



EUROPEAN COMMISSION  
SOCIAL BUSINESS INITIATIVE  
GROUP OF EXPERTS ON  
SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP  
(GECES)

Thessaloniki, 1 AUGUST 2013

## **[REPORT #9: SOCIAL BUSINESS INITIATIVE AND LOCAL ACTION] by Ioannis NASIOULAS**

The European Commission's Social Business Initiative will surely be proven of great importance for innovative local employment development, business and social cohesion initiatives. Alternative channels for informing the general public and authorities are spreading the word. This is the case of the Social Economy Action Group in Greece. Nevertheless, shouldn't we need a well-structured modality of transfusing expertise to local governance structures? Let's start deploying the Social Business Initiative at the local level.

## Spreading the word on Social Business Initiative

In my previous report, I have presented the Action Group for Social Economy ([www.koinsep.com](http://www.koinsep.com)), a non-profit group of highly motivated and seasoned professionals who provide expertise and well-documented, credible information to local authorities and visible civil society organizations on:

- The value of European Commission's "Social Business Initiative"
- The potentialities of Social Economy and social entrepreneurship
- Value-added for local governance structures
- And how to proceed in deploying viable action in the local level

Many people have seen the value of transfusing expertise to local mechanisms triggering effective social feedback. Recently, initiatives such as the Social Economy Action Group were presented to the European Parliament and spreading the word should go on until operational capacity is well-established.



Click to see the presentation to the European Parliament by EPP Euro MP Mr. HEINZ BECKER

"Social Innovation – Priority for a European Agenda" (30 May 2013)

Local authorities and visible NGOs suffer from information asymmetries and lack of up-to-date expertise on how to proceed in deploying the Commission's political vision as expressed in the Social Business Initiative Communication. Many things are going on behind the closed doors of Charlmagne Building: the context of Structural Funds is changing rapidly, the new programming period of 2014-2020 brings revisions and reforms of groundbreaking significance, changes in the General Block Exemption, State Aid Rules, De Minimis Regulation,

institutional innovations, funding mechanisms such as the PSCI and dedicated social banks such as EUSEFs for Social Economy and social entrepreneurship...

This is the most eloquent definition of information overflow!

If I have made my point then it all goes without saying that we need some kind of a mechanism to channel credible information and expertise to those most in need: local governance structures including the civil society sector.

27 March 2013, Thessaloniki, GREECE. Social Economy Workshop organized by the Action Group for Social Economy at the Municipality of Thessaloniki Central Hall.



Citizens, NGO stakeholders, investors and public officials joined the discussion



The panel of invited speakers: Apostolos Ioakimidis, Ioannis Nasioulas, Artur Nadcrinicnii, Diogenis Sakellariou, Moshos Demiris and Ioanna Avramidou



Deputy Mayor of Thessaloniki City Mr. Hasdai Kapon expands on the value-added of social economy and the local capacity-building needs.

14 June 2013, Kozani, GREECE. Social Economy Workshop organized by the Action Group for Social Economy at the Municipality of Kozani Central Hall.



The panel of speakers: Kostas Kitidis, Moshos Demiris, Ioannis Nasioulas



The Mayor of Kozani City Mr. Lazaros Maloutas expanding on the Municipality's action plan

## Do it like TAIEX!

European Commission DG “Enlargement” has TAIEX, a mechanism dedicated to Technical Assistance and Information Exchange addressing the needs of countries wishing to access the EU, along with neighboring and connected ones. TAIEX’s task is crucial: just try to imagine the chaotic EU aquis and the discrepancy of recalibrating so diverse national policies to fit the European straightjacket. If synchronization between public institutions is the target, then we need to get it simple and get things going. This is the idea.



[Click to enter TAIEX’s official website](#)

Based on my experience with the TAIEX, I was wondering: shouldn’t we do the same with the Social Business Initiative? On setting-up the Group of Experts on Social Entrepreneurship, the Commission asked not only member-state representatives but a colorful array of stakeholders and experts to join the game and share their insights on how to build a sustainable Social Economy sector in Europe. This non-linear, non-hierarchical way is of substantial value. A next step could be setting up the events, projects and mechanisms that would facilitate technical assistance and information exchange between COM and stakeholders in the local level.

In fact, the first step has already been made: the 2014 Strasbourg Conference could act as a catalyst for devising the best ways to connect local activity with the European Commission’s Social Business Initiative. We should also consider the practicalities of PSCI (Programme for Social Change and Innovation) which is currently on the making. GECES Sub Group on “Social Impact Measurement” is seeking optimal methods of spotting and documenting social value-added derived from social businesses around Europe. A set of public tools will be deployed in order to trigger social investment and support promising innovations at the local level.

The dots are already there. Let’s start the connection process!