



Combating Inequalities through Innovative Social Practices
of and for Young People in Cities across Europe

WP7 Case Study: Innovative Practice

“Shelter of Ideas-The Loft”

Date: June 2015

City: Athens

Authors: Maria Pothoulaki

Cover page

INNOVATIVE PRACTICE/PROJECT TITLE	
<p align="center">PILOT TITLE: THE LOFT Adjusted Pilot Title in the area of Elefsina: “Shelter of Ideas-The Loft”</p>	
City	ATHENS - ELEFSINA
Pilot type	1. transferred from Birmingham
Type of target group	<p>The pilot mainly focused on the following type/target group of young people based on the typology provided in the Strategy Plan for WP6:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. young people aiming for ‘alternative’ ways to get ahead, with sufficient competences and/or social support;
Type of practice	<p>The current pilot aimed to provide stimulation on the following types of practices. Young people decided based on their needs and interests to which of these practices they wanted to place their main focus and effort.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Stimulating and enabling entrepreneurship; co-creation; “communing”; 2. Empowerment: developing ambition, competences and social network; 3. Other: Building trust and direct communication between young participants and local government (Municipality) in the arts & cultural sector
Aims/objectives in brief	<p>A place where young artists can meet exchange ideas, identify their needs, network and display their art work. Additional aims, also included enhancing social entrepreneurship through training and business coaching and/or liaising young participants with the Municipality for the implementation of consultation sessions regarding artistic and cultural activities targeting young people organised by the Municipality.</p>
What needs, what inequalities	<p>Although the Municipality of Elefsina has a robust framework of social services, unemployment and especially unemployment of young people is a huge issue in the area. In addition, as there are no youth social policies in the area or services targeting young people, this practice is considered to be a novel approach that will engage young artists, allow them to liaise with local authorities and provide them with opportunities to promote their skills and competences. In addition, as this practice was hosted by the Municipality, young people had the opportunity to communicate with local authorities and build communication channels</p> <p>The main areas of need that this approach/practice targeted involve:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -The lack of trust between young people and authorities by trying to bridge the gap of communication. -The lack of motivation, energy and meaningful stimuli that can provide a productive ‘way out’ to young people and particularly young unemployed people.

	<p>-A possible gap in peer collaboration and networking by enhancing solidarity and collaboration channels among young artists/participants</p> <p>-The need for novel approaches that will help young people to survive in the labour market by strengthening capacity building in entrepreneurship.</p>
What (activities in brief)	<p>Activities can be divided into two main categories: a) Information/Dissemination & Declaration of Interest Activities and b) Activities with Young People. Activities were further defined and identified based on the needs of young participants, in the first meetings/sessions.</p> <p>a) Information/Dissemination & Declaration of Interest Activities involve:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Creation of a Facebook page during the pilot action -Dissemination and Information material hosted under the Website of the Municipality -Creation of information leaflets to attract young people to the pilot <p>b) Activities with Young People were based on young participants' needs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -2 Focus Groups with young people (pre-post) to identify their needs. This further defined the rest of the activities that were implemented during the pilot stage -Meetings with young people -Creation of a website for the pilot activity that could also display the art work of young participants -Training on entrepreneurship & coaching -Business planning for the creation of a social enterprise (Κοιν.Σ.Επ.) -Presentations/ Meetings with entrepreneurs: tips for setting up a successful business -Meetings with the Municipality and young people – consultation sessions
Who (actors)	<p>Family and Childcare Center (KMOP) in collaboration with the Municipality of Elefsina carried out the pilot. In addition, Aston University and the initiator of “The Loft” provided guidance and support throughout the set-up and implementation phase.</p>
How (involvement of the actors, their roles)	<p>Municipality of Elefsina: Hosting the pilot and providing space to host the meetings with young people. Dissemination of information through the Municipality’s website to attract participants. Participation of local government members in consultation sessions and relevant meetings.</p> <p>Family and Childcare Center (KMOP): Support and Implementation of the Pilot. KMOP undertook the responsibility of management and implementation of the pilot along with all relevant personnel and other costs.</p> <p>Aston University and “The Loft” in Birmingham: Aston University and “The Loft” in Birmingham collaborated for the successful implementation of the pilot by providing support and guidance upon request and by supporting the study visit of the initiator of “The Loft” in the area of Elefsina.</p>

Scope: number of the participants of practice(s)	8 minimum-16 maximum
Duration (when the project/practice started)	Start date: 16th January 2015 End date: 1st April 2015
RESOURCES	
Financial	TOTAL : 24.891,48 EUR Consumables including subcontracts and dissemination material : 11.423,38 EUR Personnel Cost : 13.468,10 EUR
Personnel	Total: 13.468,10 EUR Personnel Cost per month: 11/2014 : 250,00 EUR 12/2014 : 2.330,46 EUR 1/2015 : 2.663,37 EUR 2/2015 : 3.230,37 EUR 3/2015 : 2.665,45 EUR 4/2015 : 2.338,38 EUR
Other	Meetings took place at the Cultural Centre of the Municipality of Elefsina.

Contents

- Introduction 6
- 1. Evaluation methodology 6
- 2. Project/Practice Design 7
 - 2.1 Social Issue(s) addressed..... 7
 - 2.2. Project goals and plans 8
 - 2.3 Competences and resources required 9
 - 2.4 Degree of organization 9
 - 2.5 The logic of intervention 10
 - 2.6 Transfer adaptations 10
- 3. Organisational context of implementation 10
- 4. Project implementation and outputs 13
 - 4.1 Targeting of the program..... 13
 - 4.2 Addressing needs..... 14
 - 4.3 Empowerment, engagement and choice..... 15
 - 4.4 Stakeholders involved 15
 - 4.5 Competences and resources involved 16
 - 4.6 Process evaluation criteria..... 16
 - 4.7 Innovativeness 16
 - 4.8 Success factors and conditions, critical implementation barriers 17
- 5. Project results/outcomes..... 18
- 6. Final reflections 20
 - 6.1 The role of the pilot/project/practice 20
 - 6.2 Innovation..... 20
 - 6.3 Success factors 21
 - 6.4 Policy recommendations, transferability 21

Introduction

The main areas that this practice targeted involve:

- Lack of trust between young people and the authorities by trying to bridge the gap of communication.
- Lack of motivation, energy and meaningful stimuli that can provide a productive 'way out' to young people and particularly young unemployed people.
- A possible gap in peer collaboration and networking by enhancing solidarity and collaboration channels among young artists/participants
- The need for novel approaches that will help young people to survive in the labour market by strengthening capacity building in entrepreneurship.

Implementation of the pilot was considered successful as the activities implemented met most of participants' needs and expectations. Activities implemented during the pilot project are indicated in the attached agenda (please see appendix 1). The basic areas on which activities were based were: entrepreneurship and liaison with local authorities. The most important aspect which emerged during the pilot activity and provided the base for the expression of interest regarding sustainability of the group was the feeling of collectivity and team spirit that was developed and strengthened throughout the pilot process. In total, 21 meetings took place with the group members. Furthermore, additional activities were implemented as compared to the initial plan, adjusting to the development of the pilot project. According to participants, this project was considered to be innovative due to the fact that there was no similar activity in the area targeting young people. In addition, the fact that this initiative combined elements of art, entrepreneurship and liaison with local government was considered a novel approach.

1. Evaluation methodology

The evaluation method adopted a qualitative approach aiming to evaluate both process and outcome. This was deemed necessary in order to check whether the pilot activity was implemented according to the original plan set out in the beginning of the process and identify whether the outcomes and the impact of the pilot was in line with the initial expectations. As a result, the evaluation process involved:

- Two focus groups (one in the beginning of the pilot and one at the end) conducted with participants. The first focus group involved 12 participants (plus 2 facilitators) and aimed at identifying the needs of participants, focal points of the pilot and activities of interest. The second focus group, which involved 8 participants (plus 2 facilitators), took place in line with the revised time plan, and aimed at identifying satisfaction of participants with the activities implemented in meeting their initial needs, outcomes and evaluation of activity axons (entrepreneurship and liaison with local authorities) as compared to initial expectations. In addition, a SWOT analysis of the pilot activity also took place in order to identify with participants the strengths, the weaknesses, the opportunities and the threats of the pilot activity.
- Semi-structured, in-depth interviews (4 interviews) with stakeholders and group participants took place in order to have feedback regarding the outcome of the activities implemented and evaluation from all parties involved in the pilot process.

Process evaluation involved monitoring in order to ensure that the implementation process went ahead based on particular standards and provisions made. Monitoring was adopted in order to ensure optimal operation and identify in time any issues/problems raised. Monitoring indicators in this process involved:

- Number of participants attending each meeting by using an attendance list (please see appendix 2: participation table)
- Number of ‘likes’ in our facebook page
- Number of participants who joined and attended our entrepreneurship workshops
- Number of meetings with young people
- Number of dissemination/publicity tools used

Tools used in the process evaluation also involved:

- Evaluation questionnaires distributed to participants for completion in order to evaluate entrepreneurship workshops conducted within the framework of the pilot activity.

Further to the above, in the beginning of the pilot activity, participant questionnaires were distributed to participants for completion in order to measure aspects of self-confidence, prioritize participants’ needs, and identify any self-perceived weaknesses preventing them from integrating in the labour market.

Secondly, a focus group with participants took place in order to identify their needs, focal points of the pilot and activities of interest. The focus group helped to adjust the initial activity plan and design the activities more concretely. Further to the entrepreneurship workshops, an evaluation questionnaire was given to participants for completion in order to measure implementation and outcome aspects of the workshop. Nine participants returned the evaluation questionnaire completed. In addition, the entrepreneurship trainer was interviewed so as to explore design, implementation and evaluation aspects.

Towards the end of the pilot activity, the second and final focus group was conducted with participants in order to evaluate all aspects of the pilot activity and examine whether initial aims were achieved. Moreover, at the final meeting, interviews were conducted with staff members and participants in order to further explore implementation and outcome aspects of the project. Members of the local government did not participate in the evaluation process due to lack of availability.

2. Project/Practice Design

2.1 Social Issue(s) addressed

The area of Elefsina faces a number of problems, one of them being unemployment. As mentioned in previous WP reports, Elefsina is a working class industrial area with a history of immigration due to the increased industrial activity. During the years of the economic crisis, Elefsina was greatly affected due to the closing of a number of industries and the dismissal of many workers. The issue of unemployment is definitely a symptom in a society sinking in the economic crisis, but is also a cause shaping a number of issues, such as social exclusion, social imbalance and the degradation of social values. A population category greatly affected by unemployment is young people. Young people, who are in the beginning of their professional development, face a ‘dead end’ with minimal institutional support by a state that fails to provide sufficient solutions for them. As a result, young people are distant from political processes, indicating lack of trust in authorities.

This pilot practice aimed to address the issues of unemployment and lack of trust in authorities by enhancing entrepreneurship, empowering participants by developing a collaborative and co-creative spirit, increasing their social network and building direct communication between young participants and the local government.

2.2. Project goals and plans

The initial goal of the project was to create a place where young artists can meet exchange ideas, identify their needs, network and display their art work. Additional aims, based on the needs of young participants, included enhancing social entrepreneurship through training and coaching on entrepreneurship and liaising young participants with the Municipality for the implementation of consultation sessions regarding artistic and cultural activities organised by the Municipality targeting young people. As this is mainly a bottom up activity (although based on local government support for space provision) the goals were not sufficiently concrete given the fact that this is a pilot activity and no similar activity targeting young people/artists was implemented in the area, according to participants. Therefore, results cannot be compared to previous outcomes. However, for the purpose of internal evaluation and in the context of the monitoring process, monitoring indicators involving measurable outcomes were used.

The key areas on which activities of this pilot project were based involve: team building, entrepreneurship and liaison with local authorities. As already mentioned, this practice addressed the issue of unemployment in the area by helping young people to survive in the labour market by strengthening capacity building in entrepreneurship. In addition, this project also addressed the lack of trust between young people and authorities by trying to bridge the gap of communication. Furthermore, this approach addressed lack of motivation, energy and the absence of meaningful stimuli in young people by providing a meaningful ‘way out’ particularly to young unemployed people, strengthening peer collaboration, networking and solidarity among participants.

Main activities implemented, in relation to the aforementioned areas involve:

- Team building sessions
- Four entrepreneurship workshops
- Suggestion and development of an art work through participation of the group in the previously mentioned art exhibition
- Development of a suggestion and proposal for consultation sessions with local authorities
- Two consultation sessions with local authorities
- Study visit by the initiator/founder of “The Loft” in Birmingham, including presentations, discussion and exchange among the initiator/founder and the group
- Study visit of the group to a social enterprise of similar focus
- Evaluation activities (focus group discussions and interviews)

With regards to the typology introduced in the Strategy Plan for WP6, young participants could be characterised as belonging in the following category:

- young people aiming for ‘alternative’ ways to get ahead, with sufficient competences and/or social support

Most participants in the group had an artistic interest such as handicraft, pastry decoration, music, writing, photography, religious painting, wood carving etc. Other participants had technical skills such as IT – computer skills and engineering. Finally some participants came just because they felt that this initiative was something worthwhile and they felt like taking part in it. It is important to note that most participants were unemployed or part-time employed at the time of the pilot initiative and they felt that this activity was a productive way to spend their available time.

2.3 Competences and resources required

The initial invitation was addressed to young people in the area with artistic interests. Recruitment of participants was conducted through an open invitation call published in the Municipality's website, distribution of leaflets in the area of Elefsina, open invitation call in the pilot activity facebook page and from a 'word of mouth' approach. The pilot activity attracted in total 23 people throughout its implementation, out of whom 19 people were art oriented.

People who indicated interest to participate did not necessarily belong to the age range of young people, nor to the target group of artists. As a result, this pilot activity did not involve any strict inclusion criteria nor did it request any competences from participants. It adopted an 'open' approach from the beginning in order to maximize the possible benefit for the people who would be interested in participating in the pilot project. For example, from the total number of 23 people who were attracted from the pilot 12 people were under 30 years old, while four participants were over 40 years old. At this point it should be noted that throughout the pilot activity, a core group of 8-10 people was formed involving people with regular participation, while the rest of the people had an occasional participation.

Personnel involved in the management and the implementation of the study were people who were experienced working with young people and vulnerable groups of people. In addition, each staff member undertook activities relevant to his/her expertise. For instance, the group was moderated by the project manager, who is a psychologist and led the design and implementation of the team building activities and the relevant sessions. The group was also supported by a local staff member who is experienced in working with young people. In addition, an entrepreneurship trainer, who has relevant qualifications, experience and skills, facilitated and led the entrepreneurship workshops. Finally, a local staff member was also involved in acting as a mediator and liaison with the local government, networking and supporting the organization of the consultation sessions.

Furthermore, in the overall process of the pilot project a team of staff members and colleagues were also involved. Resources used that could be considered as in kind contribution by the Municipality of Elefsina were the provision of a suitable space, including furniture (chairs and desks) and electronic equipment when needed.

2.4 Degree of organization

The practice is mainly a bottom up approach in terms of design and implementation, with the support of the municipality, who provided the space to host the practice.

The practice focuses primarily at micro-level by involving young citizens/artists and providing them a space to communicate, network and exchange ideas. The practice also has an indirect focus on the meso level as it involves the whole community by disseminating the action to the citizens of the Municipality. Finally, at macro-level the opportunities that can possibly arise for participants involve employment and entrepreneurship opportunities. In addition, if the group and the practice evolve further at the end of the pilot, opportunities can also develop for the community that could be benefited by the work/activity of the group.

As this is primarily a bottom up approach, it is an innovative project due to the fact that there are no similar practices in the area targeting young people (besides athletic activities). As such, the organisation of the practice was at local level, with a possibility of becoming a 'routine' practice if the project establishes and continues to grow.

2.5 The logic of intervention

The practice can be classified as aiming at social integration due to the fact that it targets young people, and particularly young artists who face the risk of social exclusion primarily due to unemployment. Therefore, the project was adjusted to local needs in order to empower participants and introduce alternative methods, such as social entrepreneurship, to survive in the labour market. In this context the pilot project aimed at implementing activities within the following range of practices:

- Stimulating and enabling entrepreneurship; co-creation; “communing”;
- Empowerment: developing ambition, competences and social network;
- Other: Liaise and build direct communication between young participants and local government (Municipality) in the arts & culture sector

2.6 Transfer adaptations

For the implementation of the particular project in the area of Elefsina, a number of elements were changed for the successful transfer and implementation of the project. Firstly, the local needs were taken into consideration based on research that was previously conducted in the area. As a result, research findings played an important role during pilot design. This project targeted unemployment and lack of trust in authorities, by adopting as activity pillars the dimension of entrepreneurship and liaison between young citizens/participants and the local government. These pillars were examined in the initial focus group with participants in order to confirm and proceed with the development of the action plan.

In addition, another change that took place was that the space hosting the practice could not possibly include a working space for artists, as initiated in Birmingham, due to a number of practicalities. Firstly, the implementation of the practice in the area largely depended on the provision of space by the municipality, which was succeeded after a number of negotiations prior to the onset of the implementation. Secondly, the available time and resources needed to form the space in order to create a working space were insufficient, also taking into consideration that the space was the responsibility of the municipality with no possibility for reformation or transformation. Thirdly, the practice could not involve any entrepreneurial activities or monetary transactions (i.e. selling of art work produced etc.) due to national and legal restrictions.

If this practice were to be transferred to another city, particular consideration would have to be placed on the local needs of the transfer location. For instance; the target group, the presence of young artists in the city/community, the needs of young people and their ways of expression should be examined. In addition, one should also examine existing services in the area for young people, and whether such an initiative would be welcomed by the community.

3. Organisational context of implementation

This practice was a pilot project, transferred from Birmingham. As such, it was based on the original idea derived by the initiator but it was adjusted according to local needs. This project can be considered as innovative in the area of Elefsina, based on the fact that there are no activities (besides athletic activities and the remedial teaching centre) specifically targeting young people. In addition, the innovation in this action lies on the combination of a number of factors, such as the target group of young people in combination with the action pillars of entrepreneurship and liaison with the local government.

The design of the pilot project started in November 2014. The implementation of the pilot project “Shelter of Ideas- The Loft” started on the 16th of January 2015 and lasted until the 1st of April 2015, when the group had its last meeting. In total, 21 meetings took place during the whole period. Initially,

two action pillars of activities were proposed in order to see where the focus of the pilot should be placed. In the second meeting with participants, a Focus Group was conducted in order to specify the needs of participants and identify the desired activities and expectations from the pilot. Outcomes from the Focus Group discussion indicated that a combination of both action pillars was desired and that the focus should be placed both on entrepreneurship and liaison with local authorities. Therefore, a proposed time plan of activities was drafted, which was open to changes/modifications according to participants' additional needs.

The implementation phase ran smoothly with minor changes to the original schedule. Changes that took place in the plan involved:

- a) The implementation of an additional entrepreneurship workshop at the end of the pilot project in order to conduct a follow up workshop and work on participants' business plans.
- b) The study visit of the initiator of "The Loft" in Birmingham, Yinka Danmole, who visited our pilot activity in Elefsina on 3-6 March 2015, and participated in two of our meetings.
- c) Initiative from the group to participate in the art exhibition for young artists in Elefsina, by producing an art work.
- d) The desire to visit another social enterprise instead of inviting artists, in the context of networking and exchange of ideas and experiences. This change came up further to the group's initiative to develop a social enterprise.

As this was a pilot activity implemented in a specific space/location offered by the municipality, the capacity of the program was designed to involve up to 20 participants, with the possibility of re-visiting the design and adjusting it, in case the response rate exceeded initial expectations. Prior to implementation of the activity, a letter of request was sent to the Municipality, along with the basic idea and the design of the pilot activity. A couple of meetings followed with local government members in order for them to provide their consent and come to an agreement regarding the space where the pilot could be hosted. Despite some initial difficulties which resulted in the delay of the onset of the pilot activity, in general, the Municipality of Elefsina reacted positively to the pilot project by disseminating project information on their webpage, providing space in the Christmas village to distribute information leaflets and by offering a space at the Cultural Center of the Municipality to implement the pilot activity and host meetings with young people twice a week. In addition, local government members were accessible and agreed to participate in the consultation sessions in order to have a fruitful dialogue with participants. In general, effective collaboration with the Municipality was gradually established and efforts were made in order to claim a more suitable space than the one originally provided for the implementation of the pilot activity. In general, collaboration was good without any problems.

The pilot process was the responsibility of the Citispyce local project manager, who designed and coordinated the pilot activity along with staff members and participated in meetings. Two additional local staff members were specifically employed for the purpose of the pilot. The local staff members employed for the purpose of the pilot implementation were residents of Elefsina, who were well connected with local stakeholders and local authorities. Group meetings were facilitated by the local project manager and one of the local staff members who acted as assistant facilitator. Communication and networking with local authorities was undertaken by the other local staff member who acted as a communication/network mediator. Additional work and contribution was also provided at design, dissemination and implementation levels by other KMOP staff members. More specifically, an indicative table of these costs can be found below:

TYPE OF COSTS	COSTS
Personnel costs	13.468,10€
Activity costs/consumables	3.471,35 €
Experts/subcontracts	7.952,03 €
Indirect costs	4.978,29 €

Quality standards of the services provided by this pilot were ensured by the expertise of staff members involved and the design and implementation of the evaluation activities. In addition, evaluation activities involved both process and outcome evaluation ensuring the smooth implementation of the practice and the identification of any potential problems/issues in time.

Successful implementation of the pilot activity was a result of the good collaboration between all stakeholders involved; KMOP staff members running the pilot project, participants, the Municipality of Elefsina, “The Loft” in Birmingham, Aston University (Citispyce Leader) and Plus Confidence (WP6 leader). Coordination and management of the pilot activity was the responsibility of KMOP. Guidance and support was provided during the whole process of the pilot activity by the relevant Citispyce partners (Aston University and Plus Confidence). In addition, a study visit was organised for the initiator of The Loft in Birmingham to visit the “Shelter of Ideas-The Loft” in Elefsina. The contribution of the initiator was extremely valuable due to the fact that he enriched participants’ ideas and sustainability plans and he participated in the final consultation session with the local government.

As far as staff members are concerned, collaboration among colleagues running the pilot activity was very good, by sharing responsibilities and tasks and adopting a united approach. Finally, collaboration with group members/participants was very good from the beginning of the pilot. This is due to the fact that in the beginning an effort was made to bond group members through team building activities, thus strengthening a collaboration approach. Doubtlessly, not all group members shared the same goals and they had differences in terms of age, occupation and background. For the majority of the group, nevertheless, connecting elements and shared aspects were stronger than their differences, thus keeping a core of eight people united until the end of the pilot. The cooperation aspect was discussed and evaluated both in the final focus group with participants and in the interviews with all stakeholders.

This pilot project could evolve and become integrated in a wider local youth policy scheme, which at the moment seems to be absent in the area. The Municipality could be inspired by this activity and adopt a multi-faceted approach targeting young people. Besides national existing policies particularly targeting young people in the area of education and employment, there is no youth policy framework at the local level. At the moment relevant activities for young people in the area involve: athletic activities, and activities initiated by the Cultural Centre that address to all citizens. In addition, services in the area target all citizens with no particular provisions for young people, despite athletic services and the municipality remedial teaching centre.

Within this context, and based on the need for sustainability, participants developed a proposal/suggestion which was presented at the consultation sessions with local authorities. Group members developed the idea of sustaining the activity through the creation of a ‘Youth Centre’ in the area of Elefsina by forming a social enterprise. For the purpose of the consultation sessions, participants developed a presentation including the aims of this idea, sectors of operation, targeted activities, promotion tools, sustainability aspects, rationale for this idea, requests, possible benefits for the Municipality of Elefsina and similar operation of other Youth Centers in Greece. In addition, they developed a primary example of their website, which is under construction. Unfortunately, the request made by participants for a space in order to support their activity was not accepted by the local government and alternatives suggested were of no practical use for participants. Although this outcome was not favourable in terms of the sustainability of the project, it motivated participants to act more dynamically and look for other possible resources and support in order to apply for space in the future.

To summarise, this pilot activity managed to bring together a number of people with different characteristics and enabled their empowerment in order to co-act and collaborate for a shared vision.

Resources for the implementation of the pilot activity were sufficient, taking into account that remaining amounts from certain RTD categories were used for the successful implementation of the action and that the municipality of Elefsina provided the space to host the activity.

4. Project implementation and outputs

4.1 Targeting of the program

Recruitment of participants was conducted through an open invitation call published in the Municipality's website, distribution of leaflets in the area of Elefsina, open invitation call in the pilot activity facebook page and from a 'word to mouth' approach. People who indicated interest to participate did not necessarily belong to the age range of young people; however, they felt young enough and comfortable participating in a group with young people. In addition, some people who initially came to the meetings brought along their friends in the following meetings because they found it interesting.

Most participants in the group had an artistic interest such as handicraft, pastry decoration, music, writing, photography, religious painting, wood carving, jewelry manufacturing, decoupage etc. Other participants had technical skills such as IT – computer skills and engineering. Finally some participants came just because they felt that this initiative was something worthwhile and they felt like taking part in it. It is important to note that most participants were unemployed or part-time employed at the time of the pilot and they felt that this activity was a productive way to spend their available time.

The pilot project managed to initially attract 14 people to the first meeting. From these 14 people, 12 people completed the initial questionnaires for participants indicating an interest to remain and participate in the group. The group of participants remained 'open' at all times, as already mentioned, with the exception of consultation sessions with local authorities, where only members who had participated in the formation of proposals and suggestions for the consultation sessions were able to participate. Although the pilot activity mainly targeted young people, the response was also received by people who were above 40 years old. As the approach maintained throughout the pilot activity was an 'open approach', it was decided to accept into the pilot activity any participants declaring interest despite their age. This was due to the fact that interaction among participants of different ages was considered to be useful and fruitful for the development of the pilot process. In general, participation was not compulsory, meaning that participants had the freedom to participate according to their availability. Throughout the pilot process, some participants dropped out and were gradually replaced by new people who joined in. The basic core of the group, with regular attendance consisted mainly of 8-10 people. The age range of participants varied from 24-45 years old.

Publicity and dissemination tools used for the purpose of the pilot activity involve the following (please see appendix 3-publicity tools):

- Production of a Logo
- Advertisement in the Municipality's website
- Advertisement in the local newspaper
- Production of leaflets
- Facebook page
- Badges
- Website

In addition, small informative posters were produced for the purpose of the pilot project, which were placed at the main entrance of the Cultural Center and the entrance of the room where meetings were held.

4.2 Addressing needs

As stated above, this practice aimed to address existing needs in relation to unemployment and the lack of trust, and a communication gap between young people and the authorities. As a response to the above needs it was considered important to provide skills and competences that would benefit participants in the long run. Therefore, entrepreneurship was considered to be the first pillar addressing unemployment by giving participants the opportunity to gain knowledge, find out the practical steps and practice with their own business plan. In addition, the implementation of consultation sessions with local government executives was considered to be the other essential pillar in the pilot design in order to address the lack of trust and communication with authorities. Further to the recruitment and the first meeting, a questionnaire was completed by participants in order to identify their needs and expectations from the pilot activity. In addition, findings and needs were further explored in an initial focus group conducted with participants in order to proceed with the action plan and the implementation of the project.

Activities implemented during the pilot project are indicated in the attached agenda (please see appendix 1). The most important aspect which emerged during the pilot activity and provided the ground for the expression of interest regarding the group's sustainability was the feeling of collectivity and team spirit that developed and strengthened throughout the pilot process. In total, 21 meetings took place with the group of people.

Main activities with relevance to individual needs and characteristics are described below:

- Team building sessions (designed based on the interests and the profile of participants)
- Four entrepreneurship workshops (based on the profile of participants)
- Suggestion and development of an art work for participating in an art exhibition (the desire to participate in the exhibition was expressed by participants, who came up with the concept and produced the final art work)
- Development of a suggestion/proposal for the consultation sessions with local authorities (the suggestion/proposal was discussed and developed by participants throughout a number of meetings further to their need for sustaining the practice)
- Two consultation sessions with local authorities
- Study visit by the initiator/founder of "The Loft" in Birmingham, including presentations, discussion and exchange among the initiator/founder and the group Study visit of the group to a social enterprise of similar focus (the group decided to visit a social enterprise)
- Evaluation activities (focus group discussions, interviews and completion of questionnaires).

Process evaluation involved a monitoring process in order to ensure that the implementation process was based on particular standards and provisions made. The monitoring process was adopted in order to ensure optimal operation and identify in time any issues/problems raised. Monitoring indicators in this process involved:

- Number of participants attending each meeting based on an attendance list (please see appendix 2 – participation table)
- Number of 'likes' in our facebook page (please see appendix 3-publicity tools)
- Number of participants who joined and attended our entrepreneurship workshops (relevant information can be found in appendix 2- participation table)
- Number of meetings with young people
- Number of dissemination/publicity tools used

4.3 Empowerment, engagement and choice

This practice aimed primarily at empowering young people by enhancing a collaboration spirit and motivating them to explore other possible ways to survive in the labour market. In addition, this practice also gave the opportunity to acknowledge themselves as a group/team at the local government.

Participants had the possibility to shape the activities of the practice as most of them were largely defined and determined by participants themselves. This resulted in drafting an agenda/action plan which was flexible according to participants' desires and needs. For instance, the initial design did not foresee the production of an art work produced by the group. This need was raised during the course of the pilot by participants and was incorporated in the action plan.

Participants and new members had the opportunity to participate and engage at all stages as the pilot activity maintained an 'open' approach, accepting participation at almost all stages of the pilot. The group of participants remained 'open', at all times with the exception of consultation sessions with local authorities, where only members who had participated in forming proposals and suggestions for the consultation sessions could participate.

Due to the fact that this pilot project is mainly a bottom-up approach, young people played the principal and most essential role in its implementation. Young people were the basic partner, the actor and the principal agent in this practice. This means that should this practice becomes sustainable it will be an autonomous activity organized and maintained by young people themselves.

4.4 Stakeholders involved

Key stakeholders in this pilot project were:

- *Family and Childcare Center (KMOP):* Coordination, management and responsibility of pilot project implementation and dissemination
- *Municipality of Elefsina:* Provision of space for the implementation of the pilot and participation in the consultation sessions. Dissemination of the project through the Municipality's communication channels.
- *Artists and/or entrepreneurs:* Networking
- *Participants:* Principal Actor
- *"The Loft" in Birmingham:* Support during set up and implementation phase
- *Aston University:* Support during set up and implementation phase

Co-operation among all stakeholders was in general good and productive. In particular, collaboration with the Municipality of Elefsina was gradually established and efforts were made in order to claim a more suitable space than the one originally provided for the implementation of the pilot activity. The effort for networking with specific artists active in the area was not very successful as there was no response to invitations sent to them, due to unavailability. On the other hand, the response of the representative of the social enterprise the group planned to visit was very positive, and as a result a study visit was arranged to their premises. For more information on the social enterprise that the group visited, please see the following website (<http://www.stopaliolitriivi.gr/>).

“The Loft” in Birmingham and Aston University were very collaborative providing support at all stages of the pilot. In general, collaboration was good among stakeholders without any particular problems.

4.5 Competences and resources involved

Competences required:

Staff members involved needed to be experienced in working with young people. In addition, it was important for the moderator/facilitator to have experience in team building activities. The entrepreneurship trainer who delivered the workshops had relevant expertise and qualifications.

The pilot activity was addressed to young artists, nevertheless, there were people who were interested in joining the group and did not have any artistic interests. As a result, participants did not need to have any particular competences for joining in.

Additional resources that were needed and provided in kind by the Municipality was the space and the relevant furniture and electronic equipment (when needed) to host the meetings and implement the pilot activity.

4.6 Process evaluation criteria

The drivers for implementation can be identified in the needs mentioned in previous sections. The barriers during implementation are mainly associated with the local government due to the delay in several processes and the negotiations that needed to take place prior to the provision of the space. In addition, the space that was provided largely defined the extent of the activities.

In addition, it needs to be noted that although the group remained open at almost all stages of implementation, after the first month of implementation no additional efforts were made to attract an additional number of people (e.g. another open call, additional invitations etc.), due to the fact that implementation had already started and the group had started to form. This resulted in a faster and stronger bonding of the group but in a lower number of participants. Furthermore, this is also related to the space/room provided by the municipality for the implementation of the pilot which could host maximum of 16 people and also by the length of the pilot project and the time schedule submitted to the municipality.

Another obstacle that can be identified, although it was not evident during the pilot, is the fact that although social enterprises are a novel approach in the country’s landscape, they have a ‘negative connotation’ particularly when they become associated with the local government. As a result, a political barrier and reluctance can be associated with the fact that the municipality did not respond positively to the group’s request for sustainability and provision of space further to the implementation of the pilot.

4.7 Innovativeness

The key innovative elements in this practice involve the combination of art, entrepreneurship and liaison with local government, in addition to the fact that this practice primarily targeted young people. The area of intervention is employment and adopts a social investment approach and provides young people with the necessary knowledge and skills to find entrepreneurship solutions in order to survive in the labour market. The advantage and the strength of this practice is the element of flexibility and the fact that it involves a range of innovative solutions. This practice can therefore be considered as an informal network and/or a solution in networks of the actors (mixed solution) based on the fact that this practice is transferred from Birmingham, where it is successful. Still, this practice could become an institutional solution in the area of Elefsina, and in other municipalities in Greece, should the local government indicate appropriate interest and investment in local youth policy schemes and initiatives. The key dimensions that this practice addresses are trust and engagement. Trust is a core element, as

also indicated in previous research stages, lacking in the relationship between young citizens and policy makers. This practice aimed among others to liaise participants with the local government through consultation sessions, where the possibility for direct access and communication was provided. In addition, this practice also aimed to engage young people and participants in creative and collaborative activities by providing them with the opportunity to learn about entrepreneurial options for surviving in the labour market. In this way, networking and collaborative options were explored among participants in order to find ways to sustain and evolve their activities.

The above dimensions addressed are compatible to the issues and needs identified from previous research conducted in the area. Taking into consideration that this practice was effective and had an impact on participants, it could be argued that this practice could be transferred to other locations and adjusted accordingly including more people. It should also be noted that innovation is directly related to the context of its implementation. This means that if the local context is not ready to 'accept' an innovative solution, then this innovation will have minimum or no effect on citizens' lives.

4.8 Success factors and conditions, critical implementation barriers

The implementation phase ran smoothly with minor changes when compared to the original design/schedule. Changes that took place in the plan involve:

- a) The implementation of an additional entrepreneurship workshop at the end of the pilot project in order to conduct a follow up and work on participants' business plan.
- b) The study visit of the initiator of "The Loft" in Birmingham, Yinka Danmole, who visited our pilot activity in Elefsina on 3-6 March 2015, and participated in two of our meetings.
- c) Initiative from the group to participate in the art exhibition for young artists in Elefsina, by producing an art work.
- d) The desire to visit another social enterprise instead of inviting artists, in the context of networking and exchange of ideas and experiences. This change came up further to the group's initiative to develop a social enterprise.

The quality of the services provided in this pilot project was high as ensured by the monitoring plan and also by the skills and qualifications of the personnel involved in the project. As a result, activities were planned and delivered carefully whilst always taking into consideration the profile of participants and the aim of the pilot.

With regards to the activities and the engagement of young people with the group it can be argued that the pilot reached its intended goals due to the fact that the engagement of participants was higher and stronger than initially expected. The critical success factors in the implementation of this pilot project involve: a) the commitment of staff members and the fact that they all share the same philosophy which motivates them to work efficiently, empower and support beneficiaries and provide the best possible outcome, b) the collaboration of the Municipality and c) the profile of the target group, their genuine interest and willingness, which helped to take this pilot project a step further by taking initiatives and discussing sustainability plans.

In addition, one of the strongest elements in this pilot project was flexibility and the fact that the project could be adjusted according to the target group and the needs of participants. As a result, although an initial plan existed prior to the implementation; a number of activities were defined further to the beginning of the pilot and the first focus group.

Implementation barriers during the pilot can be identified in relation to networking with other art groups in the area. For instance, efforts were made to liaise with an acting/theatre group but there was no response to the invitation. Another barrier refers to the local government's reluctance to support the sustainability of the project. Consequently, local authorities although they were initially responsive to the implementation of a pilot project in the context of a European project, they indicated reluctance as to its continuity and sustainability initiated by young people in the area. As a result, in line with previous research findings, fragmented and piecemeal solutions seem to be a mainstream approach by

authorities disregarding long term effects and possible durable benefits in the area initiated by citizens. This approach is a result of a combination of factors, such as absence of political will, distance between citizens and policy makers, and inability to overcome and surpass bureaucracy and the current system, which downgrades any innovative efforts.

5. Project results/outcomes

All costs incurred during the implementation of the action were based on a careful financial forecast and design of activities. Based on a value for money practice, costs related to the pilot activity were carefully examined in order to have the best possible and quality outcome in a cost-efficient framework.

Results from the pilot activity indicate that this project was a meaningful activity for participants by giving them the opportunity to communicate, co-act, co-create and identify a shared vision. An indicative example is the fact that during the pilot project the group took the initiative to create an art work to be exhibited in the 7th Art exhibition of Elefsina (appendix 7 – art exhibition picture) and discuss ways to make the idea of “The Loft” sustainable in Elefsina.

This pilot project aimed at enhancing entrepreneurship, empower participants by developing ambitions, competences, increase their social network and liaise young participants with the local government. In relation to the above goals, the pilot activity managed to:

- a) Increase knowledge regarding entrepreneurship by informing participants regarding the types of enterprises, relevant steps to be taken when creating an enterprise, development of a business plan and providing information on national resources and grants available for the support of entrepreneurship.

The average score in the evaluation rating for overall satisfaction from the workshop experience was 4.4 (very satisfying), with the maximum score being 5 (extremely satisfying).

In particular, a statement is provided below by one participant regarding entrepreneurship workshops:

“It helped me. I was in search. Here the information on entrepreneurship was more concrete. I understood how I can implement my idea”. (Man, 27, unemployed)

- b) Empowering participants through team building activities, enabling them to co-act by enhancing a collaborative team spirit. Empowerment and successful collaboration was evident by the need of participants to keep the group and the activity alive further at the end of the pilot project and find ways for sustainability

This is evident by the initiative taken by participants to create an art work for submission in the exhibition for young artists in Elefsina. A picture of the art work produced can be found in appendix 4. In addition, in the context of the sustainability plans, participants prepared a presentation and a website (at preliminary stage) in their effort to present a sustainability plan to the local government and promote stronger their identity. The link of the website can be found in appendix 5.

- c) Participants liaising with the local government through direct dialogue and communication by the implementation of consultation sessions. Efforts were made for the group to strengthen their presence in the local community and in the local government executives. In addition, meetings with city council members and local government executives took place at different instances throughout the pilot activity, as previously described.

Please see appendix 6, containing pictures from the participation of local authorities in the project’s activities.

According to participants' views as revealed in the final focus group, the list of positive outcomes from the pilot project can be listed as follows:

- Liaison with local authorities
- Motivation and empowerment: the need for co-creation was met and addressed
- Entrepreneurship and innovative practices – sustainability of the group
- Team spirit: Change in the way of thinking. In the beginning there were two subgroups which managed to co-exist and become unanimous.

More particularly, the strongest parts of the process as identified by participants are indicated below:

“...we are all in a position where we want to create something new for the area and innovative and we came closer because we wanted to express ourselves and feel creative...” (Woman, 28, unemployed)

“The fact that we created this idea about the youth center...how we made the plan, the organisation and the whole process of discussion” (Man, 26, employed)

Both statements refer to long term effects of the pilot project. The relationship and the bond that group members established through this process is something that they continue to carry and experience even after the end of the pilot project. In addition, of great importance is the shared vision that was created during the pilot process regarding the need of sustainability for this action and the continuity and the involvement of the group.

Furthermore, the benefits that participants can identify from the pilot project are: a) at individual level, the knowledge that they accumulated on entrepreneurship and their liaison and networking with the local authorities and b) at professional level, networking, entrepreneurship activities and potential collaborations both as a group and individually.

Although this pilot project did not have a direct impact on employment and education, it had an indirect impact on the way participants thinking empowered them and enabled them to realise that there are entrepreneurial outlets and possibilities in the labour market and that through collaboration they can potentially increase their opportunities for success. The identification of a shared vision during the pilot process motivated participants to establish a stronger bond and find a meaningful and creative outlet in their everyday life. More specifically, the nature of the approach that this project adopted (bottom-up) is directly related to the subjective indicators and the outcomes of this pilot, such as i.e. motivation, development, human potential, empowerment and strengthening of social relationships, social networking and engagement.

Finally, the SWOT analysis that was conducted during the final focus group discussion revealed the following:

Strengths <i>Entrepreneurship</i> <i>Motivation</i> <i>Team spirit</i> <i>Shared vision</i>	Opportunities <i>Professional</i> <i>Social</i> <i>Collaboration</i>
Weaknesses <i>Publicity</i> <i>Networking</i>	Threats <i>Voluntarism</i> <i>Inertness</i> <i>Lack of meritocracy</i>

In relation to the above, participants revealed the entrepreneurial aspect as a strength of the pilot project, and the fact that they became motivated, they developed a team spirit, learned to collaborate and managed to identify a shared vision that unified them and gave them a sustainable option. Opportunities identified are focused on professional and social levels and on collaboration perspectives in the future. Weaknesses and aspects for improvement involve the publicity aspect of the pilot, which could have been broader involving additional participants and stronger networking by identifying additional stakeholders and liaising with additional organisations. Identified threats involve voluntarism, as participants believe that their activity could be ‘victimised’ by replacing at no cost essential service provision that should primarily be the municipality’s responsibility and concern. They also identified a lack of meritocracy and political interests that could potentially minimise and decrease their effort. Finally, participants suggested that inertness could be a possible threat, immobilising them and make them inactive and stagnant.

6. Final reflections

6.1 The role of the pilot/project/practice

This pilot project is mainly a bottom up approach and as such the impact is evident primarily in participants themselves. This project succeeded in motivating participants in collaborating and creating something meaningful and potentially sustainable. This project did not succeed in changing any established mechanisms, because this was not the purpose of this pilot, however, it succeeded in empowering a number of people in order to collaborate, make their presence stronger at a local level and face any inequalities as a group and not in isolation. In addition, it motivated young people in thinking of alternative ways when dealing with unemployment, such as entrepreneurship and to explore other options that they have not considered so far, or did not attempt to initiate. In this way, this project offered skills and knowledge to resist to patterns of inequality, such as unemployment. At this point it needs to be noted that this design and the specific pilot activities will not be necessarily successful in a different context and with different participants, as the activities were based on participants’ profile and interests.

6.2 Innovation

The key innovative elements in this practice involve the combination of art, entrepreneurship and liaison with local government, in addition to the fact that this practice primarily targeted young people. The innovative elements can be listed as follows:

- Practice for young people – no similar activity has ever been implemented in the area
- Targeting young artists – innovative target group
- Liaison with the local government – innovative approach
- Combination of art and entrepreneurship

The area of intervention is employment, adopting a social investment approach and providing young people with the necessary knowledge and skills to find entrepreneurship solutions in order to survive in the labour market. Therefore, this practice can be considered as an informal network and/or a solution in networks of the actors (mixed solution) based on the fact that this practice is transferred from Birmingham, where it is successful. The key dimensions that this practice addresses are trust and engagement.

Trust is a core element, as indicated also in previous research stages, lacking in the relationship between young citizens and policy makers. This practice aimed, among others, to have participants

liaise with the local government through consultation sessions, where the possibility for direct access and communication was provided.

In addition, this practice also aimed to engage young people and participants in creative and collaborative activities by providing them with the opportunity to learn about entrepreneurial options for surviving in the labour market. In this way, networking and collaborative options were explored among participants in order to find ways to sustain and evolve their activities. The above dimensions addressed above are compatible with the issues and needs identified from previous research conducted in the area.

In line with WP3 dimensions it could be argued that this pilot project can be considered as a “social practice of communing” where the most important elements were empowerment, collaboration of participants and a meaningful shared vision that can help them become ‘pioneers’ in their area.

6.3 Success factors

The critical success factors in the implementation of this pilot project involve: a) the commitment of staff members and the fact that they all share the same philosophy which motivates them to work efficiently, empower and support beneficiaries and provide the best possible outcome, and b) the profile of the target group, their genuine interest and willingness helped to take this pilot project a step further by discussing initiatives for promoting a sustainability plan. Another success factor was also the initial design and the successful adjustment of the practice in order to meet the needs of the local people.

Another factor which was essential in the implementation of the pilot project in the area was the provision of space by local authorities and their willingness to accept the implementation of this practice and host it in their premises. This played an important role particularly in the beginning of the pilot when people were reluctant regarding the nature of this project and their participation.

The above success factors played a determining role in both the implementation and the success of the pilot project. Staff members and the profile of participants provided the basis for the development of the pilot and the enrichment of the design and the activity plan. As a result, the activity plan was formed and finalized based on participants’ needs which were expressed throughout the pilot project. In addition, the initial positive response of the municipality and the provision of space allowed the pilot project to adopt a more integrated approach, placing the local government in the position of a stakeholder and ‘participant’ in this bottom up approach. This means that this initiative succeeded to ‘guarantee’ the participation of the local government in specific activities of the pilot project, such as the consultation sessions and the entrepreneurship workshops.

6.4 Policy recommendations, transferability

As mentioned above, one of the strong elements in this pilot project is flexibility and the fact that the project could be adjusted according to the target group and the needs of participants. During this process the local context of implementation should be taken into particular consideration. As already stated, the local context will determine whether a particular initiative will be embraced and accepted or ignored and rejected. As a result, for the successful implementation of a pilot, the initial idea should be carefully adjusted according to the local needs and the target group. The profile of participants will play an important role, ‘guiding’ the process and defining the necessary movements and activities. Furthermore, the local context is in direct relation to the national context which shapes the conditions and the framework of implementation. In the case of “The Loft”, it can be argued that this practice could be relevant to other places/areas in Greece and not only to Elefsina. However, particular attention should be paid to the area of implementation, where available research findings can highlight the local needs and available services for young people. Due to the fact that the national context does not provide such opportunities and outlets for young people, this practice could be an added value to other municipalities in Greece by expanding the target group by involving a wide range of young

people and not only young artists. For such initiatives to take place two core elements are needed: a) young people's willingness and motivation and b) political will and local government interest and determination to change the existing landscape.

Finally, this pilot project provides a good practice example that could inspire policy makers to start thinking 'out of the box', encouraging bottom up efforts towards the initiation of effective youth policies and social cohesion at local levels where results and outcomes are more visible and promising.