

Job opportunities for all



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An inspiring project located in the Thessaly region of mainland Greece has established a new social co-operative enterprise and in the process aims to create up to 90 jobs for local unemployed people.



'Employment opportunities for all' is a 2012-14 joint Greek and EU initiative being run by the Development Agency of Karditsa – one of three participating municipalities located in the administrative region of Thessaly. The other two municipalities are Mouzaki and Plastiras Lake. According to a study [Source: "Analysis of the local market", 2011], carried out before the project started in September 2012, these areas have a combined population of around 91 000. Although there is no specific data covering these areas, latest (2013) data for the region puts the unemployment rate at 25.6%.

Recycling discarded products

With an overall budget of €480 000, the project is co-financed by the EU's European Social Fund (80%) and the Greek Ministry of Labour, Social Security and Welfare. Its main objectives are to find jobs for up to 90 long-term unemployed people; and to create a social co-operative enterprise (SCE) – for the collection and management of old clothes and other discarded textiles that can be recycled.

There are two main actions for the project beneficiaries – all long-term unemployed people selected according to specific criteria (economic and social, length of

unemployment, work experience) and through interviews and evaluations. These cover 'mentoring' – including individual sessions with a social worker and psychologist at the start; and 'training' – on the reuse and recycling of clothing and on the management of the materials.

Rags to rugs

Concerning the SCE, called 'I Change', the main objectives were to create a viable social business that would not only provide a collection service to meet the needs of the local market i.e. the collections and recycling of clothing and used textiles that are currently discarded, but would also produce products from the recycled textiles (carpets and rugs, bags, toys, pillows, patchwork quilts etc) and organise their sale, for example at local festivals and a Christmas market.

Although it is only at an early stage, the initiative has already had a positive influence on the people involved and it beginning to be known about and supported locally. There are currently 16 people actively involved (four men and 12 women, aged from 29 to 62 years). They've all worked in the past, but lost their jobs because of the economic crisis.

As the activity of the social co-operative is growing, new jobs will be created in order to covers its needs, contributing to the reduction of unemployment. Moreover, 'I Change' can serve as a model for other regions or Member States, using the same, or different materials, but based on the same concept i.e. the recycling/reuse of discarded products.

'Employment opportunities for all' (Karditsa, Greece)

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