



# Case Study Briefing

## Promotion and Strengthening of Women's Participation in Trade Unions and their Representation Bodies



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## 1. Overview

### **Evaluation of the social investment programme Promotion and Strengthening of Women's Participation in Trade Unions and their Representation Bodies**

The project "Promotion and strengthening of women's participation in trade unions and their representation bodies", aimed at promoting and ensuring the active participation of women workers in positions of responsibility at all levels and types of trade unions. INE (Labour Institute) initially planned activities, which focused on the broader social education of women, in order for them to become key actors for the promotion of women's issues through trade unions. In the due course of the programme the main goals focused on the general empowerment of women within the Greek society under crisis.

## 2. Key policy implications

### **Evaluation of the social investment programme Promotion and Strengthening of Women's Participation in Trade Unions and their Representation Bodies**

- All the available data from the evaluation show that the implementation of the programme was efficient.
- Women came out from this programme stronger and willing to become more active and this could have an impact on the strengthening of the public sphere. Women from passive recipients could gradually be transformed into active citizens.
- A point of criticism could be that despite this kind of impact, further initiatives are necessary (follow-up programmes, other intervention on gender equality, etc.) in order to keep women strong and active.
- As it came out more similar programmes are needed in order to empower women within society. Women need and ask for such initiatives.
- Future programmes should be designed taking into consideration evaluation procedures in order to give measurable data that could support the necessity of their implementation.

## 3. Context

The programme “Promotion and Strengthening of Women’s Participation in Trade Unions and their Representation Bodies”, (2011-2015) belonged to the broader policy area of gender equality in the labour market, it was financed from the National Strategic Reference Framework (NSRF 2007-2013) and was implemented on a national level by the Labour Institute (INE) of the General Confederation of Workers in Greece (GSEE). The programme was considered as innovative for two main reasons. First of all, because women and their participation in trade unions were never before the target population/ the population in need in previous programmes; and secondly because of the implementation of non-traditional training material that was used during the workshops and the seminars that took place throughout the duration of the programme. This innovative material included and asked for the inter-active participation of the beneficiaries contrary to the classic lecture style seminars usually implemented. This means that it was not based on the passive transmission of knowledge (from a transmitter to a receiver), but primarily on women’s personal involvement and empowerment in order to become more active in their everyday life. The main stakeholder of the programme was the Labour Institute (INE) of the General Confederation of Workers (GSEE). INE has structures in thirteen districts around Greece and the programme was implemented through these departments and in collaboration with the local working centres of the trade unions. Another innovation of the programme was the educational material which was very interactive and different from the typical lecture style educational tools usually used in previous programmes. The workshops and seminars asked for women’s active participation and express of personal experiences, something that was not very usual in previous interventions. Through this innovative process the purpose was to empower women in order to become more active and claim their rights in every aspect of their life, e.g. in the labour market and family, as well as to become more active and start engaging in socio-political activities.

## 4. Sources of evidence

The methodology used was based on the documentary analysis of different sources that were available to us by the programme staff and included the preliminary study with a full description of the population in need and its particular needs; the initial proposal of the programme and any following amendments; additional data that were collected during the first steps of the programme by staff members regarding women's participation in trade unions; and finally nine interviews with staff members involved in the implementation of the programme as organisers, educators, and scientifically responsible in local offices. We also conducted three interviews with beneficiaries (Athens and Crete) and two discussion groups, one in Lamia (6 participants) and one in Patra (4 participants).

## 5. Main findings

The programme was successfully implemented in almost all its stages. In addition, the change of the educational material took place early in the programme and this had no further implications. Finally, the focus given on the seminars and workshops was a decision that created no functioning problems and was on the right direction since this was the programme's initial and basic goal for women's empowerment. In brief, all the available data (interviews, focus groups, internal evaluation, documents) show that the implementation of the programme was efficient. The beneficiaries we interviewed agreed on the importance of the programme without hesitation, as some of them mentioned: "It was like school for me". They stressed the fact that they learned a lot of things through these procedures especially through their participation in seminars and workshops. They learned about their rights particularly during the economic crisis since many of them had problems in their workplaces, they learned negotiation techniques in order to claim their rights in their unions, etc. They additionally mentioned that they learned about other women's problems in other unions and jobs and had the opportunity to exchange views, ideas, and experiences. Another positive impact that came out through the programme, as it was mentioned, was that the members of the unions had access and contact with the second degree of the trade unions [i.e. the Federations] because such a contact is actually absent. This was an impact regarding networking which was already part of the programme. The common ground of the vast majority of our interviewees was that the main goal should not be increasing women's participation in trade unions. Of course, the official goal of the programme, at least in the very beginning, was exactly this. However, it seems that the goal was somehow changed in due course and was rather the implementation of a strategy to empower women and give them the adequate tools to become more active in their societal, professional and personal lives. The main conclusions are the following: 1) the programme achieved its stated objectives, i.e. to strengthen women in order to become more active. Women started to realise their multiple roles (family, labour market, society). For example, as it was mentioned many of them realised for the first time which is the actual cost of the household work they do every day. 2) Through the seminars and workshops women learned or better understood their rights in family and labour market and how to claim them, especially, women from small cities or villages. In that sense, women came out from this programme stronger and willing to become more active and this has an impact on the strengthening of the public sphere. 3) There were no outcomes which were not originally intended. A point of criticism might be that despite this kind of impact, further initiatives are necessary (follow-up programmes, other intervention on gender equality, etc.) in order to keep women strong and active. This means that if an intervention is implemented in isolation, without any plans for the future after some time the existing impact will gradually be wasted.

## 6. Impact & Implications

Having all the above in mind our conclusion is that this was a programme that was successfully implemented in almost all its stages. There were some secondary practical issues that were mentioned above and occurred during the implementation, but from our point of view these issues did not cause serious dysfunctions. Most of the problems were surpassed without producing severe damage and through solutions that gave the opportunity to keep running the programme as this was initially intended. The seminars and the workshops that were the “hard” part of the programme and probably the most difficult to execute seemed to work pretty well as it was mentioned by the stakeholder staff and the beneficiaries themselves (interviews, focus groups and internal evaluation). Some issues of time schedule due to women’s overwhelmed every day programme at home and at work did not jeopardise the implementation of the programme. In addition, the change of the educational material took place early in the programme and this had no further implications. Finally, the focus given on the seminars and workshops was a decision that created no functioning problems and was on the right direction since this was the programme’s initial and basic goal for women’s empowerment. In brief, all the available data (interviews, focus groups, internal evaluation, documents) show that the implementation of the programme was efficient. In that sense, women came out from this programme stronger and willing to become more active and this has an impact on the strengthening of the public sphere. Women from passive recipients are gradually transformed into active citizens. A point of criticism might be that despite this kind of impact, further initiatives are necessary (follow-up programmes, other intervention on gender equality, etc.) in order to keep women strong and active. If an intervention is implemented in isolation, without any plans for the future after some time the existing impact will gradually be wasted. And this is the major threat that the programme’s impact faces in the near future. As it can be concluded from the above and since there is a lack of a measurable impact of the programme the economic evaluation is limited only on issues like the implementation of the budget and any possible excesses to the initial proposal. Nevertheless, based on the interviews and focus groups we conducted we can only make a rough estimation about the financial effectiveness of the programme. Having in mind that the programme was implemented in a four year time (in different areas around Greece with more than 600 women participating in workshops and seminars and around 1,000 in every structure, with multiple networking and dissemination activities, including visits abroad, and in addition that the budget was implemented as it was planned, it could be argued that this was a well organised programme in financial terms. Furthermore, the effect that was described by our interviewees was very positive and the feedback the stakeholder staff had along with the internal evaluation, supports the estimation that this was an effective programme. While the whole programme was designed properly and had the necessary flexibility it lacked a major aspect that makes it difficult to conduct impact and economic evaluation, which would be useful to examine the effect this programme had in a more measurable form than the one that came out through our qualitative analysis, which is not less important, but can’t lead to generalisations.

## 7. Further information




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For further information on InnoSI: Innovation in Social Investment: approaches to social investment from the scientific perspective, visit our website at <http://innosi.eu/>

To view the Community Reporting video with a personal experience of the case study please follow the link below

<https://communityreporter.net/story/it-never-too-late>

Authors: Alexandros Sakellariou, Alexandra Koronaiou, Giorgos Alexias

-  **Alexandra Koronaiou**, Panteion University of Social and Political Sciences, e-mail: [alexkoron@gmail.com](mailto:alexkoron@gmail.com)
  -  **Giorgos Alexias**, Panteion University of Social and Political Sciences, e-mail: [galexias@yahoo.gr](mailto:galexias@yahoo.gr)
  -  **Alexandros Sakellariou**, Panteion University of Social and Political Sciences, e-mail: [sociology.panteion@gmail.com](mailto:sociology.panteion@gmail.com)
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