

Enabling Social Innovation in Greece

Country Snapshot

Social innovation: "the processes and outcomes of developing novel approaches to address societal challenges facing people and planet." ¹

This snapshot represents a descriptive, non-exhaustive overview of key highlights from Greece's social innovation ecosystem.

✓ Direct focus on social innovation 🔗 Connected but indirect focus on social innovation ✗ No focus on social innovation

INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK

Official Definition of Social Innovation 🔗



Greece does not have a formal legal definition of social innovation. In policy documents and programs, the term is generally embedded within broader strategies on the social and solidarity economy ¹.

Government Body for Social Innovation ✓



There is no single national body with an exclusive focus on social innovation. The Directorate of Social Economy (under the Ministry of Social Cohesion & Family) and the ESF Special Coordination Unit jointly oversee programs that support social innovation within the wider social economy framework ².

Government Strategy for Social Innovation ✓



In 2023, the Greek government introduced a National Action Plan for the Social Economy and Social Innovation. This strategy promotes institutional reform, dedicated financing tools, ecosystem building, and greater public awareness of social innovation practices ³.

Policies, Laws & Regulations ✓ 🔗



- Law 4019/2011 established the legal form of Social Cooperative Enterprises (Koin.S.Ep), focused on work integration and social benefit ⁴.
- Law 4430/2016 expanded the scope of eligible entities and introduced mechanisms for regional coordination and support ⁵.
- Additional provisions related to tax incentives and access to public procurement indirectly support social innovation ⁶.

Official Statistics 🔗



There are no national statistics dedicated specifically to social innovation. However, Greece maintains a Social Economy Registry, which as of 2024 listed more than 2,100 active social economy organizations ⁷.

Government Programs ✓ 🔗



Social innovation is supported indirectly through several EU-co-funded programs:

- The Social Economy Support Centers network (2018–2021) provided mentoring, training, and advisory services to social enterprises ³.
- The SEED project (2021–2023) piloted a National Competence Center for Social Innovation, coordinated by the Ministry of Labour ⁸.
- Recent ESF+ calls have included pilot initiatives and training for youth and vulnerable groups that integrate social innovation elements ³.

ECOSYSTEM

Stakeholders

Key non-governmental actors in Greece's social innovation ecosystem include:

- Impact Hub Athens, which provides incubation, co-working, and capacity-building for mission-driven enterprises ².
- The Karditsa Development Agency (ANKA), known for pioneering community-based social finance and cooperative development ¹⁰.
- Ashoka Greece, which identifies and supports local changemakers through global fellowships and networking ¹¹.
- Regional Social Economy Unions, authorized by law to coordinate local initiatives and advocate for the SSE sector ⁵.

Support Initiatives

Non-government initiatives supporting social innovation include:

- Incubation and training programs by Impact Hub Athens and HIGGS.
- Bodossaki Foundation's Social Dynamo platform, offering mentorship and resources for civic organizations.
- Short university programs and NGO-led bootcamps focused on social entrepreneurship and impact measurement ^{2,12}.

Collaboration

Partnerships are increasing but remain project-based. Collaborations include:

- Municipal programs with NGOs for innovative service delivery in health and care sectors.
- Regional cooperation within the SEED initiative.
- Events such as the KALO Expo and Impact Hub Athens' **social economy market initiative** aim to raise awareness and build networks, although large-scale national awards for social innovation are lacking ^{3,9}.

FINANCE

Financing Schemes

Greece's social innovation financing largely depends on EU funding:

- Under ESF+ (2021–2027), funds support training, business advisory services, and pilot innovation projects ³.
- Foundations such as SNF and Onassis provide grants and run competitions for innovative social initiatives ¹³.
- Greece does not yet have a structured social impact investment market or dedicated SIBs

Inclusiveness

Funding mechanisms often prioritize women, migrants, youth, and rural communities. However, access is still uneven, particularly for early-stage innovators and those outside Athens ^{3,13}.

SOCIETY

Public Awareness of Social Innovation

Awareness of social innovation remains low among the general public, though terms like “social enterprise” and “solidarity economy” are better known. Initiatives such as the KALO Expo and university outreach have helped increase visibility ³

Research

Academic engagement is growing. Institutions such as the University of Patras and Piraeus offer relevant programs. Greece also participates in EU research networks and pilot projects ¹².

Education



Few formal degrees exist, but non-formal learning and online courses (e.g., NKUA and AUEB) cover aspects of social innovation. NGO-run workshops and incubators provide practical training, especially in urban centers ^{9,12}.

Entrepreneurship



Business Environment

It was cited by EIU as having one of the world's fastest improving business environments ^{14,15}



Innovation Capacity

Greece's startup culture is strengthening.

Global Innovation Index 2024



Social entrepreneurship prevalence

is emerging, though still a small part of the broader enterprise landscape ³

Social & Environmental Consciousness

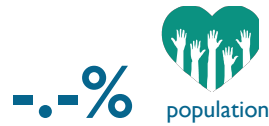


Solidarity



Political participation

Political participation and solidarity culture are strong foundations for community-based innovation ^{16,17}.



Volunteering

However, volunteerism remains below the EU average, and public trust in institutions is relatively low.



Sustainability

Greece scores high on climate policy metrics and public support for environmental sustainability.