

Environmental Social Entrepreneurship - Evangelia's and Mano's story

Introduction

Evangelia and Manos who were both born with Down's Syndrome, have met in a restaurant 12 years ago. Evangelia has an academic background in Humanities and Manos has professional background in creative and cultural industries. They are both passionate for a sustainable life model. They believe that food is culture and it brings people together. And that is what brought them together as social partners and most of all as a couple.

We had the opportunity to have a conversation with Evangelia and Manos and ask them what their Social enterprise is about and what they are doing.

These are
fictional
characters

Interview with Evangelia and Manos

How did you come up with this idea?

Evangelia: *We respect what the Greek soil has to offer and we admire the people who work hard, with great passion and love, so we can have food on the table. I have (Evangelia) an academic background in Humanities and (Manos) a professional background in creative and cultural industries. We strongly believe that there's too much food that goes to waste and we'd like to change the way people think about food. Our motto: "food use – no loss – no toss".*

What We Do

Sustainable Food Movement in Greece is a social enterprise registered in Athens, Greece in July 2017 aiming to tackle food waste and promote sustainable development in the Greek Culinary Arts Industry. We believe that environmental awareness, education, expertise, specialization and digital innovation are the only keys to progress and success.

The Problem

Greece is attracting more than 22.5 million people each year because it's an attraction for international visitors mainly for the Mediterranean climate and the great gastronomy. But the growth of the Greek tourism industry through the last decades, has added an increasing impact on the environment. Waste generation in the southern Mediterranean region has grown approximately 15% over the last decade. In many regions in Greece, restaurants, resorts and hotel units, produce more solid waste than local residents. There is lack of space



and of adequate waste management infrastructure and there is limited information to the stakeholders involved in culinary and touristic activities about the need for integrated waste management and an outlined step by step plan towards to a zero waste strategy in the hospitality industry. Food wastage (food waste) is an issue that affects everyone. It is of particular concern for businesses in the hospitality and food service sector, which in Greece dispose of an estimated 300,000 tons of wasted food every year.

The Solution

It has been estimated that 75% of hospitality businesses' (hotels and restaurants) environmental impacts are directly associated with excessive consumption. This is wasteful in terms of resources and it increases operational costs unnecessarily. It is economically beneficial for these businesses to pursue "green practices" in three areas, namely energy saving, water conservation and recycling and waste management.

Environmental improvement is an increasingly important factor for businesses to stay competitive and manage their supply chain risks. Increasing resource scarcity; rising raw material, transport and utility costs; and pressure from legislation, customers and society to reduce environmental damage, are combining to drive businesses to improve their performance and become sustainable.

The challenges for the Greek hospitality and culinary sector is to creatively adopt instruments for sustainable development and waste management and become increasingly effective, maximizing the value of the resources used. This requires changing the mindset around food.

How did you decide to become a Sustainable Food Entrepreneur in Greece?

Manos: Food it's a fundamental part of life – we all eat! People know how much we (Evangelia & Manos) are addicted to food. It's been more than a decade that we've been working in the Culinary Arts Industry and food has always been more than a life's necessity to me. Food is culture, food unites people, food is passion, food is business and food is, at last, innovation! We wanted to become Sustainable Food Entrepreneurs in Greece because we wanted to inspire and urge people to act against food waste. Imagine if you can save the world by saving your time and your money as well. While reducing your carbon footprint while helping the food value chain to optimize itself and even create new green growth. Too good to be true? Well, the fight against food waste nails it and it's becoming a big business.

We love how food crosses all cultures and connects people. A place at the table brings us together to share meals regardless of our background, beliefs, language or any disability. Food isn't just a meal, not an experience. Food is education, food is progress and it's attached to health, the environment and the ethics of a consumer. Now, more than ever, it's critical to change what we eat and how it's made. Food is an important topic; it has a social and environmental impact. Food not only nurtures our bodies, but has the opportunity to make a difference beyond our plates.



Manos: People ask me all the time, how did you start your food enterprise? And often, they follow up with, “I have this idea...”. “I’m thinking about a career in food...” or “I want to become a chef, but not just a chef...” and I’m thrilled so many people want to explore food entrepreneurship which can be very rewarding. I learned so much in my first year into the food industry back in 2010 and I’m learning more and more. It takes time and patience to learn about food: how food distributors operate, the difference between regional and national distributors, the kitchen staff and the way a professional kitchen operates, the mentality of chefs, the consumers’ needs but above all the cooking process of a meal and the food waste management that has been created in a professional kitchen. I have kept reading and researching about food, sustainable gastronomy, culinary trends and digital innovation in culinary arts. I became sensitive on the food waste issues, I am more than ever aware on the social, and environmental impact food has in our lives.

I decided to become a social entrepreneur in Greece, because I wanted to make a change in the food industry in my country. Also recycling is part of my life, I never waste food, I storage appropriately and cook only as much as I need, I prefer to buy local food, fair trade and organic products with as much as possible low carbon footprint and I always support enterprises that are green, ecofriendly and prove to have a social impact.

I chose to become a food entrepreneur because I needed to accomplish change in Greece. I wanted to change the Greek mentality on food and the food waste management and urge people to become environmentally and socially aware. An entrepreneur is always seeking ways to bring innovation through his/her startup and that’s a good reason to work hard. It needs to be something you must do, not just want to do. You need to learn about food regulations, permits, safety and labeling. Being certified is important and you urge other professionals to become certified, following worldwide regulations. As a food entrepreneur you have the opportunity to collaborate and propose solutions for public matters and policies that will affect your country’s future environmental sustainability. You have the ability to work along with chefs, social kitchens and offer more to food banks and people in need.

Are there opportunities in today's environment for entrepreneurship development by people with disabilities? Are they given equal opportunities?

Manos: No, unfortunately, they are not provided with equal opportunities and in any case I find it very difficult to develop entrepreneurship for the disabled in today's environment. In addition to the financial crisis, a person with a disability has to face serious problems of accessibility to the public for the exercise of his activity (inaccessible tax offices, public bodies, etc.). A person with a disability has to struggle both with securing his access and with his equal treatment by the unfortunately biased society. So let's not talk about providing equal opportunities.

How do people deal with people with disabilities when setting up their own business?

Evangelia: Unfortunately, society does not easily accept that a person with a disability can start their own business. As long as there is no adequate education for the society to accept



the possibility of activity of the disabled, it will be difficult for them to accept any professional occupation. There are many people who considered it inconceivable for a person with a Down's syndrome to be a successful entrepreneur. I am sure that today they no longer have the same perception and that they believe that a person with a disability can produce and function just as well as someone who does not have such problems.

What message do you want to send to people with disabilities and beyond?

Evangelia: Because based on what I have told you, one can consider that things are easy for people with disabilities, believe me that the vast majority is fighting for survival in this economic crisis that we are experiencing. It is not just that they have to deal with the often inhuman treatment by the state. However, the disabled do not give up. They raise their heads and continue life with whatever difficulties they face, proving that everyone has the right to dream and hope for a better tomorrow. Therefore, appreciate life and enjoy it... Try to interpret!

Therefore, what are the skills someone needs to become an environmental social entrepreneur?

STEPS:

FIRST STEP: Search for ENTREPRENEURIAL OPPORTUNITIES

1. Familiarity with environmental entrepreneurship: products and services
2. Employment options in environmental entrepreneurship for people with disabilities
3. Business initiatives.

Ecopreneurship is a term coined to represent the process of principles of **entrepreneurship** being applied to create businesses that solve **environmental** problems or operate sustainably. ... "Ecopreneurs are **entrepreneurs** whose business efforts are not only driven by profit, but also by a concern for the **environment**."

The term "Green entrepreneur" is the combination of entrepreneurship and the environment. ... A green entrepreneur consciously addresses an environmental or social problem/need through the understanding of entrepreneurial ideas.

Sustainable products are those products that provide environmental, social and economic benefits while protecting public health and environment over their whole life cycle, from the extraction of raw materials until the final disposal. For a **product** to be **sustainable**, it must be possible to produce and/or consume it in a way that doesn't result in harm or destruction. If the production of a **product** requires nonrenewable resources, damages the environment, or results in harm to individuals or society, it is unlikely to be considered **sustainable**.

An initial and extremely important step for the disabled is to increase awareness of entrepreneurial activity. There is a lack of awareness of the self-employment and small

business ownership among those facing a disability. Awareness is further hindered by a lack of confidence in individuals and limited support to engage in entrepreneurial endeavors from family and friends. Promotion and education around the viability, opportunities, and risks of entrepreneurship is a first step to increasing entrepreneurial engagement. In Europe, three groups have been identified as needing to be targeted, those with disabilities, their support networks, and business advisors. Through increased awareness, those with ideas and passion may be willing to take the initiative to achieve a business start-up.

As Evangelia and Manos suggest: *'Begin your search for an opportunity just like anyone else would; don't have the knee jerk reaction of thinking about everything in terms of your disability,' they said. 'Do what fits your style and matches your skill set'.*

Social entrepreneurs are motivated by **social** problems and challenges, inspiration, and previous personal experiences, as well as their **social** networks.

Employment is affected by many different economic and political factors, but ignoring the severe constraints posed by the environment and existing sources of wealth will be increasingly detrimental to business and workers. However, green technologies and green workplaces created through large-scale public and private investment could add new inspiration to labor markets. Green jobs also provide significant opportunities to reduce long-term structural poverty and consequently support livelihoods and incomes in several developing countries. These opportunities include significant support in recycling efforts, investing in biodiversity conservation, and turning agriculture more biologically and more sustainable to make it more resilient to climate change.

A fundamental need remains the institutional renewal and deeper cultural change: this requires moving away from a culture of conflict that is constantly discovering or inventing new or hypothetical adversaries and approaching a perception that different nations and political communities around the world have a major moral duty permanent and lasting peace not only with each other, but also with nature itself.

Local businesses and green employment can be key drivers in tackling and possibly overcoming persistent underemployment as a structural problem of local communities and emerging economies on a global scale.

The main difference between the activities of social entrepreneurs (for example, from traditional ones) is that they form a business model with unique characteristics. Its profit consists in increasing the social good and has the following characteristics:

- **Social impact:** the structure's activity is aimed at mitigating the pressing social problems.
- **Innovation:** in the process of their own activities, new unique methods of work are used.
- **Financial sustainability:** the company is obliged to solve social problems at the expense of the income that it receives from its own economic activity.
- **Scalable:** the ability of a social enterprise to transfer previously acquired skills to other organizations, markets and even other countries.

TIP: You can be informed and supported by various organizations and programs in matters of education, training and counseling and career support.

Visit the official site of **EOPPEP**, the *National Organisation for the Certification of Qualifications & Vocational Guidance*

<https://e-stadiodromia.eoppep.gr/index.php/chances-for-people-with-special-needs.html> &
<https://eoppep.gr/teens/index.php/amea>

Also you can be informed and inspired by a list of social enterprises in all partner countries which are available at <https://entre4all.eu/en/>

SECOND STEP: BE AWARE OF SPECIFIC SKILLS NEEDED FOR ENVIRONMENTAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP

ICT SKILLS

Basic ICT skills are essential for Environmental Social Entrepreneurship. The training material for the acquisition of digital related skills targeted to the needs of adults with disabilities is included in the General Modules as, Module 2- DIGITAL COMPETENCES.

Specific ICT skills in the field of Environmental Entrepreneurship are:

- E-books
- E-learning courses
- Business plan software
- Market research database

SPECIFIC SOFT SKILLS

- Communication Skills – Being able to communicate well with clients and partners is vital.
- Be a Team Player – As part of a team you are going to need to co-operate with others by encouraging and supporting your colleagues.
- Leadership with confidence
- Negotiation / Face and solve conflicts
- Organisational skills
- Environmental ethics
- Time Management – Important in any career, but lives could literally depend on how quick you act and how well you manage your time.
- Innovative decision making performance management - Strategic thinking
- Information management

SPECIFIC MARKETING SKILLS

- Good oral and writing skills
- Good communication skills - Be a great communicator
- Specific marketing policy, Strategic thinking - Know what it means to see the big picture and think strategically
- Creativity – Specifically in Social media marketing is not just cold hard tactics. It means understanding the creative process that provides creative content that engages with your customer and touches their hearts and not just their minds. Have an open mind and always be able to come up with fresh ideas
- Using the right tools - Be able to match the right tools with the task lying before them
- Analytical skills - Analyze the outcomes of their actions to improve their future results.
- Specific ICT skills for marketing
- Storytelling – building interest (being able to build interest, understanding of storytelling being an effective tool in understanding the customer experience and improving their buying path)

THIRD STEP: CREATION OF INDIVIDUAL BUSINESS PLAN

- Vision and objectives / detailing goals
- Preparation of a business plan for a social environmental entrepreneurial idea (market analysis, competitive landscape analysis, implementation plan, financial plan, advertising, measuring performance, providing guidance, growth and pricing strategy, risk analysis...)

The Business Model Canvas

Designed for: _____ Designed by: _____ Date: _____ Version: _____

Key Partners 	Key Activities 	Value Propositions 	Customer Relationships 	Customer Segments 
	Key Resources 		Channels 	
Cost Structure 		Revenue Streams 		

DESIGNED BY: Strategyzer AG
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You can also watch this video, in which is explained how you can create a Business Model Canvas:

- *The Business Model Canvas - 9 Steps to Creating a Successful Business Model - Startup Tip* - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IP0cUBWTgpY&t=87s>

Task: In the following link <https://e-stadiodromia.eoppep.gr/index.php/entrepreneurship-innovation.html> & <https://eoppep.gr/teens/index.php/businessman> you will find answers to what it means entrepreneurship or to be an entrepreneur and what are the key elements that characterize an entrepreneur. Then, through a series of questions you have the opportunity to discover your own personal characteristics and those skills that are related to the prospect of a business activity.