

## DIVERSEurope

### **Methodology for the identification of best practices in Greece**

In the course of the field research performed within the context of the DIVERSEurope project, we were unable to identify concrete diversity policies or best practices implemented by SMEs in remote rural areas in Greece. Of the five key expert interviews only one of the interviewees mentioned that in his company he tries to promote equality between the employees by treating everyone with respect and in the same way, yet with the absence of formal diversity policies or specific practices. For this reason, we performed an online search to identify recorded examples of D&I best practices in small businesses in remote rural areas of Greece. We have identified two Social Cooperative Enterprises (SCE) that each in turn intend to promote women entrepreneurship and the equal integration of refugees into the economic life of the local society. Information was gathered through informal interviews and the SCE's webpages.

We have followed the standard template formulated to collect all the relevant and contextual information regarding each of the two best practices.

### **Best Practices**

#### **Best Practice 1: 'Iliodora' Kalambaki, Drama, Greece**

<b>Organisation:</b>	<p><i>What type is the organization that has implemented this practice? Provide information of the sector, number of employees etc.</i></p> <p>'Iliodora' is a SCE producing natural handmade traditional products by the hands of six women in the region of Kalambaki, Drama in the North of Greece.</p>
<b>Objective:</b>	<p><i>What is the objective or purpose of the practice? (Brief description)</i>  <i>What are the requirements to implement the practice?</i></p> <p>The incentive to create this SCE was the high degree of unemployment in the broad area of Drama during the economic crises years in Greece which continues up today to record 30% unemployment according to Dramas Labour Center<sup>6</sup>. Additionally, the need for systematic production of traditional products, by people who know the traditional techniques and with the support of modern business tools, to create exquisite traditional products, with high quality certified raw materials without synthetic colours and preservatives.</p>
<b>Beneficiaries:</b>	<p><i>Who are the beneficiaries (direct or indirect) of the practice?</i></p> <p>The direct beneficiaries of this practice were the six women, shareholders of the SCE that under different circumstances would have remained out of the labour market. The indirect beneficiaries are several. The local community and the broad area of Greece that supplies the raw materials but also has access to traditional products. The local community through the SCEs awareness-raising, information and promotion activities for local producers and products. The SCE's workshops welcome groups from VET institutions and schools, creating training seminars and courses on the usefulness, benefits and preparation of traditional products. In addition, it offers products to school's parents associations, kindergartens and schools in the local area like, the Charity Association of Kalampaki "Agios Vasilios", the NGO "The smile of the child", the "Care of Pontian</p>

	Ladies of Drama" and others, to serve their collective benefit. 'Iliodora' has received honorary praise for its contribution to the business life of the local region from the Region of Eastern Macedonia and Thrace.
<b>Context:</b>	<p><i>What was the initial situation and its specific context? What are the specific difficulties that the practice seeks to address?</i></p> <p>This practice came to cover the economic difficulties faced by the six member-stakeholders participating in the SCE due to the high unemployment rate in the area of Drama.</p>
<b>Process:</b>	<p><i>Explain step by step the process of the practice to facilitate its understanding and reproduction.</i></p> <p>'Iliodora' was founded in 2015, the six members performed market research, talked to many people in the village and surrounding areas about the products they would be interested in and created a viable business plan. The initial investment of 4,200 euros, the equal cooperative shares, covered the initial costs of the project. After setting up a series of regulations that would define its operation, they decided that the administration would be exercised horizontally and that all decisions would be taken jointly through almost daily councils. There is a common e-mail and anything that happens is communicated to all members.</p>
<b>Impact:</b>	<p><i>What has been the impact (positive or negative) of this practice on the beneficiaries? Has the situation of the beneficiaries improved with respect to the objectives of D&amp;I implementation?</i></p> <p>Iliodora's impact is that six women that otherwise would be facing unemployment have put together their heritage knowledge for their financial independence but also for the support of the local society by transmitting and maintaining the traditional knowledge and ways.</p>
<b>Limitations:</b>	<p><i>What constraints or difficulties were encountered in implementing the practice, how were they addressed? And what other constraints may be encountered in replicating this practice?</i></p> <p>The difficulties encountered were and are mostly economic. At the beginning all members had to maintain the SCE with personal financial support. To date the SCE still faces financial difficulties due to the fact that they have not been able to participate in any funding programs or receive bank loans therefore being restricted to expand their business both in terms of employees as well as clientele.</p>
<b>Related resources/Links:</b>	<p><i>Establish a list of references related to the practice.</i></p> <p>Telephone interview with the president-stakeholder Ms. Androniki Louloudi</p> <p><a href="https://www.iliodora.gr/">https://www.iliodora.gr/</a></p>

## Best practice 2: 'Irinna of Tilos', Tilos, Greece

<b>Organization:</b>	<p><i>What type is the organisation that has implemented this practice? Provide information of the sector, number of employees etc.</i></p> <p>'Irinna of Tilos' is a SCE cheese farming facility in the small island of Tilos in the Dodecanese group of islands in Greece. It is a unique organization with members - shareholders citizens of the island, refugees and immigrants that reside in the refugee shelter on the island in the context of ESTIA program.</p>
<b>Objective:</b>	<p><i>What is the objective or purpose of the practice? (Brief description) What are the requirements to implement the practice?</i></p> <p>The purpose of founding this SCE was to promote local and collective interest, promote employment, strengthen social cohesion and local and regional development. The immediate objective was the equal integration of refugees into the economic life of the island and their decent living conditions, while developing the local primary sector in order to encourage and support the efforts of local young people who wished to try out entrepreneurship in these sectors with the ultimate goal, all of them to remain on the island.</p>
<b>Beneficiaries:</b>	<p><i>Who are the beneficiaries (direct or indirect) of the practice?</i></p> <p>The direct beneficiaries are the members of the SCE i.e., the involved local citizens and the refugees and immigrants that have found a way out of the economic difficulties faced due to their current situation on a very small island. The indirect beneficiaries are the local community that benefits from the products of the SCE. The local community also sees a business that could bring economic prosperity and work opportunities to its younger members thus keeping them to their homeland. In addition, it's an opportunity for the locals to accept and integrate the refugees and immigrants that are already on the island as equal members of their small society. Indirect beneficiaries can also be considered the people far from the island who become acquainted with the traditional hand made products of the SCE.</p>
<b>Context:</b>	<p><i>What was the initial situation and its specific context? What are the specific difficulties that the practice seeks to address?</i></p> <p>This practice came to cover two specific needs in the island of Tilos. One was the healthy integration of refugees into the economic life of the island and their decent living conditions. The other was the development of the islands primary and secondary sector in order to provide job opportunities to the local youth and the motivation to remain on the island.</p>
<b>Process:</b>	<p><i>Explain step by step the process of the practice to facilitate its understanding and reproduction.</i></p> <p>'Irinna of Tilos' was founded in 2018 however, the original incentive was given in 2015 when the refugee flows to the country started to increase and the first refugees arrived on the island of Tilos. The municipal authority of the island in cooperation with the local residents created an accommodation shelter with containers, given the absence of a hot spot, supporting those seeking asylum. The Municipality's purpose was the effective integration of the refugees on the island, in proportion to its population and the means to achieve it was with the foundation of the SCE 'Irinna of Tilos'. The dedication and unprecedented</p>

	<p>response shown by the Municipality of Tilos towards the protection and reinstatement of the refugees attracted the interest of many European bodies and private entities who visited the island in order to examine ways of dealing with the migration problem. The idea of a local cheese farm was welcomed, the investment came from a small municipality in Switzerland, Menier, near Geneva, which raised the money necessary to start the commercial activity. In spring 2018 with the support of the Municipality of Tilos, the Swiss Municipality of Menier and the Belgomilk company, which provided the technological equipment, 'Irinna of Tilos' was created with main members-shareholders local citizens of the island, refugees and immigrants.</p>
<b>Impact:</b>	<p><i>What has been the impact (positive or negative) of this practice on the beneficiaries? Has the situation of the beneficiaries improved with respect to the objectives of D&amp;I implementation?</i></p> <p>The impact of the practice was unfortunately short lived. The SCE four years after its creation is about to close. However, the lives of the local community have changed, the members of the local community worked side by side with the refugee and immigrant families on the island serving a common purpose, the development of the small cheese farm that would provide economic independence and stability to all.</p>
<b>Limitations:</b>	<p><i>What constraints or difficulties were encountered in implementing the practice, how were they addressed? And what other constraints maybe encountered in replicating this practice?</i></p> <p>The difficulties encountered originally were the long distance from urban centers and the lack of information and technical support. Furthermore, the process of granting asylum was very long with the refugees facing difficulties to fully assimilate their shareholder's role. To date however, a major constraint is the fact that the ESTIA project has ended and due to the current legislation on refugees and asylum seekers all the refugee families have been relocated from the island to other refugee facilities. Another limitation faced by the members of the SCE is the difficulty to participate to funding programs, necessary to support the farms expenses, mostly the animal feed costs and transportation costs that due to the Ukrainian war have increased.</p>
<b>Related resources/Links:</b>	<p><i>Establish a list of references related to the practice. (If possible)</i></p> <p>Telephone interview with the island's Mayor and member-stakeholder, Ms. Maria Kamma- Aliferi</p> <p><a href="https://www.airetos.gr/UsersFiles/Documents/Deltiokalispraktikisdimostilou.pdf">https://www.airetos.gr/UsersFiles/Documents/Deltiokalispraktikisdimostilou.pdf</a>  <a href="https://www.cheeselovers.gr/paragogi/933-irinna-ena-diaforetiko-tyrokomeio-stin-tilo.html">https://www.cheeselovers.gr/paragogi/933-irinna-ena-diaforetiko-tyrokomeio-stin-tilo.html</a>  <a href="https://www.tilos.gr/">https://www.tilos.gr/</a></p>

## Conclusion

The two cases presented as good practices of professional opportunities and development of people belonging to representative pillars of diversity, especially in regions of Greece where professional choices are limited, give us several optimistic indications. On one hand, it shows that when there is willingness, solutions can be found and can be both creative and efficient. On the other hand, local communities have the potential to accept and integrate different

people into professional environments, as long as they are properly informed, trained and aware. In each instance, assisting the local business community in implementing diversity inclusion initiatives, through and by providing real good practices, can significantly contribute to the healthy integration of all in the professional arena and, subsequently, in society.