

The Right to Work Now

Lessons from Kinofelis: the Greek public employment programme

As part of the economic crisis, Greece has confronted very high levels of unemployment. As part of its response to the crisis, in 2011 the government of Greece, under the Ministry of Employment, Social Security and Social Solidarity (MOL) initiated a direct job creation programme called Kinofelis, which in 2017 operated in all municipalities in Greece, reaching 45,225 participants.

The International Labour Organisation was contracted, through the European Commission, to provide support to Kinofelis during 2016-2017.

The lessons reflected here draw from this engagement.



What is Kinofelis?

Kinofelis has the following main aims:

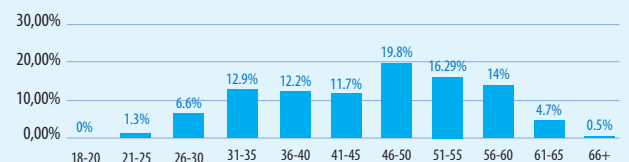
- To create employment in a context in which market-based options are limited.
- To activate the unemployed, reconnecting them with the labour market.
- To provide meaningful, relevant work experience.
- To prevent and/or to mitigate the effects of long-term unemployment and the associated declines in productivity, to strengthen the resilience of the labour market and the scope for rapid re-absorption when labour demand recovers.
- To tackle social exclusion of the long term unemployed (LTU).
- To contribute to local development through the delivery of public goods and services.
- To provide access to transversal skills (such as in IT and the social economy).

The programme offers eight months of employment to participants, with the wage costs covered by the MOL. Based on MOL targets, municipalities then identify projects that contribute to the public good. Through the employment services agency, OAED, a call is then made for applicants with the skills required for implementation. A points system is used to select the most vulnerable from amongst the many who apply. This includes targeting older workers, who have the least alternatives..

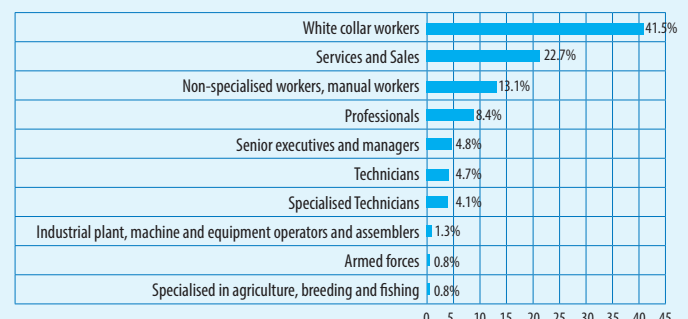
The rollout started in the 17 worst-affected municipalities, then in the next 34 before rolling out to the remaining 272. The data provided relates to specific stages of the rollout.

Demographics of Kinofelis participants

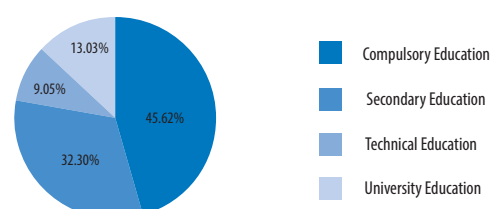
Age distribution in Phase 1 of 17 municipalities



Prior work experience of more than 6 months

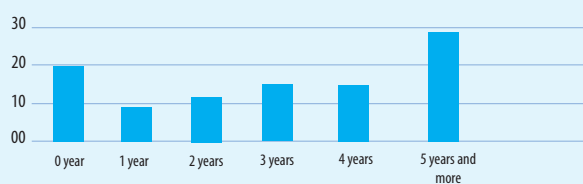


Education levels in Phase 1 of 17 municipalities



Kinofelis: tackling long term unemployment

Years of Unemployment of Participants

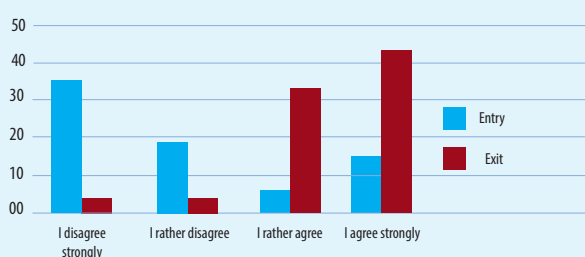


Greece confronts deeply entrenched long-term unemployment (LTU). This has a range of negative impacts on those directly affected, on the wider labour market and on society at large.

While the incomes earned on the programme contribute to social protection, participants emphasise that the value of participation in work is about more than just the income.

“When the crisis began, we lost the earth under our feet. ...And all of us who had been accustomed to working from morning till evening, we became idle, staying home doing nothing. **We cannot live without doing anything.** (Fotis, 52, unemployed husband with one child; from the construction sector) ”

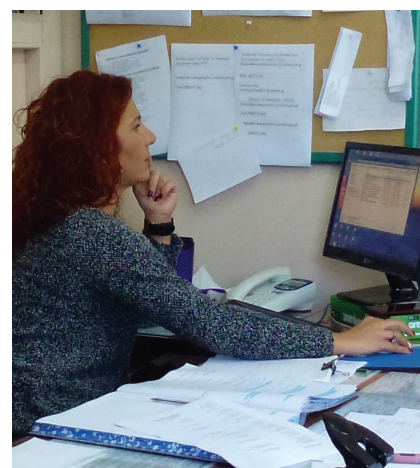
I contribute to the social life of my community



“We want to be active, we want a job. It’s not just about the money. We are not lazy people; we think we are alive, **we want a programme for our future**, not just sitting around. In terms of psychology, if you don’t have a job, where are you in life? And we are not lazy like foreigners say we are. (Participant, Aegialio Municipality, Site Visit) ”

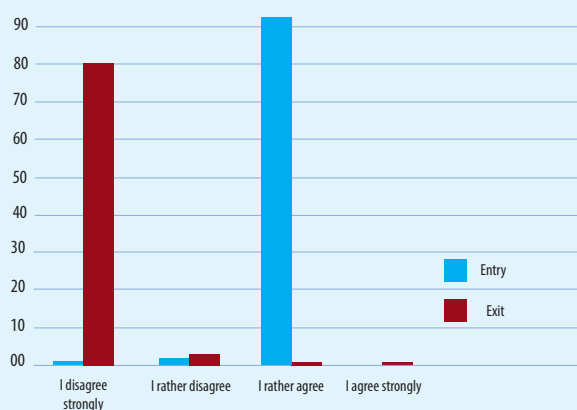
Many of the unemployed have been actively seeking work – to no avail in a context of low labour demand. This deeply affects their sense of self-worth, purpose and agency. In addition, the longer unemployment lasts, the more people lose the habits and skills of work, making it ever harder to re-enter the labour market. The aggregate effects of this erode productive potential in the wider economy which slows the pace of recovery. Kinofelis can pre-empt these effects – or mitigate them where they have already set in: making a vital contribution to resilience in the Greek labour market.

“I’m 47 years old and I was working in a department store. When it closed I was looking for a job. For two years I was very optimistic. I submitted CVs and waited...then I became disappointed... **It is very important to work**, to be paid, to survive with dignity; to feel that you are useful. (Matina 47, head of a single parent family with a child with disabilities; from Focus Group discussions, ILO/Kinofelis Focus Groups 2017) ”

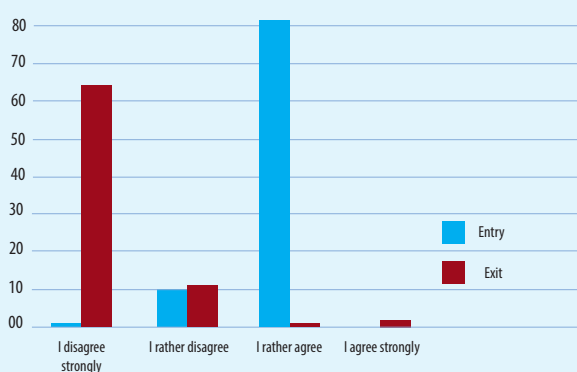


Unemployment also has a range of social impacts, manifest for example in increased depression and anxiety, conflict in households, substance abuse and other anti-social behaviour. These all have high social costs. Kinofelis mitigates these effects, as responses to entry and exit questionnaires for participants in Phase One of the 17 municipalities illustrate.

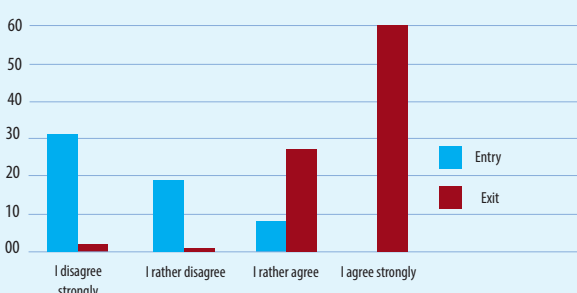
I use alcohol or drugs as a coping mechanism



As a result of my situation I have had a propensity to use violence



My social relations are supportive and rewarding



Data from ILO/Kinofelis entry and exit questionnaires, Phase One of the 17 municipalities.



Municipal officials at a workshop in Thessaloniki discuss the programme with the Ministry. Over the last year, all 325 municipalities were invited to ILO/MOL peer learning workshops, held at a regional level, at which municipalities exchanged experiences and ideas to further strengthen the programme and were able to explore solutions to challenges with the Ministry.



Project selection can strengthen impacts

The types of projects undertaken impact on the quality of the work experience, the skills learned and the employability effects on participants – and on the contribution Kinofelis makes to the wider community. These issues are also linked: the more communities value the projects undertaken, the more participation can contribute to future employability.

In selecting projects, executing authorities have to weigh several factors. These include the profile of the unemployed as well as the profile of labour demand in the wider economy, to identify forms of work experience that will most assist participants. Executing authorities also need to consider unmet needs in the community – as well as their ability to cover the non-wage costs of projects from their own budgets.

Projects can also be designed to support growth in the local economy. For example, the tourism sector can benefit from public goods and services such as the construction of cycling paths, improved signage, rehabilitation of heritage sites and the creation of public interest websites.

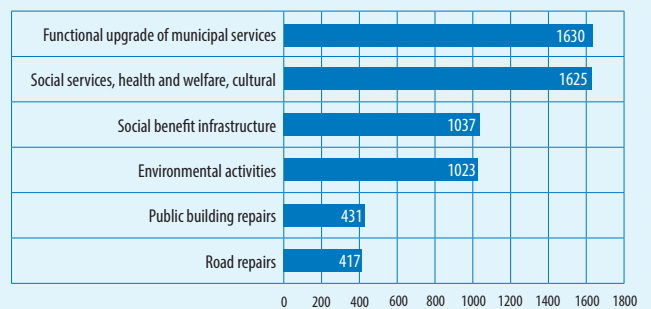
Projects can also address some of the wider social impacts of long term unemployment; for example, by supporting social kitchens, providing psychological services, countering substance abuse and many more.

Innovation in project selection

In Greece, unemployment affects all skills levels, creating a unique opportunity to match unskilled and skilled participants within projects and to use a wide variety of skills in the delivery of public goods and services. For participants, the programme adds the most value to their work experience when it fully utilises – and builds on – their existing skills and experience.

- In **Patras**, social counsellors and psychologists undertook social research in support of the Social Solidarity Income (SSI) programme.

Breakdown of project sectors for all 325 municipalities in 2017



Data from reports.kinofelis.gr

- In **North Tzoumerka**, aqueducts were cleaned, improving the quality of water.
- In **Kerkyra**, green spaces were rehabilitated in the old town.
- Many municipalities initiated care services for the elderly, children and people with disabilities.
- In **Arta**, municipal building archives were digitised.
- In **Souli**, local guide brochures were translated to promote tourism.
- In **Argous/Mikininon**, psychologists counseled parents and children.
- In **Corinthos**, archaeologists, historians and computer scientists created an interactive local history programme, which attracted many visitors.
- In **Nafplio**, Kinofelis supported the organisation of a marathon and a triathlon.
- Also in **Nafplio**, environmental scientists were hired to give lectures on environmental issues in schools.
- Many municipalities engaged in urban greening and parks rehabilitation.
- In **Lamia**, schools were painted, upgrading classrooms for the new school year.
- In **Lamia**, a project integrated the Roma into the education system, coupled with health visits and an information campaign.
- In **Levadeon**, a project addressed domestic violence.

An important part of the ILO training was to foster peer learning amongst municipalities to share such innovations.

The crisis in Greece has meant many households are affected by long term unemployment (LTU); Kinofelis can prevent or mitigate the negative impacts of LTU, building labour market resilience.

Kinofelis as an Active Labour Market Policy

Public employment programmes (PEPs) such as Kinofelis are flexible, counter-cyclical development instruments that play different roles during the phases of an unemployment crisis, as part of wider Active Labour Market Policies (ALMPs).

At the height of a crisis, when market demand for labour is lowest, PEPs are often the only feasible form of activation, because most other ALMPs require at least some level of labour demand to achieve any impact.

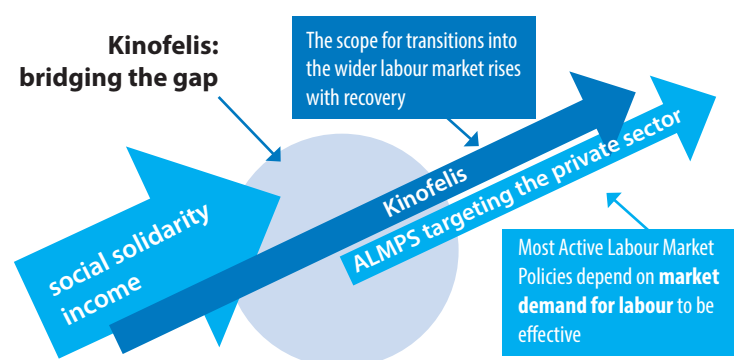
At the height of the crisis, however, the ability of participants to transition into the wider labour market when they exit from the PEP will also be at its lowest. This is not, however, the only basis on which the labour market impacts of the programme should be judged.

A key part of the role of PEPs is in providing a 'holding strategy' that mitigates the negative and costly impacts of long term unemployment, at the same time as maintaining the 'work readiness' of the unemployed in anticipation of recovery. By limiting the loss of productivity characteristic of long term unemployment, this form of activation enables a more rapid recovery when economic conditions allow.

If programmes such as Kinofelis are taken to scale quickly at the start of a crisis, they can limit declines in work skills and productivity. If, however, long-term unemployment sets in before the start of a PEP, then they offer a transitional form of activation aimed at rebuilding work readiness. Both roles are likely to improve the success rates of complementary ALMP interventions such as training, internships or placements in the private sector. Hence, for many such ALMPs, a PEP may be a necessary condition for success.

In sum, as the recovery begins, the role of public employment can be expected to shift with the interface with other ALMPs becoming increasingly relevant, with renewed labour market demand creating opportunities for participants to exit into other forms of employment: either directly from Kinofelis or with the further assistance of complementary ALMPs.

From crisis to recovery



Kinofelis activates the poorest and hardest to reach: when conditions are toughest, getting participants 'work ready' and closer to the market: bridging the gap

The ILO Kinofelis Support Project

The International Labour Organisation (ILO) was contracted through the Structural Reform Support Service (SRSS) of the European Commission to provide support to the MOL in relation to Kinofelis during 2016-2017. The lessons and insights reflected here are drawn from this engagement. In this process, the ILO has supported the following outputs as part of strengthening the programme:

- A programme implementation manual (PIM)
- Peer-review workshops with associated training materials conducted for municipalities across all regions of Greece, to strengthen project selection, design and implementation.
- A survey of participants on entry and exit, coupled with focus groups, providing valuable insights.
- The design and development of an on-line platform for the MOL, on which executing authorities will register projects and report outcomes, providing comprehensive monitoring and evaluation data on the project.
- The development of the web platform for Kinofelis and initial on-line material.
- The development of profiles of the unemployed for municipalities
- A set of recommendations, drawing heavily from the insights of practitioners in the MOL and in municipalities, to strengthen the programme.
- The development of on-line learning materials.

The project was co-ordinated in the ILO Geneva by Maikel Lieuw-Kie Song, with co-ordination in Greece by Nikos Avgeris, supported by team members Nelli Kambouri and Aggeliki Yfanti. International technical support was provided by Steve Miller and Kate Philip.



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