



Territories, laboratories of social Europe Les territoires, laboratoires de l'Europe sociale

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BRUSSELS – at the Committee of the Regions BRUXELLES – Comité des Régions

Territories, Laboratories of Social Europe Session: Social Innovation by Example

“COMBATING POVERTY AND SOCIAL EXCLUSION FOR THE 50+
CITIZENS: THE CASE OF VERIA”





VERIA AT A GLANCE

Veria Municipality, located in the region of Central Macedonia, has an estimated population of 65.530 inhabitants.

Its history is traced back about 2.500 years as one of the major centres of the Ancient Macedonia.

After the 2011 administrative reform it includes the city of Vergina, the ancient capital of the Kingdom of Macedonia.



**PHILIP'S II
TOMB
GOLD
GORDON
AT AIGAI
ARCHEOLO
GICAL SITE**



**THE
BYZANTINE
MUSEUM**



VERIA AT A GLANCE

In modern times, the post-war expansion of agricultural and industrial production had led Veria to rank among the most prosperous regions of Greece.

However, over the last 15 years, the city experienced an unprecedented economic decline that affected dramatically its social stratification as well as its development potential.



**VERIA'S
CITY HALL**



**TRADITIONAL
ARCHITECTURE
DISTRICT
AT THE CITY
CENTER**



CURRENT SOCIAL ISSUES

The aftermath of the ongoing financial/debt crisis resulted in:

- **Greater insecurity and anxiety for the future**
- **Increase of social conflicts and demonstrations (street protests)**
- **Reduction of employment rates and dramatic increase of unemployment for those aged 50+**
- **Larger number of homeless and deprived people**
- **Greater marginalization of vulnerable social groups in general**



APPLIED MEASURES AND PRACTICES IN FIGHTING POVERTY

- 1. Establishment of a Social Fund,** a fundraising mechanism which is responsible for collecting money through donations from individuals, local businesses and non-governmental organizations aiming to cover the basic financial needs of deprived and unemployed people. The vast majority of this group consists of long-term unemployed citizens who are older than 50 years.

UNEMPLOYED CITIZENS WAITING IN LINE AT A NATIONAL ORGANIZATION FOR EMPLOYMENT BRANCH





APPLIED MEASURES AND PRACTICES IN FIGHTING POVERTY

2. Operation of a Social Grocery Store which offers the basic needs for those who face extreme poverty. The collection of products process is based on

- a) a special coupon which can be bought at local stores and supermarkets,
- b) product offers by local food industries and stores and
- c) food drive collection events which are organized before the Christmas and Easter holidays at schools

FOOD COLLECTION SHELVES AT THE SOCIAL GROCERY





APPLIED MEASURES AND PRACTICES IN FIGHTING POVERTY

3. Establishment of a “Social Solidarity” office which provides people in need with:

- a) clothes (mainly second hand),
- b) house equipment and furniture,
- c) children toys,
- d) school material

CLOTH COLLECTION ROOM AT THE “SOCIAL SOLIDARITY” OFFICE





APPLIED MEASURES AND PRACTICES IN FIGHTING POVERTY

4. Establishment of a Social Medical Center and Pharmacy, which operates thanks to the voluntary work of the medical staff involved in the program. The center provides

a) first care services and basic medicine to vulnerable social groups such as long-term unemployed (mostly citizens 50+), economic immigrants and roma people,

b) prevention tests and immunizations in order to secure public health as well as

c) a blood bank

MEDICAL STAFF AND EQUIPMENT AT SOCIAL MEDICAL CENTER





APPLIED MEASURES AND PRACTICES FOR SOCIAL INCLUSION AND SOCIAL CARE

1. **Home Assistance Program.** The program runs through the Social Enterprise of Municipality of Veria and assists the elderly people who are living alone and are not able to take care of themselves. It covers approximately 500 people. The **H.A.Program** has been recently upgraded with the implementation of a **Remote Assistance Service** which detects the falls of elderly people through a special device, sending an electronic signal to a help center.
2. **Information and Career Office for Unemployment Citizens.** The office operates as a work reintegration program and is responsible for providing unemployed people with information about job offers as well as for life - long learning and training programs. It also offers direct connection with job market by making, on behalf of the unemployed people, all the necessary contacts and paperwork.
3. **Community Service Program.** The program operates in cooperation with the National Organization for Employment (O.A.E.D.) and it is designed to offer 5-month job contracts to long-term unemployed people over 45 years old.



APPLIED MEASURES AND PRACTICES FOR SOCIAL INCLUSION AND SOCIAL CARE

1. Open Protection Centers for Elderly Citizens (K.A.P.I.)

This initiative was launched in the 80's and constitutes the core institution through which the Municipality of Veria provides the essential means in social inclusion process of elderly citizens. The success of the initiative can be proven by the fact that today, there are **11** such centers at Veria which serve at least **6.500** people (roughly, **10%** of the local population).



CENTER MEMBERS WATCHING A CULTURAL PERFORMANCE



PARTICIPATION IN FOLK DANCE FESTIVAL



APPLIED MEASURES AND PRACTICES FOR SOCIAL INCLUSION AND SOCIAL CARE

The principal purpose of the centers is to offer:

- a) **Preventive Medicine** → immunizations (mainly anti-flu vaccinations), information and advice for good diet and clothing, protection from falls as well as prevention tests and checks for the early diagnosis of diseases

- b) **Home assistance** → house cleaning, shopping and cooking for the elderly people who are unable to care themselves

- c) **Cultural and Information Events** → visits at museums, archeological sites etc, music concerts, speeches and conferences about physical and mental health

- d) **Sports and Cultural Programs** → dancing and choir programs, painting courses, physical exercise programs, vacation programs during summer months etc



COUNTRYSIDE EXCURSION



CENTER'S CHOIR IN ACTION



FUTURE INITIATIVES FOR SOCIAL INCLUSION

1. Exchanging Experience Program.

Another measure to achieve social re-activation of old - age citizens is to establish a program that elderly people will have the chance to exchange their experiences and ideas with younger ages.

The actions will take place at schools and other cultural centers where elderly will share their views on several social affairs with young audiences, keeping them socially active and bridging the age gap.

2. Volunteering Programs for Retired Citizens. This initiative intends to fight social isolation of retired citizens by offering them the opportunity to stay socially active through their involvement in various volunteering programs

Thank you for your attention

Charoula Ousoutzoglou

Mayor of Veria