

3.4. STATE OF THE ART AND NEEDS ANALYSIS REPORT FOR GREECE

Aristotle University of
Thessaloniki



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PART 1: STATE OF THE ART – GREECE

1. SOCIAL ECONOMY IN GREECE

1.1. Institutional context of social economy in the country

The first legal framework about cooperatives was introduced in 1915. Since 1952, the constitution refers to the obligation of the state to protect and promote cooperatives. Nevertheless, the legal framework did not contribute to the development of Social Economy (SE), which remained underdeveloped and dependent on state funding and the political parties, with one of the most important results being the defamation of agricultural cooperatives. The degeneration of these traditional SE actors was also reflected in the disbanding (2016) of established networks such as the Panhellenic Confederation of Unions of Agricultural Cooperatives - PASEGES.

However, a new wave of solidarity and cooperative practices emerged with the crisis, creating the non-traditional actors. These practices are associated with various facets of the post-2008 economic, social, and political reality in Greece. The newly emerging practices did not develop channels of communication and synergies with the traditional actors of SE. Apart from the agricultural cooperatives, which were the most important traditional actors, the housing cooperatives, the consumer cooperatives, and the credit unions / cooperative banks appear institutionally after the Second World War, while -with rare exceptions- there were no worker cooperatives of recovered companies. The rapid emergence of the new wave of cooperativism did not allow for the consolidation of representative networks except for a few, mainly regional, networks of social cooperative enterprises.

What characterizes the legislative processes in Greece towards traditional cooperatives is institutional fragmentation. With the exception of the first cooperative law addressing all types of cooperatives (1915), all subsequent cooperative laws only address a sector-specific subset and delineate different competent ministries and supervisory public administrative bodies. This resulted to a proliferation of cooperative laws with divergent provisions in terms of fundamental operational aspects for agricultural cooperatives, forestry cooperatives, civil cooperatives, social cooperatives, and worker cooperatives. Another distinctive feature of the Greek legislative culture is the frequent amendments of cooperative legislation.

This institutional fragmentation had not facilitated the design of a coherent, transversal public policy for SSE in Greece and blocked the possible creation of a political vision for a unified sector. Each ministry worked in a silo without much needed intergovernmental coordination, let alone the inclusion of public administrative bodies in charge of SSE policy implementation.

The first time the term SE was explicitly addressed in legislation was in law 4019/2011: "Social Economy and Social Entrepreneurship and other provisions" that was followed by a

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Strategic Plan for the Development of the Social Entrepreneurship Sector in Greece (February 2013). This strategic plan linked SE, unemployment, and social inclusion by addressing social enterprises. Social enterprises were mainly seen as a tool for the (re-)integration of those facing the strongest barriers into the labour market and as an alternative to state provision of social services.

A few years later, a leftist government used for the first time the term SSE (law 4430/2016). The new law failed to include all types of cooperatives and social enterprises in the definition of SSE actors. The law is clearly normative in safeguarding certain principles and values for SSE reflecting to some extent the radical aspirations expressed by initiatives affiliated with certain new social movements in the crisis-ridden Greece. However, this legal development had to build on a slippery road given the legacy of institutional fragmentation concerning SSE legislation in Greece (i.e., cooperative legislation).

In addition, the specificity of certain provisions poses strong difficulties for the daily practice of SSE actors and the Law does not specify how the numerous restrictions imposed on SSE actors will be actually monitored by the relevant state agencies given their limited resources and capacity with regard to SSE entities.

1.2. Definition of SE applied in the country context

The concept of SE was barely used outside some limited circles in the academic and research communities until the 1980's. Even then, the approach was mainly through the study and description of organisational and legal forms that were recognised as constituent parts of the SE field and less on the commonalities in approaches, values and principles that guided their governance, their practices, business models and aims. The defamation of agricultural cooperatives in the '90s along with an interesting discussion in the same period which accompanied the policy reforms in mental health and the role that social cooperatives could play in the deinstitutionalisation and subsequent integration of people with mental disabilities, initiated a more rigorous debate on the role and transformative potential of SE. Still, it was not until 2011 when the term appeared in a legislative document. Even then, though, the law 4019/2011 adopts a rather vague reference to social gain and social interest as the main target of SE and broadly fails to take into consideration the already established SE actors and organisations. As explained above, the current law (4430/2016) although more decisive, radical, and ambitious in its definition of SSE, also failed to acknowledge all the relevant actors and organisations as part of the SE landscape. It, thus, imposed an idiosyncratic division between the new and old paradigms, i.e. the "new" ex lege acknowledged forms of SSE and the "old", more traditional ones which need to comply with prerequisites that do not align with the provisions already instituted for traditional actors, in order to be acknowledged as part of SSE.

Nowadays, there seems to be a convergence in approaches to define SE either in the sense of the operational characteristics, values and principles of actors and institutions or through the analysis of their transformative role that goes beyond their mere presence in a market

economy. However, the institutional and policy framework still needs to be considerably improved to facilitate the visibility and identity of the field to develop and flourish.

2. SE STUDY PROGRAMS IN GREECE

2.1. Types of educational/training programs identified

In what follows is a presentation of the educational / training programs in Greece related to SE. In particular, these programs are analyzed in 3 dimensions: content - educational methods - interactions between HEIs and SE organizations. Further, each dimension includes the 3 different types according to which these programs operate in Greece: (a) as the only one - so far - integrated MSc program, (b) as separate / individual courses / modules on SE issues, included in undergraduate and postgraduate programs (not related to the SE) and (c) as integrated programs on SE organized by civil society endeavours.

2.2 FOCUS ON THEMATIC CONTENT

2.2.1 *Postgraduate Program*

The aims of the MSc program in SSE (Hellenic Open University) are to provide theoretical, empirical, and practical knowledge about SSE. The graduates of the postgraduate program are expected to:

- work in academic research about SSE and/or
- work in SSE ventures or
- provide consulting services to SSE ventures or
- work in the local or state administration in relevant structures.

All graduates are eligible in the program, from social scientists to engineers and doctors.

The broadness of the aims is reflected in the content of the program that goes far beyond a managerial approach of social enterprises or cooperatives. The program contains courses about commons, spatial development, social movements, public policies, democratic governance etc. The approach is interdisciplinary.

This is the only program on SSE in Greece. The program lasts two years and covers the whole country. It is a large-scale program with more than 700 students (since its launch in 2017-18) and 30 tutors.

The structure of the program

1rst semester

Course 1: Introduction to SSE (10 ECTS)

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- Definitions of SSE
- Approaches of SSE

Course 2: Organisational forms and types of SSE (10 ECTS)

- Diverse forms and types of enterprises
- Diverse forms and types of paid work
- Diverse forms and types of transactions

Course 3: Commons (10 ECTS)

- Concepts and theories about commons
- Digital commons

2nd Semester

Course 4: Spatial Development and Social Innovation (10 ECTS)

- Alternative approaches of (spatial) development (post-development / degrowth)
- Approaches about social innovation
- Spatial dimensions and planning of SSE (post-capitalist politics - PAR)

Course 5: Public policies and legal framework about SSE (10 ECTS)

- Legal framework
- Social policies and SSE
- Social protection/social work and SSE

Course 6: Social Movements, State and SSE (10 ECTS)

- The history of SSE
- The role of social movements in SSE
- The State and SSE

3rd Semester

Course 7: Business plan of SE enterprises (10 ECTS)

- Entrepreneurial ideas in SSE ventures
- Social marketing

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- Developing a business plan for SSE ventures

Course 8: Governance of SE enterprises (10 ECTS)

- Group dynamics
- Democratic governance and decision-making processes
- Human resources management in SSE ventures

Course 9: Financial Management and Finance of SSE ventures (10 ECTS)

- Financial Management of SSE enterprises and organisations
- Social Finance

4th Semester

Dissertation (30 ECTS)

Separate / individual courses/modules

School of Spatial Planning and Development, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki

There are 2 individual modules taught in the graduate level and two in the post-graduate one.

- (a) Geography and Social-Solidarity Economy (graduate)
- (b) Alternative spatial development approaches and policies (graduate)
- (c) Commons and Alternative economies (post-graduate)
- (d) Participatory planning in the countryside and in the city (post-graduate)

Options (c) and (d) are rather a combination of (a) and (b) for the post-graduate level. Thus, describing only options (a) and (b) will be adequate for the purposes of the present report.

In case (a), the focus is on recognising and understanding the types of alternative economic initiatives such as cooperatives, alternative exchange networks and community supported agriculture, and the specific geographical context under which they are born, evolve and become sustainable. There is also a theoretical focus on the concepts of “diverse economies” and “alterity”.

In case (b), there are several foci: first in exploring alternative approaches to spatial development such as post-development, degrowth and “community economies”. Secondly, the diverse ways in which the different components of the economy (namely work, business, market, property, finance) operate are studied along with the tools for their planning and evaluation in the context of community economies. Thirdly, there is also a focus on participatory planning (especially in the topics of the “commons” and “new municipalism”). The final focus is on the ability to use the above to plan alternative visions for specific places.

There is a very high level of promotion of SE principles including for instance: democracy, equality, solidarity and contribution to the community, cooperation, community development. Concerning the degree to which the courses deal with the wider socio-economic threats and opportunities of the country / place, in case (a), while there is a focus mainly on the individual problems and opportunities that initiatives have to face in their day-to-day life, there is also a focus on relationships with other initiatives, other conventional entrepreneurs, citizens and policymakers. In the (b) case a SWOT analysis deals with threats and opportunities of the places. In both cases, however, although the SE initiatives or places are real, the solutions are hypothetical without being reviewed by the stakeholders (i.e., initiatives, policymakers etc.).

2.2.2 *Individual modules*

Regarding the Department of Agricultural Economics and Rural Development (Agricultural University of Athens - AUA), one course is taught in the graduate level and one to post-graduate students.

- (a) Cooperative Economics (graduate)**
- (b) SE and Rural Development (post-graduate)**

At the graduate level, “cooperative economics” focuses mainly on the role of cooperatives in the agrifood sector as well as on more holistic approaches which tap on rural life needs and necessities. It explains how the theory and practice of cooperatives in rural areas position themselves within the family of SE actors/organisations and documents how macro and micro realities point toward the importance of developing collective schemes in order to promote sustainable development.

The post graduate course goes deeper and presents how cooperatives (and further SE actors) if developed appropriately offer meaningful services and solutions to the needs of rural society. The course presents theory, models and practices which range from the organisation of institutions, organisations and enterprises to the role of social finance in developing an enabling local/rural SE community.

There is a very high level of promotion of SE principles, i.e., those of democracy, equity, help and offer to the community, cooperation, community development, in both courses. Moreover, the graduate course places explicit focus on the cooperative values and

principles, as most of the problems agricultural cooperatives faced in previous decades were mainly due to the inappropriate interpretation of principles which then resulted in misappropriation of cooperative assets, loss of autonomy and defamation of cooperatives.

The graduate course is modular. Students are encouraged to employ during their (obligatory in the AUA) practice period what they have learned in real life conditions and report back with an essay. Post graduate students are also exposed to a modular structure. At the same time, though, they are engaged in the process and questions of relevant research projects and are consequently asked to consider how their new knowledge may apply and inform ongoing work in the subject of SE. Both courses build on and position topics and new knowledge in both the realities of rural economy and society as well as the SE community.

2.2.3 *Civil Society endeavours*

The People's University of Social Solidarity Economy "UnivSSE Coop" is a social non-profit cooperative established in Thessaloniki in 2013. The aim of the Cooperative is to provide education, training, information, popularization, research, studies, programs, publications, support services, development of educational and social networks in the fields of SSE, self-governance, direct democracy, commons, aiming at collective and social benefits and social innovation. It is addressed to people involved in all kinds of social solidarity economy collectives, but also to any interested citizen. UnivSSE Coop's function is based on the dual nature of cooperatives: "social - economic" and consequently on the dual nature of cooperative education: "ideological - financial/technical".

"CoopStarter project" is a vocational and educational training strategic partnership between cooperatives and youth organizations. Its main objective is to contribute to a solution to unemployment, especially for young people, based on the cooperative principles and values. Greece is one of the pilot countries, with the partnership of "KAPA Network" (ICA member), an NGO supporting and developing cooperative entrepreneurship at local and international level. The developed learning materials give cooperative ambassadors basic information about how to effectively engage communities so that they can make best use of the training sessions, materials and resources. It also helps them to understand the process of developing and refining their entrepreneurial ideas and working collectively with others as cooperative entrepreneurs.

TheOtherSchool

"TheOtherSchool" is a collective educational effort coordinated by P2P Lab (Ioannina, Greece). Its main objective is to briefly communicate new and old economic, political, and philosophical ideas that can have a transformative effect on society. It is an inclusive educational procedure, as the basic aim is to communicate changemaking ideas to people of all ages from all over the world. All the audiovisual content is available according to a Creative Commons License (CCL).

"Educational Platform for SSE // kalomathe.gr" is an open knowledge sharing platform where one can find educational material on SSE (in Greek) in the format of Massive Open Online

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Courses (MOOCs). Its main aim is to assist people interested in forming SSE enterprises and discover other areas that are closely related to SE, such as Commoning, Community Economic Development, etc. The platform is based on a modular structure. More specifically, the educational material is divided in 8 sections. The six first refer to SSE, while the latter two refer to closely related areas. The first one focuses on defining and distinguishing between the basic SSE terms, as well as on presenting the SSE field on a national and international level. The second section focuses on team development and dynamics and the third on choosing an economic activity. The fourth section clarifies the institutional framework concerning SSE entities. The fifth section focuses on marketing in SSE enterprises and the sixth on forming a business plan. The two last sections concern the Commons and Community Economic Development respectively.

There is a strong focus on the Greek socio-economic context as it targets the country's residents. "Educational Platform for SSE // kalomathe.gr" aims to promote SE and cooperative principles, involving:

- democratic decision-making
- voluntary participation
- one member-one vote principle
- transparency
- autonomy and independence
- collaboration with SE and community actors on local, national and international level
- sustainable community development
- social inclusion
- social innovation.

2.3 Educational methods

2.3.1 Postgraduate program

Throughout the whole educational process of the MSc program in SSE (Hellenic Open University) is conducted remotely, following the rules of distance learning. The educational material is provided on the university e-platform. The educational material consists of scientific texts and documentaries. Students have three meetings with their teachers during each semester. Theoretical knowledge is combined with case studies that, in many cases, refer to Greece. Case studies, videos, role playing are some educational approaches. Specifically, almost all of the assignments concerns case studies of "SE initiatives", and "alternative development planning", where students are invited to: explain the existence of

the case under different theoretical views, find out the differences from conventional enterprises, creating commons, evaluate policies for specific categories, planning alternative development, create or evaluate the business plan, propose and evaluate the governance and building team procedures and finally propose and evaluate the financing methods in combination with evaluation of social impact. There is a wide use of videos in which there are plenty of international and national examples, that leads to discussions that help a better understanding of theories and approaches.

2.3.2 Individual Modules

The role-playing model is widely applied in the courses taught in the School of Spatial Planning and Development (Aristotle University of Thessaloniki - AUTH), dividing the class in two or more groups with usually opposite roles (i.e., a group of students tries to establish and operate a cooperative and another group constantly expresses the weaknesses of such a solution). Service-learning method is not yet applied, but there was an intention in case (b), that was hindered because of the condition of the pandemic. Specifically, the engagement of all the students was planned to elaborate a local development plan for a specific place. There is a wide use of videos almost in every lesson in all the modules.

Accordingly, in the Department of Agricultural Economics and Rural Development (AUA), in both courses students are encouraged to work in teams and present their cases on different solutions to specific problems the agricultural sector and rural areas often face. There is a wide use of videos in all modules. Interviews as well as parts of visual presentation of selective case studies are often used to facilitate discussions and learning.

2.3.3 Civil Society endeavours

The People's University for SSE "UnivSSE" educational methodology is based on the principles of adult learning:

1. Ideas are linked to action
2. The focus of the educational process is the student
3. Learning by discovery
4. Critical thinking
5. Two-way interaction between teacher - student.

Cornerstone of UnivSSE Coop is the constant interaction between theory and practice.

Dissemination and support actions:

- Seminar lectures-discussions
- Broadcasts

- UnivSSE website provides free access:

- audiovisual material with a thematic directory on SSE General and special theoretical issues, Commons and SSE, SSE Networking, SSE Examples - good practices
- bibliographic material
- informative publications.

Participation in European and national programs: Creation of educational material and implementation of seminars for the training in SSE (for municipality executives, youth, vulnerable social groups etc).

2.3.4 SSE Networking at local, national and international level

According to “CoopStarter’s” educational approach, the development of new skills and capabilities is not only about formal training, but also about profiting from someone’s everyday work experience. Several educational tools and methods are being applied in the context of using the learning materials.

- First, handouts and activities to support the learning materials, including factsheets, additional resources and the instructions for activities suggested in each section like the ‘jigsaw’ method, the “World Café”, and exercises of visioning, active listening, decision-making and icebreakers (e.g. “people bingo”).
- Furthermore, technical supporting tools like “Business Model You” (obtain a structured general vision of your project through introspection), “Structure a project” (questions to ask yourself before starting), “Storytelling” (some essential tips to tell a captivating story, tricks to speak in public and to give a feedback about a public speaking) and “positive communication” (tips to adopt a positive way of communication and to encourage the ambassador with examples of constructive and positive feedback) are some of the examples.
- In addition, activity sheets include an alternative “Business Model Canvas” oriented to cooperatives, game activities and a self-evaluation tool.
- Last, one of the project’s deliverables, Coopedia Knowledge Base is an interactive tool where community members can contribute in an active way for the accumulation and diffusion of resources about the global cooperative movement.

The educational material of “TheOtherSchool” includes:

- a video series on YouTube (“Changemaking Ideas in Three Minutes”);
- a children book series (forthcoming);
- games;
- and teaching courses.

Video series on YouTube are often used for educational reasons in the field of SE. Moreover, the uniquely innovative educational approach is going to be implemented by the forthcoming children's book series and games.

Each section in Educational Platform for SSE // kalomathe.grcomprises a few online classes. Each class involves:

- a video lecture on the subject, written and performed by an expert (usually a SE actor or an academic expert).
- It can also involve additional material in the form of attached texts (e.g. articles, reports, legal documents' templates),
- online videos (e.g. documentaries),
- exercises (often based on an existing SSE case study)
- and forum discussions.

As it runs only as an online platform, interaction is possible via forums. There is one forum for each section where "students" can comment on the section. Apart from this, there are also forums on some classes where one can discuss relative to the class matters.

2.4 Interactions Between HEIs, Se Organizations and Local Communities

In what follows, is an analysis for the teaching and training engagement approaches of SE organizations and local communities, the level of participation of SE organizations in teaching and the level and type of collaboration of HEIs with local communities.

2.4.1 Postgraduate program

Regarding the MSc program in SSE (Hellenic Open University), there is no direct link with local communities or SE organizations. However, an indirect link concerns the interviews with individual initiatives as part of the essays' demands in many of the modules.

2.4.2 Individual Modules

As about the School of Spatial Planning and Development (AUTE), in case (a) of module students interview specific initiatives bringing in the class the real experience from the grass-roots endeavours. In case (b) of module, there is a middle level of collaboration with SE organizations in the sense that students interview local associations and Municipality's executives in order to plan an alternative future.

In both courses taught in the Department of Agricultural Economics and Rural Development (AUA), students are encouraged to work and present their essays on real cases. We often host cooperative representatives (members, members of their Board of Directors, and/or management) to present their venture and interact with students.

In both courses SE organisations are either invited to present their experiences or asked to be interviewed by students in order to present their stories. When feasible (mainly in the postgraduate level) local societies -beyond members of cooperatives- are invited to share their opinions and stances related to the SE enterprises present in their communities. Moreover, to facilitate further students' understanding of SE theories, practices and realities the following two approaches are also used:

- Identification of a case/challenge/problem either in agri-food value chain or in rural societies (for instance access to market of agricultural product, financing of activities, social/educational service to an agricultural or rural community, irrigation/water management, etc.).
- Examination of different solutions to tackle the problem, i.e. state/authority driven, private, SE approach (coop but also as a "commons"). Discussion on pros -cons, availability/feasibility and sustainability of possible solutions.
- Identification/debate on possible challenges a SE enterprise might face (work on a real case with participants from the case involved). Discussion of possible treatment and solutions ahead. Debate on differences (barriers or strengths/enablers) the SE enterprise faces with respect to the degrees of freedom of a conventional enterprise active in a similar activity/sector.

2.4.3 Civil Society endeavours

People's University for SSE "UnivSSE" is directly linked to some cooperatives especially in Thessaloniki in order to offer educational services.

Throughout the "CoopStarter" project, mentors from 5 countries create together innovative mentoring tools, aimed at enabling their national cooperative associations and local youth organisations to encourage and support young leaders to develop cooperative-related projects in a consistent and complementary way. In its second phase, "CoopStarter" project fosters the development of a cooperative entrepreneurial culture amongst young generations, by creating synergies and capitalizing on experience and resources of both cooperative associations and youth organisations. The resulting material is tested on a pool of 10 young volunteers, called "cooperative ambassadors", through a series of 3 activities organised in 5 pilot countries. Responsible for the coordination and implementation of the learning process, both for the mentors and the cooperative ambassadors, is the Co-operative College (Manchester, UK). "CoopStarter's" objective of disseminating the cooperative culture to young people in their local communities is implemented by the collaboration with an ongoing project in the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki (AUTH).

Regarding "TheOtherSchool", video viewers, considered as project's community members, interact by proposing relevant ideas for future videos and commenting on the already released videos. Furthermore, viewers voluntarily subtitle the videos and exchange know-how about subtitling by using exclusively open-source software. SE organizations can use the videos and the other forms of educational material for their members, disseminating the presented ideas. HEIs seem to have a fundamental role in the project, as educational

material produced (in any form) is based on academic research results. Further, all the videos are being featured by academics.

The “Educational Platform for SSE // kalomathe.gr” has been developing in collaboration with Heinrich-Boell Foundation Greece for three years and since 2020 it has acquired the legal form of an association of more than twenty members, including SE organizations, academics and experts in topics related to SE. Each online class is prepared and performed by a SE actor or an academic expert.

3 CONCLUSIONS

3.1 Content

In Greece there is only one MSc program devoted to SE, some individual lessons and three programs from civil society organizations. As far as the MSc program is concerned, the broadness of the aims is reflected in its content, which goes far beyond a managerial approach of social enterprises or cooperatives. The program contains courses about the commons, alternative approaches to spatial development, social innovation, social movements, public policies, and democratic governance with references among others to issues of social psychology. The approach is totally interdisciplinary, trying to connect social enterprises with their impact on well-being of communities and the environment and broadly speaking to social change through bottom-up initiatives. The same is true for the individual lessons and civil societies programs.

3.2 Educational methods

Assignments that concern case studies of SE initiatives, and alternative development planning, where students are invited to:

- explain the existence of the case under different theoretical views
- find out the differences from conventional enterprises
- creating commons
- evaluate policies for specific categories
- plan alternative development for specific places
- create or evaluate the business plan
- propose and evaluate the governance and building team procedures
- propose and evaluate the financing methods in combination with evaluation of social impact.

The main objectives of the aforementioned educational methods are the identification of challenges and problems that might be faced in economic sectors value chains and/or SE enterprises, as well as the application of adult learning, where ideas are linked to action and learning by discovery is promoted. In this direction, learning materials that help future educators (like cooperative ambassadors) to understand the process of developing and refining their entrepreneurial ideas and working collectively with others as cooperative entrepreneurs were of particular importance. In particular, learning materials include:

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- Videos on many international and national examples, leading to discussions that help to better understand theories and approaches.
- Videotaped lectures
- Role-playing model, dividing the class in two or more groups with usually opposite roles (i.e a group try to establish and operate a cooperative and another group constantly expresses the weaknesses of such a solution)
- Intervention of all the class to a particular place with the aim to elaborate a local development plan (service-learning method like)
- Suggestions for best practices on experiential learning opportunities (out of the reviewed examples)
- Videos with cartoons
- Computer games
- Theatrical games

3.3 HEIs - SE Organizations: Interactions

Within the framework of interactive learning, SE organizations are either invited to present their experiences or asked to be interviewed by students in order to present their stories. Local societies -beyond members of coops- are invited to share their opinions and stances against the SE enterprises present in their communities. Furthermore, students are asked to interview local associations and Municipality's executives in order to plan an alternative future.

PART 2: NEEDS ANALYSIS – GREECE

1. NEEDS ANALYSIS – EDUCATORS

The 6 educators that were interviewed teach in 3 kinds of program:

- (1) MSc program on SSE (distant learning), (interviewees: ID1, ID2, ID3, ID4, ID5)
- (2) Individual lessons in undergraduate and post-graduate programs not related with SE (live learning with synchronous teaching, and distance synchronous e-teaching in covid era) (interviewees: ID1, ID2, ID3, ID4, ID6)
- (3) Distant asynchronous learning program on SE, for SE members and high school graduates (interviewees: ID5, ID6)

In what follows we will use the numbers 1, 2, 3 to indicate the different programs addressed by the interviewees.

1.1. General info about the program

In respect to focus, aims, objectives and target audience of the programs / lessons in the case 1 there is no specific focus trying to cover all types of initiatives (formal and informal ones). The aim is that its graduates can start a new business or join an existing one or improve the one they already are members or become consultants. Furthermore, aims include the ability to staff public sector services responsible for policy design or providing consulting services or pursue an academic career. There is no specific target audience. It is worth noting that the program considers it important that the students get acquainted not only with issues of SE business administration but with the full range of issues that cross the SE area (see below “content”).

The same is true for case 3 except for the aim to follow academic / researcher career. Indeed, the fact that the education material may be accessible online and with CCL, it is suitable for use by SE support centers (for the training of SE initiatives members, as well as the executives of the centers themselves), and by post-graduate students (in their attempt to find material that is more easily understood with examples and / or in the Greek language). It is worth noting, that in the first place the educational material would be prepared for young high school graduates who would like to start a new initiative. Young people were also referred as an important target audience.

As about case 2 the focus is carried away by the subject of the program, i.e., “commons”, that include formal and informal initiatives and the way that they affect local and regional development issues (School of Economics), “agricultural cooperatives” (School of Agriculture), “SE and civil society”, “social movements”, “grassroots initiatives aimed at challenging power relations” (School of Political Science and School of Sociology), “SE and

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environmental studies" (environmental education in the Pedagogical School), "alternative economies and politics of spatial "development"" (School of Spatial Planning and Development).

In the case 1, the SE is not perceived as a complement to the private and public sector, but as a different way for the economy to function with social and environmental goals, and the aim of meeting the overall dimensions of "individual" and environmental well-being. These dimensions of "individual" well-being include, among others, material needs, enjoyment of what we do every day, good social relationships, involvement with community activities, good health, and safe / healthy environment. The SE itself is perceived as part of the diverse economies, the mixture of which is -every time and in every place- the result of the ethical decisions that communities make about how they want to proceed in the future.

In cases 2 and 3 the SE is also not perceived as a complement to the private and public sector, but as a different way for the whole economy to function with social and environmental goals. In addition, emphasis is placed on:

- the transformative nature of SE,
- the "informal" solidarity section of SSE which is considered more important, because in solidarity economy there are no profits shared among members (like what happens in SE), but only the "survival" needs are met
- the distinction between the social section of SSE (i.e., the sharing of benefits among the members of the SE initiatives) and the solidarity section (i.e., the sharing of benefits among the society through surplus).

In all cases it was reported that the values that are part of the teaching concern:

- Gift
- Sharing
- Collaboration
- Solidarity
- Mutual aid
- Reciprocity
- Justice
- Respect

It is worth noting that students do not believe that all these values are ultimately applied in practice. They rather consider them as utopian.

1.2. Program Content

Regarding case 1, the program considers that a prerequisite for the satisfaction of the previous goals is the students to come in contact not only with issues of SE business administration but with the full range of issues that cross and interact with the SE. Thus,

emphasis is placed on theories that approach economy beyond the conception of "homo-economicus" (e.g., critique of neoclassical theories, anthropological perspectives such as Polanyi, post-structuralist perspectives such as diverse/community economies of Gibson-Graham and open Marxist views such as the "cracks" of Holloway) and development beyond growth approach and practice (i.e., post-development, degrowth, community economies). In addition, reference is made to the different concepts of SE, identifying different currents that consider it as a complementary third sector or as a different socio-economic and political paradigm capable of bringing about greater social transformations, in every aspect of human lives. Further, emphasis is placed on Gibson-Graham diverse economies perspective to reveal the whole range of different types of initiatives that could cover our needs for work, business, transactions, property and finance and are different from wage labor, capitalist enterprises, market, private property and market finance. In terms of disciplines, the program covers the whole range of issues on SE (concepts, types, commons, social innovation, spatial development, law, policies, social movements, business plan, governance, team building and finance).

Regarding competences and skills cultivated throughout the program, students learn to think differently about economy through a reframing process. In particular, they, understand that economy is not something autonomous beyond and outside the individual, but the result of ethical decisions. In these decisions it cannot be taken for granted that many forms / types of economic components are inferior to the one that is dominant. In this context, student learn

- to analyse, understand and contribute to policy making
- to devise strategies that are "borrowed" from social movements
- about ways to build the team, deal with conflicts and organize internal democracy
- to develop a business plan and assess the social impact
- to plan politics and actions for the well-being of places based on degrowth, commons and community economies approaches

As about case 2, theories are sometimes bounded to the overall goals of the school. i.e.:

- Institutional Economics, Commons (School of Economics)
- Institutional Theory, Commons, and Institutional Economics (School of Agriculture),
- Social Movement theories / approaches / strategies for social transformation and convergences and divergences with SE strategies, Polanyi, Diverse / Community Economies -Gibson/Graham, Open Marxism - Holloway (School of Political Science and School of Sociology)
- Prigogine theory of chaos, Dialectic and Marxist approaches (environmental education in the Pedagogical School),
- Diverse / Community Economies, Commons, Post-Development, Degrowth (School of Spatial Planning and Development)

Regarding competences and skills, students get an econometrics tool and be able to apply it to another field like SSE (School of Economics). They also learn that the cooperative is not a conventional business and so when they work in one they can think and act not only for profit (School of Agriculture).

The emphasis and theories for case 3 are the same as in case 1 (although the educational material is in the stage of development). It is worth noting the emphasis is placed on the fact that the idealization of SSE should not be sought. Instead, it shall be shown to be a difficult road. The need for knowledge about the conventional way in which the economy operates and the obligations that this operation generates was also stressed. At the same time there is a great need to acquire digital skills (internet, social media, tools of democratic administration, etc.)

1.3. Evaluation of processes / methods

1.3.1. *Teaching Methods*

- Essays through collaboration: Each student undertakes a different part of the essay and each part is related to the rest, so there is both individual responsibility and cooperation
- Small exercises
- Discussions on a specific theme of the real world
- Video relating to specific SE initiatives.
- Invited speakers from SE initiatives.
- Games (e.g., music chairs in a way that leads to sharing rather than competition),
- Role-playing games by invitation to the lesson of a board game creator, which concerns the joint management of some resources as commons
- Role-playing games: Prisoner's dilemma (central idea: If students work together the result would be better for everyone and a discussion about the choice of "prisoners")
- Indexing from the daily press of issues for SE initiatives and practices
- Assign students to write a Wikipedia entry related to SE, in order to learn about SE but at the same time participate in creating digital audiences
- Conceptual map, i.e., give some keywords and explore how they relate and what comes to mind associatively or how they are structured. Aim: to create links and trigger thoughts based on things that are more familiar, starting from these and moves on to less familiar and more complex
- Lake fishing game: For 5 hours, they start from the individual level, and reach the collective, establishing rules of commons resource management and penalties, while at the same time they must make diagrams for the financial part of the project. (It was originally created by Ostrom and developed by the professor by adding stages).
- Write an exercise on how they could change something in their daily life based on the Gibson-Graham approach and the result is presented during the lesson.
- Summer School with parallel working groups (following the structure of the alternative globalization movement)

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- It mainly concerns distance learning: Why are the students engaged, some educational material is sent further, mainly video, to express their opinion or even better the students send a video to start the discussion from their own perceptions.
- Proposal: When a person operates in some way in the informal part of the economy, these practices / ways of thinking are transferred to the formal part because each person is a single entity. So, these small actions evoke emotions and values that may exist but are hidden. This revelation must be a method of teaching.

1.3.2. Difficulties

- When there are few meeting opportunities, the ways of interaction are greatly reduced, because in a few hours a large part of the material must be covered.
- When students are young, they do not have the maturity but also the passion that the older ones have.

1.3.3. The connection with the practice

- Small assignments that the students themselves present as case studies.
- View videos narrating the history of specific SE initiatives
- Students try to find information on SE initiatives themselves from their neighbourhood or their place or in general from Greece
- Visits to relative SE Initiatives (if possible, overnight to understand the impact on the place) and ask questions of the students themselves.
- They set up an SE initiative with fantastic data about a place and by playing the role of consultant trying to persuade stakeholders to act collectively. They need to be offered multiple forms of initiatives. Then their fellow students evaluate their arguments.
- There is an internship where many students go to work on an SE initiative and in many cases continue to work as members after the end of the internship.
- To have a specific goal for the creation of cooperatives (e.g. a cooperative will be created by a school with the object of waste management)

1.3.4. Challenge of traditional methods

The authority of the teacher is neither abolished nor questioned to a significant degree. What can happen is that these hierarchical relationships are not so "present" in the teaching process. By involving students talking about their experience, it softens any hierarchical relationships.

1.4. Evaluation of cooperation/relationship with SE organisations

There is some hesitation and concern about whether SE initiatives should give the "mandate" about what should be taught. There is a recent trend to direct curricula to build technicians. However, the purpose of the university is to format students' mentality in a

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direction to think and reflect the recruiting information. The university is something much more creative and, in this sense, it should not be the agent of the "market", but to listen to it while maintaining its autonomy. Therefore, the members of the SE initiatives cannot make decisions about what will be taught, because the goal can not only concern the needs of the members of the SE initiatives, but to awaken new ways of thinking, to open horizons, to transfer -filtered through theory- experiences, to be the basis / motivation for change.

1.4.1. Proposals

- Summer school organized by educators, students, and SE initiative members.
- Festivals for acquaintances and training, organized by educators, students, and SE initiative members.
- Many SE initiative members could teach specific themes.
- The course should have a teaching team consisting of academics and professionals. The same with the supervisors of theses whose subject matter concerns applications on the field and not only theory
- In France (SE in Grenoble), a cooperative is called upon to report its problem and a group of students is trying to solve it. For 3-4 hours the students discuss with the initiative and ask questions trying to understand the aspects of the problem. After 3-4 weeks there is a second meeting, and the students suggest different solutions which they have worked out in groups.

1.4.2. Collaborations and ways of diffusion

- Lectures given to the SE initiatives but also to the general public
- Educational material produced under Creative Commons Licences can be read by a wider audience.

1.4.3. Co-production of knowledge through student collaboration

A good student essay could be incorporated into the educational material.

The establishment of a cooperative by students is a process of co-production of educational material.

Proposal: Within the weekly courses there should be a two-week break. In the first week the students will work on SE initiatives and in the second week they will discuss in the classroom about the experiences they gained. As students will research on different initiatives, a huge wealth of varied information shared among all of them will be produced. It is expected that the experience through SE initiatives will be different from the theory and thus students will learn in an experiential way about the possibilities and problems of these initiatives. This contact with practice could also trigger the production of new educational material.

1.4.4. Fees / Financial support

- The Msc program (case 1) is the only one that have fees.
- In case 3 the educational material is produced under Creative Commons Licence.
- In case 3 there is some financial support but there is the target of financial autonomy.
- It is very difficult and very expensive to produce educational material for distance education.

1.4.5. Final thoughts

The process of co-production of knowledge should activate a dialogue between the two parties

- defining the common field of interest,
- revealing the approaches of each party to this common field,
- posing an effort each approach to be understood from the other party,
- adding new elements to each approach
- trying to integrate and synthesize approaches into a new one.

This way the produced knowledge is useful to all. It presupposes the assumption that no attempt is made from one party to persuade the other one, but that after the exchange of approaches their understanding by each party is unique and the synthesis of these different understandings is a new knowledge, resulting from the co-production process.

2. NEEDS ANALYSIS - STUDENTS

2.1. Interviewees' profile, motives, expectations and aspirations

Seven students were interviewed in Greece, all students or graduates of the MSc program in SSE (the only relative to SE MSc program in Greece). The interviewees, belonging to the age group between 28 and 40, come from different academic backgrounds (though many of them have graduated from business schools) and also differ regarding their relationship with SE. Some of them were already working in or were members of SE initiatives while others not. Furthermore, some of them are continuing their studies on SE, some are currently employed in the SE sector (mostly in supporting organizations) while others are employed in entirely different sectors or are currently unemployed.

The interviewees were informed about the MSc program via presentations in SE events, their social network or the web. They chose this course mostly due to their personal interest in SE and their will to expand their knowledge on this subject, but also for professional reasons (i.e., improving their skills, for those already working in the field) or academic reasons (i.e., continuing with a PhD in SE). What was particularly attractive for many of the

students is the focus on a socioeconomic transformation which transcends the MSc program course and translates to an alternative view of the economy. Additionally, some of the students stated that the broad spectrum of theories, approaches and scientific fields relative to SE, which was included in the course, reinforced their interest in the MSc program, since it made possible to get a wide view of SE and then focus on the things that are of particular interest to someone.

In general, due to the wide content of the course most of the students managed to meet their aspirations and expectations. Since many students were driven by their will to expand their knowledge on SE, they expected that the broad spectrum of theories, approaches and fields included in the MSc program will lead to a multidimensional and in depth understanding of SE, as well as to a systematization of their knowledge, which was proven to be true. Furthermore, developing critical thinking and social networking were also mentioned as positive outcomes of this educational procedure. For the ones aiming to improve their professional skills in the SE sector, the aspirations were also met, especially for the ones working in supporting organizations, since their job usually requires a mix of a wide theoretical knowledge and practical skills. Nevertheless, for the students aiming to start a SE business it was more difficult to meet their aspirations, mostly due to the difficulties related to forming a group which can converge regarding the initial vision.

2.2. Structure and content

The wide content of the course was evaluated positively by almost all of the students, since it corresponded not only to a variety of information but also to a broad-mindedness and an understanding of the different ways of thinking and the diversity in the SE ecosystem. Nevertheless, for some of the students aiming to continue their studies, though appreciated, the wide content of the course was judged as insufficient to prepare them for a PhD, since it lacked an in-depth focus in particular areas and subjects. The non-technocratic approach was also evaluated positively, as was the focus on social sciences and on procedures and contingency underpinning the course. In general, students found the balance between theory and practice during the course quite satisfactory, though some feel that a bit more focus on practice could improve the course.

On the other hand, some students (especially the ones not having a prior relationship with SE) found it difficult to connect the dots and place the different subjects they were taught on a single narrative. For the students already active in SE it was quite easy to reflect on the educational material and place it on a context. The fact that there was a lack of a focus on underpinning ideologies and epistemologies seems to have worsened this situation, since some of the students (especially the ones not having an academic background in social sciences) could not place the different theories on a broader narrative. Furthermore, it was mentioned that the general content could be improved by incorporating a greater focus on the everyday needs of the SE sector and society in general.

Regarding the structure of the course, the fact that it is entirely online is important for the people working in SE or in other sectors in order to attend the classes, but it comes on expense of social fermentation and networking, which are vital for the SE sector. Working in small groups and the evaluation via individual projects were judged positively by the students, with the exception that the latter didn't allow for cooperation between students to develop. However, it was mentioned that 12 hours were not sufficient to gain a sufficient understanding of each subject. The obligatory final thesis was helpful in order to gain a greater insight in a particular area of interest but for some students the time limit of six months was not enough in the case of participatory research methods.

Among the subjects included in the course students found particularly useful the following: commons, social movements, public policies and governance, group organization and operation, community psychology, alternative spatial development and principles and values of cooperatives. They also found useful Polanyi's and Gibson-Graham's approach to economy and cultivating the subject, the current of utopian socialism and the discussion around scale (local to global) and networking. Among the skills they developed they consider particularly important management skills, the ability to distinguish between the different legal forms of SE businesses, to participate in a group and resolve conflicts that may arise, to collectively organize work, to find funding and to form partnerships. Advocacy skills and development of creativity were reported as missing from the program.

On the other hand, a more in depth focus in business planning for SE businesses and cooperatives in particular could improve the course. Nevertheless, since not all students have a business background, it was mentioned that this focus should be on a practical basis rather than a theoretical one, as the subjects relating to business administration were characterized as "basic" by the students with a business background but relatively sufficient by the others. A greater focus on how SE could contribute to "greening the economy" would also be desirable as well as on explaining the ideologies underpinning the theories taught. Furthermore, for the students aiming to continue their studies after the MSc program, the absence of the subject of research methodology was among the deficiencies of the course.

2.3. Educational methods

The inclusion of case studies in the educational process was particularly appreciated by the students. Some expressed the will to involve more case studies in the projects and it was suggested that it would be helpful to approach a case study with small projects throughout the semester that will lead to a final project about this case study in the end of the semester (e.g. the business model canvas of a SE enterprise). A project which was mentioned as a good practice example was the writing of a Wikipedia article in the context of the subject on commons, because it involved an evaluation in the form of editing the article to be suitable for Wikipedia and it gave the students the feeling of contributing directly to the diffusion of knowledge. However, the fact that all projects are individual was considered as negative, since students would also like to undertake group projects with other students or even in

collaboration with SE entities in order to enhance their skills of cooperation as well as their knowledge base.

Another good practice mentioned was the use of audiovisual material like videos, movies, documentaries etc. Regarding the fact that this MSc program is based on the role of coordinator (who is responsible for coordinating the class, assigning and explaining the projects and answering the students' questions in relation to the educational material) rather than professor, there were mixed feelings. Though it is an innovative method some of the students would also like lectures in the "traditional" form to be included in the educational process, maybe by expanding the duration of each subject in hours.

The greatest deficiency of the course according to the students was the limited interaction with the SE field, since SE initiatives were only involved as case studies in some of the projects. This translated to a limited knowledge (for the ones not active in the SE field) regarding the particularities of the Greek context and even more limited regarding the local particularities from place to place. SE initiatives could be involved in the course as guest lecturers in order for the students to gain a better view of the problems and everyday challenges a SE initiative might face. This could be done preferably by on-site visits or at least via online participation of a SE representative in some of the classes. Furthermore, interaction with the SE field could be promoted by participation of the students in some of the initiatives' procedures (e.g. attending an assembly or an event) or even by internships.

2.4. Basic needs and suggestions

The greatest deficiency of the MSc program in SSE in Greece seems to be the limited connection with the field of SE and the limited incorporation of the current societal needs, in the course. In order to address this deficiency more local case studies could be involved in the educational material and projects, while also visits to local SE initiatives (active in different sectors), participation in some of their procedures or even internships could be employed. Furthermore, the educational material could be revised on a regular basis in order to incorporate the current needs of society and SE.

Another important matter is the need to connect fragmentary knowledge on a practical as well as theoretical basis. On a practical basis, the abovementioned suggestions could help, but in order for this to happen also on a theoretical basis it would be helpful to add subjects regarding epistemology and ideology at the beginning of the course. This could help the students systematize their knowledge and connect it with broad narratives.

The need for developing cooperation skills and team spirit could be addressed by involving more group projects, while the need for greater emphasis on SE enterprise management could be dealt with by adjusting all the relevant educational material to SE enterprises, involving more projects in the form of case studies and/or promoting collaboration with SE enterprises for a specific project whenever this is possible.

3. NEEDS ANALYSIS - SE ORGANISATIONS

3.1. Introduction – SE actors represented by the people interviewed

Six organisations were selected for this part of in-depth interviews aiming to collect information from the field and representative SE actors. These organizations were selected so to highlight both the views of organisations, which are active for many years, and views that reflect the experience of organisations which were founded more recently. In particular, three of them were founded before 2000, with a length of continued activity ranging from 21 to 28 years, while the other three were founded during the economic crisis and are active from 3 to 8 years.

Additional effort was made to include organisations which are active in different fields of activity and with diverse membership and focus. Thus, two of them are organisations with extensive support services aimed at promoting local/community development approaches and initiatives as well as dedicated services to SSE themes and actors. The remaining cases are organisations that are active in both receiving training and support services and/or sharing, when possible, their experiences and knowledge on cooperatives and the SSE field in general. Moreover, in terms of spatial reference, there were organisations active in and focused on rural areas as well as organisations in urban settings.

As about the interviewees, they were selected in a way to include the voice and perceptions of different levels inside selected organisations. So, the interviewees were members of the BoD of the organization in three of the cases, the senior manager in two cases (also member of the entity in one of the two, both actively engaged as promoters/brokers/enablers in several SSE entities and activities) and a working member in one of the organisations.

3.2. Educational collaboration and further relationships with HEI and/or further organisations

All organisations have indicated that they already have or try to engage into joint activities with HEIs. These, however, refer mainly to joint research projects or on an ad hoc basis, which are usually research-led, connected either with researchers' interest to include practitioners' experiences or research approaches that strive to promote bottom-up approaches and co-creation. Overall, these joint activities are circumstantial, and are more likely than not to stop when the projects are finalized.

It should be noted that older organisations and especially those that have a rather coordinating/eco-systemic, holistic approach on community and local development and SE, seem to have developed a better, more structured and longer collaboration with HEIs. This

enables them to reach out to HEIs and research centers to communicate specific problems (technical and/or organizational) that they face or the SE organisations they support and/or collaborate with do. In general, all interviewees referred to attempts or actual projects/collaboration that aim to improve the flow of knowledge, best practice dissemination and mutual learning through joint work with academic institutions. Joint reading of interviews, though, rather points to the difficulties and challenges SE actors face in Greece to coordinate and consolidate actions and build a coherent, strategic collaboration with HEIs. Although interviewees did not refer specifically to the absence of competent umbrella organisations (or even not-active/present at all) this dimension was traced as a critical one in this process. The fragmented SE community in Greece, along with the striking division/deviation in understandings of what constitutes SE, limits the potential of SE actors to work together, strengthen their identity and increase awareness and public perceptions of their role and potential. Thus, , parallel “monologues” and isolated ventures and less than needed, let alone expected, common projects, synergies and constructive collaborations were identified.

Work and collaboration with secondary education was also identified as partial and one-way. Respondents indicated that their attempts to engage with schools in most cases stemmed from their initiative and referred to events that were organised as part of a dissemination strategy, and/or case study discussions to inspire pupils and expose them to alternative approaches. In a couple of cases, again coined by older organisations, there seem to be a more consistent and persuasive venture to link with schools with long-term proposals on themes and activities that refer to a variety of issues, such as financial literacy, climate actions, energy transition, circular economy, etc. Nevertheless, all interviewees underlined that the work with young people is a key element and should be strongly placed in their organisations' decisions and future plans.

A final point refers to collaborations with local and regional authorities (and much less with national ones). Most organisations indicated that, recently, some events have been organised and that working in this direction should be advanced. Most interviewees, though, also indicated their concerns on the understanding, perception and competence local/regional authorities have on SE and its dynamics and potential.

As expected, interviewees pointed to needs related both with their entrepreneurial activities as well as with the overall concept and approaches of SSE. Interestingly enough, the latter was detailed in ways that cover both the organisation (and its internal structure covering all levels of work and governance) as well as further stakeholders, directly and/or indirectly connected with the organisations work and area of activity and intervention. Apparently, the knowledge gaps identified in their environment and stakeholders are linked with the barriers they are facing when having to cope with their everyday work and actions as well as the limited visibility currently the field of SE has in the Greek context.

Turning to the internal needs that were mentioned, most organisations referred to a mix of requests that relate both to technical/hard skills and competences connected to their field of

activity, as well as to SE in general. As one of the older organisations' interviewees stressed "successful SE initiatives are those which have received extensive support on their activity/service delivery or product creation, but mainly on the different role and focus (model, scope, objectives, governance) their organisation is built upon". It should be noted however that although this seems to be a shared perception among all interviewees, not all of them described it in such a clear and straightforward wording.

While technical knowledge and training was easily connected with the entrepreneurial/business model of the organisations, there were quite some references that directed the discussions to the equally important soft skills needed and understanding of the SE among all participants, members and/or employees. Soft skills and improved knowledge and appreciation of SE, were frequently mentioned in any effort to promote, efficiently develop and keep focus of their distinctive governance models and modus operandi, and through that increase their success and deliver their impact potential.

A central point in this discussion held the acknowledgment, understanding and application of cooperative principles and values in participating organisations and how this can be improved through collaborations and education/training sessions and programmes. All participants indicated that SE values and cooperative principals should always guide the work and "lives" of their organisations. Moreover, most of them underlined their importance and critical role in enabling their organisations to expand and meet their full potential in all possible ways, whether this is quality employment, decent and sustainable income streams, covering social/societal needs, climate action, and/or community development.

Despite the unanimous appreciation of cooperative principles and values as the heart of each organization, the research team has also seen that it was rather challenging for some of the interviewees to understand the SE as a whole and, even more, to position their venture within the SE community. While this may reflect the current level of development of the SE community in Greece, along with the fragmented and often contradicting legal frameworks that regulate SE entities in the country, there were also statements that revealed respondents' difficulties to provide a consistent self-description of their organizations' identity. This blurred self-perception was even more pronounced when interviewees were trying to identify distinctions between critical terms that define their organization, such as profit vs surplus, for-profit and not-for-profit, mutual/social benefits and impact etc.

An interesting point raised by most of the interviewees refers to the identification of different sub-groups, and therefore diverse needs thereof, inside their organization. For example, a recurring reference was made to the distinctive needs of members and their representatives in BoDs and governing bodies. These refer to the solid understanding of Cooperatives and SE in general as well as to soft skills related with the group dynamics, consensus building, conflicts resolution, etc.

An important dimension was the needs situated at the levels of management and employees. Although it was encouraging to hear in some of the interviews that this need is acknowledged even by the employees themselves who actually ask for trainings in various topics and theatics (both related to SE and professional/practical aspects of their

organisation), there were also cases where this was not so straightforward. Finally, equally valuable was the reference to different needs that even the same sub-groups may have. For example, at least one organisation stressed the difficulties they faced in transferring the different approach they have in their model and approach to senior-management and/or employees that have extensive experience in conventional enterprises (for-profit and/or investment-oriented). Apparently, in these cases, there is a need for an additional step that would entail a “de-learning” process to allow for the cooperative culture and identity to guide their behaviour, thinking and performance.

Last, regarding the structure of trainings and the tools and features that could make these trainings efficient and beneficial for organisations, interviewees indicated a mix of training and peer-learning activities as most appropriate. While exposure to SSE theories is recognised as important for the topics to be covered, they tend to prefer a more practical approach to learning and even more a specific focus on how theory can inform practices. To this end, peer learning events such as study visits, small group discussions, analyses of case studies, and further opportunities to share evidence and experience on both lessons learned and failures are considered as more apt and effective ingredients of such collaborations.