

Local actions for vulnerable groups (ΤΟΠΕΚΟ)

Τοπικά Ολοκληρωμένα Προγράμματα για τις ευάλωτες
κοινωνικά ομάδες (ΤΟΠΕΚΟ)

 Greece

1 Description

Timespan 2007-2013

Stage NO LONGER OPERATIONAL

It has been completed and followed by another similar program.

Focus area  MATCHING SKILLS FOR TODAY'S JOB MARKET

2 Foundations

Policy area  ACTIVE LABOUR MARKET POLICIES

The Primary Objective of the development strategy of the Operational Programme "Human Resources Development 2007-2013" is the utilisation of all human resources as a moving force for the country's growth and the reinforcement of social cohesion through actions that aim to activate socially vulnerable groups with specific support, networking, consultancy, training and counselling activities.

Policy goal

The aim of the Local actions for vulnerable groups (TOPEKO) is to contribute towards the integration or re-integration of unemployed people belonging to socially vulnerable groups, through a broad set of actions that cover additional needs of different beneficiaries with a special emphasis on their employment or entrepreneurial perspectives. The actions aim to mobilise local actors to create jobs and at the same time facilitate a versatile and effective preparation of unemployed beneficiaries to:

- cover job positions of existing businesses
- start a business that will benefit from the characteristics of their area
- gain qualifications to benefit from other investment programs
- acquire skills that will meet real and identified needs of local businesses that will hire them

Mismatch

PART OF BROAD POLICY MEASURE OF WHICH SKILL MISMATCH IS ONLY A MINOR PART

Although no explicit reference to skills mismatch has been made, the applicants (partnerships consisted of local agencies, VET providers, NGOs, trade unions, employer organizations, chambers, CSOs) should submit specific labour market information supporting the relevance of the suggested training courses in tandem with the local labour market needs.

Aim of policy instrument

 **UPSKILL AND MATCH SKILLS OF UNEMPLOYED**

Legal basis

MINISTERIAL ORDER

Administrative level

NATIONAL

Main responsible body

Ministry of Labour, Social Insurance and Social Solidarity/Managing Authority for Social Inclusion and Social Economy

Stakeholders

-  **TRAINING PROVIDERS (PUBLIC/PRIVATE)**
-  **EMPLOYER FEDERATIONS**
-  **TRADE UNIONS**
-  **CHAMBERS OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY**



GUIDANCE COUNSELLORS



RESEARCH CENTRES AND UNIVERSITIES



SOCIAL PARTNERS



OTHER

OAED (Public Employment Service): implementing
 Municipalities: implementing
 Employers' associations: implementing
 Trade unions: implementing
 NGOs: implementing
 Universities & research units: implementing
 Transnational partners: advising & consulting as observer
 VET companies: implementing

Funding

Operational Program "Human Resources Development" 2007-2013: €60,000,000 (ESF: 75%, national funds: 25%).

Intended beneficiaries

12.000 individuals participated. The right to participate belonging to the socially vulnerable groups below:

- Long-term unemployed aged over 45 with low qualifications
- People with Disabilities
- Female victims of domestic violence
- Trafficking victims
- Parent families
- Immigrants, refugees
- People with religious and cultural differences in poverty/risk of poverty
- Asylum seekers
- Released prisoners
- Former drug users
- Seropositive
- Homeless
- People in poverty/risk of poverty
- People subject to discrimination based on sexual orientation and/or gender identity

3 Processes

Use of labour market intelligence



INFORM AND TRAIN CAREER GUIDANCE AND COUNSELLORS



Studies on local labour markets have been delivered by each applicant of the program. The applicants (partnerships consisted of local agencies, VET providers, NGOs, trade unions, employer organizations, chambers, CSOs) conducted a survey (relying mostly in secondary data) pinpointing the need to support specific social vulnerable groups (beneficiaries) through counselling and training activities in VET areas that corresponded to the local labour market needs.

More specifically each applicant (partnerships of local authorities, NGOs, Civil Society Organizations, VET providers, social cooperatives) should provide evidence based information on the local labour market demands. A fully completed application form should make explicit references to indicators and instruments such as a) unemployment rates; b) information on local business activity by sector, size, type of activity; c) SWOT analysis that can support the need for the specific training program suggested by the partners. Additionally, the beneficial consortia should deliver a local labour market study that would integrate data collected from local and regional authorities, PES, ELSTAT, business organizations, chambers, trade unions and consultancy firms.

Financial schemes

Training benefits for the individuals and subsidies based on calls for the enterprises that will hire beneficiaries of the program.

Frequency of updates

Each approved action under the TOPEKO program has delivered a local labour market study, which has been evaluated after the action's implementation.

Development

There was a major issue concerning the unemployment benefits of the target-groups. Initially the selected beneficiaries (unemployed) should inform PES about their new status as trainees, and PES should cancel their unemployment card. This led to reluctance and low motivation in the target-groups. The partnerships collaborated with the Ministry of Labour and the PES and ended up with a solution: the beneficiaries suspended their card for those months that they participated to the programme. After the completion of the programme, their card was activated again and they did not lose their months of unemployment.

Barriers

The shortage of central LMSI tools was critical, since the data provided by national or regional authorities could not support an analysis at the local level. Most studies were descriptive and rested upon the data of the 2011 census.

Success factors

The synergies among local authorities, NGOs, social partners, trade unions, employers' associations, chambers and universities, has improved the success of the instrument. TOPEKOs are result-oriented, as the payment of the grant is directly linked to the employment of all the beneficiaries, either by setting up their own business, or by assisting the further development of existing businesses. To this end, TOPEKOs have placed emphasis on the potential of social economy, through the establishment of sustainable social co-operatives. These projects receive 100% of the grant by providing jobs and retaining them for at least three months, otherwise the amount of repayment is proportional to the percentage of job creation.

Monitoring

Credibility of the local labour market analysis
Rating of the importance of the problem anticipated in the proposed action/project. Responsiveness to the problems and developmental advantages of the area of intervention. Coverage of the target-groups' needs. Contribution of the action in the labour market, inclusiveness and the entrepreneurship support at the local level.
Budget realism in relation to the physical object.
Timeframe realism.

Innovativeness

SLIGHTLY INNOVATIVE

The focus on socially vulnerable groups and the commitment to their employment perspectives through training and counselling actions has been accompanied with raising awareness at the local level, mostly aiming at shifting employers' and local society's attitudes in favour of the target-groups. This intervention in both levels, had innovative elements and in many cases undermined stereotypes that hampered the employability of certain vulnerable groups.

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Sustainability

Evidence of effectiveness

Estimations based on the EYSEKT evaluation: 17.4% of the beneficiaries (individuals from socially vulnerable groups) who participate in TOPEKO actions are in employment or entrepreneurship within six months after his/her involvement in the action.

Engagement of stakeholders

TOPEKO follows a bottom-up philosophy at all stages of planning, design and implementation, and involve different levels of government, local institutions and stakeholders, as well as the target groups, through processes of social dialogue and collaborative approach. In this respect, local partnerships, known as “Development Partnerships”, are responsible for the implementation of all projects undertaken in this framework. Development Partnerships consist of members of local community, businesses, professional organizations, non-governmental organizations and institutions of civil society, who decide to join forces, skills and experience to jointly implement a comprehensive intervention in local level. The specificities of each action's stakeholders' coordination meetings are described in detail in the approved Action Plan.

Transferability

EASILY TRANSFERABLE

The presence of a skills diagnosis mechanism operating both at national and regional level would maximize the social impact of this instrument. Apart from the very important socio-psychological support that TOPEKO provided to socially vulnerable groups, the career counselling and training activities can be effective only if accurate and credible labour market information is available at national, regional and local level. At the time of the TOPEKO projects implementation, no such context had been achieved yet.

Sustainability

Not really. It has been assessed as a practice with low impact on the employment of the target population (vulnerable groups).
