



YPERIA 2018

16th INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION

ON CULTURE AND TOURISM

9th INTERNATIONAL AMORGOS
TOURISM FILM FESTIVAL

Contribution to the Special Tribute *Women and Youth Employment* (01/11/2018)
"From the Global to the Local: the case of the Cyclades Complex

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Abstract: On a global scale, women and young people employment play a pivotal role in the sustainable development goals set by United Nations for the 21st century. In reality, women and young people are often met with limited access to quality job positions, difficulties to entrepreneurship, lower incomes and a number of obstacles regarding leading personally and financially rewarding professional lives. Relevant policies put forward or implemented to address current challenges have only but partially mitigated the existing asymmetries. In Cyclades, the contribution of tourism industry on women and young people employment has been long acknowledged both institutionally and informally. At the same time, it has put enormous pressure on local communities, resources and cultural identities.

Initially designed as modular-structured presentation, this is a brief introduction into the current challenges of women and young people employment. It also explores the possibilities of a shift in the paradigm of sustainable development in Cyclades, a sub-division island complex of the South Aegean Region. A quality change in perspective regarding tourism and local cultural resources, such as architecture, gastronomy, music, handicrafts, and agricultural products, will help bring prosperity to local communities and meet the needs of an authentic tourist experience for visitors. Sustainable Island Development can only be achieved by creating decent, meaningful jobs for young people and women. Sustainable development combines balancing the tourism industry pressures. We firmly believe that **Projects such as YPERIA contribute to the dialogue and promote the understanding of employment on the islands from the perspective of culture, local resources and tradition.**



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A Challenge for Policy-making, Legislation and Authorities Worldwide

In all high-level summits and conventions, Youth Employment has been a central issue, with global institutions, such as the UN, the World Bank, the European Commission, ILO, etc taking a wealth of initiatives so as to develop and implement strategies that give young people everywhere a real chance to find decent and productive work¹. Accordingly, women employment and sustainable development goals² have been positively linked, while gender equality and women empowerment are top priorities for all key actors. Globally, policy documents and legislation frameworks have been drafted, adopted, implemented and monitored to ensure that everybody, from local authorities to governments, are committed to fight inequalities concerning the professional life of women and young people.

During the last decade, the category of NEETS (segments of population that are absent from any process of social or professional integration, vulnerable groups subject to social marginalization and exclusion) has received special attention since it has been estimated that NEETS latency account for 1,5% annual loss of GDP for a country³. By the way, Greece ranks in the first positions among OECD countries together with Italy and Turkey and tops at the NEETS rate with university degrees. Key concepts relating to bringing equal opportunities to young people and women employability include a wide range of aspects such as the availability of resources, social roles, availability of choices, access to education and training for up-to-date skills and competences.

¹ <https://www.un.org/development/desa/youth/youth-employment.html>

² <http://www.unwomen.org/en/news/in-focus/women-and-the-sdgs>

³ OECD (2016), *Society at a Glance 2016: OECD Social Indicators*, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/9789264261488-en>.



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The repercussions of the failure of the existing policies and strategies to address the complex issues of youth and female employment are far-reaching and grave indeed. They include high rates of involuntary immigration, violent radicalization, rural depopulation, widening of poverty gap, high risks of social marginalization and exclusion, loss of expertise and skills, to name just a few.

Pay Gap: There are huge disparities in average earnings between young people of different gender and ethnicities with the same level of qualifications⁴. The disparity between men's and women's income can be found at both ends of the earnings distribution affecting all social strata⁵. In the majority of countries, women's wages represent between 70 % and 90 % of men's, with even lower ratios in some Asian and Latin American countries. Young people earn below the average wage in all EU countries. But in some the gap is much wider than in others, and is growing alarmingly. In 2014 the under-30s earned on average 74% of the overall standard wage. But since 2006, that proportion has fallen by two percentage points or more in 16 EU countries: Belgium, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Spain, France, Cyprus, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Austria, Portugal, Slovenia, Slovakia, Finland and Sweden. In countries like the Netherlands, Belgium, Ireland, Greece and the UK, lower minimum wages apply for young people. Workers in Germany are not eligible for the minimum wage until they are 18⁶.

Higher unemployment rates: More than 64 million unemployed youth worldwide and 145 million young workers living in poverty: youth employment remains a global challenge and a top policy concern.⁷ Definitions of youth vary from 15-29, "The youth unemployment rate is the number of unemployed 15-24 year-olds expressed as a percentage of the youth labour force. Unemployed people are those who report

⁴ <https://www.ft.com/content/aaa900ea-d6b9-11e8-a854-33d6f82e62f8>

⁵ <http://www.oecd.org/sdd/37964069.pdf>

⁶ <https://www.etuc.org/en/young-people-and-youth-pay-gap>

⁷ <https://www.ilo.org/global/topics/youth-employment/lang--en/index.htm>



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that they are without work, that they are available for work and that they have taken active steps to find work in the last four weeks”⁸ being the most widely used. Young people generally have bad chances of finding a job⁹, and scientific research reveals some interesting findings: (1) Low employability of young people not due to basic skill shortages, (2) generally worse jobs for younger people in relation to established employees, (3) significantly higher risks of unemployment for young people, (4) insufficient job prospects and fragile employment security for young workers and (5) especially low remuneration of young people.

Despite a substantial increase in women employment since WWI –at least in the so-called developed world- women’s participation rates in the labour market are still systematically lower than those of men¹⁰. Women and Youth have higher percentages in all types and subtypes of precarious employment, undeclared work, unpaid-domestic and rural work. They are also champions of In-work poverty (for example due to zero-hour contracts).

Localize the global: Cyclades and youth and women employment

Cyclades constitute a unique -on a global scale- sub-division in a unique region with particular socioeconomic and cultural conditions due to its insularity and geography. 79 islands, 48 of which are inhabited, 178 rocky islets are included in the South Aegean Region. There are a great number of NATURA sites, landscapes which are protected by European Directives and of course a millennia-old civilization. Below are some basic socio-cultural and economic characteristics affecting female and youth employment in the South Aegean and Cyclades, delineating a distinct framework from other European or national regions.

⁸ OECD (2018), Youth unemployment rate (indicator). doi: 10.1787/c3634df7-en (Accessed on 07 October 2018)

⁹ https://www.etuc.org/sites/default/files/publication/file/2018-06/Youth%20Friendliness%20Indicator_complete%20%20version.pdf

¹⁰ https://www.eurofound.europa.eu/sites/default/files/ef_publication/field_ef_document/ef1638en1_1.pdf



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- **Tourism contributes immensely to job creation**¹¹, being the largest sector with more than ¼ of active population. The resilience of South Aegean Region economy¹² can be largely attributed to the tourism industry. In fact, it is the most resilient of all Greek regions in terms of employment in the period 2005-2016. It attracts thousands of temporary workers both from abroad and nationwide every tourism season. Regional economy is hugely dependent on service provision, specialized in typical tourism services. There has also been a significant drop in agriculture and livestock farming in the last 2 decades, leading to serious dependency on imports.
- **Gendered and Youth employment constitute the biggest % of the part-time, temporary (20%), leasing/renting section of the tourism sector.** In other words, the deregularization of labour market with the subsequent flexibilization of employment and working relations affect the Janus- faced policy (contributing to business resilience and recoverability, while highly- precarious conditions being created for employees with the compression of incomes and instability of job positions., South Aegean being among the top region in EU27 countries with involuntary participation in flexible working contracts. Empirical Data also shows reduced or non-existent workers' rights, safety precautions/measures and security benefits.
- **Family support and close community ties** play a key role in young people's and women employment trajectories.
- **Severe annual demographical changes** due to high-tension, seasonal economic activity, lack of infrastructure, access to health and education facilities.

Global needs and local initiatives: a shift in paradigm for Sustainable Development of Island Communities

¹¹ <https://www.inegsee.gr/ekdosi/apascholisi-eyeliktopoiisi-kai-neoi-anergoi-i-ektos-ekpaideysis-katartisis-neets-stis-topikes-agores-ergasias-toy-notioy-aigaioy-mia-epikairopoiimeni-analysi-se-synthikes-krisis/?hide-hf=true>

¹² <https://www.inegsee.gr/ekdosi/apascholisi-eyeliktopoiisi-kai-neoi-anergoi-i-ektos-ekpaideysis-katartisis-neets-stis-topikes-agores-ergasias-toy-notioy-aigaioy-mia-epikairopoiimeni-analysi-se-synthikes-krisis/?hide-hf=true%5C%5C>



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With the above in mind, combining tourism with gastronomy with local agricultural products, cultural products and services can help Cyclades, young people and women to lead meaningful, decent lives on their islands. The previous standardization of tourism services, uniformity of tourist infrastructure and disrespect for local resources ought to be replaced by the acknowledgement of the islands' cultural and environmental capital and the development of skills for the locals.

Lately, a great number of young people have re-discovered traditional crops and architecture, old stone-houses and barns. Women as well produce in oikotechnia (that is at home with specifications regulated for the 1st time by law) sweets and alimentary products sold as delicatessen, handicrafts sold in tourist boutiques. But there is a wealth of other options for employment and entrepreneurship in Cyclades: digitalization of cultural heritage, workshops for traditional jewelry, home furnishings and homeware, cultivation of local livestock and crops, architectural restoration, etc.

The proposed new paradigm, which is actually what this year's YPERIA is all about, should provide the alternative for sustainable development as it can:

- boost income for all
- motivate young people to remain on the islands addressing their demographical problems
- extend tourism season with visitors seeking quality experiences and authenticity
- help local communities stay active during no-tourism seasons and promote intergenerational solidarity
- It will decrease food miles and help reduce the ecological footprint of food production
- Preserve local resources by investing on comparative advantages of each islands

How can we contribute to achieve this? Not by order of importance:



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- By mapping the relations between innovation and local tradition and provide training and counseling for innovation reforms (including setting up channels for innovation)
- By designing tourism strategies as a participatory process with **specific benchmarks on cultural, human and environmental resources with emphasis on sustainability**
- Design and implementation of specifically tailored policies for women and youth, for example, covering the crucial “transition” period (after childbirths, school or college attendance, etc).
- Provision of quality VET (connected to lower NEET) and lifelong learning and making the most of ICT benefits
- Provision of health care and child care facilities on the islands

Last but not least, let me mention Anna Mykoniati, a postgraduate student of Film and Cultural studies and ex-student of mine, more than 10 years ago. We worked with Anna to conduct interviews with young people and women on our island, Kea, as a primary material for this project and turned it into a video, which is available in English on YouTube¹³. Anna has been an inspiration for me and I have asked her to be here with because her values, academic expertise and ideas is one precious part in the change cycle: a young girl in her 20's from a small island, highly qualified, in-and-out of meaningful employment. Interested in returning to her island helping out with the vision of YPERIA, she is promising case study herself.

In 2019 South Aegean and Cyclades will be the honored Gastronomy Region of Europe: this opportunity shouldn't be exhausted only on celebrations and festivities, but leave a legacy for the years to come. A turn to local products and culture, an emphasis on traditional farming and livestock breeding as prerequisites for an authentic gastronomy culture with job creation for young people and women are vital.

¹³ <https://youtu.be/K18JQai0wiA>