonal items, bicycles, toys, stationery, office supplies and school supplies, hand tools, construction tools, garden tools etc.

3) Management aimed at reuse and recycling of furniture.

Eight (8) beneficiaries established that social enterprises with the basic objective to integrate the management of items and materials related to furniture and bathroom furniture. The enterprise will receive furniture provided by citizens and local businesses. It will also identify furniture owners who want to deliver their furniture. It can also resell useful furniture at very low price and resell or dispose the unusable furniture for alternative management.

4) Management aimed at reuse and recycling of waste electrical equipment, besides electronic devices (PCs etc.).

Six (6) beneficiaries established social enterprises with the basic objective being to integrate the management of items and materials related to electrical equipment and appliances in good condition or the repair of electrical and electronic equipment waste. The purpose of this business is to receive the electrical equipment waste (except PC and peripherals) derived by citizens and businesses. It will also provide reception services for receiving such equipment for reuse from large producers. It can also resell useful equipment at very low price and/or dispose waste for alternative management.

Beneficiaries participating in the above four social enterprises included individuals belonging to the following vulnerable groups of people:

1. Long-term unemployed over 45 years old
2. Heads of single parent families
3. People in a state of poverty or at risk of poverty
4. People with religious and cultural particularities

The target number of employed beneficiaries is still significantly lower than the target of 80 beneficiaries. Currently there are 20 people who are employed out of the 80 beneficiaries in the project. This figure is, however, expected to increase in the coming months with the recruitment of unemployed people from the newly established social enterprises which will participate in the aforementioned OAED program. It should also be noted that due to the poor economic situation faced by many companies in the region it was not possible for TOPEKO beneficiaries to be absorbed in existing enterprises as originally planned. As a result, the total number of beneficiaries absorbed by existing enterprises in the area is below the target number.

Beneficiaries who were able to find a job are mainly people with higher educational training. This is also due to the type of jobs created which were mainly office/desk jobs. On the other hand, the construction industry and other sectors of manual work which could absorb a larger share of unemployed –beneficiaries due to the deep recession, these sectors did not indicate an interest to absorb unemployed people in the workforce despite the fact that the period of employment would be subsidized by 50% by OAED for four months.

In the context of program implementation and until its completion a 3-month follow-up and support of beneficiaries is implemented (see. Action 11) through meetings with specialized consultants so as to assess their progress in the job and discuss any problems encountered by beneficiaries.

The positive impact of the project is indicated by the intention of the Municipality of Elefsina to proceed with service contracts to the newly-founded KOINSEP since the bodies of the Municipality and the community gradually realize the benefits for the entire community of the operation of KOINSEP active in waste recycling. Long term expected positive results from the operation of KOINSEP in the area will lead to the increased work of KOINSEP with positive effects on the development of the Municipality of Elefsina, which could possibly present a best practice example in the region of Attica.

One of the barriers in the program implementation was the delay in proclaiming OAED programs for the absorption of TOPEKO beneficiaries in the labour market. This resulted in two negative aspects:

a) the total delay in completing the program and b) the increasing disappointment of a number of beneficiaries resulting in their withdrawal from the program.

An estimate of the expected benefits from the creation of social enterprises (KOINSEP) indicates that they can outweigh the cost of the program in a short time. Newly established KOINSEP can benefit from the existing legal framework and engage in Green Public Procurement by the Municipality of Elefsina and other Public bodies in the wider region of Attica. So, in the scenario where 5 out of 9 KOINSEP are established with a total turnover of 80.000 € each in the first year of operation, the expected benefits exceed the cost of investment (390.000 €). Furthermore, in the list of expected benefits one should also add the positive effects on the economic and environmental development of the area and the increase in employment.

## **6. Final reflections**

### ***6.1 The role of the pilot/project/practice***

The project provides counselling (psychosocial and professional) support and guidance for each beneficiary at individual level. Also the whole project is designed to contribute to the empowerment of people and companies at a specific area of intervention in the Municipality of Elefsina. The project is based on a detailed study of the development needs and employment opportunities in the intervention area thereby increasing the chances of success of the project. The training (theoretical and practical) that beneficiaries attended is specialized and based on the identified needs of the area thus ensuring that beneficiaries of the program acquire appropriate qualifications required by the local labour market. To tackle long-term unemployment the program targeted on two main actions:

Firstly, the achievement of employment through entrepreneurship in the innovative field of recycling and reuse. To achieve this goal beneficiaries received specialized training both in matters of social entrepreneurship and in the specific area of recycling and reuse.

Secondly, the achievement of employment in existing businesses by upgrading beneficiaries' educational qualifications, through counselling received and the use of networking methods and OAED programs addressed exclusively to the beneficiaries of the program.

### ***6.2 Innovation***

The main innovation of the project is based on creating partnerships between private and public actors at the local level following the detailed study aimed at local development and employment growth in the Municipality of Elefsina. This cooperation is also associated with the New Law on Social Economy (N. 4019/2011) that represents a significant opportunity for people affected by the economic crisis to seek a way out in social entrepreneurship and self-employment, and in the overall collective and social interest of the area due to the social character and purpose of the Social Cooperative Enterprises (KOINSEP).

In addition, this program gave the opportunity to beneficiaries to create nine social enterprises KOINSEP in alternative waste management, in order to form an integrated Green Point, based on the European experience. The Municipality of Elefsina upon its decision to collaborate with the social enterprises will have the opportunity to innovate at national level on issues of alternative waste management and reuse. Operational plans of the social enterprises prepared by project partners demonstrate, how in our country and particularly in Elefsina, sustainable reuse and alternative waste management activities can be created that can contribute to achieving the legal obligations of the country to face in the best way the problem of waste management and create new, permanent and useful jobs.

### ***6.3 Success factors***

One of the success factors of the TOPEKO programme is the careful design prior to the implementation and the good collaboration private sector, cooperatives with extensive expertise and public bodies who played an important role in the intervention area (such as the Municipality of Elefsina, the Municipal Public Benefit Enterprise and PASEPPE). From the beginning the project an effort was made to establish a good coordination of actions and an effective cooperation between all actors. In addition, the action aimed to provide the best possible outcome and benefits based on the experience of each partner. Also special attention was given to the planning and organization of Meetings, Forum activities and ad hoc meetings in order to make the most of the participation of the Municipality of Elefsina, Municipal Public Benefit Enterprise (KEDE) and PASEPPE during the implementation of the actions for networking.

### ***6.4 Policy recommendations, transferability***

For the effective implementation of the program and possible transferability of the above action it would be recommended to:

- have a better coordination at central/state level so that different actions and programs to be interrelated within the appropriate timeframe
- have an ongoing external evaluation by an external evaluator throughout the course of the project in order to suggest improvements at central level during the implementation stage and prior to the end of the program.