



Better Advocacy, Better Inclusion

Social priorities, participation, and advocacy practices

The experience of 23 Greek antiracist realities

NATIONAL REPORT Greece

Edited by

ONTIGONE

INFORMATION AND DOCUMENTATION CENTRE
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Introduction

The concept of advocacy as a social intervention on refugee/immigrant and asylum seeker issues is embedded in the Greek reality in the context of the action of entities in a formal or informal form. This intervention is either oriented to the broader context of defending rights, diversity, and vulnerable populations or specifically targeted to the refugee/immigration issue. We spoke to lawyers, psychologists, social scientists, educators, academics, artists, people in positions of power and decision-making, and others who worked in the field and came into daily contact with refugees/immigrants and asylum seekers. Many of them know each other, participate in common networks, collaborate, and fight for the same issues from the same or different levels.

The use of the term 'advocacy' in the Greek context is mainly found to describe advocacy at the legislative and legal level, hence at the level of authorities and institutional intervention. It is, therefore not a widely used term, especially at the level of everyday struggle for free access to services and basic goods, for respect and dignity. This is a multi-level and continuous effort aiming at an equal society in which basic rights are respected. However, the capacities of these entities in this daily struggle is strengthened through the existence of formal or informal networks. These networks emerged as a powerful response to the challenges that Greek society has faced in recent years and continues to face at a political, social and human level.

1. The National Context

1.1. A short review of the data indicating the state of refugee and migrant discrimination in Greece

The official data produced by the Greek governmental statistical agencies often fails to reflect upon indicators representative to discrimination and even less to the question of advocacy rights. There are though, some interesting data produced by other organizations and the government itself that give us a general picture of the degree of discrimination that refugees, asylum seekers and migrants face. Hate crimes constitute one quantitative indicator that could represent this degree of discrimination but beyond the direct xenophobic attacks, structural barriers to access to jobs, housing or education are the main definers of the daily discrimination that refugees suffer in Greece. Here below, you have a small take on significant recently collected data of these two dimensions of discrimination.

Hate crimes

According to Violence Recording Network from 2011 (first recorded year) until 2020, 1258 incidents of hate crimes have been recorded in Greece. 2017 was the year with most incidents recorded (128). Migrants and refugees have been the target of most of the attacks with a significant number of incidents against the LGBTQI+ individuals. Hence in 2018, 117 incidents were recorded: 74 were refugees and migrants, 27 LGBTQI community, 10 religious beliefs, 6 Greek Citizens victimized because of the color of their skin (Antigone 2019, 11). In 2019, 100 Incidents were recorded from which 51 were migrants, refugees or asylum seekers, 44 incidents were against LGBTQI+ individuals (Racist Violence Recording 2020, 9). The rest were attacks on Greek citizens on the grounds of religion. In 2020, 107 incidents were recorded: 74 against migrant, refugees or asylum-seekers or human right defenders attacked due to their association with these groups, 30 incidents against LGBTQI+ individuals and 3 were Greek citizen targeted because of their ethnic origin. Most of these attacks were perpetrated by Greek citizens who, in a significant portion were part of organized or semi-informal extreme groups but also people without any known political alignment (Racist Violence Recording 2021). The attacks reflect the need of migrants and refugees to be allowed to organize themselves to denounce this fact since it exists a deviation between those who were prosecuted and sentenced and the crimes recorded¹.

Structural discrimination: a glimpse on labor market and housing access discrimination

Despite the significance of the display of violence of hate crimes, structural discrimination, mostly derived from the difficulties to access to the basic material means to sustain life (jobs, housing or education), is the main problem that lures on the daily lives of migrants and refugees affecting their present and immediate future. Moreover, the overall relevant legal framework of Greece has deteriorated since a law published in May 2020 (Law 4686/2020) abolished humanitarian

¹ In 2013, 109 incidents were recorded, 9 people were prosecuted yet no one was sentenced, and in 2017 128 crimes were recorded, 46 people were prosecuted and only six were sentenced. One explanation for this deviation, however, might be the complexity of the Greek penal law as well as the time consuming legal process". (Antigone 2019, 8-9)

protection as of 01-01-2020 (retroactively). So, now there are no relevant provisions in place for applicants who do not meet the requirements for refugee status or subsidiary status but might meet those of humanitarian status. This negative development not only does not contribute to the achievement of social integration but also it puts it at risk.

According to the Greek Council of Refugees (2020, 182), "difficulties in accessing the labor market have been more marked for applicants residing in open mainland camps and/or informal accommodation. As of the end of 2020, less than 33% of the resident adult population (approx. 16,099 out of 28,356) had managed to obtain an AFM², and even less of the residents above 15 years of age had managed to obtain an unemployment card from OAED (10.57%). Asylum seekers have access to the labor market as employees or to the provision of services or work provided that their application for asylum has been formally submitted and they have received the card of the asylum seeker (article 71 of Law 4375/2016). However, in practice there are problems due to their condition as new entrants: valid certificate of enrollment in professional associations or for attending professional programs training, skills validation and flexible accreditation process, linguistic skills, lack of state-funded Greek language courses and social orientation / integration programs and the difficult situation that has been created in the labor market due to the economic crisis.

The situation is not better in housing. Despite implementing the National Integration Strategy (2019) that had labour, education and housing as main pillars for the integration of refugees and migrants, restrictive measures concerning access to housing by recognized beneficiaries have been implemented. This brought refugees and asylum-seekers live in very different conditions: from living in the overcrowded and insalubrious camps in the "hotspots" of the Aegean Islands, until the families who have been living in the apartments supported by ESTIA (Emergency Support to Integration & Accommodation). Although, according to the Immigration and Social Integration Code, holders of a single permit enjoy equal treatment with Greek citizens in terms of access goods and services and the provision of goods and services made available to the public, including housing (article 21A par. 1.i, Law 4251/2014), there are restrictions on equal treatment, inter alia, as regards access to housing in third-country nationals who are not working (Article 21A (3) (d)). So, in spite of the fact that the beneficiaries of international protection are entitled to social income benefits solidarity, the benefits / benefits associated with housing can be provided only to Greek nationals and EU citizens (such as student housing allowance, Law 3220/2004 (Government Gazette A'15 / 28.1.2004)).

ESTIA is a program lead by UNHCR in collaboration with the Greek government and the EU designed to house families in the process of becoming recognized beneficiaries. At the beginning of this program, recognized refugees had the right to remain indefinitely in the apartment. This was reduced to 6 months in 2019 and in 2020 to 30 days, which means that beneficiaries of ESTIA Program are obliged to leave their hotel or apartment within 30 days from the notification of the decision granting them the refugee status. In parallel to these restrictions in ESTIA, the government launched HELIOS "program which was presented as an integral program of integration which included housing. As of June of 2021, ESTIA along with HELIOS is in the process of being terminated and the second is waiting for new financing. Nonetheless, HELIOS has not been an accommodation program *per se* but part of a larger integration policy and it only offers rental

2 The AFM is the Tax Identification Number in Greece and it is mandatory to have in order to sign any job contract.

subsidies for a period of 6 - 12 months to recognized refugees who are eligible beneficiaries and who must secure a rental agreement under their name, as well as attend language and employability courses offered. Securing a rental agreement without a job is very difficult, hence the eligibility criteria for enrolment to HELIOS exclude a big portion of beneficiaries of international protection. Consequently, homelessness is increasing in the last months. This restrictive tendency was epitomized by the Minister for Migration and Asylum when in March 2020 stated “our aim is to grant asylum to those entitled within 2-3 months and from then on we cut any benefits and accommodation, as all this works as a pull factor [...] Greece is cutting these benefits. Anyone after the recognition of the asylum status is responsible for himself” (Greek Council for Refugees, 2021).

1.2. General picture of Civil Society Organizations in Greece

Greece has a formal civil society fabric below the European average with lower levels of civil society organization memberships or of voluntary work. Nonetheless, they exist informal linkages and organizations that accomplish a similar role than the one of civil society. The apparent weakness of Greek civil society is attributed on the one hand to legacy of the well-entrenched two-party (PASOK and New Democracy) clientelistic system that rule the country for decades. On the other hand, the central position of the Greek Orthodox Church in Greece, both within the state and in its religious and moral dominance in society, steers a dense formal and informal civic fabric that many people are part of (Huliaras 2013, 8 -11).

Since the 1990s onwards, NGOs began to flourish, often benefiting of EU funds, adding some new actors in the picture. A sustain increase of civil society participation continued in parallel to the growing political polarization in post 2008 economic crisis in Greece due to the implementation of highly unpopular cuts to the welfare state. In parallel and as a consequence of these policies, many organizations were born to counter the impact of a growing poverty in Greece. Hence, some of these organizations are taking care of people that until very recently were under the protection of the welfare state. Still, the “formal” civil society participation remains low when compared to other EU countries.

The refugee crisis came on top of this rapidly deteriorating social background that steered the creation of civil society organizations. Hence, the situation of migrants and refugees in Greece has been defined on the one hand, by the geographic position of Greece in the South-Eastern borders of the EU and by the global geopolitics in a very instable and conflictual middle-east which turned Greece into one of the main point of entry of the people escaping from conflicts. Refugees escaping from the Syrian War and its spillovers (Islamic State, Turkish Intervention Iraqi Kurdistan) are the most publicized but also we have people escaping from other countries in permanent conflict for decades such as Afghanistan plus economic migrants escaping from poverty. This situation though it became more problematic after the EU- Turkey Treaty was signed in 2016 that forced thousands of people to remain in Greece when most of them did not intended to. On the other hand, Greece was enduring an economic crisis and applying memorandums that weakened its welfare state and consequently, the capacity to answer to a humanitarian crisis of that caliber. This new situation created a new context of necessities in which new and old NGO's and CSOs have been facing until today.

The deteriorated economic situation of the Greek state emplaced governmental international organizations such as the UNHCR or IOM in key managerial positions. Despite of lacking of sovereign executive powers, these organizations have being crucial in the planning along with governmental authorities, often with tensions, of the response of this humanitarian crisis. Furthermore, these organizations have become a bridge between the Greek government and the EU and the Greek CSO's. As a result, many CSO's and NGO's working with migrants and refugees, have done it under the umbrella of these large organizations. Here we have organizations of different sizes working in different fronts often covering basic needs of the migrants and refugees that in principle, should be covered by the governmental effort. Hence, there are organizations with long experience, organizations founded to respond to the specific challenges arising in the last years and foreign organizations from all over Europe who have been working in Greece for years now. A considerable portion of the financing of this organizations comes from governmental funds, mainly EU. We tried to get a representative sample of this CSO picture and we could basically identify six types of CSOs working with refugees and migrants since the migratory crisis began. This categorization is permeable since there are networks such as the Advocacy Working Groups in which entities from different categories are part of.

1. Anarchist initiatives operating outside any governmental framework dedicated mainly housing but also having political empowerment in the center of their actions. The housing squats for refugees in Athens and Thessaloniki are examples of these initiatives.
2. Organizations founded to respond in specific areas to the needs and to respect the rights of the refugees due to the incapacity or unwillingness of the governmental institutions to do so. Here we have organizations such as Lesvos Solidarity, dealing with the consequences derived of the Lesvos hotspot, a humanitarian and legal black hole inside the EU.
3. Refugee and migrant founded organizations who are intensively working in all fronts (legal lobbying, work in the camps, teaching Greek language etc.) to preserve the rights of migrants and refugees. Most of these organizations were founded 10 to 15 years ago by young Greeks with migrant background and refugees. Their advocacy efforts have been intense. Here we have as examples the Greek Council of Refugees and Generation 2.0.
4. Education and Integration. There are many CSO initiatives who specifically work in the terrain of education to secure the education of children and keep them in the school system but also cultural initiatives conceived to bring art to migrants and refugees.
5. Middle-sized organizations who have been working in different fronts for the refugees. From legal counseling and advocacy to all matters concerning integration. Solidarity Now would be a good example of this relatively large organization. International organizations such as Terres des Hommes would fall in this category as well.
6. Public workers who work outside their jobs for the refugees. Finally, we have come upon many more or less informal initiatives involving state workers who have been working in parallel to their paid jobs for covering the needs of the refugees. Here we speak about teachers doing extra-working hours to preserve the education rights of the refugees or governmental officials who have confronted local politicians to secure basic rights such as access to the schools.

2. The results of the qualitative research

2.1. The methodology

The selection of organizations and entities included in the interviews was made through the axes on which we focused our research: education, housing, anti-discrimination. ANTIGONE's long experience and existing networks in the field guided our first choices of key persons, scientists, academics, professionals and NGO staff members, informal groups, artists, teachers, who offer services and are active on the refugee issue in Greece. We tried to have a relatively significant sample of the organizations working in these fields.

From 2015 onwards, in the first 'emergency' situations, with the large refugee flows in the Aegean and at the Greek borders, social reflexes rallied all social forces that existed at a formal or informal level. These people, many of whom had been providing services even before the refugee 'crisis', found themselves shouldering the serious and urgent needs of the arrival, care, and settlement of refugees. They organized their action and developed initiatives within Greek society, at local and national level, but also within the wider framework of the European Union and European legislation advocating for the rights of refugees.

The first approach to our prospective interlocutors was made in two directions: 1) towards existing ANTIGONE's networks and 2) towards entities whose work on the refugee issue had concrete and significant presence. Starting from these and their rich activity, our goal was to also reach out to grassroots organizations, entities and initiatives that have an active presence of intervention in the field.

We based our interviews on the common grid that was proposed by LUNARIA and discussed among the partners, specifying each time depending on the interlocutor and the work done. In the grid, but also all our interviews, three main directions stand out: a. the social needs to which each organization responds and prioritizes, b. the involvement of refugees/migrants themselves in the advocacy process, and c. the more specific reference to an exemplary case of advocacy.

Among the questions that we added to the grid and seems to be repeated in most of the cases are: 1) the relationship and the dialogue of the organization/group/initiative with the local authorities and 2) the way the organizations/groups/initiatives assess refugees' and migrants' needs.

2.2. The overall pictures of the results

a. Social needs/political agenda

The organizations and entities we examined have as their mission and purpose either broader action in relation to vulnerable groups and human rights, part of which are interventions on refugee, asylum seeker, and migrant issues, or they have been established and are exclusively concerned with solving problems around the refugee/immigration issue.

The social needs and priorities linked to the broader social issues as recorded through the interviews can be summarized as follows:

-Action related to children and youth: some organizations (e.g. ARSIS, Terre des Hommes, TEN-et GR, RefugeEduCare) respond to the needs of children and youth by orienting their action towards the proper implementation of children's rights and human rights as enshrined in the Greek and International Law through the UN pact for Children's Rights. The protection and the fight against exclusion, exploitation, poverty, abandonment, harm, victimization of young people are some of the objectives.

An important part of the action of these organizations focuses on children and young refugees, especially in terms of their connection with education and school. The focus of many entities' efforts on school communities and the issues that arise there is indicative of the great need, gaps, and dysfunctions on the part of state care. The efforts of the entities are related to linking refugee children to formal schooling. Their objectives focus both on purely educational issues - empowerment in school subjects, reducing school drop-out, ensuring systematic attendance of classes – and on community building, inclusion, and awareness-raising in the local community.

Another type of intervention relates to unaccompanied minors, the creation of safe spaces and shelters, as well as assistance in relation to documentation and asylum application procedures.

-Providing assistance and support to the most vulnerable groups: *Indicatively some of the most central areas of interest of the organizations are: planning and implementing projects of humanitarian and medical nature, ensuring safe access to vital services, protecting and empowering those facing social exclusion, homeless, trafficking victims, drug users, unaccompanied minors, refugees (eg Praksis, Solidarity now, the Greek Ombudsman).*

-Art as a means of social intervention. Two of the organizations (TEN-Et Gr, S.Mou.Th) consist mainly of artists. The programs they implement aim to raise awareness in society through art workshops and events on issues of diversity, disability, vulnerability. An important part of their action is the interventions on refugee/immigrant issues mainly through the implementation of workshops and artistic events with a mixed population.

The main social needs and the political agenda of organizations and entities acting exclusively on the refugee/migrants and asylum seekers issues, can be summarized as follows (UNHCR, Generation2.0, GFR, GFM, RefugEduCare):

-protecting human rights and ensuring safe access to basic goods

-ensuring respect for the right to apply for asylum and proper implementation of relevant legislation

- *ensuring equal participation*
- *empowering to self-advocate for their rights*
- *fighting racism, xenophobia, and discrimination*
- *promoting the inclusion of the refugee and asylum-seekers communities in Greek society*
- *promoting their demands for representation in the public debate in front of the State its institutions, and other political and social actors*
- *helping to foster solidarity and cooperation between the migrant communities existing in Greece, and between them and the Greek civil society*
- *promoting social cohesion, citizenship, and the fight against discrimination*

b. The internal participatory paths

The general picture concerning the participation of refugees/migrants themselves in the advocacy processes is that we do not often find initiatives coming from refugees/ migrants themselves, while at the same time the entities acknowledge that they have fallen behind with the participation of refugees in their advocacy work. The degree of participation in initiatives of the entities varies depending on the type and purpose of advocacy while in some cases, there is a dichotomy between the priorities of the organizations and those of refugees.

The reasons cited by our interviewees as key reasons for the difficulties in involving refugees/migrants more actively in different advocacy cases are:

a) from the refugees '/migrants' side: the predicament of the situation they find themselves in, as they have to struggle for survival daily, the uncertainty of daily life, bureaucracy, and numerous problems leave no room for collective action. The language barrier is also mentioned as an inhibiting factor, as well as the fact that Greece is often considered a transit place, and this prevents migrants/refugees from engaging in political questions or self-advocacy strategies in a continuative manner.

b. from the entities side: The reasons cited as obstacles are on the one hand the fast speed at which things often have to be done combined with the limited freedom of movement of refugees

living in the camps, language barriers, and even lack of trust. Most of our interlocutors seemed to be aware of the issue and want to get better results in the future.

However, there are entities that are either mainly composed of migrants or directly involve refugees/migrants in their advocacy efforts, letting them speak in the first person and empowering them to self-advocate (e.g., Greek Forum of Refugees, Greek Forum of Migrants, Generation 2.0). In many cases, these entities work as networks for the local refugee or migrant communities, and voice their needs through direct contact with the communities themselves, in the context of asserting autonomy.

Examples for advocacy through the asserting of autonomy are the housing projects, originating mainly from the anarchist space. In these cases, refugees move from the periphery to the city center, in an attempt to move away from the camps, to integrate into the urban fabric, and to become independent from the benefits and the life model imposed by the state. Self-organization, anti-fascist, anti-racist values frame these efforts.

The most common ways that CSOs include refugees/immigrants in their advocacy are:

- Through focus groups to explore issues, ideas, and proposals from the refugee/immigrant perspective
- Roundtable discussions
- Self-advocacy groups
- capacity building workshops, empowerment with tools for knowing their rights and advocate for their autonomy
- Include refugees and migrants in events, campaigns, conferences
- workshops and visits to the camps to discuss with the refugees and conduct an autopsy, to better assess refugee needs
- working to build and to empower the refugee community inside the camp, so that collective decisions can be taken and conflicts resolved by the refugees themselves
- integration of refugees/immigrants into the workforce of the organizations as employees, mainly as translators and cultural mediators, but also as members of their boards of directors.

Finally, special mention should be made of the support of the organizations for the few but important refugee initiatives, such as the Moria protest, which broke out because of the miserable living conditions in the camp. Organizations, such as Lesvos Solidarity, support these spontaneous initiatives by spreading their voice to the media.

c. Main typologies of advocacy experiences

The concept of advocacy is something that is found in the work of entities either as traditional advocacy actions or as social interventions, which while constituting advocacy are not referred to

as such. From our desk research and the 23 organizations' interviews we can conclude the following.

Advocacy actions usually refer to interventions at the political and legal level, in a regional, national, European, and international context. They ensure the correct and fair application of legislation, comment on draft laws, and lobby political bodies. In the same context, a transversal informal advocacy network of Greek NGOs, the Advocacy Working Group, has been established. Other advocacy activities that stand out as priorities are:

- First emergency aid, meeting basic needs on refugees' arrival, health care, accommodation, food, clothing, safe zones for unaccompanied children, and protection of the most vulnerable.
- Support at an institutional level from arrival to recognition of asylum, concerning access to rights and compliance with the law. This includes issues of reception conditions, registration and documentation procedures, asylum applications and procedures, obtaining residence permits, legal assistance, and strategic litigation before national and international courts.
- Support on issues of daily access to rights, equality, and meeting basic needs in everyday life. This includes advocacy within the host society concerning inclusion, which is usually translated to a constant struggle for dignity. Some of the most usual advocacy practices aim at raising awareness in the host community and support access to accommodation, health facilities, employment, smooth integration into the formal education system, empowerment of refugees/immigrants and their communities, self-advocacy, equal participation, social cohesion issues and fight against discrimination.

2.3. Single short sheets describing 23 advocacy initiatives investigated with the interviews

1. Charalampos Tsavdaroglou, academic

Name: Charalampos Tsavdaroglou, University of Thessaly/ University of Amsterdam

A short introduction of the association/campaign/informal group/movement: Charalampos Tsavdaroglou wrote a series of academic articles analyzing and theorizing the housing initiatives for refugees promoted by anarchist groups in Athens. His work brings to light many elements that can be very interesting for our project: the interaction with the refugees, their empowerment in a successful quest for an alternative model of integration that was met with hostility by the governmental authorities.

The main social needs: The main social needs that the housing initiatives lead by anarchists groups in Athens targeted were twofold. On the one hand, they wanted to provide housing, food and a place in which human dignity could be protected in contrast to the situation in the camps around Athens. On the other hand, the project aimed at bringing to the city of Athens the refugees in order to facilitate their integration and their life within the city.

The mission/political agenda: The move to the city within a squat shelter is per se political since it opens a new life horizon for the refugees. This is what steers the idea of empowering them through a horizontal models of organization that can construct a new space in which dignity, solidarity and inclusion can occur far from the oppressive limitations that these people have faced in the governmental camps. In short, the idea is to work beyond the limits that the nation-state.

The participatory path: The practice of autonomy was very clear in this squats. Self-organization is practiced from the beginning. The daily needs (cooking, guarding the doors of the squat, shopping etc.) are organized by themselves following a horizontal framework in which the roles are shifting all the time to avoid the accumulation of power.

One exemplary policy advocacy initiative: City Plaza in Athens put in practice this participatory path. The synergies that that this path created among the different groups of people facilitated the structuring of a heterogeneous group that created linkages of solidarity because of the daily work in the kitchens, cleaning, etc., but also it helped to overcome language barriers by an interesting melting of languages that each group was learning from the other just to communicate. But most importantly, City Plaza in Athens became a space of freedom and dignity far from the institutional dehumanization and atomization of the camps in which migrants and refugees could again think about the meanings of their existence.

2. ARSIS worker working in ESTIA program

Name: Giorgos Stefanidis

Association: ARSIS - Association for the Social Support of Youth

Town Athens, Thessaloniki, Volos, Alexandroupoli, Kozani, Tirana

Website: <http://www.arsis.gr/en/home/>

A short introduction of the association/campaign/informal group/movement: ARSIS – Association for the Social Support of Youth is a Greek Non-Governmental established in 1992, whose work mainly targets young people. It operates in all the territory of Greece, implementing actions, projects, and services aiming at creating equal opportunities for all young individuals. Among these services, there are psycho-social support, preparation for employment, legal support, educational support, temporary housing and food services, social and recreational mobilization. Among their people of concern, there are also refugees and unaccompanied minors, who are the targets of many projects and activities of the organization. ARSIS advocates for youth rights, provides social support for youth, manages shelters for unaccompanied minors, engages in non-typical education and human rights issues. The advocacy strategy of the organization has a human rights and social approach, trying to advocate for issues that are important for the whole population, but with a focus on minors, youth, and child protection. ARSIS implements a Pilot Program of holistic support and hosting of unaccompanied minor refugees, aiming at their social integration: the structure where it is implemented operates in a calm, social, urban environment, with complete and recently renovated facilities, which accept a strictly limited number of minors, 15 in number, attending / participating in: • school curriculum, • psychosocial support • legal support • creative activities in the community, • sports activities, • visits to museums and cinemas, • excursions and participation in a hangout with other minor teenagers, always accompanied by a competent person of the hostel. ARSIS also participates in the implementation of the ESTIA program of housing for vulnerable asylum-seekers and is part of the Advocacy Working Group, a self-organized network of NGOs in Greece creating initiatives and task forces for advocacy.

Giorgos Stefanidis works for ARSIS and he directly participated in the ESTIA housing program for asylum seekers applied by the governmental authorities.

The main social needs: ESTIA program was the most ambitious housing program for asylum seekers families put in motion in the last years. ESTIA was design to house asylum seekers during the process of gaining refugee status and in principle, they would be allowed to continue living in the assigned apartment once their status was recognized. The idea was to have a decent housing to secure the rights of the refugees in order to start better the integration process. ARSIS was helping in this process and they basically witnessed the deterioration of the ESTIA during the years with constant cuts starting in 2019 that ended in June 2021 with the termination of the project.

The mission/political agenda: The role of ARSIS was to help the families with the paperwork especially young adults which were they quite unaddressed by the authorities and try to guide

refugees to an autonomous life helping not only housing and guidance to find a job with the ultimate goal of inclusion in mind. They were addressing any problems regarding the living conditions of the refugees once they were settling in the apartments. They also help them with any problems they could have with the local neighbors.

The participatory path: According to Stefanidis, it is difficult for people to organize themselves to fight for their rights. Without the help of the locals, it would have been almost impossible for them to organize. They need a graduate exposure to the administration by providing them information and make them understand the logic of the administration. Vulnerability leaves little room for self-organizing. Their job to help them to deal with the encountered frustrations and help them to set realistic goals

One exemplary policy advocacy initiative: Organizing workshops to understand work rights: what is an insurance, what is the enrollment of the tax office and service? This initiative was very important for them to enter in the labor market and avoid exploitation even if they worked in low-paid jobs. Another example was trying to help them to integrate them in the local football clubs of the region of Macedonia using sport as a means for inclusion. Despite not achieving the objectives, these initiatives showed the limits and problems that the Greek football association poses to the refugees.

3. Theodoros Karyotis, academic

Name: Theodoros Karyotis, Ghent University

A short introduction of the association/campaign/informal group/movement: Theodoros Karyotis is an academic from Ghent University who wrote a straightforward article titled *"Criminalizing solidarity: Syriza's war on the movements"* which dealt with the reaction that the state had against the alternative housing refugee shelters in Thessaloniki back in 2016. In addition to this, Karyotis has written about the notion of "commons" and generally we could say that he is interested on democratic empowerment. This interview wants to touch upon first about the insides of the relation between social movements and refugees in the last years in Greece (2015-2021). Secondly, how the coincidence in history between the refugee crisis and the anti-austerity measures has shaped the relation between social movements within the notion of the commons and how this has been put in motion.

The main social needs: When it comes to social needs, the research field experiences of Karyotis showed that these were general. Housing, access to labor, preservation of basic rights, migrants and refugees did not have these basic needs protected. In a nutshell, human dignity was really threatened. The squatting projects that became housing projects tried to read this needs integrally and try to build the housing as an answer to these.

The mission/political agenda: The political agenda of the squatting houses was to overcome a solidarity based on assistentialism to a solidarity based on autonomy. On the other hand, the idea was to lead an initiative beyond the borders established by the governments who were evidently oppressing migrants and refugees. The notion of advocacy is inherent in this struggle, since basically any action that is undertaken within this frame empowers the position of migrants and refugees hence favoring their capacities to become political.

The participatory path: The practice of autonomy was very clear in this squats. Self-organization is practiced from the beginning. The daily needs (cooking, guarding the doors of the squat, shopping etc.) are organized by themselves following a horizontal framework in which the roles are shifting all the time to avoid the accumulation of power. The synergies that these creates among the different groups of people facilitates the structuring of an engaged group that later can more easily face the challenges of inclusion.

One exemplary policy advocacy initiative: The Orfanotroteio Squat in Thessaloniki put in practice this participatory path. It was run by a big assembly that would accompany the refugees politically and organizationally and would also cater for many of their needs, which were very pressing, because it was a humanitarian emergency. The coverage of the main needs derived to a very political process of self-management within the squat, engaging ppl, etc. Orfanotroteio shelter project ended abruptly in late July 2016 when riot police operation evicted everybody living there and immediately later the bulldozers rolled in to demolish the building and transport their inhabitants to camps. The state put down by force an interesting project.

4. Lesvos Solidarity

Name: Quentin Brzustovski

Town: Mytilene (Lesvos)

Website: <https://lesvossolidarity.org/en/>

A short introduction of the association/campaign/informal group/movement: Lesvos Solidarity is a Greek NGO officially registered in 2016 and born from a part of the solidarity network “The Village of Altogether”, which, back in 2012, had started hosting refugees in the Pikpa camp on Lesvos. Pikpa was an abandoned children’s summer camp belonging to the State and handed over by the Municipality to the solidarity network. Pikpa was a unique initiative and an alternative model to the official camp system run by the State, a place of solidarity, inclusion, and active participation, and the first open Greek refugee camp. Unfortunately, Pikpa was evicted in October 2020 by the State authorities.

After the enforcement of the EU-Turkey statement in March 2016, the number of refugees in Lesvos sharply increased. Therefore, to better respond to these challenges and better manage the donations, Lesvos Solidarity was founded as an official NGO. Since then, Lesvos Solidarity has been developing actions to support refugees and locals, such as the Mosaik Support Centre, a social center in Mytilene that offers activities and educational trainings, or the Asklipios medical center, a clinic that offers services both to refugees and locals, connecting them with public services and offering psychosocial and health support. The organization holds workshops to create job opportunities for refugees and develop their skills, it has opened a new housing program for women and for women with children, it provides mental health, medical, and social support. It creates activities for refugees to connect them in the local society, and it advocates for their human rights.

The main social needs: Lesvos Solidarity strives to secure access to documentation, protection, and dignified reception conditions, which have been progressively cut by the Greek government after recognition of the refugee status: public services, health, and social security. The organization also fights for their access to the most basic rights, such as food, shelter, and sanitary facilities, which in many RICs and mainland camps are still a big issue.

The mission/political agenda: To provide community-based solidarity spaces, give dignified reception and support to people in need, promote integration, and advocate for human rights and an inclusive society.

The participatory path: Already in the Pikpa camp, the solidarity network worked to build a community inside the camp so that refugees and asylum-seekers could take collective decisions on the use of space, express their needs, and resolve their conflicts by themselves. Many actions in which Lesvos Solidarity participated came spontaneously from refugees, such as the protests in the Moria camp protests in 2017, to which the organization provided its support. Lesvos Solidarity

supports and empowers these spontaneous initiatives by informing people on their rights and on the risk they may face, by spreading their voice to the media and sometimes giving practical support. The organization has also hired refugees in its staff as interpreters and cultural mediators.

One exemplary policy advocacy initiative

In 2017, the Moria camp had serious problems with food, electricity, wash facilities, and in general, with the most basic services. Therefore, a strong movement of residents of the camp started to organize themselves and to protest for these problems, as well as to ask for the ability to travel. In this way, the movement of protest “#opentheislands” was created, which was a very strong and meaningful initiative. The protest was very well organized, it came directly from the grassroots movements of asylum-seekers and not from local organizations pretending to speak for them. Lesvos Solidarity provided them with a space to meet and to discuss their actions by opening the Mosaik center to them, and it also helped them in brainstorming their ideas, in reporting, in spreading the voice through the media and to other organizations, and it participated directly to the protests. The refugees asked them to be present as much as possible in their activities since they believed that the presence of the "white people" could lead the authorities to react differently to their actions.

5. Katerina Rozakou, Academic

Name: Katerina Rozakou Panteion University of Social and Political Sciences in Athens

A short introduction of the association/campaign/informal group/movement: Katerina Rozakou is a researcher that has been writing, among other topics, on the insides of bureaucratic registration of migrants and refugees. She developed the concept of "non-recording" which highlights how authorities act as if bureaucracy would be working perfectly when in reality it has systemic flaws. She argues that the point is to show the "presence" of the state despite of the flaws and to emphasise that even these "failures" can be used as assets to achieve certain political goals.

The main social needs: Rozakou's research theorizes but also shows in practice the display of force of the state in the border. Recording migrants and refugees in a hotspot like Lesbos might be a very chaotic process in which many irregularities mostly because of incompetence and lack of resources. Still, recording is essential since it categorizes people and depending in the category they fall, they might have very different life paths. The help that NGOs provide in this particular context of the hotspot arrival is very important since the state "recording" machinery might be malfunctioning. Non-recording, might mean non-categorizing but it means as well, non-registering and living people in a legal and life limbo.

The mission/political agenda: Rozakou shows us with her research the importance of recording and the impact that this has in the life of people. NGOs work in this particular case is very important since they act as a shield for the rights of migrants and refugees when they face the border control. Also, the research showed, on the one hand, how travel documents are often a contradictory concept for people who never had to use them or simply do not have them and, on the other hand, the incapacity of the authorities to deal with that. One could as well distinguish how some groups of people had more problems than others to pass the recording process once they were entering the island of Lesbos. This research was undertaken in 2015 before the EU-Turkey treaty was signed. So, time at this moment matter, since most of these people were transiting Greece

The participatory path: Rozakou's research shows in relation to advocacy, that recording is an essential part of it and that the first step for advocating and empowering refugee's rights is to be sure that they are properly treated and recorded in the borders, since the state's fetishism of bureaucracy, despite of its irregularities, can be one of the main problems for their empowerment.

One exemplary policy advocacy initiative: Rozakou showed in her research plenty of initiatives from many NGOs who rapidly realize that this process was not undertaken properly by the Greek border authorities and this was going against the rights of the migrants and refugees

Sources:

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/314126792_Nonrecording_the_European_refugee_crisis_in_Greece_Navigating_through_irregular_bureaucracy

6. Greek Forum of Migrants

Name: Henri Hysenbelli

Town: Athens

Website: <https://www.migrant.gr/cgi-bin/pages/index.pl?arlang=English&type=index>

A short introduction of the association/campaign/informal group/movement: the Greek forum of Migrants is a federation network of migrant and refugee communities, the biggest of this kind in Greece, with about 40 members from migrant-based organizations and communities. It is active since 2002, holding almost 20 years of experience, and it functions as a union body. It promotes migrant inclusion in Greek society by involving migrants themselves and their needs in their activities. They conduct a variety of actions and promote several services to these ends. It is also part of the Advocacy Working Group network.

The main social needs: GFM defends the rights of migrants and addresses their problems by promoting their demands for representation in the public debate in front of the State, its institutions, and other political and social actors. Moreover, it helps to foster solidarity and cooperation between the migrant communities existing in Greece, and between them and the Greek civil society. It also works to promote equal rights and non-discrimination towards them, as well as their inclusion in Greek society.

The mission/political agenda: the main pillars on which the organization bases its activities are equal rights, social cohesion, citizenship, and the fight against discrimination. Their mission is to promote migrant's integration "by enhancing their individual and collective responsibility and participation, through collaboration with institutions, NGOs and society on a national and European level" (Greek Forum of Refugees, n.d.)

The participatory path: the Greek Forum for Refugees makes sure that migrants are involved in all its activities and at all levels. The interviewee itself is a 2nd generation migrant from Albania working for the organization. They involve migrants and collect their views through their network of contacts with the presidents or the representatives of the migrant communities on the territory: in this way, they shape each activity around their needs. They also involve them in the life of the organization as volunteers. Before the pandemic, their office was opened and offered advice and help to every migrant that asked for their assistance. Now, the office is close to the public, but they try as much as possible to provide this service by email, social media, and phone calls.

One exemplary policy advocacy initiative

The GFM participates in the Migrant and Refugee Integration Councils. These are structures created in 2010, when migrants could vote and get elected in the municipal elections, in order to give them a forum where they could speak about their issues and promote their rights. After the law allowing them to vote was found unconstitutional, they stopped pursuing this "first objective", but they continued to exist, and now different organizations from civil society working in the field of migration are part of it, together with some representatives of the migrant communities themselves. The councils work as advisors to the local authorities, to whom they can make

proposals, though not binding. It is a way for migrants to be in contact with the municipality and express their thoughts more directly. They express both the views of migrants and refugees, whose needs in terms of integration in the Greek society are actually very similar. However, one major flaw of this initiative is that only participants of officially constituted entities, such as NGOs or migrant communities, can participate, therefore it is not a body that is open to anybody who wants to express his or her views.

Another important campaign that was implemented by GFM is “Do it Like Portugal”, trying to raise awareness about the exclusion suffered by refugees and asylum-seekers in the access to health during the first stages of the COVID-19 pandemic. The name of the campaign refers to the policy of free access to health for everybody implemented by Portugal during the pandemic. In Greece, the situation was way different: in fact, refugees and asylum-seekers had limited access to the AMKA, the Greek social security number needed to access health services, and therefore, if they had health problems, they had to pay all the treatments on their own. However, equal access to health is not only important to avoid discrimination, but also to avoid the spread of the pandemic.

The activities mainly involved a social media awareness campaign, and letters to the ministries of Health and Migration to inform them about the ongoing situation. Being implemented in the very first stages of the pandemic, it was not possible to run roundtables nor events.

At the moment, the Greek government has issued a new social security number specific for asylum-seekers, the PAAYPA, but there are still several issues with its functioning.

Sources: Greek Forum of Refugees. (n.d.). Who we are. Greek Council of Migrants. Retrieved June 4, 2021, from <https://www.migrant.gr/cgi-bin/pages/index.pl?arlang=English&argenkat=&arcode=170123194122&type=article>

7. Greek Forum of Refugees

Name: George Stefanopoulos

Town: Athens

Website: <https://refugees.gr/>

A short introduction of the association/campaign/informal group/movement: the Greek Forum of Refugees is an association created in 2012 acting as an umbrella for formal and informal refugee communities. It participates in wider advocacy networks both at the national and European level, and in 2019, in advance of the local, national, and EU elections, it formed a Self-Advocacy Team composed of refugees, asylum-seekers, migrants and second-generation Greeks that were trained and empowered to become able to advocate for their own rights. Its activities are directed at advocating for the rights of refugees and asylum seekers, empowering communities and individuals through self-advocacy and capacity-building, informing them about their rights and obligation, and raising awareness on their major issues. The GFR has created an online information platform that aims to inform every refugee and immigrant who needs to get in touch with institutions and organizations, which offer all kinds of social benefits in all areas of social inclusion. This is achieved by their direct access through the aforementioned online information platform that is posted in a special category on the site of the Hellenic Refugee Forum (<http://refugees.gr/>) at a section titled “social benefits”.

The main social needs: GFR promotes the inclusion of the refugee and asylum-seekers communities in Greek society and empowers them to meaningfully self-advocate for their rights.

The mission/political agenda: GFR supports and advocates for the rights of asylum-seekers, refugees, migrants and stateless persons in Greece.

The participatory path: through the Self-Advocacy Team, the GFR includes active members of migrant and refugee communities to promote their civic engagement and to empower them to advocate for their rights. They are trained through capacity-building workshops and then participate in events, campaigns, conferences and roundtables of the association. The philosophy behind this initiative is that “there are no better advocates for refugees and migrants than refugees and migrants themselves” (Self-Advocacy Team, 2020)

One exemplary policy advocacy initiative: in November 2020, the Self-Advocacy team has conducted an interesting initiative about the issue of undeclared labour, which is a very sensitive issue in Greece. The initiative was supported by PICUM-Platform for International Cooperation on Undocumented Migrant, and it consisted of two seminars, the first with representatives of the communities to gather information on the situation of undocumented labour in Greece, while the second webinar involved state officials, lawyers and advocacy officers from prominent NGOs, to initiate a discussion with the community representatives on the issues arising from the previous webinar.

Sources: Self-Advocacy Team. (2020, June 10). *Who we are*. S.A.T. - Self Advocacy Team. <http://selfadvocacy.gr/who-we-are/>

8. Generation 2.0 for Rights, Equality, and Diversity

Names: Erjona Balani Sotiria Chira

City: Athens

Website: <https://g2red.org/>

A short introduction of the association/campaign/informal group/movement: Generation 2.0 RED is a non-profit organization composed of people of different origins, mostly 2nd generation young people. It was founded in 2013 with the primary aim of promoting the establishment of a legal framework on citizenship for 2nd generation migrants. Now that this goal has been mostly achieved in Greece, the main target has evolved to comprehend the right to citizenship of migrants in general and the lawful residence of migrants, overcoming the problems that arise during their path to integration. It does all this through actions involving, for example, targeted research on the new bills concerning citizenship and residence that are discussed in the parliament, making comments, and suggesting proposals in order to make sure that the law is not threatening the rights of migrants, as they did regarding the law 45/47, which aimed at establishing, inter alia, strict financial criteria for awarding Greek citizenship. Moreover, it raises awareness about the problems and obstacles faced every day by migrant communities through press releases, and it tries to bring locals and migrants together through social events. It also provides services such as job counselling, legal counselling, intercultural mediation, and nonformal education.

The main social needs: Generation 2.0 works for promoting the right to citizenship for migrants, as well as to help them overcome the obstacles during their path towards residency and integration.

The mission/political agenda: The mission of Generation 2.0 is to promote equal participation in a diverse society and empower the communities, promoting human rights, equality, and diversity, fighting racism, xenophobia, and discrimination.

The participatory path: The staff of Generation 2.0 involves many 2nd generation migrants, but also refugees that work as translators. In their everyday work, they empower migrants and the migrant society through seminars and workshops, providing them with the tools for being aware of their rights and advocate for them autonomously. In this way, it encourages them to be an active part of society and participate in the political debate. They also collect stories and information about the current issues through their legal counselling services, which then serves as a basis for the advocacy campaigns it puts in place.

One exemplary policy advocacy initiative: Due to the Covid19 pandemic, many of the challenges faced by the migrant community were brought to light, especially regarding the procedures for obtaining residence permits. Therefore, Generation 2.0 has collected a number of real stories coming from people to which they were providing their legal counselling services, and they created an interactive map on their website that gathers together all these problems, synthesizing and explaining them to the general public in a simplified way. They also publicized the initiative through the media and showed the map to the Ministry of Migration. The ultimate goal was to raise awareness among the general public on the issues faced by migrants in their path towards residency in Greece. The map is available at the following link: <https://g2red.org/mapping-of-challenges-in-lawful-residence/>

9. International Organization for Migration

Name: Konstantinos Kousaxidis

Town: Athens

Website: <https://greece.iom.int/en>

A short introduction of the association/campaign/informal group/movement: the International Organization for Migration is an intergovernmental organization with a longstanding international experience on migratory issues, assisting governments all over the world in managing migratory flows, promoting the understanding of migratory issues, encouraging social and economic development through migration, and upholding the human dignity and wellbeing of migrants (International Organization for Migration, 2018). It has housing structures in the cities of Serres and Drama, with 650 and 400 residents respectively, and it has renovated housing structures in 7 regions of Greece (Attica, Central Greece, Northern Greece) with an emphasis on safety and quality of life for residents. In Greece, it cooperates with the Greek authorities and the civil society to put in place several activities and to provide a number of services. During the past two years, in collaboration with the Greek government and its partners, IOM has managed the HELIOS project, the official accommodation and integration project for refugees in Greece.

The main social needs: IOM's main activities in Greece concern integration of recognized refugees into the Greek society; assistance to voluntary returns; relocation to the other EU Member States; Site Management Support and temporary accommodation facilities management support; safe zones for unaccompanied children; provision of health services (International Organization for Migration, 2021a)

The mission/political agenda: the main priority of IOM in Greece is to support the government in dealing with migration issues and migration management, now mainly focusing on integration.

The participatory path: IOM is conducting a survey among its beneficiaries to measure their degree of satisfaction with their services under the HELIOS project and get regular feedback on them, which then is incorporated into the implementation of the project. The Program includes five Actions: a) Integration Greek language courses, b) Supporting beneficiaries towards independent accommodation, c) Supporting self-employment, d) Monitoring and regular evaluation of the integration progress of the beneficiaries concerned, and e) Awareness raising of civil society (in reception areas). Moreover, many people get in contact with the project staff and express their views about it. It also receives feedback through focus group discussions, where people are invited to discuss a specific issue, and they support the organization of the representatives of migrant and refugee communities inside the Refugee and Migrant Integration Councils, helping to facilitate the communication between the Greek representatives and the foreign representatives.

One exemplary policy advocacy initiative: from June 2019 to February 2021, IOM has managed the HELIOS project, which included a series of activities: support to recognized since 1.1.2018 refugees towards independent accommodation in apartments through contributions to the costs; integration courses (Greek language, cultural orientation, job readiness); employability support. The project also included regular assessment of the integration process of the beneficiaries, and

several activities to sensitize the host community about migratory issues by creating opportunities for exchange between migrants and locals. These included workshops, events, and a nationwide media campaign. (International Organization for Migration, 2021b)

Sources: International Organization for Migration. (2021a, January 27). *IOM Greece*. <https://greece.iom.int/en/iom-greece>

International Organization for Migration. (2018, April 3). *IOM Mission*. <https://greece.iom.int/en/iom-mission>

International Organization for Migration. (2021b, June 22). *Hellenic Integration Support for Beneficiaries of International Protection (HELIOS)*. <https://greece.iom.int/en/hellenic-integration-support-beneficiaries-international-protection-helios>

10. UNHCR Greece, Head of Sub-Office Northern Greece

Name: Luca Curci

Town: Athens, Thessaloniki, Ioannina, Evros, Lesvos, Chios, Samos, Leros, Kos, Rhodes

Website: <https://www.unhcr.org/gr/>

A short introduction of the association/campaign/informal group/movement: The Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees in Greece is running since March 2015, and it supports and assists the State in the development and consolidation of its asylum system. From 2015, it has been at the forefront in supporting the Greek government in handling the refugee crisis. From 2017 'til September 2020, its main activity has been the management of ESTIA, the official housing and integration program for vulnerable asylum-seekers providing them with accommodation and with a number of integration services. After handing out the housing component of ESTIA to the Greek government in September 2020, UNHCR Greece is now refocusing its priorities towards integration and access to the territory and asylum, fostering the creation of the conditions for meaningful inclusion of refugees and asylum-seekers in the Greek society. It monitors the implementation of national asylum legislation and the adherence to asylum procedures, and it provides capacity-building to the Greek government to implement this legislation. Through its monitoring activity, it also has the opportunity to advocate for refugee and asylum-seekers rights and to intervene in cases of breaches of national or international refugee law, also by following up allegations of pushbacks, detention, and fundamental human rights violations. It has also conducted public awareness-raising and information campaigns trying to redress and correct the predominant narrative about refugees and migrants through social media, radio programs, videos, and public initiatives. Finally, it has, through Programs, aimed to highlight and document the particular problems faced by refugees and asylum seekers with disabilities and chronic illnesses, as well as their families, and has contributed to the empowerment of these groups so that they can claim themselves effectively their rights.

The main social needs: UNHCR responds to the basic needs of refugees and asylum-seekers by providing first emergency aid, distributing essential goods, improving shelter and infrastructure, providing protection to the most vulnerable individuals, providing information, interpretation, psychosocial support, and intervening in the health and education sectors.

The mission/political agenda: the main purpose of UNHCR is to protect the rights and guarantee the well-being of those who have been forced to flee, ensuring respect for the right to asylum and the provision of long-term solutions.

The participatory path: UNHCR Greece ensures that the actual needs of refugees and asylum-seekers are incorporated in its strategies, and lately, it has pursued this aim through the mobilization of refugee communities, understood as congregations of individuals with different backgrounds and needs, and not as single, homogenous entities. The organization is also working to activate refugee and migrants' integration councils.

One exemplary policy advocacy initiative

The refugee and migrants' integration councils are public entities foreseen by the legislation that serve as institutional fora for refugees and migrants to bring up their issues, problems, and

instances to be discussed with the municipalities. However, despite being official entities foreseen by the law, the Councils are still very embryonal, and they are fully operational only in few Greek cities, such as Ioannina and Larissa. For this reason, UNHCR Greece is working to fully activate and capacitate these councils by facilitating the communication between refugees and local authorities through the creation of a network of community mobilizers, selecting a number of refugees that voluntarily decide to engage themselves in facilitating the communication between refugees and authorities. In this way, it encourages refugees to follow the public discourse about integration policies, it raises awareness on the active role that refugees can play in the host society, and it makes sure that the needs of refugees and asylum-seekers are better incorporated in public policies.

11. ARSIS - Association for the Social Support of Youth

Name: Mihalīs Vasilakis

Town Athens, Thessaloniki, Volos, Alexandroupoli, Kozani, Tirana

Website: <http://www.arsis.gr/en/home/>

A short introduction of the association/campaign/informal group/movement: ARSIS – Association for the Social Support of Youth is a Greek Non-Governmental established in 1992, whose work mainly targets young people. It operates in all the territory of Greece, implementing actions, projects, and services aiming at creating equal opportunities for all young individuals. Among these services, there are psycho-social support, preparation for employment, legal support, educational support, temporary housing and food services, social and recreational mobilization. Among their people of concern, there are also refugees and unaccompanied minors, who are the targets of many projects and activities of the organization. ARSIS advocates for youth rights, provides social support for youth, manages shelters for unaccompanied minors, engages in non-typical education and human rights issues. The advocacy strategy of the organization has a human rights and social approach, trying to advocate for issues that are important for the whole population, but with a focus on minors, youth, and child protection. ARSIS also participates in the implementation of the ESTIA program of housing for vulnerable asylum-seekers and is part of the Advocacy Working Group, a self-organized network of NGOs in Greece creating initiatives and task forces for advocacy.

The main social needs: ARSIS aims at targeting poverty, neglect, victimization, conflict, disapproval, exploitation, isolation, school drop-out, and many other issues that arise among youth.

The mission/political agenda: Its main mission is to prevent youth exclusion and to promote the rights of children and young people as enshrined in the Greek and International Law through the UN pact for Children's Rights.

The participatory path Part of the mission of ARSIS is to respond to the actual needs of the people they work for. For example, refugee children's needs are taken into due consideration while designing the advocacy strategies through workshops and focus groups, asking for their ideas and proposals. Concerning the work done with the Advocacy Working Group, refugees are often invited to participate in round tables in first person. ARSIS has also hired some refugees and second-generation migrants in its staff.

However, the biggest issue recognized by the organization is the dichotomy between what the organization prioritizes, such as education, and the priorities of the refugees themselves, which are often different and more practical.

One exemplary policy advocacy initiative

The biggest action ever implemented by ARSIS has been a huge campaign of child protection in favor of Albanian children in the 1990s, who faced very harsh conditions. The campaign targeted both the Albanian and the Greek governments, and it ended with the creation of an ARSIS office in Tirana and the creation of a transnational agreement between Greece and Albania about child protection and migratory flows between the two countries. The activities involved policymaking,

newspaper articles, roundtables, discussion with the Albanian ministers, and the drafting of the international agreement, which was undertaken by ARSIS itself.

Another interesting initiative is the Task Force on education of the Advocacy Working Group, led by ARSIS together with Terre des Hommes, which aims at promoting access to schools for refugees and asylum-seekers, who, due the lack of adequate technologic means and internet connection, have been largely left out of the school system during the pandemic. This is a cross-cutting problem that involves several governmental areas: indeed, one of the biggest issues in Greece is the lack of connection between different branches of the public sector, and the Task Force has therefore tried to achieve its objectives also by targeting this issue. The activities involved the drafting of an open letter to the Ministry of Education, a meeting with the ministry, the creation of a dialogue between the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Migration, the organization of a round table with representatives of different ministries to connect the different branches of the government.

12. Greek Council for Refugees

Name: Spyros V. Oikonomou

Town: Athens, Thessaloniki, Ioannina, Evros, Chios, Kos, Leros, Samos, Lesvos, Rhodes

Website: <https://www.gcr.gr/en/>

A short introduction of the association/campaign/informal group/movement: the Greek Council for Refugees is a large and highly experienced Greek NGO providing a wide array of services to refugees and asylum-seekers. It provides interpreters/cultural mediators, advocates for and informs the public about refugee rights and their living conditions, it has a legal unit of more than 70 lawyers providing legal services to refugees and asylum seekers, it provides psychosocial support, social services, and support to the integration process in the Greek society. GCR has consultative status in the UN ECOSOC, it is an operative partner of UNHCR, it is a member of ECRE (European Council on Refugees and Exiles) and SCEP (Separated Children in Europe Program), and it participates in the National Committee for Human Rights (EEDA). The main focus of its advocacy activities is access to asylum and the situation of the islands, as well as European cooperation and solidarity in the reception of refugees.

The main social needs: GCR focuses on all facets of refugee protection, from access to the territory up to inclusion and integration, and it aims at responding to the whole array of needs of the beneficiaries that arise during this process.

The mission/political agenda: the goal of the organization, as stated in its Statute, is the development of activities for refugees and asylum-seekers, aiming at ensuring their dignity, self-preservation, respect for their human rights, and inclusion in the Greek society. It also aims at raising awareness and educating the public about these issues (Greek Council for Refugees, n.d.).

The participatory path: For its advocacy projects, GCR tries to collect feedback on the ground and to directly assess the needs of the refugees and consult them regularly, to structure their reports and actions based on what these people perceive as priorities. It includes the perspectives, opinions, and requests of asylum-seekers that benefit from its services, or it conveys the view of the people it reaches through its staff on the ground or by visiting refugee camps. It also directly involves refugees in interviews from the press, letting them answer in first person, and it asks them to directly speak with the reporters from the organization when they collect data and information to write reports. Many of the staff members of the organization are refugees themselves, and there is always a member of the board of directors that has a refugee background. The GCR has also created groups of women who are active in the camps in collaboration with psychologists /social workers and lawyers with the aim of informing and empowering the rest of the female population.

One exemplary policy advocacy initiative

GCR was invited by the European Commission to speak about the situation in the Greek islands at the European Parliament, together with some representatives of the DG HOME. This allowed the organization to gather some comments from the beneficiaries and to bring them to the European

Parliament: in this way, it conveyed their actual words, opinions, beliefs, and requests about the situation in the refugee camp. GCR did so by asking them three questions about what it means to live in a refugee camp, and what they wanted to ask the EU itself about this situation. Some of the replies to these questions were brought to the discussion in the European Parliament, while others were collected in a follow-up document and sent after the discussion. The intervention received some critiques, but generally, it resonated positively with many MEPs. According to the view of our interviewee, this intervention helped the MEPs to perceive refugees and asylum-seekers as human beings and not mere numbers, and thus, it rehumanized the issue.

Another important initiative started in February 2020 was a project on the relocation of unaccompanied minors. At that time, there were about 5000 unaccompanied minors in Greece, a huge number that required attention, and they often lived in precarious situations without safety. The campaign started with some letters to the competent ministries and some public announcements highlighting and explaining the situation and asking for solidarity from the other EU countries, trying to develop a "coalition of the willing" that would welcome these young people in their countries. It also involved a collaboration with stakeholders in other EU states, for example in Germany, where they promoted relocation. The purpose now is to have a second round of this initiative and to include not only unaccompanied minors, but refugees in general. Now, in Greece, relocation schemes for unaccompanied minors have been established, mostly as a consequence of the publicization of the situation in Evros and Moria, and the civil society efforts in general sensitively helped to improve the situation.

Sources: Greek Council for Refugees. (n.d.). GCR - STATUTE. Retrieved June 15, 2021, from <https://www.gcr.gr/en/mission-statement>

13. Greek Ombudsman Office

Name: Aggelina Sora

Town: Athens

Website: <https://www.synigoros.gr/?i=stp.en>

A short introduction of the association/campaign/informal group/movement: The Greek Ombudsman's guiding principle and drive as a mediator is its commitment to the win-win approach, i.e. visualizing solutions from which both the citizens and the administration can benefit. The Independent Authority stands by the citizen affected by the financial crisis; it investigates problems caused by legislation or administrative acts or omissions and undertakes targeted initiatives, building on the expertise it has developed so far and the enhanced competences it enjoys. In addition, the Ombudsman acts as guardian of the people's rights in both the public and private sectors, with a special emphasis on monitoring and promoting the implementation of the principle of equal treatment, the rights of the child and the rights of vulnerable groups. The Ombudsman is also competent to issue regular special reports against torture and ill-treatment, which can reveal violations of refugees' rights since they have visibility and draw the attention of media.

The main social needs: The Greek Ombudsman is often approached by persons with disabilities, persons who have been victims of unequal treatment, arbitrary treatment by the administration and authorities, prisoners on issues of living conditions and arbitrariness. Among the most frequent petitions received by the Ombudsman's Office are those of refugees and migrants on citizenship issues, but also on living conditions, asylum, legal assistance, residence permits, access to the health system, employment and education. Special reference is made to the very frequent interventions on issues of VAT (ΑΦΜ) number and Social Security Registration Number (ΑΜΚΑ).

The mission/political agenda: The priority of the Ombudsman is to protect the rights of citizens who are residents of Greece. The scope of their work concerns the action of the public administration on issues such as the protection of rights, equal treatment, public health, taxation and, in general, issues of daily life that affect the residents of the country.

The participatory path: There is a direct and open dialogue with asylum seekers, refugees and migrants. Either through the autopsy in the camps or because the Ombudsman's work is widely known. Many migrants approach the Advocate on their own, but in the case of refugees there is usually an intermediary, a lawyer or an organization.

One exemplary policy advocacy initiative: Interventions at the institutional level are very important because their results affect a large number of people. One example is the ongoing intervention in relation to the Social Security Registration Number and

the VAT number. Without them, it is impossible to find a job or to have free access to the health system. The Ombudsman's interventions, for example, have also made it possible for asylum seekers to access the health system by issuing a temporary number.

In addition to these interventions, very important are also individual cases, where the Ombudsman intervenes to resolve specific issues where refugees' needs conflict with administrative issues.

14. Refugee Education Coordinator in Ritsona, Ministry of Education

Name: Pepi Papadimitriou

Town: Chalkida/Ritsona Camp

A short introduction of the association/campaign/informal group/movement: Pepi Papadimitriou is a high school teacher who became Refugee Education Coordinator of Ritsona Camp (Chalkida). She had to confront the mayor of Chalkida to secure the access to education right of the children of the camp. She is one of these examples of public workers who, just to fulfil their obligations, end up becoming models of endurance against reactionary authorities who want to dilute the rights of the refugees.

The main social needs: The needs of camps like Ritsona are many but Ms Papadimitriou's job consisted in securing the access to the public schools of Chalkida of the children of the camp and help on their education by collaborating with the NGOs that are bringing educational material, by being in contact with the families of the children in the camp and dealing with all the problems derived from the closure of the schools because of Covid-19.

The mission/political agenda: The mission of this lady was simply to ensure that the rights of the children inhabiting the camp would be respected. Her mission as a public worker became very political when the managing of the school buses who were transferring the hundreds of children of the camp to the school in Chalkida was transferred from the IOM to the municipality of Chalkida. The mayor decided to stop sending the buses to the camp effectively diluting the children right to school.

The participatory path: The response of the camp was immediate with children and families demonstrating for their right to education. From her position Papadimitriou, supported these demonstrations and responded to the needs of the families who tried to organize themselves schools in the camps by coordinating the help of the NGOs for school material.

One exemplary policy advocacy initiative: In this context, the most notorious initiative was the letter that Pepi Papadimitriou wrote for the press confronting the mayor of Chalkida in public and accusing her of not respecting basic children rights protected by the Greek law. She also brought the case to the Ombudsman. The case became known nationwide and only after the pressure of the judicial authorities became evident, the mayor gave in to the demands. The judicial authorities only stepped in when the case became a topic in the public opinion. This initiative was successful in their objectives but also created awareness about the educational rights in Greece. Finally, the advocacy for children rights united the different national groups of the camp to fight for one goal empowering them and also generated interesting self-organization initiatives within the camp for the struggle of the access to school rights but also to continue some educational paths even when the children could not go to school.

15. RefugeEduCare

Name: Olga Kalomenidou

Town : Thessaloniki

Website: <https://refugeducare.blogspot.com/>

A short introduction of the association/campaign/informal group/movement: RefugeEduCare is an association of volunteer teachers supporting refugee children in their path towards inclusion in formal Greek education. It started with a summer school in a shelter for unaccompanied minors in 2018, and now, the volunteers hold lessons in shelters all year long, with the purpose not only of filling the gaps in the education of these young people to prepare them to enter the formal education system, but also to establish a relationship with them in order to encourage them to go to school. RefugeEduCare has a mailing list of about 100 available volunteer teachers, of which 20 actively give lessons at the current moment. The others taught in the past, participate in other activities of the association or might be willing to teach in the future. Apart from lessons, the association promotes other initiatives, such as a pilot program where they proposed some changes in the current school program for refugee children and a guide about the formal education system directed to shelter staff.

The main social needs: the Greek State does not promote any policy for actively encouraging refugee children neither to join formal education structures, nor to ensure that they actually attend school. Moreover, refugee children and their parents have little information about the formal Greek educational system, while drop-out rates are extremely high among refugee children. RefugeEduCare tries to solve all these problems by connecting these children with the formal school system and giving them the tools and skills needed to follow the lessons and be included in the mainstream classes, enabling them to pass to the next class without dropping out.

The mission/political agenda: The ultimate goal of the group is the smooth and equal integration of young refugees in society through inclusion in formal education.

The participatory path: RefugeEduCare inaugurated the institution of “educational sponsorship”, where a volunteer from the association undertakes the role of the “educational contractor”. With his/her knowledge of the conditions and processes of Greek public education, the contractor supports three or four refugee students in their daily school attendance, by dedicating one or two afternoons per week to meet them and discuss their experience, their issues, and helping them with their lessons. The contractor also interacts with the school teachers, discussing with them the difficulties and peculiarities of each student. Moreover, the association assesses the needs of the unaccompanied minors by talking with the NGOs managing the shelters.

One exemplary policy advocacy initiative: On the 15th of June, an EPAL refugee student was removed from the Panhellenic Examination and was ordered to leave the room before he could complete his exam, due to the opposition of one teacher that refused to award him with the minimum grade to be admitted to the exam. However, this grading was not connected to the performance of the child, but instead, to his behavior in class. RefugeEduCare notes that the performance of the student in all subjects is above the average of his class, and therefore, the low grade given by this teacher is considered arbitrary. Therefore, the association is supporting this

child to be admitted to the exams, by first trying to contact the teacher, and then, when he refused to speak, by encouraging the child to write a report to the Ombudsman. The association is also organizing a campaign for the support of this child by spreading the issue in the media and also by organizing a demonstration that, at the time of the interview, was still to take place.

16. Synergy of Music Theatre (S.Mou.Th)

Name: Andreas Almpanis

Town: Larissa

Website: <https://smouth.com/pf/detalks-project/>

A short introduction of the association/campaign/informal group/movement:

The fundamental aim of S.Mou.Th. is to offer young people and adults a permanent home for training, practice, education, creation, inclusion, research and professionalization in the performing arts and media, and through this process, to reinvent the means of artistic expression. The work of SMouTh, both locally and at European level, includes educational programs, cultural events and social activities, professional theatre, musical theatre, opera productions, and the organization of two annual festivals.

The main social needs: In Larissa, where S.Mou.Th is based, the local community had not dealt with the refugee issue at all until 2016. The sudden arrival of the large refugee wave created strong reactions and the need for awareness raising campaigns was obvious.

The mission/political agenda: Between the artistic activities and with art as a vehicle, S. Mou.Th creates interventions in the local community of Larissa, on issues of inclusion of vulnerable populations. The projects that have been implemented so far are related to disability, accessibility and the inclusion of refugees.

The participatory path: There is very little initiative from refugees because of the lack of trust caused by the bureaucratic system in Greece in relation to important issues, their papers, access to health care, the asylum process. This leads refugees to want to leave Greece and not to take the initiative to participate and fight for their political rights.

One exemplary policy advocacy initiative: The DeTalks project, was an educational program aiming to support linguistic education, by incorporating other crucial aspects of communication. Non-verbal communication, body language, facial expressions, volume and tone of voice as well as our own image and behavior can convey information effectively and can make a real difference in the communication with others. It was something innovative for the society of Larissa, as the participation and direct involvement of the local community was foreseen in the design of the program. Specifically, it included the local youth, especially young people with fewer opportunities who, while acting as linguistic peer coaches, were familiarized with the cultures of their newly arrived peers and minimized in this way xenophobic feelings and attitudes.

17. Intercultural High School of Evosmos

Name: Veroniki Tsougrani

Town: Thessaloniki

Website: <http://dge.mysch.gr/site/>

A short introduction of the association/campaign/informal group/movement: The intercultural high school of Evosmos is part of the formal intercultural education of the Greek public school system. The school has refugee reception classes, where mainly language is taught. Outside the school timetable, on the initiative of the teachers, the students participate in joint artistic activities, with the aim of the effective inclusion of refugee students.

The main social needs: The inclusion of refugee children in the school environment and the wider local community constitutes the main social need. Through the education and socialization offered by the school community, the aim is for refugee students to learn the language and become familiar with the new reality in which they find themselves. The systemic approach of difficulties, getting refugee parents to know the school environment and their frequent visits to the school, are part of the school's policy.

The mission/political agenda: The school teachers have understood that the inclusion of refugee students in the school environment is a complex process that goes beyond language learning and other school subjects. Many of them, coming from war, with the trauma of loss and living in the uncertainty of camps or temporary shelters, have needs that are not covered by the provisions of the Greek state mechanism. The priority of the school is to address these multiple needs.

The participatory path: The school includes refugee students in all its parallel activities, such as celebrations and artistic performances. Refugee students are particularly happy to take part in the events because it is usually easier to participate without the language restriction. These are events of an intercultural nature or dance performances, where the expression and participation of refugee students becomes easier.

One exemplary policy advocacy initiative: Participation in artistic events and performances, which is not provided for by the Greek Ministry of Education, but is an additional initiative of the school itself. School festivals always become an opportunity for cultural exchange, even at Christmas or the celebration of national anniversaries.

Examples of such events: -the Greek pupils danced Kurdish dances and sang Kurdish songs together with the refugee pupils.

-Every Christmas they all dance a tango together.

-Everyone participates in the dance performances, they are all influenced by each other, they actually coexist, laugh and become friends.

18 Solidarity Now

Name: Lefteris Papagiannakis

Town: Athens, Thessaloniki

Website: <https://www.solidaritynow.org/en/>

A short introduction of the association/campaign/informal group/movement: Solidarity Now is a Greek NGO dealing with vulnerable groups, be they Greeks, refugees, or migrants. Among its priorities are social integration, unaccompanied minors, education, and human rights defense, and it delivers a number of services and programs in collaboration with international humanitarian agencies such as UNHCR, UNICEF, IOM. It also intervenes in refugee camps to support the most vulnerable people. In its “Blue Refugee Center”, funded by the UNHCR, it operates multiple Greek adult classes, according to the different levels of students. It also organizes interpretation seminars for interested beneficiaries who already speak English or Greek and another rarer language. The seminars focus on specialized interpreting techniques, such as interpreting in a hospital or meeting with a psychologists. Its advocacy activities put pressure on the authorities at the local, national and European level. It is an active member of the Advocacy Working Group.

The main social needs: Through its services, it aims at ensuring that the most basic needs of refugees and asylum-seekers are covered, such as health services and food aid, access to school and hospitals. At the same time, it advocates for human rights and the inclusion of everyone.

The mission/political agenda: “[...] to support the most vulnerable members of our society indiscriminately, through innovative social actions.” (Solidarity Now, 2020)

The participatory path: Solidarity Now encourages the civic and political participation of refugees and migrants through institutional programs such as the Councils for Migrants and Refugee Integration, to whom it participates as an observer. Through its staff working on the ground in refugee camps, it collects relevant information to present policy provisions and advocate for change.

One exemplary policy advocacy initiative: Through the Advocacy Working Group, Solidarity Now has participated in an initiative creating a task force for the right to education of refugee children.

With the Advocacy Working Group as well, in October 2020 the organization participated in the drafting of an open letter calling for an investigation into all allegation of unlawful returns of asylum-seekers to Turkey, together with other 28 human rights and humanitarian aid organizations. The action was developed with the support of the Greek Ombudsman.

It also participated in the letter advocating against the suspension of the asylum process in Greece in March 2020, which received the support of around 200 European NGOs.

Sources: Solidarity Now. (2020, October 15). VISION & ACTION. <https://www.solidaritynow.org/en/orama-praxi/>

19. Terre des Hommes Hellas

Name: Melina Spathari

Town: Thessaloniki

Website: <https://www.tdh.ch/en/our-interventions/greece>

A short introduction of the association/campaign/informal group/movement: Terre des Hommes is an international organization for the protection of children. Although it is not strictly a refugee nor migrant organization, it targets refugee children with specific projects, especially in Greece, where the needs of migrant and refugee children are those mainly targeted by the organization. Another priority of TdH in Greece is the promotion of the establishment of a child-friendly, restorative justice system.

TdH has been working in several open accommodation facilities on the Greek mainland, providing child and family protection interventions such as mental health services, legal support, case management, skills building, capacity-building, assistance to access to public services and provision of essential items. These services are offered also to unaccompanied children. Moreover, it trains professionals and NGO staff members who work with children and in open accommodation facilities for refugees. On their social media platforms, they provide constant news and updates from camps, and they conduct several advocacy actions targeting the migrant agenda, both with public actions and with letters to relevant political figures. It is an active part of the Advocacy Working Group, the informal network of Greek NGOs where many organizations meet for discussing issues, define collective strategies and interventions. The Working Group is spontaneous and mutable, it does not have a legal form or a formal status, and each organization is free to choose whether to participate in each activity. TdH Hellas is the coordinator of the Task Force on education promoted by the Advocacy Working Group.

The main social needs: TdH responds to the needs of all children, striving to protect them from abuse, neglect and harm, and especially in Greece, it responds to the needs of migrant and refugee children, to improve their reception conditions and protection.

The mission/political agenda: Its mission is to guarantee a childhood for every child, to empower every young person, and to engage communities ("**For every child, a childhood. Every young person empowered. Every community engaged**" (Terre des Hommes, n.d.))

The participatory path: TdH does its best to include the voices of refugee children and their families in its advocacy work by frequently visiting camps and interviewing them to get first-hand testimonies. They also managed to invite a refugee child to speak at a Zoom conference on education. However, TdH laments that, in general, civil society organizations do not manage to include these people enough in their advocacy strategy, whereas Terre des Hommes itself faces a series of obstacles to their involvement, such as their limited freedom of movement from camps and language barriers.

One exemplary policy advocacy initiative

In March 2020, a serious asylum crisis between Turkey and Greece erupted: Turkey opened its frontiers letting asylum-seekers cross the border to Greece, and on the other hand, Greece issued a ministerial decree suspending all asylum procedures for these people and refusing to accept their

asylum requests. It has also been documented that the Greek government participated in pushbacks at the Greek borders, leaving people stuck in the border zone between the city of Evros and Turkey. These events were worrying and serious and provoked a loud reaction from the Greek civil society. In particular, Terre des Hommes launched a call to action that ended with the drafting of an open letter denouncing the situation supported by about 200 organizations from all Europe, a success without precedents in terms of numbers, but also related to its impact. In fact, the fellow organizations participating in the action spread the initiative in their countries and among their national authorities through their national media, managing to raise awareness across Europe about the issue. In the end, the European authorities contacted the Greek government asking to repeal its decision, and the Greek government revoked it.

Terre des Hommes structured its action around some first-hand testimonies that it was able to collect from journalists in the border zone, and thanks to the information provided by other organizations from the network that spoke directly to some of the refugees coming from Evros. The sharing of information among the advocacy network was of primary importance for the success of this initiative, and it still is in every action.

Sources: Terre des Hommes. (n.d.). Vision and Mission. Retrieved June 10, 2021, from <https://www.terredeshommes.org/about/mission/>

20. Refugee Support Aegean

Names: Natassa Strahini and Minos Mouzorakis

Town: Athens, Chios, Lesbos

Website: <https://rsaegean.org/en/>

A short introduction of the association/campaign/informal group/movement: Refugee Support Aegean is a non-profit organization offering legal support to asylum seekers and refugees, monitoring the Greek asylum system and reporting human rights violations on the Aegean islands and the mainland, and advocating for humane policies in Greece and Europe. In their advocacy activity, they intervene in the lawmaking process through detailed legal and impact analysis of the law proposals affecting refugees and asylum-seekers and presenting suggestions and alternatives more in favor of refugee rights by publishing detailed commentaries on the public consultation forum and direct discussion with the parliamentarians.

The main social needs: RSA works to ensure that the rights of refugees and asylum-seekers are respected by offering support in the whole path from arrival to recognition and integration, focusing on legal assistance and strategic litigation before national and international courts. They struggle to secure very basic rights such as access to health, safe accommodation, and, after recognition, to labor and education, but also family reunification, promoting transfers of unaccompanied children and vulnerable groups from camps to more dignified accommodation facilities, and trying to stop the returns of recognized refugees and asylum-seekers from other EU countries to Greece.

The mission/political agenda: RSA aims at protecting refugees and asylum-seekers, with a focus on the most vulnerable groups, by providing legal, social, and humanitarian individual assistance, advocating for the right to a fair asylum procedure, the prohibition of torture and ill-treatment, and the principle of non-refoulement, and raising awareness to fight racism and xenophobia and promote human rights protection. The overarching objective of RSA is to promote a functioning and protective Greek asylum system.

The participatory path: The legal cases usually come to RSA through referrals, and, to a smaller degree, through people in the field, intermediaries, and collaborations with other organizations (e.g. Mediciens Sans Frontières). Moreover, they make sure that their views are incorporated in their reporting and documentation work, for example through roundtable conversations. They also include them in the staff of the organization thanks to their background.

One exemplary policy advocacy initiative: RSA made a remarkable effort to make sure that the International Protection Act of 2019 was brought in line with EU law, in particular with the Asylum Procedures Directive, by presenting twenty main commentaries to the law proposal. These commentaries included provisions on the processing of asylum claims of vulnerable asylum seekers, on how to take into account sexual orientation, gender, mental health situation, and concrete examples of how procedural support could be granted. The approach used by RSA was that of the comparative analysis: it provided concrete examples coming from other States, such as the Netherlands, of how to handle asylum claims of vulnerable people. Moreover, it tried to ensure that border procedures were correctly applied: according to the EU law, border procedures can be

applied only for the admissibility of cases and for manifestly unfounded cases, while, until recently, the Greek law was broader on the possible reasons to apply these procedures. Now the law fully reflects EU standards in this sense, while unfortunately, the policies on the ground have not changed substantially.

On March 2021, on the occasion of the 5 years of the implementation of the EU-Turkey deal, RSA held an online discussion entitled “EU-Turkey ‘Agreement’ – 5 years of shame: Through the eyes of those who experienced it”, where both refugees and locals were invited to talk in the same panel. The main point discussed was the EU-Turkey deal and its impact on the islands. Moreover, RSA financially supported one of the refugees to produce a video in order to show the situation of asylum-seekers, the limbo where they live during the processing of their asylum requests, and how they interact with the locals, also showing some bad experiences.

21. European Wergeland Centre

Name: Iro Potamousi

Town: Oslo, Norway (with field staff in Greece, Bosnia-Herzegovina, and Ukraine)

Website: <https://theewc.org/>

A short introduction of the association/campaign/informal group/movement:

"The European Wergeland Centre (EWC) is a resource centre on education for intercultural understanding, human rights and democratic citizenship." (European Wergeland Centre, 2020). It has been established by the Council of Europe and Norway in 2008, and it serves all 47 member states. Its offices are located in Oslo, Norway, but it also has field staff in Greece, Bosnia-Herzegovina, and Ukraine.

The main social needs: through the Schools for All project, EWG works in Greece to train educational staff to make sure that refugees are duly welcomed and included in schools and are provided with quality education.

The mission/political agenda: EWC's main objective is to help to build a culture of democracy, tolerance and human rights through the education systems of the member countries.

The participatory path: The Schools for All project's final beneficiaries are refugee students themselves, whose inclusion is the primary aim of the project itself. Through the project, all children, including refugee children, are empowered and equipped with the instruments for being aware of their rights and to speak out about them. The project also has an assessment phase after the first three months of implementation in each school, to rearrange and adapt the plan to the peculiarities of each environment.

One exemplary policy advocacy initiative

"Schools for All" is a project implemented in Greece by EWC Norway with the collaboration of the Ministry of Education and the Institute of Educational Policy (IEP), funded by the "Local Development and Poverty Reduction" program. The project aims at building an inclusive and safe school environment for all children, in particular refugee children. Under the project, first, a number of trainers are trained by four "expert trainers" in order to acquire the necessary skills to interact with the school staff. Then, the participating schools send three representatives each who meet with the trainers and the "expert trainers" to understand the philosophy behind the project and to receive advice on how to better integrate refugee pupils. The output of the meetings is a custom action plan drafted for each school, with very specific suggestions and a timely schedule of the activities to be implemented. Then, the plan is applied to the schools, and after three months of implementation, the school staff meets again the trainers to provide their feedback on the plan, which is readapted and rearranged, while good implementation practices are collected and shown. At the end of the school year, there should have been a final event where the schools present their achievements, which has not happened yet because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The project started in 2019, so it was conceived before the pandemic, whose impact forced the organization to adapt its strategies accordingly. However, it was very difficult for the teachers to reach refugee children during the pandemic, a problem that goes well beyond this project. Some schools reacted positively to these challenges and managed to implement their plan

notwithstanding the situation, while in another case, the school did not manage to adapt to the changes and only a small group of teachers continued to implement the project. Unfortunately, some schools completely stopped implementing the project.

Sources: European Wergeland Centre. (2020, October 13). About us. The European Wergeland Centre. <https://theewc.org/about-us>

22. Hellenic Theatre/Drama & Education Network (TENet-Gr)

Name: Jenny Karaviti

City: Thessaloniki

Website: <http://theatroedu.gr/en/>

A short introduction of the association/campaign/informal group/movement:

The HELLENIC THEATRE/DRAMA & EDUCATION NETWORK (TENet-Gr) is an association of teachers and artists for the promotion of research on and practice of theatre, educational drama and other performing arts within formal and non-formal education. Since 2015, the TENet-Gr has organized and implemented in Greece in association with and the support of UNHCR Greece (UN Agency for Refugees) the **'It could be me-it could be you' project**. It is an awareness raising project, targeting the educational community at large, on refugees and human rights using experiential learning, theatre and educational drama techniques. It aims to raise awareness on human rights and refugee issues through educational workshops and seminars and to support schools and teachers who work or want to work on relevant school projects.

The main social needs: TENet-Gr responds to the need for social awareness within the school community, addressing teachers, parents and students. Their interventions through the art of theatre have aimed to raise awareness, inform the Greek society and contribute to the inclusion of refugees.

The mission/political agenda: Among the aims of the program is to reach a big number of the Greek school community members and disseminate as widely as possible experiential educational methods on human rights and refugees. This is reflected in the large numbers of participants and its numerous actions aimed at reaching the general public.

The participatory path: While it started as a program to raise awareness in Greek society, following the changing needs with the settlement of refugees and the enrolment of refugee students in Greek schools, it changed its structure and content, adding actions to support inclusion. In spite of the fact that cases of initiatives by refugees themselves to participate in the program are rare, the enthusiasm of refugees who are invited and participate is high. Also, the three-day theatrical workshop, that is one of the basic activities of the program, ends with an interview game. In this, the interviewee is a refugee who is invited to share his/her story, answer questions and discuss with the participants, teachers, artists and facilitators.

One exemplary policy advocacy initiative: Part of the 'it could be me it could be you' project are two sub-actions:

1. "Together" – joint actions for local and refugee youth populations. With the view to create opportunities and preconditions for coexistence and meeting between local student population and refugee children accommodated in

different locations and facilities, joint creative actions are designed and promoted. These include activities to be organized mainly in the urban context such as common workshops for local and refugee youths, organizations of visits to museums, street happenings, attendance to music, dance and theatre performances etc. Such activities can facilitate intercultural communication, breaking the ice between the two populations, fighting fear and stereotypes, while mitigating the sense of marginalization among the refugee population. Design of such activities are based on an assessment of needs and possible partners to these actions (schools involved in the project, competent central and local authorities and civil society actors etc.), in consultation with UNHCR, and taking into account any special conditions at local level and the evolving refugee situation. Workshops, museum or performance visits, street happenings etc. are organized for local and refugee youth, so that they can play and create together.

2. 'Monologues across the Aegean' permitted 28 unaccompanied refugee children to tell their stories, the difficulties and challenges they went through, but also to reveal their hopes and dreams. The final aim of the project was to record the stories of these young people into a book, enabling them to express themselves and empowering them. The Monologues included, as a first step, a series of 20 workshops held in Athens and Patras where unaccompanied refugee minors participated voluntarily. There, through theatrical techniques, art, and creative writing, 28 stories emerged, speaking about the stories of these young people, their journey and the tragic events they went through, but also about their hopes and dreams: in this way, these could be conceived not only as stories from refugee children but also as stories from simple teenagers.

The outcome of the workshops was a book with 28 stories. As a next step, the stories were disseminated among groups of Greek young people in schools, who gave voice to these stories by making a theatre play. In this way, a process of communication between refugees and Greek young people was created. The project enabled the group of young refugees to represent their community and their people, share their stories, and thus, it improved their self-awareness and empowered them to be more active citizens able to claim their rights.

Sources: <http://theatroedu.gr/en/What-we-do/Projects/It-could-be-me-it-could-be-you/What-it-is>. Retrieved June 11, 2021

23. PRAKSIS

Name: Marianella Kloka

Town : Athens, Thessaloniki, Patras, Lesvos, Samos, Chios

Website: <https://praksis.gr/en-about/>

A short introduction of the association/campaign/informal group/movement:

PRAKSIS is a Greek NGO providing support to vulnerable social groups. Its beneficiaries are people facing social and/or financial exclusion, such as poor people, homeless people, uninsured people, migrants, refugees, asylum-seekers, unaccompanied minors, victims of trafficking, sex workers, drug users, Roma, HIV seropositive people and people with AIDS, prisoners and former prisoners, and many more. Its activities focus on service provision as well as lobbying and advocacy. As far as migrants or asylum-seekers are concerned, it works both in reception points and in the main Greek cities, it supports unaccompanied minors and vulnerable adults in RICs, and it offers shelter, health services, and education in the mainland. More specifically, in consultation with teachers, PRAKSIS used to accompany refugee students an hour earlier to school so as to prepare them for the day's lesson. It also collaborated with UNICEF and the Ombudsman for a smoother enrollment of refugee children in schools and for the isolation of racist phenomena by school principals or employees of Secondary education offices that prevented their enrollment. Before the pandemic, it also organized social events where the unaccompanied minors could meet the local population.

The main social needs: the services provided by PRAKSIS include free healthcare, accommodation, psychosocial support, job counselling, legal counselling, interpretation and cultural mediation, basic hygiene services, and clothing. As far as unaccompanied minors are concerned, it manages several shelters for them, as well as a pilot program of semi-autonomous apartments.

The mission/political agenda: PRAKSIS's work is directed at eradicating social and economic exclusion of vulnerable individuals and social groups, and enhancing social (re)integration and inclusion (Praksis, 2020)

The participatory path: the needs of the beneficiaries are mostly assessed by the service staff, such as psychologists and social workers, who speak directly to the beneficiaries and then refer the problems they meet to the advocacy team, which develops its strategy accordingly. The advocacy team also met them directly on some occasions, during festivals or other events, and asked them questions about their situation. Moreover, the semi-autonomous accommodation project is a good opportunity for empowering unaccompanied minors and encouraging their independence. In shelters, they introduced a "buddy system" where refugee adolescents being in Greece for longer help their peers, introducing them to the Greek reality through the eyes of a refugee.

One exemplary policy advocacy initiative

From 2016 till today, PRAKSIS has put in place an intervention to solve the issues that refugees meet with their social security numbers (PAAYPA, AFM and AMKA). Migrants and refugees meet a number of problems related to the social security numbers: for example, some officials of the KEP offices (Citizens Service Centres) usually accept requests from people without the numbers, while others not, and the number of accepted and rejected cases varies greatly from one municipality to another. So, first of all, the advocacy team identified who was responsible for these problems and at which level, and it was not easy, since it was a joint ministerial decision. Therefore, it addressed its advocacy plan to several ministries. They tried to find allies inside the public administration that could work from the inside to bring the respective actors accountable for these problems, they monitored the situation and talked with governmental actors to inform them on the situation. After that, they went public through press releases and interviews in the press, explaining what was happening and what the problems were. This produced interesting results: the Secretary-General of Migration brought some of the KEP managers to court, and the former government issued a joint ministerial decision clarifying how these offices should act in these situations. Unfortunately, the current government has reframed these issues, so the organization is still advocating for this matter.

Since 2014, PRAKSIS started a campaign against the use of the term “lathrometanastes”, a Greek word indicating “illegal immigrants” in an offensive manner. It got in contact with all the members of the Greek parliament individually, explaining the problem and the idea behind this word, and its meaning. The president of the parliament, in 2015, introduced PRAKSIS’s arguments during the assembly process to discourage the use of these terms among MPs. Nowadays, this word is recognized as offensive and not to be used during civil discussions among democratic and human rights-oriented people.

Sources: Praksis. (2020, April 5). About. <https://praksis.gr/en-about/>

3. Conclusions

Greek society from 2015 to date has had to respond to large waves of emergencies in relation to what is called the 'refugee crisis'. The Aegean Sea and the Greek borders became the focus of international interest, the place of negotiation of destination and reception, but also, unfortunately, very often of violent incidents, conflicts, push-backs, boat sinks. The rallying of social forces and the social reflexes of the early days were called upon to respond to complex and immediate needs, from the rescue of refugees in the Aegean to the first survival needs, the registration and identification process, the observance and respect of asylum procedures.

In the prevailing situation of solidarity with refugees, hate rhetoric comes alongside opposing social forces, usually motivated by nationalist and far-right groups. Incidents of racist attacks are often and, as no stable and long-term political plan for the absorption and integration of newly arrived refugees is in sight, violence is on the increase. The reactions to the attendance of refugee children in Greek schools with demonstrations and rallies, attacks on buses transporting refugees, nationalist events outside refugee camps are just some examples of the growing reaction of part of Greek society to the new situation.

On the opposite side, organizations and informal groups intervene to solve difficult and pressing needs, while others are being created for the same reason. These social groups are coexisting, networking, and developing advocacy strategies. The many different levels that need intervention, shape the forms that the entities' advocacy action takes. Advocacy in the legislative framework, at a national and international level, monitoring and lobbying for fair and social European legislation and advocacy strategy in the courtrooms, are cases that the organizations we have spoken to describe as advocacy strategies. Other forms that advocacy is particularly common, even though it is not referred as such, are at an institutional level of refugee registration and reception, in the dialogue with local government and local authorities, in the asylum process, in free access to rights and social services, in the right to housing, food, education, employment. The general picture from the entities we interviewed is that advocacy strategies on refugee and migrant issues in Greece are a continuous and uninterrupted complex process, starting from the level of everyday life in the neighborhood and reaching to international law and its implementation. One element that seems to be frequently repeated in the interviews, is that none of this would have been possible without the networking and meaningful cooperation of organizations, informal groups, and progressive social forces.

Even if they are explicitly recognized or not by the entities, advocacy generates synergies that would not per se be recognized as "political empowerment" but nonetheless, are intimately related to it. Here we are thinking about dynamics of group that break atomization processes that haunt the refugees and migrants when they are physically and mentally enclosed within the limits established by the

governmental plans. Hence, the idea of recovering “dignity” is not an abstraction but it relates to a very practical display of actions such as parents and students fighting for their rights or when linkages of solidarity are established between the different groups of refugees or when a family is allowed to live within a city and breaks away from the atomization of the camps. This way towards dignity is essentially a political empowerment path made of small daily steps that remain in time. This is the type of advocacy that the interviewed entities are practicing and, as mentioned above, it is a complex process operating in different levels but at the same time very palpable since it is well grounded on recognizable daily practices.

Appendix

List of entities and persons interviewed

	Housing/Antidiscrimination	
	Organizations	Names
1	Academic researcher on Anarchist Housing initiatives Athens and Thessaloniki	Charalampos Tsavdaroglou
2	ARSIS/ESTIA Programme	Giorgios Stefanidis
3	Academic Anarchist housing initiatives in Thessaloniki	Theodoros Karyotis
4	Lesvos Solidarity	Quentin Brzustowski
5	Academic (Lesvos hotspot, border registration initiatives, recording process and the question of political rights)	Katerina Rozakou
6	Greek Forum of Migrants board member.	Enri Hysenbelli
7	Greek Forum of Refugees	George Stefanopoulos
8	Generation 2.0	Erjona Balani Sotiria Chira
9	higher rank officer of IOM in Greece	Konstantinos Kousaxidis
10	UNHCR Head of Sub-Office Northern Greece	Luca Curci
11	ARSIS	Mihalis Vasilakis
12	Greek Council of Refugees	Spyros V. Oikonomou
13	Greek Ombudsman's office	Aggelina Sora
	Education	
14	Refugee Education Coordinator in Ritsona, Ministry of Education	Pepi Papadimitriou
15	RefugeEduCare Network	Olga Kalomenidou
16	SMOUTH (Synergy of Music Theatre)	Andreas Almpanis
17	Intercultural School Evosmos	Veroniki Tsougrani
18	Solidarity Now	Lefteris Papagiannakis
19	Terres des hommes	Melina Spathari
20	Refugee Support Agean	Natassa Strahini Minos Mouzorakis
21	The European Wergeland Centre	Iro Potamoussi
22	Hellenic Network for Drama and Education	Jenny Karaviti
23	Kloka, PRAKSIS	Marianella Kloka

Grid for Interviews: examples

The grid used for the interviews has been in most cases changed and adapted to each interviewee's role and experience following the structure of the interview grid agreed by the partners. These grids were prepared with the aim to valorize and maximize each candidate's contribution to our research. In other cases, the same grid has been reused with minor changes. Here below you have three examples of the grids employed in the interviews.

Example n.1



Better Advocacy for Better Inclusion (BABI)

Project number: 2020-1-IT02-KA204-079522

Interview with Erjona Balani and Sotiria Chira, Generation 2.0

Part 1: The organizations agenda

1. Generation 2.0 works from its diverse nature to promote equal participation in different fronts. Could you tell us a bit more about Generation 2.0? Which issues does Generation 2.0 mostly target?
2. Generation 2.0 has the acquisition of citizenship as one of its main advocacy aims. This is a topic that it is very difficult in the Greek context. What is your strategies to overcome all the obstacles?
3. Migrant's empowerment can be achieved in different ways, how does your advocacy strategy understand political empowerment?
4. Greece has had different migration waves. Your organization has been existing for more than a decade and at the beginning you were called second generation. How do you think were the experiences lived by 1990s and 2000s migrants in comparison with the experiences lived by today's refugees and migrants?

Part 2: the level of participation

How do you involve migrants in the fight for their rights and their inclusion? Are they directly participating in the design of the initiatives?

5. Tell us a bit of the role of Generation 2.0 in the relation between migrants and locals. How do you think the situation has evolved in the last years?
6. With respect to the relationship between Generation 2.0 and governmental institutions, has Generation 2.0 lead actions that have been well received by the government (municipal, national, European levels)?

Part 3: examples of advocacy campaigns

7. Could you describe one example of a recent advocacy action/campaign in favor of refugees or migrants you have participated?
 - Which was the main object of the action?
 - To whom it was directed?
 - How were the priorities identified? How were migrants and refugees involved in the process of needs assessment?
 - Which kind of activities were carried out?
 - Was it successful? Which results did it yield? What are the major challenges that you met in the process?
8. From previous interviews, we had examples of organizations that not only try to involve refugees in campaigns but also to integrate them in the organization. Do you have similar strategies in your organization?
9. Which would be your advice to lead successful campaigns for the empowerment of refugee rights?

Example n.2



Better Advocacy for Better Inclusion (BABI)

Project number: 2020-1-IT02-KA204-079522

MAIN TOPICS TO BE DEEPEN IN OUR INTERVIEWS

1. The political agenda: what are the priorities for your organization? What social rights/needs you consider to be priorities in your advocacy work?

- Can you tell us specifically about your action in relation to the inclusion of refugee-migrants?

In relation to:

- a. the local population
- b. the local government
- c. the refugees and migrants themselves

-How is your work perceived and accepted from a part of society, the refugees, who very often does not have access to basic goods, such as health care, housing, work, education? How can we address people and advocate for political rights when many of their basic rights are not secured?

From your experience research, how do you think we should face this contradiction?

-Is your advocacy work in any way related to the claim for civil rights? If so, how?

2. Participation /protagonism /leadership of migrants/refugees/ discriminated /racialized people.

-How would you describe the degree of involvement of migrants/refugees/discriminated/racialized people in the work of your organization? What is your experience on the initiatives of migrants/refugees/discriminated/racialized people in the process of your interventions?

-Which were the main obstacles you faced in direct participation/protagonism/leadership of immigrants/refugees/racialized people to your organization's strategy/program designing and implementing?

3. Description of the actions and their legacy

-Please describe public policy advocacy undertaken by your organization in collaboration with refugees. Which are the key characteristics of your policy advocacy work?

(Guiding questions:

- definition of the problem/s and of its/their causes (who, how, where)
- possible solutions identified
- context analysis and strategy: who can give an answer? What are the main targets of the Policy advocacy activities described? And the main allies?
- short- and long-term objectives
- typology of activities developed
- preparation of topics and development of key messages
- communication (lobbying, public campaign, media work)
- success' indicators
- networking
- monitoring and evaluation activities)

-Can you give us some examples of positive experiences in terms of the impact and results of the organization's advocacy campaign strategies?

-From the perspective of a researcher interested in the empowering of refugees in the present context, which would be your recommendations for a project like ours?

Example n. 3: Academics



Better Advocacy for Better Inclusion (BABI)

Project number: 2020-1-IT02-KA204-079522

MAIN TOPICS TO BE DEEPEN IN OUR INTERVIEWS

Charalampos Tsavardoglou wrote a series of academic articles analyzing and theorizing the housing initiatives for refugees promoted by anarchist groups in Athens. His work brings to light many elements that can be very interesting for our project: the interaction with the refugees, their empowerment in a successful quest for an alternative model of integration that was met with hostility by the governmental authorities. This interview wants to touch upon all these issues to extract valuable information for the implementation of our project.

The political agenda

1. Let's talk a bit about the realization of autonomy self-organization. How this step does from theory to practice actually occurs? Do refugees step up for their rights just because they are freed from this oppressive bureaucracy and offered an anti-hierarchy context or it is necessary to persuade them to do so?
2. It is obvious that speaking about rights without securing basing needs like governments do is rather cynical but this is a critique can as well be applied to a project like ours. Hence, how can one who advocates for political rights be taken seriously by the refugees when these basic needs are far from being covered? From your experience research, how do you think we should face this contradiction?
3. Do you know about any other initiative beyond the anarchist that successfully targeted politicization via the development of autonomy for the refugees?

Participation

4. The participation of the refugees in the internal organization of this squats houses is an element that is constantly highlighted in your research. Which were the steps taken in order to engage them to do so? Did the positive experience of these initiatives spread to other projects?

5. Which were the main obstacles faced by the activists during this process of empowerment of the refugees?

Description of the actions and their legacy

6. Do you know which were the methods employed by the activists to initiate the squatting project? Did they develop any specific organizational structure for the purpose of the project?

7. From the perspective of a researcher interested in the empowering of refugees, which would be your recommendations for a project like ours?

8. The squat houses had antifascist, anti-patriarchal and anti-racist values. How did this combined with the cultural background of the different groups of refugees and migrants?

9. One of the conclusions of your research is that the state willingly tried to dismantle these experiences occurring beyond the governmental framework. Do you think it is possible to empower refugee's political rights without facing a state forces backlash?

10. One of the main objectives of these initiatives was to allow refugees to leave the isolated refugee camps in the outskirts of Athens to give them the opportunity to lead an existence within the city social fabric. What legacy do you think these experiences left in the inner city neighborhoods?

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