Empowering Changemakers: Youth Social Entrepreneurship and Social Innovation in the Citizen Sector
(SE-HUB)

Grant decision No: 2018-3974/ 001-001

Social Enterprise

RETHINK SOCIAL ENTERPRISE

(Greece)¹

Area of work: Waste management, environment

I. Key facts

Challenge overview

- Community Compost Network in Kalamata, 61 community composters
- Expanding of Community Compost Network in other municipalities (Mykonos, Samothraki, Vrilissia)
- FarmaFifa Permaculture education center. Establishment of an open farm for environmental education practices and workshops, for youths and families recreation
- From 2014 -2018, 500 workshops, presentations, 250 schools involved, 150 social events and recreation events; more than 3.000 tons of organic waste have been aborted in the community compost network; more than 450 ranges from traditional seeds have been saved and kept for exchange in the Farmafifa OpenBank of Traditional Seeds, in a network of 200 Seedkeepets.

Enterprise`s Establishment

Re:Think works within the principles of equal co-operation and the conscious volunteer offer to the project. The team has begun its work as a group of activists at the initiative of the educational and visual artist Mirto Fifa and with the support of the Phoebe Farm. Since 2014, the team has chosen the legal form that considered the best serving of their principles and facilitates them to be active, which is a non-profit social cooperative enterprise.

II. Objectives and Activities

Principles of work

The organization contributes decisively to

- create a multidimensional ecological power built based on respect for diversity
- emphasis on creative collaboration, encouraging local action
- enhancing the concept of an eco-sustainable society

¹ This good practice is presented by K.A.NE. Social Youth Development (Greece).
For many years, the people of Kalamata were facing the reality of the community and their unhealthy habits for themselves and the environment. The lack of tools to activate the local society regarding the social waste and food management was the first motivation for Re:Think. The corruption of public sector in waste management was the opportunity for Re:Think to start from the beginning to communicate with people about perm culture methodology for a sustainable model of production. The economic crisis was also an opportunity to transfer to the people and the stakeholders the need of a more economical way to manage their wastes. Finally yet importantly, the old traditions of managing the wasted, farming, etc., were still alive and these techniques should be recorded and transferred to today’s reality.

**Scope of work/ Objectives**

Re:Think social non-profit cooperative aims to raise awareness and activate citizens to protect local biodiversity and enhance the natural environment for the benefit of the quality of life for the local and wider community and for the emergence of wider rural culture, with innovative optics. The organization also aims to creatively interact with young people, focusing on the expansion of a new sustainable way of life and cultural production, decentralized, infused with the principles of ecological wisdom and sustainability of social solidarity, respect for diversity, direct democracy, self-organized action and cooperation. Re:Think explores and creates proposals for management of rural and agricultural production with sustainable and innovation perspective.

**Activities**

**FARMA FIFA PERMACULTURE EDUCATION, A SCHOOL IN NATURE**

The team produces environmental programs, performs and educates school groups and groups of adults in perm culture methodology, in the circle of the seed/plant (natural and traditional farming), in natural composting, botany, and natural remedies and DIY crafts and arts. The organization uses a holistic approach, based in democratic education and inspired from the schools of practical education, such as Waldorf-Steiner education. The team aims to create a school in nature, where the young generation can be a part, respect, work and live in coordination with nature, and the values coming out of a natural way of life.
SEEDKEEPERS

A project with great environmental value for the region as it maintains and evolves continually collection, planting and breeding from old, traditional varieties or ones that tend to disappear. The team maintains and grows a bank of traditional seeds in their farm. They preserve a voluntary traditional seed keeping network, called Seedkeepers.

RE: THINK PROJECT

A study on waste self-maintenance, as a tool for a sustainable society. The main idea of Re:Think project is how society can self-maintain, enlarging the self-activity and self-management of environmental problems of a region, collectively by its inhabitants. Since 2011, RE: THINK Social Cooperative has been implementing, in cooperation with the Municipality of Kalamata, the Re: Think Community Compost Network Program, which is a new and original creation of RE: THINK Social Cooperative, with the right of management and implementation of the cooperative university/municipality/factor involved. The main objective of the program is the creation of a Community Compost Network for free and common use by citizens, where the waste producer becomes a compost producer. Currently, the Re: Think composting network consists of 58 community composters, being maintained from habitants in collaboration with factories/enterprises. The network can absorb annually around 400 tons of organic waste.

The team has also placed composters in Mytilini, Mykonos, Samothraki and Mani. They activate and inspire artists, scientists, activists and widely active citizens on the creative reuse and recycling, through workshops DIY from waste materials, workshops, actions.

FARMA FIFA NATURAL VENUE-PLAYGROUND

Aspires to be a nodal space in the region (and beyond) for environmental awareness, action and training, but also a place of natural entertainment for the family, as Re:Think is organizing family playground activities, and birthday kids activities and parties in nature. Families found an alternative way of entertainment with their kids and in the same time being in touch with nature and not fat way from the city center.

THE MUSEUM

A museum highlighting rural-artisanal history of the region, but also serving as a cultural center - carrier artistic events with the simultaneous emergence, maintenance and report
of the folklore collections of Athanasios FOIFA. The collection contains elements of rural and artisanal history of the region.

III. Challenges encountered and Impact

Challenges

The challenges, Re:Think had to face and is still facing: first of all, there are no institutions, tools or other channels to activate the local society regarding the social waste and food management. Most of the locals do not now even the terms of social waste and food management. This fact was at the same point the reason the team wanted to start the projects.

The corruption of public sector in waste management was and still is a big challenge not only in the region, but also in the whole country.

The team needed to start from the beginning to communicate with people about permaculture methodology for a sustainable model of production, because there is a lack of education in these fields. Also Re:Think had to face the lack of existing model in experiential environmental education among public school curriculum.

The biggest challenge was and still is that there was not support from the government at all. The people who started Re:Think had to pressure themselves in order to achieve their goals with huge personal involvement. Only after many years insisting and spreading their ideas, they achieved collaboration with the municipality of Kalamata.

Impact

The impact of Re:Think is visible in almost every neighborhood of Kalamata where the locals are using the Community Compost Network. Because numbers show the real impact, the network can absorb annually around 400 tons of organic waste. This amount can be translated to saving energy and money, to use high quality soil in gardens in the city, manage their own food and of course increase the number of active citizens.

Schools, kids, parents and other individuals visiting the farm gain knowledge, which could change their lifestyle and make them more independent, so freer.

IV. Lessons learnt and conditions for potential replicability

Lessons learnt

After all these years and the experience gained, Re:Think supports truly that anyone who involving in social innovation and social enterprises must have first of all clear image of
the reality in the community and its needs. Continuously, anyone who is getting involved with this kind of activities should respect and include local people and the community in general. At the same time, they should be open for new ideas even when the cost is economical or loose of time. Finally yet importantly, social enterprises and innovations should be sensitive, honest and ready dedicate many hours at this.

**Conditions for potential replicability**

They are already expanding their network in Kalamata, since more people are getting more active and they want to have active participation in all or some of their projects. Re:Think has being a good example for many other municipalities and many of them are calling and hosting the Re:Think team in order to share with them their methodology and good practices.