

Addressing Un/Under-employment at the Local Level: Participatory Action Research in Greece of Crisis

Eugenia Vathakou¹, Maria Tsampra², Pantelis Sklias¹

¹University of Peloponnese, Greece

²University of Patras, Greece

ABSTRACT

The underutilization of human capital, reflected on shrinking job opportunities and employment deterioration, is the major crisis outcome and cause of socio-economic exclusion in Greece. Our research (EEA-GR07/3694 project), addressing un/under-employment at the local level during the country's downturn, identified wide discrepancies between labour supply and demand. Data analysis revealed that the type of employment required by locally prevailing business does not contribute to local employability, nor sustains labour market resilience and employment recovery. On this ground, the capability of local entrepreneurship to capitalize the existing qualified personnel was questioned; and Participatory Action Research (PAR) was carried out in order to set new accounts of entrepreneurship for inclusive growth and social innovation. The paper presents the collaborative process and tentative results of PAR undertaken at the target-localities of Sparta and Tripoli in Greece. The process of action planning and implementation engaged local key-stakeholders and empowered local actors (municipality, vocational institutions, business chambers, trade unions, cooperatives) to address the potential of the un/underemployed and particularly, the most vulnerable of the labour market (young and women). The results (i.e. Spartathlon in Sparta) make a contribution to the discussion for social innovation, cohesion and sustainable economic recovery.

KEYWORDS local entrepreneurship; skills mismatch; labour surplus; participatory action

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