

"ECO-SYSTEM COLLABORATION" OF KARDITSA

Short History

The "Ecosystem of Collaboration" of Karditsa is a result of a long term strategy launched at the same time with the establishment of Development Agency of Karditsa in 1989. The first step was the inclusion of the "incubator" in its activities. The task of the incubator was to host all the innovative collective initiatives

or to support the existed ones. In 1994 a promised cooperative was established: the Credit cooperative of Karditsa. It hosted in the incubator for the first two years. Four years later it transformed into the cooperative bank of Karditsa which plays a very crucial role in the economy of the prefecture.

Support of local initiatives

The incubator has until now offered support to a lot of local initiatives transformed already in organizations of a variety of legal status: Cooperatives, Non for Profit Agencies, associations etc. All these local collective schemes in cooperation with existed ones formed gradually, with the support of Development Agency, a local network that is transformed into the "ecosystem of collaboration". Its main characteristics are:

- Its members are complementary one each other
- They are conscious that they belong to the ecosystem and know the members of it and their ac-

tivities

- They try to develop and implement a common strategy (they participate to the planning of their future)
- Each member tries to cooperate in preference with the other members of the ecosystem
- They establish common rules (code of conduct)
- They develop common services aiming to the members' improvement
- They develop support tools to facilitate the emergence of new collective initiatives

Services offered by the incubator

Pre-startup services: The support of the meetings of candidate members to agree on the crucial points of the statute:

- The vision, the mission, the relationships among the members and the terms of their cooperation etc
- The meetings take place in the agency's offices or even in a village where the candidate members live.
- The result is not always successful!

Offer of space for the head office.

- The hosted cooperative is integrated in the everyday function of the Agency.
- A desk, a computer and an ITC connection (telephone, internet) is offered
- There is not a separate space.
- Some of the agency's executives work also for the hosted organizations
- The organizational bodies of the hosted cooperative have their meetings in the common meeting room

Raising of awareness of candidate members, via:

- The organization of events all over the prefecture, in villages and cities
- Promotion of the initiative through the Media (traditional or Social)

The raising of awareness is organized in two phases: before the establishment (in favor of social entrepreneurs) aiming to the founders attraction, and after the establishment aiming to the en-

largement of the social enterprise

- Secretarial support
- Support to the administrative bodies (governing board, General Assembly)
- Invitations management; keeping of minutes etc.
- Management of the member's subscription and keeping of the book of members. So, when the Social Enterprise "graduates" from the "incubator" it has fully organized the legal files it is obliged to keep
- Information of visitors who are interested for the initiative
- Support in the process of business plan elaboration, especially in the phase of the debate – negotiation among the members
- Training in soft skills

The goals of the support services

- To eliminate or minimize the start up cost. This cost is the main disincentive putting obstacles to participation. Besides, in the case of unemployed people, they are unable to afford it.
- To give a boost to the enthusiasm of Collective initiatives. In the most cases they feel helpless
- To give a chance to the founders to acquire basic knowledge and skills
- To facilitate the participatory decision making, especially in the start up phase
- To enable the formation of a leading group competent to plan and implement the business plan of

the Collective Initiative

- To communicate the initiative to the local society

Current situation and results

The incubator supports or hosts more than 15 collective schemes:

- 2 Civic cooperatives
- 5 Agricultural cooperatives
- 3 Social cooperatives
- 3 Networks of family-run businesses (small or micro)
- 2 NGO

- The local “Ecosystem of Collaboration” includes 36 collective schemes.
- The establishment of local initiatives accelerated during the crisis.
- 3 innovative investments carried out by new cooperatives are already finished and the productive units are ready to work.

The “supply chain” in 6 fields is reorganized

Links

Forum Synergies: ERSG 2017 ([link](#))

Euracademy ([link](#))

Contact and information

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