



INTERACT

Inclusion Through Environmental Activities



Alternative Business Models of Green Economy



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Phrases like ‘There are no jobs’ or ‘I was not given a chance to prove myself’ are commonly heard among young people seeking to enter the labor market. After a period of knocking on closed doors, very shortly the disappointment and desperation take over the feelings of optimism that possesses usually the newly graduates. Self-employment and entrepreneurship is not something taught or promoted in the classrooms thus is not considered a choice. However, youth work and voluntarism can be the bridge between the formal education and the labour market, providing the youth with practical knowledge on the field of their interest, and multiple skills and competence related to the working conditions that will be appreciated by any employer. There are alternative business models that can accommodate today’s realities and needs of the youth. Some of these opportunities are mentioned below to inspire and guide youth in their pursue of new paths and careers.



Employment through the development of social entrepreneurships

According to Wikipedia “it is the process of pursuing innovative solutions to social problems. More specifically, social entrepreneurs adopt a mission to create and sustain social value. They pursue opportunities to serve this mission, while continuously adapting and learning”. They draw upon appropriate thinking in both the business and nonprofit worlds and operate in all kinds of organizations: large and small; new and old; religious and secular; nonprofit, for-profit, and hybrid.^[1] Business entrepreneurs typically measure performance in profit and return, but social entrepreneurs also take into account a positive return to society. Social entrepreneurship typically furthers broad social, cultural, and environmental goals and is commonly associated with the voluntary and not-for-profit sectors.^[2]

Investing on Corporate Social Responsibility

Corporate social responsibility (CSR) ^[3] is defined by the European Commission as "the responsibility of enterprises for their impacts on society". The Commission encourages that enterprises "should have in place a process to integrate social, environmental, ethical human rights and consumer concerns into their business operations and core strategy in close collaboration with their stakeholders".

Green Jobs

According to GoodWork, Canada's Green Job Site^[4], "a green job is any job or self-employment that genuinely contributes to a more sustainable world. A green job is the coming together of a company or organization, with an individual motivated and capable of performing the role. The company or organization can either be in a 'green' sector (e.g. solar energy), or in a conventional sector but making genuine and substantial efforts to green its operations (not just greenwash)". A green job can be with business, nonprofit organizations, government or education. Small business, self-employment and entrepreneurship is very much a part of the new green economy. Some green jobs require specific 'green' skills or education, such as a solar engineer, an environmental educator, or an organic gardener. Other positions do not necessarily require a green background — for example a graphic designer or accountant working for a green company or organization.



Self Employment

According to Wikipedia, self-employment is the act of generating one's income directly from customers, clients or other organizations as opposed to being an employee of a business (or person). Self-employed people generally find their own work rather than being provided with work by an employer earning income from a trade or business that they operate.

Which of the above models is best for you?

You don't necessarily need to choose from one of the above, but rather you can do a combination. It all depends on the ideas you want to pursue, if it might interest more the companies, if you are better connected with local communities rather than business entities etc etc

The benefits of alternative business models are the following:

- ✓ They are more open, accessible, and resilient – they are accessible to workers across the spectrum of education and may also provide opportunities for people with disabilities to re-enter the workforce.
- ✓ They provide opportunities to shift the current paradigm of women being underrepresented in most green job occupations.

- ✓ According to various studies, more and more small to medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) are interested for the green economy to continue flourishing.
- ✓ They encourage further inspiration in the community leading to a more enlightened perspective on how to run one's business or lead one's life.

Why choose an alternative business model?

- ✓ Act as change agents for your society and create solutions to change society for the better
- ✓ Seize opportunities others miss to improve systems
- ✓ Invent new approaches, develop innovative solutions to social problems and implement them on a large scale
- ✓ Set a good example, inspire others to 'up their game' when it comes to social and environmental responsibility
- ✓ They are trendy



Learn how others did it...

The case of 'Argonaftis' in Cyprus

A successful CSR case in Cyprus is the one developed between **AKTI Project and Research Centre** and **EuroLife** Insurance Company. The project is called "ARGONAFTIS: Working Experience Opportunities for young scientists in the field of environmental applied research". ARGONAFTIS aims in providing 10 young graduates per year with the opportunity to work as interns for 6 months at AKTI. The graduates need to have received their degree within a period of maximum 2 years from the day they apply to ARGONAFTIS and they need to be fluent in Greek and very good in English language. All degrees may become relevant to the environment, in its broad sense: from environmental engineering and environmental science, to sociology, computers/IT, mass media, art, and many more related to environmental issues. The young scientists have the chance to gain experience in their field of interest, network with the environmental stakeholders in Cyprus and abroad through the broad network of AKTI and make their search for work easier and more focused.



What's in it for EuroLife? The company contributes in corporate social responsibility efforts, improves its social image, gains publicity and becomes more competitive while serving the social good and providing working opportunities for youth.

What's in it for AKTI? AKTI has the opportunity to work with new, enthusiastic scientists who share the NGO's vision and interests while supporting youth to pursue their career paths. The project also supports the strengthening and professionalization of civil society organizations.

What's in it for youth? The youth get hands on experience, learn how real businesses/organizations work, network with NGOs, educational institutions, businesses and enrich their CVs while earning a stipend for their services supporting them in their daily expenses.

The case of 'Environmental Reporters' in Italy

Another interesting example of CSR is being implemented in Italy by **Valle Umbra Servizi (VUS)**, an environmental company. The project which is called '**Environmental Reporters**' and runs from 2013 to 2014, aims at raising awareness on issues such as recycling of waste and the water cycle, as part of its **CSR strategy**. In this project, students take an active role, as guided by the teachers while educational material and technical support is being provided by the company. Students learn to address the theme of the environment through careful observation of activities

related to the management and conservation of natural resources as well as activities conducive to information, knowledge and eco-sustainable behaviour. They are therefore invited to become reporters to discover, analyze and create reports on the state of the environment as it is perceived in their everyday life. Like every year, there are competitions among the primary and secondary schools which choose to participate in the project. This year's project focuses on used domestic vegetable oils placing an emphasis on the need for consumers' attitudes to become greener. The project also includes field visits to VUS' facilities and educational workshops on recycling, in view of the upcoming carnival costumes and masks made from waste material.

What's in it for VUS? As a green company, the company is supporting society in also becoming greener while performing its CSR mandate.

What's in it for students? Students get the opportunity to learn more about environmental issues, find ways to externalize and express their curiosity, and discover possible new career paths.

What's in it for the schools? The schools work towards achieving their social role and become greener.

The case of 'Tiganokinisi' in Cyprus

Another very successful example of **social enterprise** is '**Tiganokinisi**' project which is implemented by AKTI Project and Research Centre in partnership with more than 200 schools in Cyprus, and is under the auspices of the Ministry of Education and Culture, in collaboration with the Cyprus Pedagogical Institute. The project is about how a harmful waste such as the used cooking oil can be converted into fuel and subsequently a driving force for education, development and social action. The project is an educational, environmental programme which converts the waste into biodiesel while giving resources for environmental education activities and supporting environmental infrastructure for schools and our students all over Cyprus! At the same time the project promotes green jobs, by employing young, unemployed scientists!



How does it work?

After a school enrolls in the programme and a barrel to collect the oil is made available, the students and the teachers are informed about the process of collecting the used cooking oil from their houses and neighborhoods. Once collected, the oil is sold to Ambrosia Ltd, which has the capacity to convert the used cooking oil into biodiesel. A portion of the funds collected goes back to the school as a means to encourage further environmental actions!

What's in it for the students? The students experience how they can convert something harmful into a driving force! They gain knowledge about the environment and empowerment while becoming change-agents!



What's in it for the teachers? It's an opportunity to explore alternative teaching methods and support their students / school / community in making their lives greener!

What's in it for the schools? This project enables the school to fulfill its social role by becoming the centre of the community not just in terms of teaching but in terms of social action and cooperation with the community stakeholders as well. The funds that are being returned to the school provide opportunities for more creative and green ideas to be implemented!

What's in it for Ambrosia Ltd? The company is fulfilling its environmental / social role while becoming more competitive through the specific services offered. It also improves its public image.

What's in it for the community? All community members can be part of the project and not just the students of the specific school, it is a collective effort which should be part of our everyday lives!

What's in it for AKTI? Through this project, AKTI Project and Research Centre contributes to its mandate as a non-profit organization which supports actions that benefit environment and quality of life. The project is also an opportunity to expand its constituency and work with the local communities / schools / teachers / students. Additionally, AKTI's work benefits society and the economy through the employment of young unemployed scientists. The project is **not a profit making endeavor but rather a social enterprise** in the sense that the funds collected are shared among all stakeholders for investment in further environmental / social activities.

As shown above, **the benefits are for all**, and for society in general especially nowadays with unemployment rates among youth hitting the ceiling.

Are you ready to develop your own green business?

Here is an original idea: Community Composting

The problem:

Managing organic waste from residences as well as public spaces is still a challenge for local authorities under EU laws because it is prohibited to bury organic waste in landfills or do outdoor burning. Additionally the transportation costs in licensed facilities are disproportionately high.

At the same time the phenomenon of desertification in the countries of southern Europe reduces the organic fraction of the soil and makes it poorer day by day. One of the most reasonable solutions to stem the phenomenon appears to be the enrichment of the soil with organic matter. However compost, which could be the main source of provisioning, still remains very expensive and scarce in the amounts required to achieve the above objective.

Solutions proposed:

The solution could be the creation of small, local, regional green composting units. Clustering of adjacent communities for low- cost composting units would be ideal for Cyprus. It is estimated that more than 100 such small units could be developed in Cyprus that would create over 3000 new jobs.

Your chance....

For this initiative to take off, the local authority does not need to take the lead but rather **an energetic, passionate self-employed young person** through innovative project ideas and partnerships.

Is it sustainable?

Based on a cooperation scenario among five communities - the costs of collection and transportation of greens to licensed premises beyond 20 miles of each community is actually covering the cost of buying the equipment for collecting, cutting and aerating, as well as the yearly operating cost of the unit, including the employment of a young scientist and two workers.

How do you start your business?

Put your ideas down in a presentable way, find others who share the same enthusiasm and beliefs, **build partnerships** starting small, from your nearby **school, coffee shop** and then your **local authority** and relevant **NGOs**. Once you have the commitment of your own community, start with the **neighboring** ones, convince them about the benefits of your initiatives and why they should proudly be part of it! Present the idea, give them **figures**.... Managing waste is among the priorities of the EU and if local authorities do not limit them, the fines to be paid are enormous. Argue this is a **win-win situation** for all. Ask the local authority to help you find the right place to establish the unit and do it in partnership with them. You need more **funding**? Partner with NGOs or other possible funding enterprises that are also interested in the subject, form partnerships and submit proposals. Similar approaches may be applied for **community gardens** and **community organic waste management**.

For you are interested in more information on composting, please visit www.akti.org.cy .



Contact Us



AKTI Project and Research Centre
akti@akti.org.cy;
www.akti.org.cy



GSI Italia
info@gsitalia.org
www.gsitalia.org

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