

EURACADEMY
15th SUMMER ACADEMY
STUDY TRIPS REPORTS

COOPERATIVES
SOCIAL ENTERPRISE

GROUP C

20- 21 / 7 / 2016

1. Agricultural Cooperative of Stevia plant



- Establishment time : 2012
- Members : 64 (in the region of Karditsa)
 - Purpose of cooperation: cultivation, processing and trade of stevia plant
- Financial Background: 130.000 euros from Leader Programme + 200.000 euros from membership= All used in infrastructure (equipment, building of cooperative etc.)
- Collaboration Partners : Cooperative Bank of Karditsa
Technological institution research and implementation on Stevia extract special machinery
University of Thessaly (support on stevia Information).

Development Agency of Karditsa ,

Institute of Cooperative Research and Studies

- September 2016 : 1st production of Stevia extract from the cooperative
- Significant interest from companies worldwide to purchase their product.

2. Cooperative Bank of Karditsa



- Establishment time : 1994 (Credit body) - 1998 (Cooperative Bank)
 - Members : 7.000
- Purpose of cooperation : development, credit and consulting of local businesses
 - Financial Background : 17 million euros
 - Collaboration Partners : European Associations, Local businesses and cooperation
- Member of FEBEA (European Union of Ethical Banks) , Development Agency of Karditsa

3. Social Enterprise “Ilacati”



- Establishment time : 2014
 - Members : 20
- Purpose of cooperation : connecting the local producers with consumers directly.
- Financial Backround : 400 euros
 - Collaboration Partners :
Local Producers
Shops &
Development Agency of Karditsa

4. Snail Cooperative “Sigma”



- Establishment time : 2010
 - Members : 46
- Purpose of cooperation : producing snail products and promoting them to markets
 - Financial Backround : 46.000 euros
 - Collaboration Partners : Ilakati Social
Entreprise
Private sector

5. Agricultural Cooperative of Tomato farmers (thesto)



- Establishment time : 2012
- Members : 600
- Purpose of cooperation : Producing industrial tomato, organizing and monitoring the production and selling it to industries.
- Financial Background : 300.000 euros
- Collaboration Partners : Industries
Cooperative Banks
Institute of Cooperative Research and Studies

6. Cooperative of Cow farmers (thesgala)



- Establishment time : 2011
 - Members : 100
- Purpose of cooperation : Producing cow milk and directly selling to consumers through selling machines in cities
 - Financial Background :100.000 euros +Loans from banks
 - Collaboration Partners : Cooperative and commercial banks, Milk industries Development Agency of Karditsa Grain cooperative (provides food for the cows)

7. Agricultural Cooperative of farmers (thesgi)



- Establishment time : 2013
 - Members : 75
- Purpose of cooperation : Cultivating and trade of agricultural products
Contractual agriculture
 - Financial Background : 75.000 euros
 - Collaboration Partners : Cooperative of Thesgala (Cow farmers), Commercial Banks
Industries
Development Agency of Karditsa

***Historic Cooperative of Ambelakia village (Spinning and Dyeing of wool)

- Establishment time : 1778
- Members : 6.000 local people
- Purpose of cooperation : Increase production of wool and trade abroad

Financial support of local community

- Financial Background : Members funds
Creation of a local bank
- Collaboration Partners : European Banks and institutions



Questions to guide the study trip reports

- Has the social economy helped the development of the rural areas you visited?
The social economy helped the development of the rural area of Thessaly in many ways.
- How it has helped?

Reduced the unemployment rate and increased the extroversion of the areas. In addition it provided financial support in construction and education of local areas.

➤ Have you identified any shortcomings or ground for improvement?

- The members of the Agricultural Cooperative of Stevia plant will extend their business in a year.
- The Snail Cooperative members of “Sigma” have already promoted their products to Europe and USA and they expect collaborations soon.
- In the case of “Thesgala”, cooperative of Cow farmers (they will increase their selling points in Athens from 16 to 30 until the end of 2016).
- “Thesgi”, the agricultural cooperative of farmers, will provide in the future a higher level of technical-economical assistance in every member – farmer of the cooperation.
- “ilakati”, social enterprises, is planning to increase the number of producers who promote their products through the enterprises.
They also want to set a business logistics of the enterprise.
- The cooperative bank of Karditsa aims to cooperate with other cooperative banks from Crete, Epirus, Central Macedonia to create a financing fund for social enterprises in the near future.
- In the case of “thesto”, agricultural cooperative of Tomato farmers, in the future they want to provide a higher level of technical assistance in every member – farmer of the cooperation.

➤ What are your proposals for further development of the social economy and its agents in the areas you visited, for the benefit of these areas?

The creation of an ecosystem network will benefit the rural area of Thessaly, because it will provide the opportunity :

- to develop and implement a common strategy (they participate to the plan of their future)
- to cooperate (each SE) with the other members of the ecosystem and find solutions.
- to establish common rules (code of conduct)
- to develop common services aiming to the members improvement
- to develop support tools to facilitate the emergence of new social enterprises

Therefore, each SE will eliminate or minimize the start up cost. It will facilitate the participatory decision making, especially in the start up phase. Also it will communicate the initiative to the local society.

SOCIAL IMPACT

Some of the cooperatives we visited pointed out that apart from boosting their members economically and giving employment, they donate some of their products for free to disadvantaged people of the local society (for example thesgala gives free milk to orphans or poor people of the area). In addition all cooperatives mentioned that their work and practices are in respectful connection to the environment. So they do not use chemicals or they do not release industrial waste in a unproper way. They function ecologically in most of the cases which is very hopeful for the future of the planet in general.