



## **SOCIAL ECONOMY IN GREECE, 2010-2020**

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### **ABSTRACT**

The crisis that impinged on Greek economy and society at the beginning of 2010s caused serious problems to wide population strata. At the same time, the implications of the recession fueled high expectations from social economy (SE). The article attempts to approach the reasons why the high expectations from SE were only partially verified. The analysis emphasizes two factors. The first concerns the Greek peculiarity, in regard to the limited social state, and therefore the smaller gap, in comparison to the developed countries of Western Europe, that resulted from its retreat with SE getting above it. The second relates to the deep and prolonged recession, which undermined the economic conditions for addressing unmet needs by undertaking collective economic activities.

**Keywords:** Social economy, Social solidarity economy, Greece

### **Introduction**

The present article attempts to assess some variants of the multidimensional space of social economy in Greece in the period 2010-2020; during that decade the economic recession caused unmet economic and social needs to broad segments of the population. The analysis aspires to explore the reasons why the high expectations associated with social economy were only partially fulfilled.

The rather limited development of SE in Greece is primarily attributed to two factors that differentiate it from the countries of Western Europe, both highly and less developed. The Greek case is differentiated from the highly developed

countries due to the specificities of the Greek economy and society, which is structured and functions under the condition of a less developed welfare state. On the other hand, the Greek case is also differentiated from the less developed countries due to the deeper and prolonged recession that impinged on the Greek economy,<sup>1</sup> which undermined the economic conditions for the collective economic activities to address unmet needs.

Designating the above two specificities of the economy as primary issues in the Greek case, entails that the policy choices, the institutional framework, the supporting actions, the funding, the know-how etc., although they could play potentially a crucial role for SE's development, they are considered as rather partial matters. Therefore, their analysis follows the primary issues analysis, as it may lead to more secure conclusions as long as it is embedded in the wider economic environment.

The critical assessment of SE's performance in the period 2010-2020 allows the assessment that the experience gained makes the subjective efforts more mature than before, in order to match more effectively with the economic conditions.

### **The turning point of the 1970s-80s in the long course of SE's history**

SE has a long history that could be divided into three historical phases. The main criteria for such division are SE's relation with the economic-social problems of each period in combination with the evolution of the welfare state. SE emerged in the early 19th century with the development of the capitalist mode of production, promoted by citizen's initiatives aiming to address the emerging economic and social issues; at the same time, it functioned as a space for claiming rights, and contributed to the rise of the welfare state until World War II. In its second phase, SE evolved during the post-war period up to the 1970s; this phase was characterized by its relative decline due to the economic growth and the welfare state upgrade. Since the 1980s, a new-third phase of SE followed, which was associated with two interrelated effects of the crisis of the Fordist growth model:

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<sup>1</sup> During 2009-2021, Greece's GDP remained constantly below the 2008 level; especially after 2012 it remained lower from 22.8% to 27.9%. In Spain and Portugal, the recession was sub-multiple in magnitude and almost half as long. In particular, in Spain it remained below the 2008 level only for a period of five years with a decline between 2.8% and 8%. In Portugal the corresponding figures were four years and a decrease from 1.7% to 6% (process of Eurostat data by the author).

the economic consequences of deindustrialization, including the shrinkage of the welfare state (Amin et. al., 2002), the search for new-compensatory policies from the part of the state, and the citizen's responses to both of them.

In the first two phases, the formation of SE was initiated by the citizens with the purpose of meeting their own needs. However, in the third phase, such initiatives have been undertaken by the State, as well. The State's involvement to address social needs through the 'new' SE has been due to its disengagement from key areas of social policy. This process reflects broader changes involving the redefinition of the relations between state, economy and society (Hudson, 2009; Amin, 2002). At the same time, the third phase also has been characterized by the emergence of a new version of SE, that of Social Solidarity Economy (SSE).

The fact that initiatives have been undertaken also by the state constitutes a pivotal point in the history of SE. Such pivotal point is associated with a number of radical changes that are interrelated: the content of the notions' changes, especially the notion of the social factor, which shifts from property relations to the satisfaction of social needs; the purpose is broadened from collective to social benefit, and includes the object of the activity and even the way it is carried out; the sources of revenue are diversified and, apart from selling goods and services, they are now enriched with public and other resources. The collective ownership is extended to other actors (e.g. other stakeholders, contributors of capital).

In the same period, the parallel emergence of SSE, as a new, relatively distinct and structured subsector of SE, is also characterized by radical changes in relation to the traditional SE. These changes concern the same areas as those mentioned in the case of the state initiatives, but with a different content and orientation. Such changes refer to the broadening of the purpose from the collective benefit towards being in solidarity with third parties and, at the same time, the inclusion of the object of the activity and the way in which it is carried out, as well as including at the concept of the social factor, not only the property relations, but also the social contribution.

The problems of restructuring the economy and the involvement of the state in meeting social needs in other terms (through the 'new' social economy) create multiple spaces of unmet needs and corresponding ways of meeting them. In this context, new market spaces are being created and/or becoming of interest to the SE, including services for unmet social needs, grants, European funds, public procurement and new labor markets in a variety of SE schemes.

In these emerging spaces and markets, various types of initiatives are being active, from the already existing pure-distinct initiatives (private enterprises, traditional SE actors) to the newly established hybrid formations, informal formations and citizens' initiatives. As a result, an uneven and volatile space emerges with a strong presence of hybrid formations (see Billis, 2010), under all kinds of combinations, and with fundamentally different entities.

With the rather simultaneous expansion of purpose, both on state's and SSE's part, but under a different orientation and content, and with the formation of hybrid entities under various compositions, a number of theoretical, political, institutional and practical issues emerged which, due to the fluidity of the phenomenon, they have not been sufficiently analyzed and comprehended.

The radical changes in the basic features of the traditional SE (notion of the social factor, purpose, sources of revenue, property relations, conditions of operation, use of results), the consequent variety of hybrid formations that were created and the emergence of the 'diverse economies' approach (Gibson-Graham, J. K. 1996, 2006, 2006b), in addition to the content of notions, also influenced the process of abstraction, in order to analyze and highlight its fundamentally different characteristics in relation to other forms of organization of economic activities. The epistemological-methodological option to abandon the process of abstraction leads the effort to delimit individual spaces to endless categorizations, under various criteria even of 'ungraded' importance and role. In any case, the question arises as to the nature of the hybrid character of each subset, i.e. which are the original source formations, which of their original characteristics are maintained in the newly formed hybrid formation, and in conclusion what (if any) are the dominant elements in each different-subset formation.

As far as policy issues are concerned, the heterogeneity of the field in terms of purpose, operating conditions, sources of funding, etc., highlighted the need to discuss the broader and differentiated economic and social role of SE, and at the same time the differentiation of criteria for the developmental planning and the evaluation of relevant policies. Furthermore, the emergence of hybrid schemes increases the demands at the institutional, fiscal, administrative, financial, and audit level, in order to operate on clear terms, in a transparent, inclusive and non-privileged manner. At the same time, the above institutional-administrative-regulatory framework creates an increased level of requirements, and entails corresponding operational costs for SE entities.

## **Broadening the range of the resources of SE**

Of the above critical and interrelated issues highlighted by the emergence of hybrid formations, the issue of the resources will be further analyzed, as it constitutes a critical element for both the viability of the various formations and a determinant of their physiognomy and orientation.

The resources available in the hybrid formations of the SE come from a wide range of sources and under various combinations. These include: traditional markets for goods and services, the market for services left uncovered by the decline of the welfare state, grants from national and European funds, public procurement, the banking system, other forms of financing, solidarity, and voluntary initiatives, charity initiatives, and donations.

The wide range of resources reflects varying degrees of certainty accessing them. Each type of market has its own characteristics. Traditional markets for goods and services, but also markets for services left uncovered by the shrinkage of the welfare state, constitute potential markets dependent on effective demand. Effective demand, i.e. demand that at the same time is backed by purchasing power, is limited during recessions, and is of critical importance for the lower income strata of the population. The access to national and European resources is governed by specific conditions determined by the overall official policy focus. Resources from a variety of informal sources, such as volunteering, solidarity, philanthropy and donations, are not universal, and are to a considerable extent occasional.

The diverse characteristics of markets and sources of funds entail different conditions of competition and access. This may be translated into different requirements for knowledge, skills, commitments, network relationships, etc. The ability to respond adequately to the criteria of competition in one form (e.g. the market for goods and services), and at the same time to (re)adapt to the criteria of competition in another form (e.g. the market for grants, European funds or public procurement) is particularly demanding, and constitutes an important factor of differentiation between SE schemes, which is also widened by their choices.

The wide range of resources, combined with the varying degree of certainty, competitive capacity and choices of SE formations, leads to asymmetric resource allocation. Asymmetric access to resources affects the conditions of sustainability of the different formations. National and European resources are allocated primarily to those schemes in line with the objectives and conditions of the

respective sources, which to a certain extent also define their orientation. Unilateral dependence on such sources, while ensuring sustainability to some extent, risks reducing their activity to the level of meeting the ‘eligibility criterion’ and turning them into consumers of national and European funds. On the contrary, resources of any kind to support SSE schemes that come from citizens’ initiatives are falling behind.

### **The case of SE in Greece**

On the basis of the above characteristics of the third phase of SE, an attempt is made to the assessment of SE in the Greece case. Following the turning point in the long history of SE, i.e. that it is now also promoted by the state and not exclusively by citizens’ initiatives, it is found that in Greece in the period 2010-2020 both of the above-mentioned versions had a relatively limited development. The causes are sought in three categories of correlated factors, which are typical for the Greek case, and they affect the initiative both on the side of the state and of citizens.

#### *Adapting to meet needs in a limited welfare state*

In the more developed and structured economies of Western Europe, the decline of the Fordist growth model stimulated a strong effort, both by the state and by the affected social strata, to address the emerging economic-social problems, and to replace the services of the shrinking welfare state through various versions of SE.

In the Greek case, there was no corresponding mobilization for the development of SE, at least for two reasons. The first one is related to the lower level of economic development, associated with the limited level of social services in quantitative and qualitative terms.<sup>2</sup> The second refers to the broad segment of private enterprises whose operation is based on the provision of services that are not covered by the weaker welfare state.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Indicatively, the social expenditure per capita in Greece in the period 2000-2009 was only 63% of that in France and 66% of that in Italy (OECD data processed by author).

<sup>3</sup> For example, elderly care, pre-school education, nurseries, and medical care. In particular, private spending on non-hospital medical care was in 2021 in Greece 39% of the total, compared to 25% of the EU average (Eurostat).

Therefore, starting in 2010 the shrinkage of the already limited welfare state in Greece did not create a gap of needs, in terms of size and qualitative characteristics, so that an equivalent initiative for SE might need to cover them, as it occurred mainly in the developed countries of Western Europe after the 1970s-1980s. At the same time, the majority of the population in Greece had already satisfied their needs through the extensive private sector, and traditional practices of various forms that were based on informal networks, social-relationships, but also by resorting to the services provided by undeclared and low-paid migrants-workers.

### ***Prioritizing direct rather than indirect commercialization***

One of the roles that the ‘new’ SE in Western Europe was called upon to play after the 1970s-1980s was the commercialization of social services in order to limit public expenditure. The Greek case is different in this respect for two reasons: the first one, as already mentioned, is associated with the rather limited welfare state and, thus, with less public expenditure to be curtailed.<sup>4</sup> The second reason refers to the fact that in Greece the political focus has been mainly on forms of ‘direct’ rather than ‘indirect’ commercialization, where SE would be the ‘vehicle’ for such a process. The choice of direct commercialization was also decisively influenced by the country’s debt obligations under the Economic Adjustment Programs after 2010.<sup>5</sup>

Direct commercialization does not require public resources; rather it requires a limited number of stakeholders in the process, a short implementation period, and less organizational-management capacity. In contrast, indirect commercialization, while leading to a reduction in public expenditure, requires some public resources for the financial support of SE schemes that undertake ‘social service’ and, in addition, it requires purchasing power from the part of the citizens. Moreover, the circle of stakeholders is wide, the implementation period is long, and an increased organizational and management capacity is required from the part of the state.

In the case of Greece, the above conditions for indirect commercialization were missing to a significant extent. The large public spending cuts after 2010 did not allow even a limited funding for the version of SE that would take on the relevant role, and any efforts were mainly based on EU funds. Furthermore, the drastic reduction in the living standards of the population and the consumption expenditure of households made the financial participation attributable to the

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<sup>4</sup> See footnote 2.

<sup>5</sup> See European Commission 2010, 2012, 2015.

citizens difficult to impossible. The management capacity of the state proved to be insufficient, while at the same time some attempts to commercialize social services, in conditions of drastic reduction of incomes, also encountered the reactions of the citizens.<sup>6</sup>

The combined result of the effects of the recession, namely the reduction of public spending on social services, the inability to finance SE schemes, that would substitute these services, the limited purchasing power of citizens, but additionally their reactions in many cases, resulted in the failure of the state's efforts for an indirect commercialization of social services through SE.

### *Scarcity of resources for citizens' initiatives*

The fact that recession in Greece was deeper and longer lasting compared to less developed countries of Western Europe<sup>7</sup> limited the available resources for citizen-led SSE initiatives. Among the preconditions for economic activity, recession primarily limits effective demand, the sufficiency of own funds and access to the financial system. Of these conditions, the absence of effective demand is the most crucial, as it affects the adequacy of financial resources, and its restoration requires an improvement in the economy, overall. The importance of own funds, grants and access to the financial system, although critical, is rather subordinated as their function is subsidiary and can be addressed, to some extent, by economic policy measures. The above conditions concern the economic activity in general, and mainly its initiation. The case of SSE in Greece falls into the second category, i.e. the start of the economic activity and, moreover, under recessionary conditions.

In the midst of this extremely unfavorable economic environment, there was an expectation from SSE to reverse this trend, i.e. to establish new businesses, to create jobs and, in addition, to offer social services. This expectation derived both from the ideological-political component that developed due to the opposition to the 'memorandum' policies, and from the significant contribution of many SSE schemes in terms of solidarity in the first years after 2010. However, the very continuation of social contribution, as a process of redistribution, presupposes primary sources of resources, i.e. activities in terms of economic viability, which in turn require conditions that were not available and/or accessible to a sufficient extent (effective demand, own funds, grants,

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<sup>6</sup> It is mostly referred to the attempt to commercialize pre-school education by the local authorities.

<sup>7</sup> See o.p. footnote 1.



access to lending, etc.). An indicative result of the scarcity of resources is that the vast majority of SSE entities are of very small economic size with low expertise services and low capital intensity.

The limitation of effective demand is the main factor that in the period 2010-2019 led to the closure of thousands of businesses and the rapid rise in unemployment.<sup>8</sup> As far as SSE is concerned, apart from the general importance of the decline in purchasing power, the purchasing power and consumer profile of the population to which it is mainly addressed and the composition of the goods-services it offers are of particular importance. In both cases the situation is unfavorable. It was the lower middle-income population that suffered the greatest reduction in income and reduced their consumption of basic goods to the greatest extent.<sup>9</sup>

Moreover, access to any effective demand is only ensured through competitive terms of price, quality, diversification, reliability, marketing, etc. In terms of fulfillment the conditions of competition, SSE actors have certain advantages stemming from their social traits, but they fall short in aspects of competition that are more dependent on economic factors.

Regarding the citizens' financial capacity to bear the cost of collective action in the framework of SSE actors, i.e. the sufficiency of their own funds, it should be taken into account that it was expected that the initiatives would be taken mainly by population strata that were marginalized: the dismissed, the unemployed, the long-term unemployed, often with outstanding loan obligations, with social solidarity initiatives and possibly burdened with obligations of financial support to relatives, and friends. In other words, these were the population strata on the verge of survival, unable to finance themselves and unable to obtain loans from the banking system, which was in any case in difficulty.<sup>10</sup> Another category for the supply of SSE is the new entrants to the professional life, who are subject to the general economic constraints, while at the same time lacking professional

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<sup>8</sup> Unemployment reached up to 27.5% (2013), whereas the EU maximum was 10.9% in the same year. The percentage of long-term unemployed rose from 44.6% in 2010 to 72.7% in 2017. Gross domestic product per capita in purchasing power units fell from 87% of the EU average in 2010 to 67% in 2019 (Hellenic Statistical Authority).

<sup>9</sup> Hellenic Statistical Authority, *Household Budget Survey* (various years).

<sup>10</sup> Non-performing loans rose from 9.5% (December 2009) to 49.1% (March 2017), the gross loans from December 2008 to December 2019 decreased by 41.8% (Bank of Greece).

experience. Indicative of the absence of prerequisites for undertaking any form of entrepreneurial activity was the massive emigration of the population strata with a high level of knowledge and expertise.

The relationship between SSE and the financial system is, with a few exceptions, particularly problematic. The problem lies both in the weaknesses of the banks, both systemic and cooperative, and in the characteristics and weaknesses of the SSE actors. The SSE sector is not particularly well known in the banking system and, by its own criteria, is small and insecure.<sup>11</sup>

In conditions of deep and prolonged recession, with existing SMEs being squeezed and put out of the market, citizen initiatives for SSE ventures, which are micro-SMEs, face additional difficulties. The economic conditions were lacking, which could not be offset by positive social services, especially in the early 2010s, by the reasonable arguments about the advantages of collective action and the invocation of good practices, and examples from other countries and in other circumstances. The EU-funded grant effort, which was expected to provide a boost to SSE, was not completed due to lag of its implementation, the amendment to the relevant European institutional framework,<sup>12</sup> and the government change.

### *The predominance of the social factor over financial sustainability*

The combination of unmet economic-social needs with the lack of effective demand, the tightness of finance, and the intense ideologization-politicization of the period, focused the efforts of the SSE actors, almost inevitably, on a ‘social’ orientation by undertaking solidarity initiatives, against the economic purpose, i.e. of sustainable economic activity.

The field of SSE had mainly a political-ideological orientation, as well as that of solidarity, where it offered significant services in terms of meeting acute social needs, both in terms of the survival of the participants and in terms of solidarity with third parties. At the same time it is perceived that SSE is an affair for

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<sup>11</sup> The funding problems are also identified in a report by the European Investment Bank.

<sup>12</sup> The modification of the European funding framework, the so-called “simplified cost”, would result in resources being directed mainly to large companies in the sector and the small ones, which make up the vast majority, would receive little support. The necessary adjustments initiated were not completed as there was a change of government in July 2019.

initiates and experts, and that participation requires political commitment and special theoretical training (Zaimakis and Nicolaidis, 2022). This social/solidarity-economic asymmetry acquired a reproductive dynamic and became an inhibiting factor for the balance in the ideology-politics-economy relationship. As a result, apart from some successes, it has not been able to be a credible alternative in economic terms, and emerge as an attractive economic paradigm. The dual socio-economic problem of the recession was addressed by SSE partially in the social field, while in the economic field it did not show a remarkable result.

While in times of economic crisis, the social contribution, the meeting of basic needs, and the ideological cover are sufficient to defend the idea of SSE, the continuation of the unilateral one-sided emphasis on the social after the crisis does not work in the same attractive way, the requirements from SSE are differentiated and shifted towards the necessity of economic sustainability. Besides, the upgrading of economic capacities contributes to the consolidation and maintenance of solidarity, as it is not based exclusively or mainly on ‘solidarity from scarcity’, which is exposed to uncertainty, but on ‘solidarity from surplus’, which derives from more solid bases of economic operation.

It is worth noting that at the same time the debate on the ‘new’ SE and SSE not only bypassed, but moreover undercut the debate on the development of the cooperative sector, which is the SE’s widespread subsector with the longer history, based on explicit operating principles and a clear economic logic. Indicatively, the above finding is reflected by the fact that the vast majority of the actors established under the Law for SSE (4430/2016) opted for the legal form of a Social Cooperative Enterprise, rather than that of a Worker Cooperative established by the same law. One interpretation for this tendency, apart from the problems of the cooperative sector in recent decades, is the undertaking of SE initiatives also by the state, while as far as SSE is concerned, it should be sought in the ideological-political search for alternative forms of collective action, often associated with political movements. It is rather odd that when traditional SE is not developed for the collective benefit, or more precisely for the individual benefit through collective action, it is expected that SSE with broader (social) aims will develop, and even more so under the conditions of a deep economic crisis.

The need for SSE’s economic viability and competitiveness becomes more obvious if it is linked to economic development and/or broader social objectives. The potential of SSE depends on demonstrating its advantages in economic terms as well. Financial sustainability will prove whether SSE is indeed capable

to transform ideology into economic practice, and stand competitively alongside the public and private sector, while serving social objectives. Unilateral one-sided ideologization and politicization may lead to a downgrading of the analysis of real economic conditions, and ultimately to an underestimation of their importance.

### ***Exaggerating SE's advantages and examples from other countries***

In an attempt to document the positive aspects of SE, there has been a strong tendency in emphasizing from a theoretical perspective on the advantages, the necessity, and the progress of SE in other countries. However, highlighting Greece's peculiarity in regard to other Western European countries shows why, in the case of SE, comparisons with other countries, the invocation of examples and international experience in general are certainly useful, but to the extent that they take into account specific conditions, and go beyond mechanistic references and the level of rhetoric.

The promotion of 'good practices' and 'successful examples' for dissemination purposes can be effective, if it is part of a more general plan that includes the creation of the conditions, and the general preparation of the sector will be called upon to adopt and implement them. When these conditions are not met, the phenomenon of unilateral promotion of individual successful examples appears, often at the level of rhetoric, without any analysis on whether and under what conditions these examples can be applied in Greece.

The excessive projection of examples from the international arena, without the inclusion of the corresponding conditions, creates and reproduces confusion in regard to the terms for the development of SE, underestimates the peculiarities of the Greek economy, and society as well, making it difficult to identify in a realistic manner the problems of SE development in Greece, while fostering excessive expectations. Unrealistic expectations obscure objective potential, while unfulfilled expectations encourage introversion and exaggerate subjective weaknesses.

### **Epilogue**

In the long history of SE, its third phase, which began in the 1970s-1980s, marks a turning point. The radical economic-social restructuring of this period transformed the relations between the state, society, and the economy. The state, while retreating from its commitments in terms of social policy, it became involved in indirectly supporting social needs through a new version of SE. The

withdrawal and the parallel re-engagement of the state in other terms create at the same time empty spaces, but nevertheless spaces of possibilities and opportunities. At the same time, citizens are also taking collective economic initiatives in formally organized and informal ways, with a strong focus on social solidarity. In both cases, hybrid formations are created with radically different characteristics from those of the classic SE.

The starting point of these initiatives, i.e. whether they were undertaken by the central state or by citizens' initiatives, is crucial because they lead to different variants of SE. This is mainly reflected by the changes concerning the broadening of the purpose, the widening of the composition of the participants, the diversification of the origin of the resources, the changes in the way of operation and the use of the results. In any case, it seems that these variants of SE in the future will coexist to form a version of a capitalist mode of production (Amin et al., 2002).

In its traditional version, SE is associated in a positive manner with the presence of economic-social problems, and the absence or low degree of presence of the welfare state. However, in the third phase of the history of the SE, when the already developed welfare state has been shrinking, and the state undertook SE initiatives, then other factors have been responsible for the development of each SE variant, the traditional, the new, and SSE. In other words, the traditional view that economic and social problems almost automatically trigger processes for the development of SE is abandoned. From now on, other conditions, particularly economic ones, must be present to a greater extent than in the past. This finding, concerning the new, increased economic conditions for SE development, is confirmed in the case of Greece, which is also characterized by two main peculiarities.

First of all, the Greek case of SE differs already in its starting point, as it is indicated by the limited presence of the welfare state, the extensive presence of the private sector in the provision of quasi-social services, and informal initiatives meeting needs. The crisis therefore creates a gap of a smaller scale, and of a different kind compared to Western Europe, and consequently weaker conditions for SE.

The second peculiarity is the deeper and more prolonged recession of the Greek economy, which has undermined the development of SE in many ways: due to the restriction of public spending, and therefore the inability to support, even partially, SE actors that would have been involved in the provision of former social services; due to the lack of purchasing power, which is a prerequisite for a

successful commercialization, and due to an absence of financial resources from the part of citizens to undertake SE initiatives.

Therefore, during the period 2010-2020 in Greece, both the commercialization of social services through SE and the development of SSE had significant limitations. Without underestimating the crucial role of social capital, and the non-completion of the grant aid plan, it can be noted that despite the gap of unmet needs and the strong political-ideological expectations, the economic basis for the development of various SE initiatives, as they were manifested in the Western European countries, was absent.

Under the weight of unmet economic and social needs combined with references to the international experience, a tendency emerged characterized by high expectations for SE regarding its capability to address such needs. High expectations come from both the state and SSE's side. It is not an exaggeration to mention that SE is projected as *the deus ex machina*, that will provide solutions to economic and social problems. However, it turned out that the burden on SE was particularly heavy and the demands disproportionate to its capabilities, at least in the current context.

As a result of the recession of the 2010s, the welfare state has shrunk, the unmet needs have expanded, with the final beneficiary being part of the traditional private sector, as neither the 'social enterprises' have benefited, nor has the SSE sector been able to develop to an economically significant degree. In short, the recession worked mainly towards reproducing the existing growth model of the Greek economy, despite the marginal development of various versions of SE.

In the new heterogeneous universe of the SE, special evaluation criteria and differentiated proposals-guidelines could be formulated for each of its individual manifestations. In any case, overcoming the effects of the recession, restoring economic growth and reconstructing the welfare state will create more favorable conditions for each nuance of SE: for SSE, achieving a balance among ideological-political-economic objectives; for the cooperatives, their reintegration into economic life; for the 'social enterprises' operating in certain sectors under firmly defined conditions.

However, important lessons from the 2010s could be learnt. These include: the involvement of significant population strata, either as participants in various schemes or as consumers-users-recipients of goods and services; highlighting the importance of subjective efforts being in line with the current conditions; the accumulation of significant experience based on the political, institutional and

financial conditions; testing and evaluating the institutional framework; the restoration to a certain extent of the perception for a balance among ideological-political-solidarity aspects of SE and its economic viability; the interest in the theoretical analysis and empirical investigation of SE, the introduction of relevant scientific subjects in the curricula of undergraduate and postgraduate programs etc. The above positive elements, which were largely absent in the early 2010s, constitute a remarkable framework-baseline to be explored for the future of SE.

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