

## Local Action Plan Summary of My Generation at Work URBACT Thematic project

**Name of the city:** Thessaloniki, Greece

**Title of LAP:** You- Th - Ark

### Policy challenge the LAP is addressing

Thessaloniki is Greece's second major economic, industrial, commercial, and political center, and a major transportation hub (including sea transportation) for Southeast Europe. Thessaloniki hosts 4 universities and more than 120.000 students. Aristotle University of Thessaloniki is the largest in Greece and the Balkans. Thessaloniki used to be the main touristic destination for the domestic tourist industry, while was unimportant for the international. Since the crisis, the situation has rapidly changed. The last years, the municipality, along with the relevant bodies, is making efforts to attract more international tourists; the first results are promising (almost 20% more tourists are visiting Thessaloniki the last two years).

However, Thessaloniki is also the "champion" in unemployment rates. It is estimated that almost two out of three persons under the age of 30 is unemployed. The rate is impressive, if you also take into consideration that almost half of the total population in the city is under 35 years old.

Thessaloniki, being the European Youth Capital for 2014 (TEYC), had a good opportunity to explore the strengths and challenges of the city and investigate options for new networks and actions focusing in youth employment. The project "My Generation at Work"/URBACTII has provided very strong tools since such experience was missing from the city.

### Focus and goals of LAP

The scope of our LAP is to mitigate youth unemployment in Thessaloniki by implementing active, participatory, and cooperative methods in a medium and long-term perspective. In the short term, it is aiming to engage local stakeholders to take actions in a creative and networking spirit in order to address the issue of youth unemployment.

The consultation period has proven that the priorities which are crucial in order to achieve the above goals are:

1. *Continuous connection of the labour market with youth.* The situation so far is that several bodies are dealing with several issues, but there are no active and reliable channels between the academic world and the labour market (focusing in entrepreneurship).
2. *Better connection of the labour market to education.* They are no mechanisms, which can support the individual choices of a young person so to find an entrance and a role in the labour market.
3. *Enhancement of the creativity economy of the city.* TEYC2014 has proven that there is a very strong local creativity community which is hidden and without internal and external cooperation.

## **Actors and partners of LAP**

URBACTII has taught the Municipality that an important LAP cannot be implemented with the cooperation of a Local Support Group (LSG). The LSG is a group of people representing specific local stakeholders who are active in a certain field (young employment). Its members are volunteers and their decisions define the direction of the actions of Municipality in implementing the LAP.

The core members of our LSG are:

- ✓ Municipality of Thessaloniki
- ✓ Thessaloniki- European Youth Capital 2014 (Municipal community enterprise)
- ✓ Alexander Technological Educational Institute of Thessaloniki, Innovation's & Entrepreneur's Unit (TEITH)
- ✓ Center for the Support of Employment and Entrepreneurship of Women (Ergani)
- ✓ Creativity Platform
- ✓ Association of Young Farmers of Thessaloniki
- ✓ UNESCO Youth Club of Thessaloniki

The Municipality along with the TEYC are the ones with the authority to implement local policy; TEITH is providing the connections to the academic world, while the three NGOs are giving the links with the youth, creativity economy, and the general business world.

The rest of the members of our LSG who are having the relevant roles explained above are:

- ✓ Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, Employment and Career Structure (AUP)
- ✓ Educational Group Ksini
- ✓ Greek International Business Association (SEVE)
- ✓ Thessaloniki Chamber of Commerce and Industry (TCCI)
- ✓ Association of Young Entrepreneurs of Thessaloniki
- ✓ Individual young entrepreneurs, eg. Nikos Goudaras and Lakis Anotidis

## **Nature, Actions and timetable of LAP**

This LAP is bringing the city to a new period since there is not such a tool in the Municipality so far. After the local consultation of the LAP, the LAP become part of the city' strategy. Therefore, it is a joint agreement: The Municipality has included the LAP in its 5 years strategy, while the rest of the LSG has included its priorities in their priorities.

The key actions of the LAP are:

1. *Establishing an Entrepreneurship Consultative Unit of Thessaloniki.* The Municipality has started since the beginning of 2015 the operation of an entrepreneurship office and the goal is to acquire an upgraded role in the local labor market. The enhancement of the social economy is one of the priorities of the Unit.
2. *Establishment of a Center of Creativity Economy of Thessaloniki.* This is a strong need of the city and it is expected to be operational the next years.
3. *Twinning of all the consultation units of the academic institutions of Thessaloniki.* Already some successful joint pilot actions have taken place and it is expected to be more enhanced the next years.

4. *Enhancement, communication, and promotion of local relevant initiatives.* While the list is not exclusive, the pilot activities which took place during 2014 have been decided to continue the following years (Youth Entrepreneurship Fair, Business Idea Contest “to bizz or not to bizz”, CRUNCH, small thematic workshops).
5. *Establishment of an Observatory for Vocational Guidance.* During 2014, business plan has been prepared. The decision is to run it as soon as possible.

## **Funding**

In Greece, as in most Member States, it is very difficult to secure public funding this period. The reason is that EU has just acquired a new budget and everything is being structured on this. Furthermore, Greece has just had a new government and there are negotiations on how the national funds should be distributed (apart of the direct management costs of the public sector that is secured).

The Municipality is investigating the available own sources so to fund the LAP for the upcoming period, since it is included in its strategy. However, the most probable scenario is to start implementing gradually the LAP following the national funding priorities for the local administration. The several members of the LSG have agreed to support the Municipality in securing funding during the next period by structural funds or donors.

## **Risk analysis**

The risks in our LAP are strongly connected with the available funding. There is a great willingness from the LSG to invest sources (personnel, infrastructure, networks), but it cannot continue without some kind of funding, even basic.

In addition, a great problem that has emerged during the development of the LAP was the difficult and complex administration of Greece for the local government. This issue can be addressed, but it is causing delays and energy loss.

It should be mentioned that there are no local elections foreseen before 2019.

## **Websites/Further reading**

For more information of our LAP, you can visit:

- ✓ The general website for the “My Generation at Work”/ URBACTII (English)  
<http://urbact.eu/en/projects/active-inclusion/my-generation-at-work/homepage/>
- ✓ The municipal webpage (English-Greek)  
<http://www.thessaloniki.gr/portal/page/portal/DioikitikesYpiresies/GenDnsiDioikOikonYpiresion/AytotTmimaEthelNeolaias/MG@Work>
- ✓ The fourth meeting of “My Generation at Work”/ URBACTII in Thessaloniki (English-Greek) <http://www.thessaloniki2014.eu/en/276-my-generation-at-work-urbact-.html>
- ✓ Observatory For Vocational Guidance (English-Greek)

<http://www.thessaloniki2014.eu/en/443-observatory-for-vocational-guidance-.html>

- ✓ Young Entrepreneurship And Innovation Festival and Business Idea Contest (Greek) <http://goo.gl/pOfvOE>
- ✓ Creativity Mornings- CRUNCH (English-Greek) <http://goo.gl/7n80tZ>
- ✓ Skills and Employability: Labour Market Opportunities for Youth (English-Greek) <http://www.thessaloniki2014.eu/en/91-skills-and-employability-labour-market-opportunities-for-youth.html>
- ✓ From Classic To Digital Advertisement (Greek) <http://www.thessaloniki2014.eu/gr/59-from-classic-to-digital-advertisement.html>

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