



# **Social Enterprise in a Global Context: The Role of Higher Education Institutions**

## **Country Brief: Greece**

**August 2016**



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## About the British Council

The British Council was founded to create a friendly knowledge and understanding between the people of the UK and the wider world. The British Council creates international opportunities for the people of the UK and other countries and builds trust between them worldwide. We call this work cultural relations.

We work in over 100 countries, connecting millions of people with the United Kingdom through programmes and services in the English language, the Arts, Education and Society. We believe these are the most effective means of engaging with others, and we have been doing this work since 1934.

[www.britishcouncil.org](http://www.britishcouncil.org)

## About Plymouth University

Plymouth University is one of the leading modern universities in the UK, ranked in the top seven institutions under the age of fifty by Times Higher Education. The University was awarded the Queen's Anniversary Prize for Higher and Further Education in 2012, and was the first in the world to be awarded the Social Enterprise Mark in recognition of working as a genuine social enterprise, caring for communities, and protecting the planet. The study has been led by SERIO, an applied research unit based at Plymouth University, in collaboration with colleagues from the Institution's Futures Entrepreneurship Centre.

## Using this report

### Overview

This research seeks to identify the benefits and challenges of partnership between higher education institutions (HEIs) and social enterprises (SEs) with a particular focus on those operating within an international context. Specifically it explores:

- Existing partnerships between HEIs and social enterprise across twelve countries, spanning four continents;
- The benefits of existing cooperation between social enterprise and HEIs;
- The impact of such cooperation on a range of stakeholder groups, such as students, social entrepreneurs, and funders; and,
- The role of HEIs in supporting an increased awareness of social entrepreneurship as a career option, and in assisting start-ups and early growth.

In May 2016, the British Council published the core research report<sup>1</sup> emanating from this study - '*Social Enterprise in a Global Context: The Role of Higher Education Institutions*' – which placed a deliberate focus on the macro international landscape for engagement between HEIs and social enterprise. In contrast, this report on Greece provides a specific country focus, enabling a more granular view of social enterprise activity among Higher Education Institutions (HEIs). A similar report has been produced for each of the eleven other countries that participated in this study.

It is expected that the findings of this research will:

- Facilitate dialogue, networking and knowledge exchange, opening up avenues for greater international cooperation between HEIs, and a stronger global narrative on social value and the contribution of this activity to achieving social development goals.
- Assess and promote the role of HEIs in social enterprises and the benefits of existing co-operation, based upon an analysis of opportunities and challenges related to collaboration.
- Provide a body of evidence which supports and informs further research and collaboration opportunities.

All research outputs from this study, including this report, will be made available on the British Council Social Enterprise webpage: [www.britishcouncil.org/society/social-enterprise/reports](http://www.britishcouncil.org/society/social-enterprise/reports)

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<sup>1</sup> Referred to hereon after as 'the global research report'.

## Introduction

### Outlining the research

This research is set against a context of global growth in higher education, and seeks to understand and enhance the role of international cooperation between higher education institutions (HEIs) and social enterprises (SEs). The study, led by Plymouth University for the British Council, is one of the first to attempt to identify the range of HEI activity in the social enterprise sector. Specifically, the study maps and explores existing partnerships between HEIs and SE; the benefits of existing cooperation; and the impact of such cooperation on a range of stakeholder groups, such as students, social entrepreneurs, and funders.

One of the challenges of conducting social enterprise research on a global level is that the term is governed by different legal frameworks, terminology, and cultural approaches. For this study, the researchers adopted the [www.socialenterprise.org.uk](http://www.socialenterprise.org.uk) definition, which considers a social enterprise to be:

*“A business that trades to tackle social problems, improve communities, people’s life chances, or the environment. They make their money from selling goods and services in the open market, but they reinvest their profits back into the business or the local community”*

### Study approach

The global research was undertaken with over two hundred HEIs drawn from Canada, Greece, Hong Kong, India, Kenya, Mexico, Pakistan, Slovenia, South Africa, Thailand, United Kingdom and the USA. These twelve countries were selected to provide a wide range of different geographical locations, higher education structures, and levels of economic development and rates of growth. The study comprised three core methodological stages:

Approach	Overview
<b>Desk-based review of social enterprise activity</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ This included academic and grey literature, as well as media sources such as HEI and news websites, blogs, and third party partner organisation websites.</li> <li>▪ The review was supported by consultations with British Council representatives from each country and explored country-specific issues such as variations in the definition of social enterprise, legal structures for the sector, and challenges to growth.</li> </ul>
<b>HEI survey</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ An online survey was sent to all known HEIs in each country to map social enterprise activity, and to explore the benefits and challenges of partnership working.</li> <li>▪ The survey was disseminated to 993 HEIs, yielding a return of 205 (a 21% response rate).</li> </ul>
<b>Consultation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ In-depth semi-structured interviews with up to three HEIs from each country, to capture their social enterprise activity and partnerships in more detail.</li> <li>▪ This data was combined with analysis from the preceding two stages to formulate a series of case studies of practice.</li> </ul>

With specific regard to Greece, thirty-nine HEIs were invited to complete a survey, yielding a return of eight – a response of 21%. Where possible, the survey was targeted toward named contacts with knowledge of, or responsibility for social enterprise at their institution. Whilst this approach was felt to provide the most rounded view of cross-institutional engagement and practice, it should be noted that any views expressed may not necessarily reflect the official stance of their HEI.

The survey findings have been exemplified and elaborated upon through the inclusion of case studies of practice from two Greek HEIs, and consultation with representatives from the British Council team in Greece.

### **The British Council's social enterprise programme**

Social enterprises address social and environmental problems through innovative solutions that improve people's lives in our communities and societies. The British Council's global social enterprise programme draws on the UK experience in social enterprise to promote its growth around the world. We build capacity in the sector, forge international networks, and support policy leaders to create ecosystems in which social enterprise and social investment can thrive. Our work supports positive social change, inclusive growth and sustainable development while building trust and creating opportunities between the UK and other countries.

## The landscape for social enterprise

### Country overview

The higher education system in Greece has a long history and is well-established. However, austerity measures and budget cuts following the 2008 economic crisis have caused disruption to the sector. Institutions have experienced heavy cuts to funding, in some cases up to 67% over the past 6 years, with many protest movements and activism occurring as a result.<sup>2</sup> There are approximately 49 public HEIs in Greece, and in 2013 there were more than 650,000 student enrolments, representing around 6% of the total population in Greece.<sup>3</sup> This is almost double the average number of student enrolments as a proportion of the total population across the 12 study countries described in this research, with the mean average across the 12 countries being 3.6%.

The terminology used to define the social enterprise sector varies in Greece. Consultations with in-country representatives suggest that the term 'social economy' may have more resonance than 'social enterprise'; particularly as the term social enterprise does not appear in any legislative or administrative documents.<sup>4</sup> A preference for the use of the term 'social economy' may be due, in part, to the negative connotations associated with profit-making enterprises. Representatives from Greece note that traditionally the charitable sector is not associated with profit-making endeavours and so connecting a social purpose organisation with a profitable business plan has yet to be fully accepted in Greece.

### Approaches to social enterprise

Relative to the rest of Europe, who have been conducting dialogue on social innovation for up to 30 years, the social enterprise sector in Greece is emerging. Evidence suggests that organised forms have only been present here for the last decade, and development of the sector has particularly occurred over the past five years. This is thought to be in response to the severe budget cuts affecting many of Greece's core services following the economic crisis. These funding cuts have led to a sharp increase in interest around social innovation and its potential to fill gaps in community service provision brought about by the cuts, such as addressing unemployment and promoting inclusion of vulnerable social groups.

In September 2011, a law for Social Economy and Social Entrepreneurship was passed by the Greek parliament. This was the first formal acknowledgment of social enterprise in the Greek economy, with three forms of social enterprise receiving legal status in Greece: women's agro-tourist cooperatives; cooperatives of limited liability for people with mental health problems; and social cooperative enterprises, the last of which was set up under the 2011 law.<sup>3</sup> Following the introduction of the 2011 law, the Greek government has started to make efforts to promote the development of the social enterprise sector and public policy has focused on trying to create an eco-system for social enterprises to operate and thrive in.

To date, only a small number of actions have occurred; although the law was intended to provide SEs with opportunities for formal registration, support and access to finance, it has since been scrutinised amid reports that it creates more issues than it solves. For example, the strict categorisation of what constitutes a social enterprise and the many formalities and obligations that the law imposes, including the requirement to have a minimum of 5 members, has created barriers to SEs registering and receiving support. In addition, the strict approach originally considered

<sup>2</sup> British Council (2015). Country Brief Greece: Education Intelligence. British Council: London

<sup>3</sup> UNESCO Institute for Statistics (2016). Enrolment by level of education. Available at: [http://data.uis.unesco.org/Index.aspx?DataSetCode=EDULIT\\_DS](http://data.uis.unesco.org/Index.aspx?DataSetCode=EDULIT_DS)

<sup>4</sup> European Commission (2014). A map of social enterprises and their eco-systems in Europe: Country Report: Greece. Available at: <http://ec.europa.eu/social/keyDocuments.jsp?advSearchKey=socentcntryrepts&mode=advancedSubmit&langl&langld=en>

necessary because of the funding opportunities to be given to social entrepreneurs, has since been deemed redundant. This is because the Social Economy Fund, the main source of finance promised in the law, has never been established.

### **Support for social enterprise**

The amount of support available for social enterprises in Greece is limited but increasing gradually. Thus far, two public support schemes have been implemented: the Local Plans for Employment (TOPSA) and Local Actions Integration for Vulnerable Social Groups (TOPEKO). These initiatives were developed to promote job creation for disadvantaged and unemployed individuals through the provision of training and funding to aid them in setting up their own social cooperative enterprises.<sup>5</sup> However, the cost-effectiveness of these initiatives and the extent of their impact have been widely debated.

Two international social enterprise support organisations have established themselves in Greece. IMPACT HUB Athens, set up by the international IMPACT HUB community, provides social entrepreneurs with a space to meet, work and hold events; promoting social enterprise and encouraging the development of networks and knowledge exchange. Similarly, Ashoka Greece has been working to foster a culture of networking, accelerated social innovation, and impact on local communities. For example, in association with the Robert Bosch Stiftung and The Hellenic Initiative, Ashoka runs the New Solutions for Employment Initiative; showcasing how social enterprises in Greece are addressing critical issues and making an impact.

Despite these support organisations promoting the sector and enhancing awareness, it is virtually impossible for social enterprises in Greece to secure funding. The Government's Social Economy Fund has not been implemented and the social investment market has yet to take root in Greece. Mainstream businesses struggle to access finance following the economic crisis and as social enterprises are considered niche, novel and unreliable, they are privy to even fewer funding opportunities.

### **The role of HEIs**

Currently, HE support for the sector is present but fragmented and varied. Several HEIs engage in research on the development of social enterprise in Greece and others incorporate the notion within the academic curriculum; offering taught modules within various university courses. For example Athens University of Economics and Business offer a Diploma in Social Entrepreneurship course which also functions as an incubator for social enterprises on-campus. In addition, some Greek HEIs acted as key partners in the TOPEKO and TOPSA initiatives, providing training and funding for disadvantaged groups to create their own social enterprises.

HEIs are beginning to build a cohesive ecosystem of support that is needed to help the social enterprise sector thrive. One of the few potential avenues of support that social enterprises in Greece have, is through receiving students for work-practice from abroad,<sup>4</sup> highlighting the critical role that HEIs can play in supporting SEs where possible.

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<sup>5</sup> European Commission (2014). A map of social enterprises and their eco-systems in Europe: Country Report: Greece. Available at: <http://ec.europa.eu/social/keyDocuments.jsp?advSearchKey=socentcntryrepts&mode=advancedSubmit&langl&langld=en>

## Overview of social enterprise activity

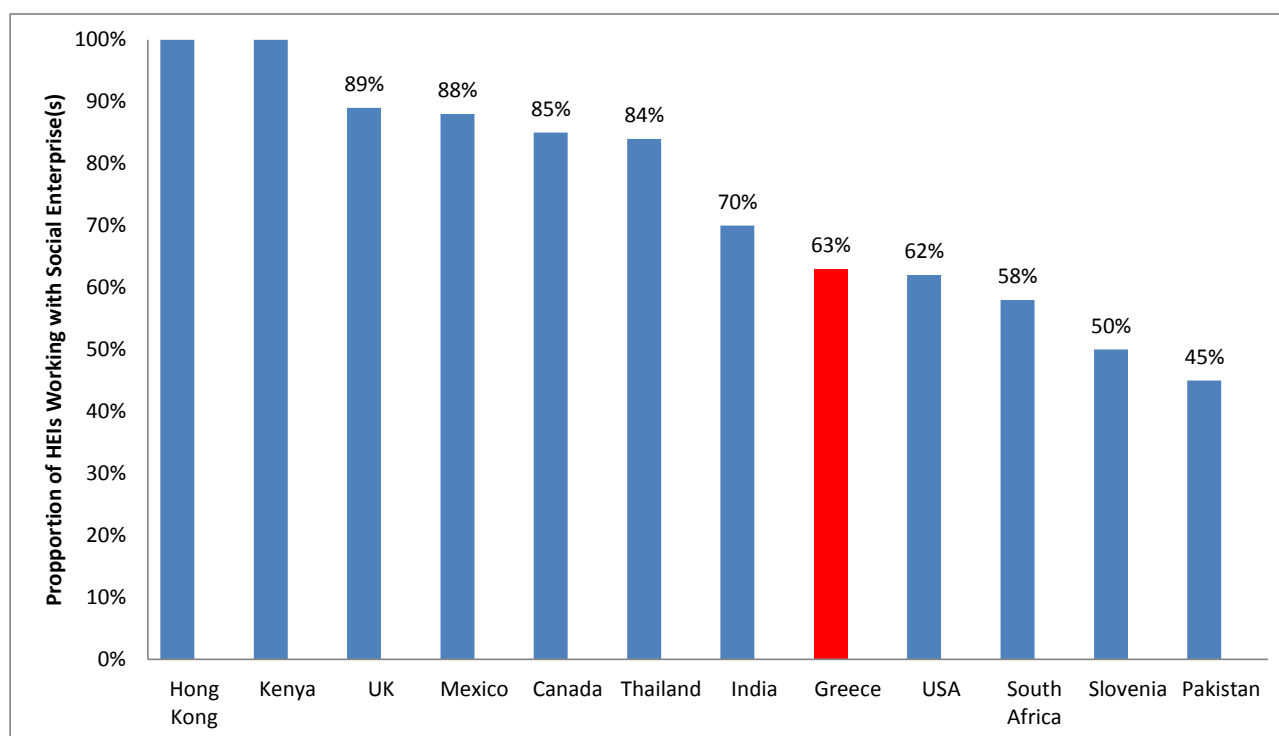
### Introduction

This section firstly summarises the scale and characteristics of HEI and SE partnerships in Greece, followed by a review of priority areas, and discussion on the benefits and approaches to supporting social enterprise. Where appropriate, the analysis draws on findings from the eleven other countries of focus in order to provide a comparator position to Greece (see 'Using this report').

### The scale of social enterprise activity

Although the social enterprise sector is still emerging in Greece, and as such is relatively new, of the surveys returned, activity amongst Greek HEIs was found to be relatively commonplace. As illustrated in Chart 1, although the survey yielded a relatively small sample from Greece (8), the responding HEIs comprised a majority that had active partnerships with social enterprises (63%/ 5). Notably, of the remaining three HEIs, one had previously engaged with social enterprises (12%); and two stated an intention to do so in the future (25%).

**Chart 1: Proportion of institutions from each country currently working with social enterprises**



Source: Social Enterprise in a Global Context Survey, 2016  
Base: 205

Analysis revealed no obvious trend with regard to the number of active partnerships across responding Greek HEIs; of those who were working with social enterprise at the point of the survey, two engaged with between one and five partnerships, whilst one stated that they had between six and ten and another had between eleven and sixteen active partnerships.<sup>6</sup>

As with the findings from the global research report, the number of active social enterprise partnerships in Greece was found to be diverse, and do not represent one homogenous group.

<sup>6</sup> One respondent was unsure how many partnerships the HEI currently had.



However, taking into account the size of a social enterprise could go some way toward accounting for these differences. For example, in the global research report, one university was found to have between one and five active partnerships; but one of these was with an umbrella organisation which is home to several large scale social enterprises.

### International activity

Regarding the geographical scope of engagement amongst the six Greek institutions who reported having a current or previous partnership(s) with social enterprise(s), four HEIs indicated that this included a partnership within their own country. Furthermore, half (3) also specified their work with social enterprise(s) had included some element of international activity, such as supporting the creation of educational and employment opportunities, or partaking in international research projects.

*“One of our international partnerships focuses on helping unemployed graduates”*

*“International activity with social enterprises includes teaching technology to children”*

In terms of the scale of this international activity, all three HEIs who work (or had previously worked) with international SE partnerships stated that this amounted to between one and five projects. As a proportion of total work with social enterprise, one institution stated that international partnerships accounted for five per cent of their social enterprise engagement and activity, whereas for another, it accounted for fifty per cent. The remaining HEI was unable to attribute a proportion for which international activity accounted for.

With regard to the key motivations for working internationally, Greek HEIs tended to focus on the advantages for their own institution, recognising how such opportunities allow for greater levels of knowledge sharing and funding prospects, and also enable HEIs to promote themselves. However, as identified on a global scale, cultural differences posed as the main barrier to international collaboration.

*“We collaborated internationally to advance knowledge from a country with know-how in social entrepreneurship”*

*“We were able to access funding for work with social enterprise which involved collaborating with more than three countries”*

*“As part of an out-reach program, international working enabled us to promote our Research & Education activities to the South-East Europe & Middle-East regions”*

### Priority areas

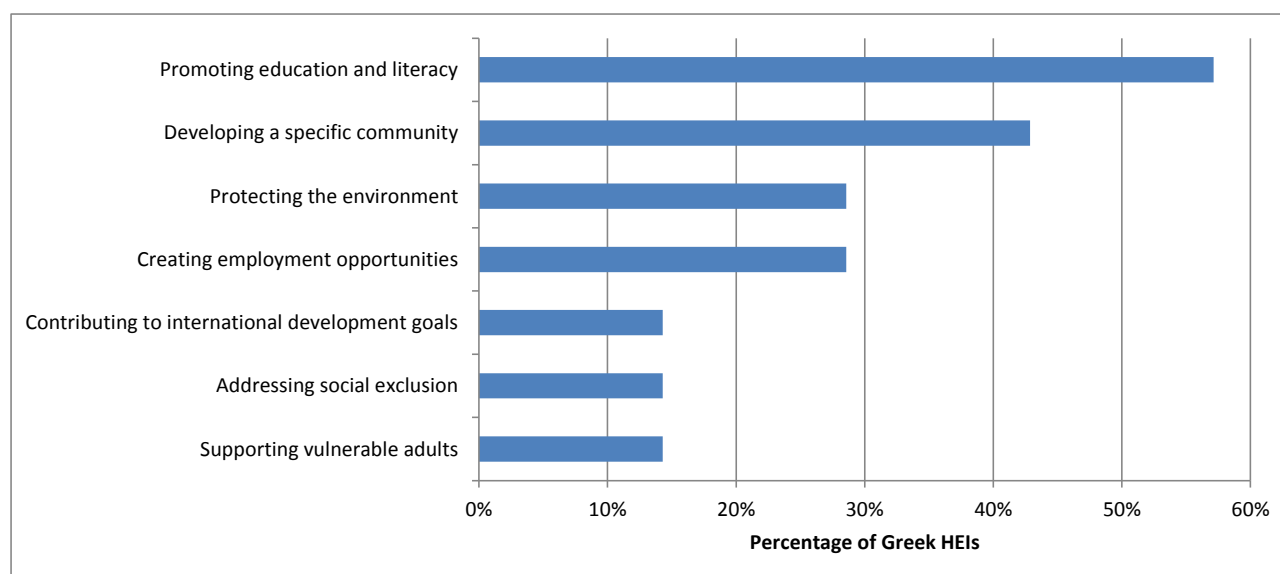
The most commonly cited social purpose that Greek HEIs would be most likely to support<sup>7</sup> was the promotion of education and literacy, as cited by four Greek institutions (Chart 2). However, reflecting views held across all twelve study countries, three were also drawn to supporting social enterprises which focused on developing specific communities. Furthermore, Greek HEIs identified a number of specific areas of community development as social purposes they would likely support, namely creating employment opportunities and protecting the environment (each cited by

<sup>7</sup> HEIs nominating each variable as their first or second choice they would be most likely to support.

two institutions); and addressing social exclusion, contributing to international development goals, and supporting vulnerable adults, each cited by one institution.

Given the extensive funding cuts in higher education over the past six years (see '*The landscape for social enterprise*'), it is perhaps unsurprising that the country is focusing its efforts on improving education through alternative means such as social enterprise. Furthermore, support for developing specific communities is potentially due to the austerity measures put in place following the 2008 recession, where many social enterprises in Greece are placing an emphasis on running certain community services once provided by government.

**Chart 2: Types of social enterprise Greek HEIs would be most likely to support**



Source: Social Enterprise in a Global Context Survey, 2016

Base: 7

### Motivations for engagement

Greek institutions outlined a range of motivating factors that underpinned their engagement with social enterprises. Of those providing a response, three reported that they would be particularly motivated<sup>8</sup> to engage with social enterprise because they felt that such partnerships provided opportunities to develop research. This was followed by a motivation to: address local and regional needs; improve the student experience; and build SE partnerships if such practices were included in the HEIs' mission or strategy, all of which were all cited by two institutions.

With the exception of opportunities to develop research, these motivations echoed the findings reported in the global research report. Further, with particular reference to addressing local or regional needs, such a perspective is especially relevant to Greece given its current economic position. For example, where there have been funding cuts to community services, social enterprise is considered a route to filling those gaps, therefore HEI engagement with social enterprise serves to enhance the contribution to emerging societal needs.

<sup>8</sup> HEIs nominating each variable as their first or second most motivating factor.

*“Working with social enterprises provides an opportunity to participate in European co-funded research”*

*“Our partnership working allows us to address social issues such as unemployment and education”*

*“After working with social enterprises, students have more knowledge, have developed soft skills, and have widened their job opportunities”*

*“Social enterprise contributes to brand recognition and is part of our international student recruitment strategy”*

## Working with and supporting social enterprise

Greek HEIs currently working with social enterprise(s) were asked to indicate the ways in which this took place, and to exemplify the associated type of support they provide.

As shown in Table 1, (and in common with the findings from the global research report), by far the most common approaches were through a project, partnership or joint venture, and through institutional commitment to working with or supporting social enterprises within their mission or strategy, as cited by all five responding Greek institutions. This was exemplified by the provision of: expertise and training (5 HEIs), collaboration or research opportunities (5); access to facilities such as buildings and equipment (4); and placement students, funding, and advertising and purchasing social enterprise goods and services (2).

Partially echoing the findings from the global research report, the second most commonly cited support approach was through the development of HEI- or staff-led social enterprises, reported by two Greek institutions. However, contrary to the global findings, Greek HEIs did not commonly hold an institutional membership of a social enterprise network (cited by only one out of five HEIs); nor were they likely to provide incubation space or support student-led social enterprises, both of which were also only reported by one HEI.

**Table 1: Approaches to working with social enterprise<sup>9</sup>**

Approach	Percentage	
	Greece	Global
A project, partnership or other joint activity with one or more social enterprise(s)	100%	96%
Institutional commitment to working with/ supporting social enterprises in mission/ strategy	100%	81%
HEI/ Staff-led social enterprises	50%	67%
Institutional membership of a social enterprise network	33%	70%
Incubation space/ facility where new social enterprise(s) can develop	25%	68%
Student led social enterprises	25%	78%

Source: Social Enterprise in a Global Context Survey, 2016

Base: 5 except 'Institutional commitment to working with/ supporting social enterprises in mission/ strategy', 'HEI/ Staff-led social enterprises', 'Student led social enterprises', and 'Incubation space/ facility where new social enterprise(s) can develop' where B=4; and 'Institutional membership of a social enterprise network' where B=3.

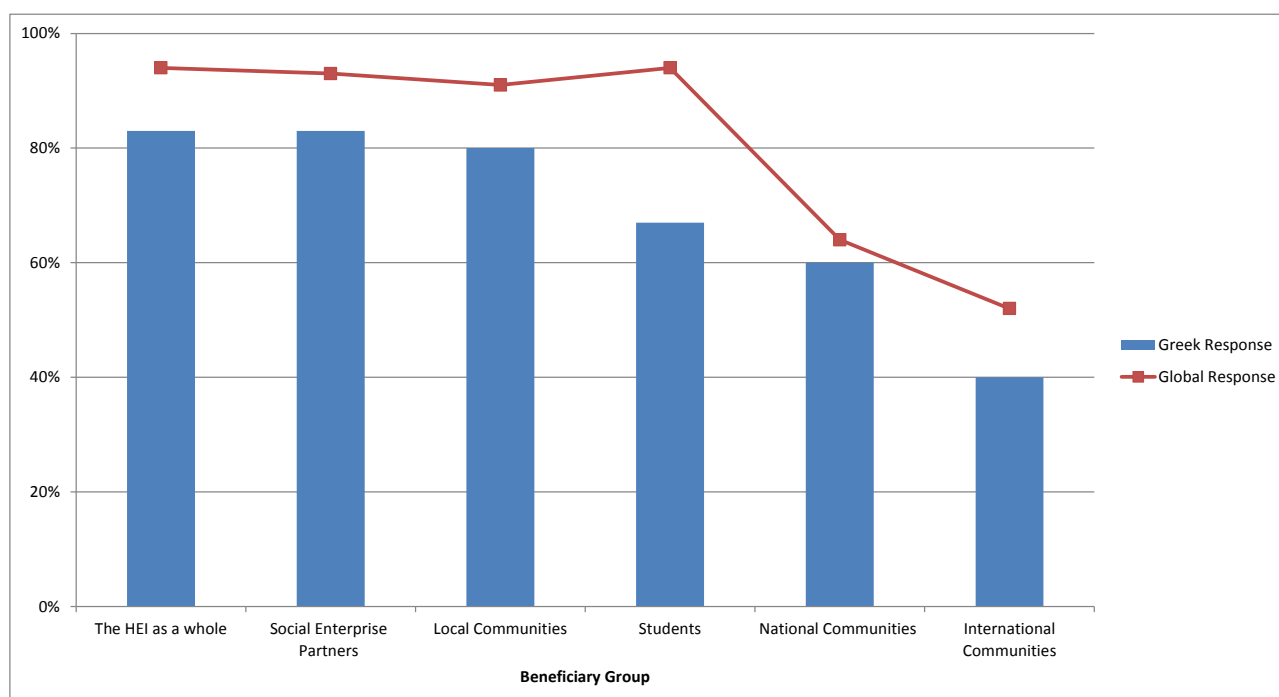
<sup>9</sup> NB: Percentages may vary due to differing base numbers and have been provided so that a global comparison can be made, however caution should be exercised when interpreting this data because of the small sample from Greece.

## Benefits of partnership working

Greek HEIs identified that their work with social enterprise(s) had created benefits for a range of groups. This is presented in Chart 3, and benchmarked against findings from the global research report, indicated by the red trend line.

The perceived levels of benefit amongst Greek HEIs somewhat echoed global views. Of those providing a valid response, the HEI as a whole and social enterprise partners were each identified as the primary beneficiaries of partnership working by five Greek institutions. This was followed by recognition of benefit for local communities and students which were each cited by four institutions and generally reflected the global findings of 94%, 93%, and 91% respectively. Acknowledgement of the advantages of partnership working for international communities was notably less (cited by only two HEIs) than what was found on a global scale (52%). This is perhaps unsurprising given the economic standing in Greece where there is a focus on providing services for the local community, due to funding cuts reducing, or in some cases eliminating, provision.

**Chart 3: Greek views regarding the key beneficiaries of HEI/SE partnership**



Source: Social Enterprise in a Global Context Survey, 2016

Greek Base: 6, except 'Local Communities'; 'National Communities'; and 'International Communities' where B=5  
 Global Base: 157, except 'Social Enterprise Partners' where B=156; 'Students' and 'Local Communities' where B=155; and 'National Communities' and 'International Communities' where B=148

## Embedding social enterprise in higher education

Reflecting findings from the eleven other participating countries, Greek HEIs that had active partnerships at the point of the survey<sup>10</sup> commonly used social enterprise to support the delivery of extracurricular activities (4). Furthermore, all four responding institutions indicated that social enterprises were involved in the delivery of curriculum teaching; two stated that social enterprise was incorporated across all courses; and one offered an accredited social enterprise course.

<sup>10</sup> A total of four HEIs provided valid responses.

## Good practice in developing partnerships

### Introduction

As noted previously, the research sought, in part, to facilitate dialogue and knowledge exchange, and to inform further collaboration opportunities (see *'Using this report'*). In support of these objectives, the survey asked HEIs to share examples of good practice stemming from their experience of developing partnerships with social enterprises.

HEIs in Greece provided a range of good practice approaches that could be shared more widely, which were broadly categorised as follows: involving communities; student involvement; and a focus on impact and sustainability. These are discussed in turn, and exemplified by quotes from responding institutions.

### Involving communities

In common with the findings from the global research report, HEIs in Greece highlighted the importance of engaging local communities in making successful social enterprise partnerships. The University of Thessaly cited collaboration between the Municipality of Volos, other HEIs, and local community partners in the TOPSA and TOPEKO initiatives. Here, the university provided social entrepreneurs with mentoring and training which facilitated the creation of enterprises supporting people facing social and economic exclusion.

Other Greek institutions have partnered with community organisations to help support new start-up ventures with access to resources and incubation facilities. For example, Athens Information Technology described two partnerships they have with local social incubator organisations, Aephoria and Idea Tree. They offer mentorship, coaching, innovation management and networking services to support the development of new start-up ventures operating in Greece.

*"It's important to work in close liaison with the local society"*

*"Communicate your intents and work with the local communities closely"*

### Student involvement

Although Greek institutions did not identify students as the primary beneficiary, educating students about social enterprise and involving them in the development of the sector was also underlined as key to successful delivery. Indeed, evidence from the survey indicated that one of the factors motivating Greek HEIs to engage with social enterprise was to improve the student experience. Furthermore, all responding institutions with an active partnership (4) reported that social enterprises were involved in the delivery of curriculum teaching, and two HEIs supported social enterprises through the provision of placement students; emphasising the importance that HEIs place on student involvement and the key role that they can play in developing the sector. Athens University of Economics and Business (AUEB), for example, uses social enterprise as a way to enhance students' employability after university. Their Diploma in Social Entrepreneurship course operates a dual function role, as both an academic certificate and a social enterprise incubator for new start-ups.

### Focus on impact and sustainability

As was a common theme in the global report, measuring the impact and longevity of a social enterprise is considered key to ensure it has a lasting and enduring effect on society. HEIs in

Greece noted the importance of considering their social enterprise endeavours a long-term commitment; ensuring ventures have solid business plans and sustainability after the initial start-up phase. With social enterprises increasingly being considered a useful tool to help deliver key community services affected by the widespread budget cuts in Greece, the long-term sustainability and measurable impact of ventures is considered paramount.

*“You need to have longer term strategic planning that will span over a number of years and projects. In many cases the work is discontinued because the project ends and there is no funding”*

## Summary

In Greece, the recent backdrop against which the social enterprise sector has been set is one of cuts, austerity and unemployment. Following the economic crisis, the sector is increasingly viewed as a productive way support the needs of local society that the state is unable to fulfil. The degree of support available to the social enterprise sector is small, but growing. Despite the higher education system not being in a strong position to support the development of the sector following substantial funding cuts, the survey found that social enterprise activity amongst Greek HEIs was relatively commonplace, with five out of eight institutions reporting having an active partnership (63%). This is benchmarked against a 75% level of active engagement from across all twelve study countries.

With regard to the geographical scope of engagement, four of the five Greek HEIs with either active or previous partnerships indicated that this included a partnership within their own country, whilst three stated that their partnership also involved international activity. Underpinning this engagement was a motivation to increase opportunities to develop research; improve the student experience; and address local and regional needs. Greek HEIs also reported how the inclusion of social enterprise within the HEI's mission or strategy would further encourage them to develop partnerships.

Consistent with aspirations to address local and regional needs, the most commonly cited social purpose that Greek HEIs would be most likely to support was the promotion of education and literacy, which is perhaps to be expected given that success in education and training is widely acknowledged as an important route out of poverty for young people in Greece. However, only two institutions indicated that they were most likely to support social enterprises that create employment opportunities, which is notable given the backdrop against which the sector sits in Greece.

In terms of the ways in which Greek HEIs approach their work with social enterprise(s), all responding institutions reported that this was through a project, partnership or joint venture, such as the provision of expertise, training and/or research opportunities. This was followed by an institutional commitment to working with and/or supporting social enterprises in the HEI's mission or strategy, reported by all but one institution. Both of these approaches were in line with the global findings, however, Greek HEIs were much less likely to hold an institutional membership of a social enterprise network, provide incubation space, or support student-led social enterprises than HEIs globally. The HEI as a whole and the social enterprise partners were identified by Greek HEIs to be the primary beneficiaries of partnership working, as cited by five responding institutions.

Looking forward, a strong social enterprise community has the potential to aid Greece's social and economic recovery. However, there is still much work to be done to broaden the scope of support available for social enterprises within HEIs. All Greek institutions with active partnerships reported that social enterprises were involved in the delivery of curriculum teaching and extracurricular activities such as being a mentor or judge in business competitions. So whilst social enterprises themselves are providing HEIs with various forms of support, there exists opportunities for HEIs to further promote development of the sector through increasing incubation space and supporting student-led social enterprises; both of which were less commonly cited approaches in Greece and more frequently reported in other study countries.



## Case studies of practice

### Case study 1: Athens University of Economics and Business

#### **Institution overview:**

Founded in 1920, Athens University of Economics and Business (AUEB) is a public university located in Athens, Greece. It is the third oldest university in Greece and subject specialisms include Business Administration, Economics, Accounting & Finance, Marketing & Communication, Management Science & Technology, International and European Economic Studies, Statistics and Informatics. They have between 10,000 and 15,000 students currently enrolled.

#### **Approach to social enterprise:**

AUEB's primary interest in social enterprise results from their commitment to sustainability, business ethics, social responsibility and the development of management capacity in the social economy sector. They work with social enterprises to develop research opportunities, because it helps them innovate, to address national needs, to improve their student experience, and to improve the reputation of the HEI.

#### **National agenda, local action:**

Linked to the national priorities for social enterprise, AUEB are particularly supportive of students' social entrepreneurship initiatives concerned with integrating disadvantaged groups, providing social care and developing technological and web solutions for these groups of people. For example the university helped 'The Lighthouse for the Blind in Greece' to develop a business plan supporting their work to improve the social integration of visually impaired people.

'Blood-e', a student-led enterprise that developed the first online platform for blood donation in Greece, was created in the university's incubator, the Athens Centre for Innovation and Entrepreneurship. The centre provided the enterprise with business mentoring in terms of strategy, marketing, finance and legal issues and guided the development of their first business plan. They also supported the founder through the Diploma in Social Entrepreneurship in order to develop their management capabilities, scaling and strategy growth. The winner of the Social Impact Award 2014, Blood-e aims to increase the number of blood donor volunteers, contributing to the organisation of the blood donation system in Greece.

#### **Encouraging student engagement:**

AUEB are particularly supportive of social enterprise activities that facilitate an increase in students' employability and enhances their entrepreneurial spirit. The Diploma in Social Entrepreneurship is an academic course that also functions as an incubator for social enterprises at AUEB. They accept young social entrepreneurs with specific social venture ideas that they wish to develop as social enterprises. They provide multiple individuals with support at any one time and students receive assistance in the development of sustainable business plans for their social projects.

Examples of past incubates include 'Solomon', a magazine written and sold by immigrants; a social restaurant that employs and supports immigrants and refugees; a social enterprise that creates a platform for providing employment opportunities to people with disabilities; and a social enterprise that develops educational programmes for the protection of the Greek heritage.

Contact Information: [www.aueb.gr](http://www.aueb.gr)



## Case study 2: University of Thessaly

### **Institution overview:**

The University of Thessaly, 'UTH', was founded in 1984. The main campus can be found in Volos, Greece and other campuses are present in Larissa, Trikala, Karditsa and Lamia. The university aims to promote scientific knowledge through research and to contribute to the cultural and economic development of the local community and wider society. There are between 10,000 and 15,000 students currently enrolled.

### **Approach to social enterprise:**

Working with social enterprise attracts opportunities from various sources to the university. They have a commitment to work with social enterprises as part of their HEI mission/ strategy and their partnerships help improve the reputation of UTH, access funding, develop new services and products, and address local or regional needs.

### **Community engagement:**

UTH was a key partner in the development and delivery of the TOPEKO (Local Actions Integration for Vulnerable Social Groups) and TOPSA (Local Plans for Employment) programmes. These initiatives were developed in collaboration with the Municipality of Volos and other local communities to promote job creation for disadvantaged groups through the provision of training to support them in setting up their own social enterprises. The University of Thessaly provided start-up social entrepreneurs with incubation space, mentoring and training, helping them to support people facing social and economic exclusion through social enterprise.

### **Benefits and challenges:**

UTH note that social enterprises create indirect impact for the university. They benefit staff through their contact and cooperation with external partners, and they enable planning and development of new programmes to build on prior successes.

The university identified that poor initial planning and a lack of communication between stakeholders creates challenges for their work, leading to delays and problems adapting the right training for people. For HEIs working with social enterprises for the first time, they emphasise the importance of communicating their intents well and working with local communities in order to plan in advance, creating more tailor-made programmes for their specific needs.

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