UN Inter-Agency Task Force on Social and Solidarity Economy

Social and Solidarity Economy in Greece: The Role of SSE in Relation to Local Labour Markets

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June 2019

Draft paper prepared in response to the
UNTFSSE Call for Papers 2018

Implementing the Sustainable Development Goals: What Role for Social and Solidarity Economy?

Abstract

The paper deals with the issue of the Social and Solidarity Economy (SSE) and its relation to the labour market focusing on Greece. The main purpose lies on the detailed analysis of 'SSE ecosystem' through extensive data analysis and empirical research. The methodology consists of a mixed research approach which incorporates Business Intelligence and Analytics in order to analyse and map the quantitative characteristics of employment in SSE organizations through the use of census data from the Social Economy Registry. Furthermore, the collected data on SSE are analysed in relation to the characteristics of employment and entrepreneurial activity in other sectors of the Greek economy as well as registered unemployment, aiming to identify possible correlations and differentiations. The second part of the approach is a survey research, which focuses on the needs of SSE organisations in horizontal skills and qualifications. At the same time, the survey emphasizes on the recording of current and future vacancies, the production of new or significantly improved products or services and the introduction of innovations related to production processes.
The originality of this article consists of the identification and development of robust methodologies and innovative approaches that advance our understanding of the functionality of SSE entities, their key enabling contexts, the challenges they face and their sustainability.

Keywords

Social and Solidarity Economy, labour market, Business Intelligence and Analytics, empirical research, Greece

Bio

The authors are currently working for the National Institute of Labour and Human Resources (NILHR) in Greece focusing on the Mechanism of Labour Market Diagnosis which was created by the Greek Ministry of Labour, Social Security and Solidarity. Dr. **Vaios Kotsios** is the main researcher and data analyst for this Mechanism while Dr. **Stavros Gavroglou** is the Scientific Responsible of the Mechanism and the Director of Active Policies and International Networks of NILHR. **Vasiliki Krommyda** is a PhD Candidate at National Technical University of Athens while among with Vaios Kotsios and others have founded the Social Cooperative "Social Analytics" which focuses on research and development on social sciences.

Introduction

The paper deals with the issue of Social and Solidarity Economy (hereafter SSE) and its relation to the labour market focusing on the case of Greece. The main purpose is the development of a detailed analysis of the 'SSE ecosystem' through extensive data analysis and empirical research by incorporating Business Intelligence and Analytics in the form of dashboard.

Despite the very long history of cooperatives in Greece, legislation on the SSE in Greece developed mainly after 2000 with the most recent Law being 4430/2016, which defines SSE as 'all economic activities based on an alternative form of organization of relations of production, distribution, consumption and reinvestment, based on the principles of democracy, equality, solidarity, cooperation, and respect for humans and the environment'.

Considering the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the United Nations' 2030 Agenda, we focus on significant parts of SDG 8 'Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all' and SDG 9 'Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation'. Both of these SDGs form the cluster of *People-centred growth*, from which we focus on employment, innovation and productivity, and the future of work. Therefore, the role of SSE as a means of implementation for the specific parts of SDGs 8 and 9 is critically examined.

1. Methodological framework and data

The structure of the research is based on the use of mixed methods. This technique allowed us to gain a more holistic view on the subject as we developed it in 3 main stages:

- **Mapping Social and Solidarity Economy in Greece**:

In the first methodological stage we used official data from the Social Economy Registry (it operates under the Greek Ministry of Labour, Social Security & Social Solidarity). The data used are collected in administrational levels and were obtained in August 2017. For the integrated management of these data the methodological steps of the Table 1 were followed.

Table 1. Methodology steps for the mapping of SSE in Greece

Methodological steps	**Description**
Inputs	Correction of data due to spelling mistakes, anagrams, incorrect listing of municipalities and lack of spatial identification
Management	Database configuration based on spatial (a coordinate pair (X, Y) was assigned to each registered social enterprise in geocentric reference system (WGS '84) and descriptive information
Analysis	Correlation of the registered SSE entities with the polygons of all spatial levels examined and correction of random errors
Outputs	Visualization of the overall information for registered SSE entities through the use of Business Intelligence and Analytics program

- **SSE comparison with conventional economic indicators**:

In the second methodological stage, we focused on the SSE entities that have submitted annual reports from 2014 to 2017 and for the analysis SSE's sectoral distribution in 2-digit analysis was used. SSE was correlated with conventional economy (CE) through:

- the percentage of SSE entities' sectors in relation to the percentage of the sectors of CE businesses as reflected in General Commercial Registry[1] data that were obtained in March 2017,
- the percentage of the total number of employees per SSE's sector in relation to the employees' percentage of CE's sectors as reflected in ELSTAT[2] data from 2014 to 2016,
- the percentage of total registered unemployment per Region according to Public Employment Service[3] data in relation, firstly, to the percentage of SSE entities that have submitted reports per Region and, secondly, to all the SSE entities.

It should be noted that the analysis is focused not only on the active SSE entities, but on the SSE entities in various stages of licensing.

- **Empirical research on SSE entities**:

In the third methodological stage, the research team conducted a field survey to collect primary data on a sample of SSE entities in order to investigate and record the needs for horizontal skills and occupations (in one-digit analysis). Emphasis was placed on the recording of vacancies, analyzing their quantitative and qualitative characteristics. In particular, the following were investigated:

- how many vacancies exist, in which sectors and occupations, what are their characteristics, how long and why they remain vacant,
- what are the dynamics of the sectors and occupations and the preconditions for increasing employment,
- which are the horizontal and / or occupational skills that are in deficiency in SSE and which are the occupations and sectors in which the deficiencies are identified.

Particular care has been taken to ensure representativeness, a high degree of response rate and generally to meet high quality standards in this quantitative research.

The survey was conducted between December 2017 and January 2018 through an online questionnaire to SSE entities. Businesses were initially invited by e-mail asking them to respond to the questionnaire after having explained to them its purpose. At the same time, in order to increase the response rate, businesses were contacted by telephone. SSE entities' communication data were drawn from the Social Economy Registry. The sampling was set up on the basis of all registrants in the Social Economy Register (1228 entries). Of these SSE entities, only 350 entities met the requirements to form the population of the survey. These requirements refer to the possession of a permanent certificate of operation, a membership certificate from 2016 to 2017, the submission of annual reports and the possession of a correct e-mail address. The survey collected 95 fully completed responses, resulting in a response rate of 27.14%, which is well above the average response rate of 10-15% of similar surveys (Nulty, 2008).

2. Research results

2.1 Mapping Social and Solidarity Economy in Greece

The goal of this stage lies in the synthetic analysis of SSE characteristics in all spatial levels in order to map the dimensions of SSE size in Greece. In Figure 1 the data are presented in a synthetic

[1] General Commercial Registry is a registry of public administration and assists in the monitoring of commercial enterprises in Greece [http://www.businessportal.gr/home/index_en].
[2] Hellenic Statistical Authority [http://www.statistics.gr/en/home].
[3] Public Employment Service [http://www.oaed.gr/].

dashboard for which a link is added that leads to its online interactive form[4]. It is of key importance that the reader navigates the specific link in order to fully comprehend the information given. The data are drawn from SSE entities that have submitted the requisite annual report to the Registry. The main characteristics that are presented refer to the type of SSE entities, their categorization, the licensing stage, the sector, the economic activities, the number of members, the year of registration, the year of annual report submission and the spatial representation ranging from administrative Regions to exact locations.

2.1.1 SSE Characteristics

Social and Solidarity Economy entities in Greece consist mainly of Social Cooperatives, which are 755 throughout the country, while there are 19 Social Cooperatives of Limited Liability and 15 other Social Economy entities (Non-profit Organizations and other rural/urban cooperatives). Furthermore, there are 3 kinds of Social Cooperatives such as for Collective and Productive purposes, for integration and for social care. As it is shown, Social Cooperatives for Collective and Productive purposes are the most common ones.

The registrations of SSE entities from 2012 to 2017 seem to have reached a peak in 2014 (33,3%), with most of them in Attica Region (41,6%). At the same time, more than half of those SSE entities are functioning with a membership of up to 5 people. Most of these entities are located in the Regional Units of Central Sector of Athens and Thessaloniki, which are the two most populated Regional Units in Greece. Focusing on the level of municipalities, it seems that many have not developed SSE activities yet, which is particularly noticeable in Western Macedonia, Epirus, western Thessaly and southern Crete. Regarding the spatial distribution of SSE entities based on postal codes and the exact positions of their premises, we were able to take a closer look at the dispersion across the country.

2.1.2 Economic analysis of SSE entities

The economic analysis of SSE entities includes only those that have submitted the relevant data through an annual report. Of course, the entities that did not submit a report are not necessarily inactive, but for the research needs inevitably only the declared data can be used. There was a significant upward trend in annual report submissions from 2013 to 2016, while in 2017 there was a decrease (Figure 1). The economic data considered refer to total financial statements (the profits from the activity of the entities, the turnover, the subsidies[5], the value of fixed assets resulting from the use- not the total-, the loans taken out by the social economy operators, the number of employees (Annual Units of Employment) and the number of workers belonging to vulnerable groups).

The general picture shows that most SSE entities in Greece are very small[6], since most of them demonstrate annual turnover less than 2 million € in average and the number of average

[4] The interactive form of this dashboard is available at: http://lmd.eiead.gr/Social-and-Solidarity-Economy-in-Greece
In this link one can visualize all the data and by clicking on the object that interests him or her, the data are adjusted according to the specific selection. In addition, more than one selection can be made at the same time, deepening the data analysis further.

[5] According to Law 4430/2016 (article 34) subsidies may be derived from the Public Investment Program, European Union's programs, international or national organizations or second-degree Local Government Bodies (Regions).

[6] Categorization by EU recommendation 2003/361, concerning the definition of micro, small and medium-sized enterprises, *Official Journal of the European Union*, online [https://web.archive.org/web/20150208131318/http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:L:2003:124:0036:0041:EN:PDF]

employees is less than 10. In addition, most of the SSE entities present small amounts of profits and subsidies.

According to the annual economic analysis for all the SSE entities, we can conclude that the size of SSE in Greece is quite small and still in its beginnings. It is mainly based on the SSE type of Social Cooperatives, with most of them located in Attica Region.

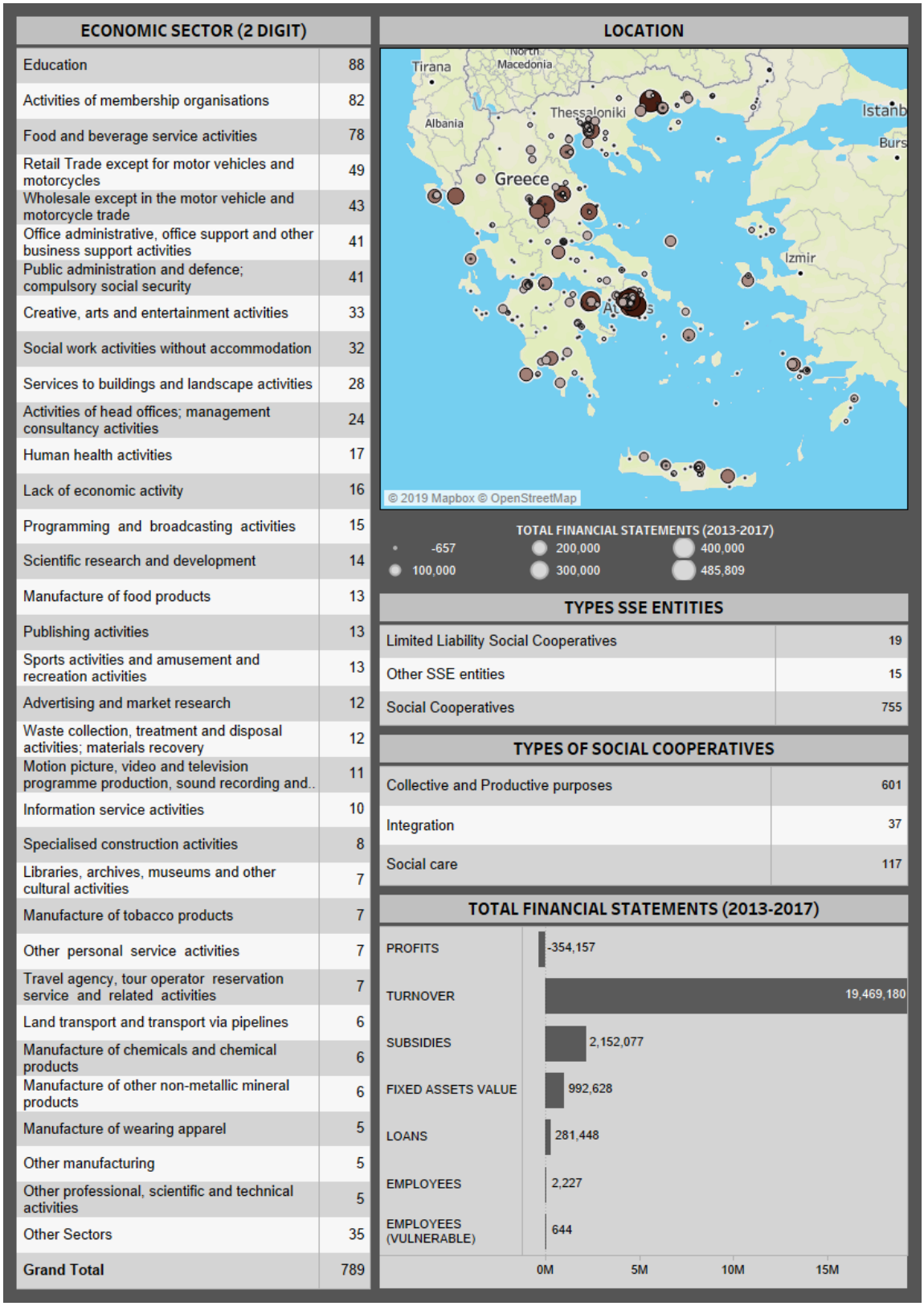

Figure 1. SSE characteristics, economic indicators and spatial representation

2.2 SSE comparison with conventional economic indicators

2.2.1 Sectoral analysis of SSE entities

Looking at the economic sectors of those SSE entities which have submitted annual reports from 2013 to 2017 (Figure 1), it appears that most SSE businesses are active in sectors such as Education (11.15%), Activities of membership organisations (10.39%) and Food and beverage service activities (9.89%). In particular, the Education sector presents an upward trend among SSE businesses from 2014 (5.88%) to 2016 (11.94%), while in 2017 there is a slight decrease (11.56%). Activities of membership organisations demonstrate a significant declining trend each year from 2014 to 2017 with 19.61% to 6.53% respectively. Lastly, Food and beverage service activities increased strongly from 2014 (9.8%) to 2015 (11.45%) following a declining trend until 2017 (7.04%).

2.2.2 Correlation with conventional business activity

The correlation between SSE's sectors and the conventional business activity is shown in Table 2. Analytically, the correlations of the percentage of SSE entities by sector in relation to the percentage of total CE's economic activity as reflected in the General Commercial Registry's data are investigated. The table shows that there is a statistically significant correlation with moderate intensity, thus demonstrating the relationship of the two economies to their sectoral distribution.
In particular, looking at each sector separately, the five main sectors of CE are Retail trade, except trade in motor vehicles and motorcycles, Wholesale except for motor vehicles and motorcycles, Food and beverage service activities, Wholesale and retail - repair, trade of motor vehicles and motorcycles and Specialized construction activities. Correspondingly, the five main SSE sectors are Education, Organizational activities, Food and beverage service activities, Retail Trade except for motor vehicles and motorcycles and Wholesale except in the motor vehicle and motorcycle trade.
In the two types of economies, Retail trade except for motor vehicles and motorcycles, Wholesale except for motor vehicles and motorcycles and Food and beverage service activities present high concentrations of both SSE and CE's businesses. Beyond these three sectors, however, SSE and CE do not have the same sectoral structure.

Table 2. SSE's sectors and the conventional economy correlation

Correlations

		SSE	CE
SSE	Pearson Correlation	1	,408**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		,000
	N	87	87
CE	Pearson Correlation	,408**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,000	
	N	87	87

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

2.2.3 Correlation with labour data

Further up the percentage of the total number of employees per SSE's sector in relation to the employees' percentage of CE's sectors as reflected in ELSTAT data from 2014 to 2016 were

investigated (Table 3). The correlation of employees in both economies' sectors is statistically significant but moderate in intensity, thus demonstrating the relationship between the two economies in terms of employment.

Table 3. Employees of SSE and conventional economy correlation

Correlations

		CE	SSE
CE	Pearson Correlation	1	,393**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		,000
	N	89	89
SSE	Pearson Correlation	,393**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,000	
	N	89	89

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

In particular, investigating further the abovementioned correlation, we see that the 5 sectors of CE with the largest share of employees are: Retail trade except for motor vehicles and motorcycles, Plant and animal production, hunting and related activities, Public administration and defense, and compulsory social security, Education and Food and beverage service activities. Respectively, the 5 sectors of SSE with the largest proportion of employees are: Education, Organizational Activities, Food and beverage service activities, Public Administration and Defense, and compulsory social security and Services to buildings and landscape. As it turns out, in the two types of economies, the sectors of Public Administration and Defense, and compulsory social security, Education and Food and beverage service activities employ the most of the employees. However, the classification of the percentage of persons employed per sector shows that in SSE and CE there are differences in the employment structure.

2.2.4 Correlation with registered unemployment data

In this section, we focus on the correlation of the percentage of total unemployment per region according to Greek Public Employment Service data firstly, in relation to the percentage of SSE entities that have submitted reports per Region and secondly, in relation to all the SSE entities. Table 4 indicates that this correlation is statistically significant with high intensity, thus showing that the development of the social economy is closely related to unemployment, seeming to provide a productive outlet to the unemployed.

Table 4. SSE and registered unemployment data correlation

Correlations

		% registered unemployment	% SSE entities with submitted report	% sum of SSE entities
% registered unemployment	Pearson Correlation	1	,961**	,966**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		,000	,000
	N	13	13	13
% SSE entities with submitted report	Pearson Correlation	,961**	1	,998**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,000		,000
	N	13	13	13
% sum of SSE entities	Pearson Correlation	,966**	,998**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,000	,000	
	N	13	13	13

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Focusing further on this correlation, the regional data regarding the percentage of registered unemployment, the percentage of SSE entities that submitted an annual report and the percentage of all SSE entities were investigated (Table 5). As a result, we can detect a similar pattern in all of the regions (more intense in Attica and Central Macedonia) and a parallel relationship between the growth of SSE and the registered unemployment rate in all the regions of the country, which requires further investigation.

Table 5. SSE and regional registered unemployment data (%)

Regions	% of registered unemployed	% of all SSE entities	% of SSE entities that submitted an annual report
Attica	**37.93%**	**40.86%**	**41.57%**
Central Greece	4.46%	3.43%	4.31%
Central Macedonia	**20.29%**	**14.11%**	**13.56%**
Crete	3.68%	5.95%	5.58%
Eastern Macedonia and Thrace	5.37%	5.22%	5.83%
Epirus	3.08%	1.71%	1.01%
Ionian Islands	1.02%	1.63%	1.52%
North Aegean	1.37%	1.88%	1.39%
Peloponnese	4%	6.36%	5.96%
South Aegean	1.44%	5.14%	4.69%
Thessaly	6.7%	8.16%	9.51%
Western Greece	7.62%	4.73%	4.18%
Western Macedonia	3.03%	0.82%	0.89%

2.3 Empirical research on SSE entities

2.3.1 Jobs and innovation

In Table 6 the survey results regarding vacancies, new products or services and production process innovations are presented. The SSE entities that participated in the survey are located by 34.74% in the Attica Region, 20% in the Region of Central Macedonia and 45.26% in the rest of the Regions of Greece. Most of them were established between 2014 and 2016 and are active in several economic sectors. More specifically, 46.32% of the sample is active in the Other service sector, Education is next with 25.26%, Occupational, scientific and technical activities with 18.95%, Information and communication with 16.84%, followed by lower rates in sectors such as Health, Agriculture, forestry and fisheries, Administrative and Support Activities, Construction, Accommodation and Food and beverage service activities and Wholesale and retail trade.

With regard to the new jobs in SSE entities of the sample, it is noted that 29.47% of them had vacancies during the survey period. During the quarter prior to the survey, employment rose in 34.74% of the sample entities, 53.68% of them maintained the same number of jobs, while 11.58% reported a new job loss. For the next quarter after the survey, 16.84% of SSE entities of the sample predict that there will be new jobs added, 37.89% do not know and 45.26% of them will have fewer jobs.

SSE entities that responded to the survey were also asked whether they created new or significantly improved products or services during the period of 2016-2017. 68.82% of the respondents replied that they created some new or significantly improved products or services as

opposed to the 31.18% that they did not. This result demonstrates a significant momentum for SSE entities in the field of product or service innovation.
Regarding the introduction of innovations in production processes, 46.24% of SSE entities' sample reported they had contributed in innovations while more than half of the sample (53.76%) had not. The results indicate that the difficulty in introducing production process innovations is greater than the creation of new products or services.

Table 6. Survey results regarding vacancies, products or services and production innovations

SURVEY RESULTS			
% of sample SSE entities per Region	Attica	34.74%	
	Central Macedonia	20%	
	Other regions	45.26%	
New jobs	Vacancies during the survey period	*Yes*	29.47%
		No	70.53%
	Vacancies during the quarter prior to the survey	*Increased*	34.74%
		Decreased	11.58%
		Remained the same	53.68%
	Vacancies for the next quarter after the survey	*Yes*	16.84%
		No	45.26%
		Do not know	37.89%
New or significantly improved products or services	*Yes*	68.82%	
	No	31.18%	
Introduction of innovations in production processes	*Yes*	46.24%	
	No	53.76%	

2.3.2 Skills mismatch

Skills mismatch is a broad term covering various types of imbalances between the skills offered and those required by the labour market (ILO, 2014; McGuinness et al, 2017). Skills are referring to those abilities that one can have in order to apply his / her acquired knowledge and can be divided into general / horizontal, basic and specialized (Stoevska, 2017). According to Cedefop (2010), skills mismatch can contribute to rising unemployment, while reducing productivity and competitiveness. However, the context for investigating skills mismatches has not evolved sufficiently because existing data are uneven and there is no commonly accepted measurement framework yet (Cedefop, 2010; ILO, 2014). For this reason, the most effective way to record skills mismatches is to carry out surveys either employers or of employees in their reference workplace (ILO, 2014). But why is it important to measure skills mismatches? According to Stoevska (2017), skills mismatch means reduced utilization of human capital and can lead to multifaceted effects depending on the degree of mismatch (low wages, reduced work satisfaction, insecurity, low productivity, higher unemployment etc.).
Despite the extended literature review, it has not been possible to find relevant primary research in social cooperatives, but it is considered that the methodology remains within existing frameworks based on similar surveys in CE's businesses. According to ILO (2015), social entities can be an appropriate platform where more experienced members can transfer skills to newer members. At the same time, youth unemployment, which is strengthened by the lack of experience and skills, can be combated through cooperative schemes in which young people can acquire and develop useful skills.
This empirical research has taken into account all of the above, and the research team produced and distributed a questionnaire as complete and comprehensible as possible. Skills assessment

was elicited for two groups of occupations in each SSE entity: the largest and the most critical or the most populous and the most significant for the main economic activity of the entity, respectively (according to the respondent). The skills that were evaluated are shown in Table 7.

Table 7. Categorization of skills reviewed

General categorization of skills	**Specific categorization of skills**
Basic skills	Numerical Ability
	Good knowledge and use of the Greek language
Soft skills	Analytical thinking
	Basic Digital Capabilities
	Knowledge of Foreign Languages
	Dissemination of Information
	Interpersonal and communication skills
	Information Processing
	Teamwork
	Lifelong Learning Capability
	Problem solving
	Critical Thinking
	Organizational Skills
	Initiative
Hard skills	Specialized Digital Capabilities Occupational skills

Thus, the skills assessment conducted through the survey, highlighted the variations between the existing skills' level (adequacy) and the significance of these skills in the largest and most critical occupations of the business. As a result, variations range between -1 and +1 and the greater the number, the greater the lack of the specific skill.

The results in Figure 2 show that for the largest occupations skill mismatch is significant in Problem solving, Interpersonal and communication skills, Organizational skills, Initiative and Teamwork, while for the critical occupations skill mismatch is significant in Organizational skills and Problem solving. Consequently, the skills mismatch is highlighted mainly in relation to Soft skills.

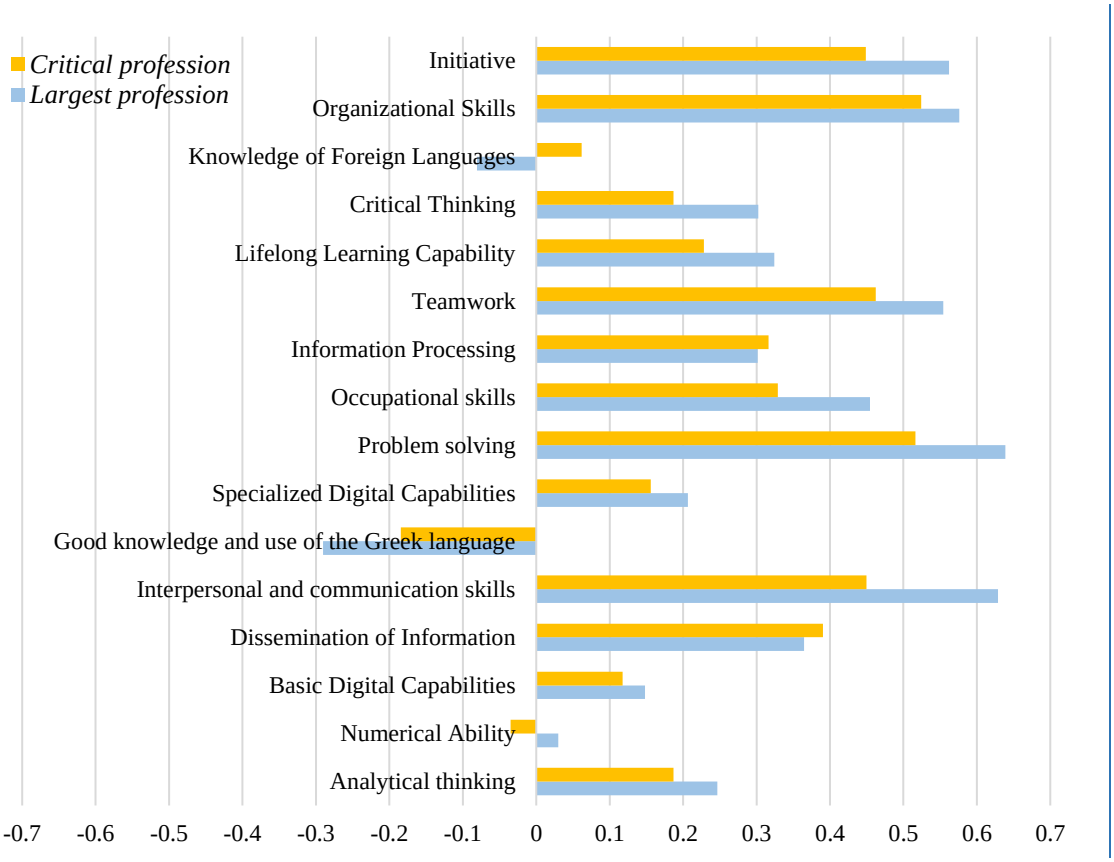

Figure 2. Skills assessment /adequacy and significance variations

2.4 Comparison of respective surveys on SSE entities and CE businesses

SSE is a different type of economic activity, an alternative way between the public and the private sector. In this capacity, it is interesting to look at two similar surveys on SSE and conventional entrepreneurship. In particular, the survey regarding to conventional businesses was carried out by the National Institute of Labour and Human Resources (NILHR) during the period October-November 2017. This survey on the one hand aimed at recording the needs of businesses in occupations and in educational level for existing or future vacancies, while on the other hand it aimed at the recording of skills and knowledge in existing jobs (NILHR, 2018).

2.4.1 Vacancies' Status Comparison

By focusing on the number of jobs we investigated vacancies available during the surveys' period, changes in the number of jobs during the previous quarter since the start of the surveys and expected new jobs for the next quarter. The following Table 8 illustrates the results, wherein we observe that relatively more SSE entities reported vacancies and an increase of employment since the last quarter prior to the survey. On the other hand, when businesses were asked about expected changes regarding jobs in the next quarter, the proportion of conventional enterprises that responded positively was higher than that of SSE entities.

Table 8. Vacancies' Status – Comparison between SSE entities and CE businesses

Parameter	CE businesses (sample)	SSE entities (sample)
Vacancies (during survey period)	20.10%	**29.47%**
New jobs (previous quarter since the start of the survey)	16.05%	**34.74%**
Expected new jobs (next quarter since the start of the survey)	**23.43%**	16.84%

2.4.2 Skills assessment comparison

Taking into account the corresponding survey in conventional economy businesses, the results regarding skills in the most critical and largest occupations are compared. Table 9 shows the comparative recording of the values resulting from the skills assessment and it is possible to draw common conclusions about the skills for SSE and CE entrepreneurship respectively. We have to note that Table 9 presents only the most significant and common skills regarding both economies.

Table 9. Skills recording – Comparison between SSE and CE

Significant skills' variations	**Largest occupation**		**Critical occupation**	
	CE (sample)	SSE (sample)	CE (sample)	SSE (sample)
Problem-solving	**0.56**	**0.66**	**0.56**	**0.54**
Interpersonal and communication skills	0.43	**0.65**	0.43	0.48
Organizational Skills	**0.60**	**0.59**	**0.60**	**0.55**
Initiative	**0.56**	**0.58**	**0.56**	0.48
Teamwork	0.32	**0.57**	0.32	0.49

Focusing on the largest occupation of CE businesses' sample the main variations were found in Organizational Skills, Initiative, Problem Solving, Occupational Skills and Lifelong Learning Skills. According to the results for the largest occupation of SSE entities' sample, it is noted that there are common significant variations in Problem-Solving, Organizational Skills and Initiatives, in a different order of importance.

On the other hand, for the most critical occupation of conventional businesses, the most significant variations are found in Organizational Skills, Problem Solving, Initiative and Flexibility and Adaptability. According to the results for the most critical occupation of SSE entities, it is noted that common significant variations are found in Skills of Organizational Skills and Problem-Solving Skills.

These common differences in skills adequacy and relevance demonstrate that SSE entities have similar general / horizontal skills shortages to conventional businesses. However, the largest occupations in SSE entities' sample present skills mismatch in all of the five skills examined. As a consequence, coping with these skills mismatches can be approached horizontally in both social and conventional entrepreneurship. In particular, an obvious way to cover skills shortages could be targeted training in the required skills of the occupational category concerned. However, the nature of incomplete skills that are essentially related to personal characteristics, social and managerial skills are questioning the structure of a potential educational process to cover mismatches and is a separate research subject.

2.4.3 New or improved products/services and introduction of innovations

Looking at the results of the survey in relation to conventional businesses regarding the creation of new or improved products or services and introducing process innovations, it is recorded that the introduction of new or improved products or services for 2016-2017 corresponds to 18.94% of the sample, while the introduction of process innovations for 2016-2017 corresponds to the 14.81% of these businesses. Similarly, in SSE entities the creation of new products or services for 2016-2017 corresponds to 68.82% of the respondents, while the introduction of process innovations for 2016-2017 corresponds to 46.24%.

The main observation by comparing the results is that innovations are much more frequent in SSE entities compared to conventional businesses. At the same time, there are relatively more instances of new or improved product creation than process innovation. At any rate, the need to

create something new seems to be a driving force in SSE businesses, while in conventional ones seem less active in this area.

3. Towards a People-centred growth through SSE?

3.1 The feedback from Greece

The Greek debt crisis in 2008 led to a variety of political interventions in order to regulate the labour market through the Memoranda. In brief, Greek labour market was considered as inflexible and as a result the applied legislative actions targeted this characteristic (Dedoussopoulos et al, 2013; Koutroukis, 2017). Taking into consideration the (un)employment data, the worst year since the outbreak of the crisis seems to be 2013. As NIHLR's latest report shows, after 2013 Greek economy demonstrates a gradual recovery regarding new jobs, but unemployment (especially long-term) is quite persistent (NIHLR, 2018: 87). In addition, conventional entrepreneurship is recovering, with a shift regarding legal forms mainly from Individual enterprises to Private Capital Companies due to the complex tax and insurance scheme.

Within this setting, SSE has the opportunity to blossom. Our analysis indicates that its size in Greece is relatively small and most of the SSE entities have been created only recently. Moreover, the spatial distribution of SSE entities is uneven while almost half of the registered SSE entities are located in the Region of Attica. The 3 main sectors in which SSE entities are economically active are Education, Activities of membership organisations and Food and beverage service activities. The comparison between CE and SSE demonstrates that they do not follow the same sectoral structure and they differ in their most employable occupations. Regarding the relationship between the growth of SSE and the unemployment rate in all the regions of the country, a positive relationship is detected in all of the regions.

3.2 SSE through the lens of Sustainable Development Goals

Considering the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the United Nations' 2030 Agenda, we focus on significant parts of SDG 8 'Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all' and SDG 9 'Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation'. Both of these SDGs form the cluster of *People-centred growth*, from which we focus on employment, innovation and productivity, and the future of work. Therefore, the role of SSE as a means of implementation for the specific parts of SDGs 8 and 9 is critically examined.

3.2.1 New or improved products and innovation

One part of our research relates to the investigation of a) the creation of new or significantly improved products or services, and b) process innovation during the period of 2016-2017. The results show that more than 3 out of 5 SSE entities contribute to the creation of new or improved products or services, while more than 2 out of 5 SSE entities contribute to the introduction of innovations. By comparing SSE entities with conventional businesses, we conclude that for every conventional business that contributes to the creation of new or significantly improved products or services there are, proportionately, 4 such SSE entities. Regarding the introduction of process innovation, one conventional business corresponds to 3 SSE entities. Consequently, the examined aspect of SDG 9 seems to be supported by SSE in Greece, at least in comparison to the conventional economy.

3.2.2 Employment and the future of work

According to ILO (Borzaga et al., 2017: 5), the future of work is affected by a number of broad economic, social and demographic transformations. SSE contribution to the future of work lies in its ability to preserve employment even in times of crisis due to the goal that it serves which is not to maximize profits, but to provide a service to their members (Borzaga et al., 2017: 19). In order to approach the future of work we base our analysis on the jobs' status and skills assessment. Firstly, 30% of the SSE entities' sample were having vacancies during the survey, 35% of the respondents created new jobs in the quarter prior to the survey, but only 17% were expecting to create new jobs in the following quarter. By comparing SSE entities with conventional businesses, we conclude that SSE entities were more boosted with new jobs the previous quarter and during the survey. On the other hand, more CE businesses were expecting new jobs for the next quarter after the survey. Secondly, skills mismatch indicates reduced utilization of human capital and can lead to multifaceted effects depending on the degree of the mismatch. In SSE entities we saw that skills mismatch is highlighted mainly in relation to Soft skills and is observed mainly in relation to the largest occupations in comparison to the critical ones. By comparing SSE entities with conventional businesses in relation to skills mismatch, there are no significant differences, as both show mismatches mainly in soft skills and as a result coping with these skills mismatches can be approached horizontally in both social and conventional entrepreneurship. Finally, we can conclude that SSE is on its way to implementing SDG 8, but like CE there is still a lot to do in order to promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all.

3.3 Further discussion

In relation to the headline question posed in this section, we conclude that Social and Solidarity Economy has the potential to contribute significantly to a more People-centred growth[7]. The higher incidence of product and process innovation displayed by SSE indicates that the SSE can function as a vessel for the achievement of a better quality of life, allowing workers to contribute their intellect and initiative in their working lives. It has been noted that the Social and Solidarity Economy, responding to social needs that are not met by the for-profit sector, bridges the public and the private sector, providing a fertile ground for a more holistic development. In this regard, we envision the SSE as a catalyst of social and economic innovation, similar to the vision of *superminds* or "a group of individuals acting together in ways that seem intelligent" (Malone, 2018) unleashing the power generated by the synthesis of collective and artificial intelligence in order to solve core problems of modern societies.

In this paper we investigated the national landscape of SSE in Greece in an attempt to comprehend its overall path of evolution, by presenting a methodology for monitoring its development. In line with the above vision of the *superminds*, our study also represents an effort by an interdisciplinary collective of individuals gathered in a Social Enterprise using modern research techniques and methods in cooperation with a Public Body, as a small example, with possibly wider application, of enhancing collective knowledge not only in the field of SSE but also in building evidence-based policies for the achievement of the UN goals of sustainable development.

[7] Here we should pose a question regarding the meaning of the word "growth" itself. We believe that in order to fulfil a people-centered approach we need to step back and incorporate a more holistic view that transcends the monoculture of economic growth and promote a combination of well-being and development for all. For this matter, substantive discussions have been taking place for decades (Rokos, 2003; Koroneos and Rokos, 2012; Kotsios, 2017; Katsoulakos et al., 2016; Kotsios, 2016).

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