



ΑΠΟΚΤΟΛΗ

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Overview of Migrants' Integration in Greece

MIGRATION NETWORK MEETING 2024

10 - 11 October 2024

Numbers and Figures on migrants and refugees in 2024

- **102.000** refugees and temporary protection holders in Greece
Mostly from Syria ,Afghanistan, Iraq, DRC, Ukraine and Somalia
- **20.000** asylum seekers
Mostly from Syria ,Afghanistan, Egypt, Turkey and Palestine
- **Approximately 500.000 TCNs** reside legally in the **Greek territory**
Mainly from Albania,China, Pakistan, Georgia, Russia and Bangladesh
- **250.000 EU** citizens
- More than **30.000 undocumented migrants** are estimated to live in the country
- **40.500** arrivals of individuals crossing the sea/land borders

The Never - ending story of Integration in Greece

1990s

-

2000s

-

2000s

2020s

2020

-

2024

- Heavy migratory inflows from Albania as an escape to poverty
- Lack of existing immigration and reception policy - mass undocumented migrants
- Two state regularization programs (1998 - 2001)
- Greek reaction towards immigrants was initially quite welcoming however negative stereotypes emerged leading to widespread scapegoating and suspicion

- Differentiation of migratory influxes due to arrivals from Asia and Eastern European countries
- New law (2005) recognized the reality of migration as a long-term and permanent phenomenon without addressing significantly integration.
- From 2010 onwards, the social integration of migrants entered more dynamically into the political and policy agenda leading to controversies.
- As of 2015 the period of refugee crisis starts

- A new National strategy (2021) for the social integration of asylum seekers and beneficiaries of international protection is inaugurated.
- The basic principle is that social integration can be achieved through a two-way process which should be supported by cooperation, dialogue and active involvement of the society focussing mainly to refugees and asylum seekers.

Main Goals of the Integration Strategy

1.

Safety and Protection

2.

Protection of Rights and ensuring access to education and public services

3.

Ensuring Children's Rights

4.

Promotion of European way of life

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- Integration Programmes are implemented in cooperation with local and national authorities, international organizations or NGOs.
- Civil Society actors provide language courses, soft-skills workshops, and job preparation courses to newcomers/asylum seekers and refugees.

• **There is not a standard integration programme for all third-country nationals.**

- **Focus is given to beneficiaries of international protection.**

Integration Programs

HELIOS Project

- Integration language courses;
- Accommodation support
- Employability support
- Integration monitoring
- Sensitisation of local communities

Goal: **Assistance towards independent living**

Challenges: **Lack of stable funding leads to suspensions**

Migrant Integration Centers of Municipalities

- Provision of legal information, psychosocial counselling and language courses
- Collaboration with Civil Society Actors and referrals

Challenges: **Understaffing & limited resources**

Civil Society Actors

Wide Range of local or International NGO's implement projects providing integration oriented services including housing, legal representation, education, Vocational Training and Career skills and labor market counselling via European or private funds

Challenges: **Funding**

Integration in Practice

- **Approximately one out of five recognized refugees live in refugee camps leading to undoubtful integration practices.**
- **Approximately 50% live in self accomodated flats financed by themselves.**
- **60% of refugees and asylum seekers have been reported not to be working**
- **State integration policies strongly link integration with current labour market needs in the touristic or agricultural sector developing a win - win situation**
- **Surveys indicate that 60% of Greeks tends to agree with the view that Greece should accept immigrants depending on the needs of its economy**
- **However, social and political stance towards refugees and documented migrants is considered much more positive compared to the past.**

The narratives in the Greek context

- **Currently, migration or refugee issues occupy only a limited part at the public discourse and mainstream media in Greece.**
- **Everyday life matters (cost of living, inflation etc.) play a more important role for locals**
- **It seems that there is a high level of saturation of the Greek society regarding “negative” topics after a long period of economic recession - refugee crisis and the pandemic**
- **State officials and media emphasize on the need of effective land and sea border control connecting them with national security**
- **Information gaps shape negative views on the role of NGOs and the legal status and rights of migrants/refugees**
- **Cases of unfortunate incidents such as shipwrecks or pushbacks are accentuated, presenting only the facts and not entering in detail in terms of policy**
- **Successful integration examples of migrants and refugees are virtually absent from public dialogue.**

How to create alternative narratives

- **Shift from feelings of fear, prejudice and ready made conclusions to intercultural activities**
- **Awareness raising campaigns through the mainstream media, presenting famous persons and successful examples with a migrant/refugee background**
- **Awareness raising campaigns through face to face joint meetings, festivities, concerts or volunteering**
- **Promotion and facilitation of joint activities for children of migrant origin with local children that share common interests (eg. Sports, Education and Pedagogical activities etc.) - Bring cultures together**
- **Include in the social media channels special programs with interviews, reports on data concerning migration, publications of reports /research on migrants' productivity, business and commercial activities, artistic creations**
- **Promotion of research on migrants' biographies emphasizing on mapping negative attitudes and problems to be tackled with a view to proceed to a knowledge based change of narratives**



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**Migrants' Social Inclusion: a
Rhetoric & a Challenging
Process**

The experience of Apostoli

Apostoli, Migration & Social Inclusion

Scope:

A faith-based organization and social service provider APOSTOLI practices love without any discrimination

The Mission:

- Provision of specific and holistic services to Greeks and third county nationals
- Individualized approach
- Common programmes and initiatives. Bringing together local communities with migrants where applicable

Apostoli, Challenges & Characteristics of Social Inclusion Initiatives

Facing a continuous challenge with regard to inclusion for a variety of reasons:

- Differentiation of migrants needs -newcoming migrants with different status and needs and migrants of more that 10 years of stay in Greece – immigrants and refugees
- Harmonization of family and training/professional life
- Cultural boundaries - a two-way process
- State mechanisms (institutional) adequacies in implementing legislation

Characteristics of initiatives

- Focus first on real and basic demands toward integration (language & employment)
- Bringing together migrants and Greek natives. Developing common initiatives for the benefit of all (fight hunger, health, vocational training, non-formal education)
- Responding to actual needs (interdisciplinary –education, vocational training, mental health etc)

Children after School & Community Centers

Children & Parents

Assumption

- Quality work... Provision of the best possible service tailored made to beneficiaries needs toward integration
- Family is the focus of our interventions. More sustainable outcomes when working at a family level.

Programmes

- Creative sessions -theatre and music kinetic workshops, fine arts' group sessions, multi-culture recreational activities, research & technology workshops, storytelling classes, family zone activities

Non-formal Education

- Languages Greek and English
- Preparation for the yearly Naturalization Exam (immigrants)
- Life and social skills
- Career skills, promotion to employment. Connecting individuals with the labor market
- Women's empowerment

Children after School & Community Centers

Children & Parents



Unaccompanied Minors, Vocational Training & Promotion to Employment

- **Safety & protection**
- **Ensuring public education**
- **Psychosocial support**
- **Individualized legal services**



Unaccompanied Minors, Vocational Training & Promotion to Employment

- **Non-formal education (language, life skills, career skills etc.)**
- **Community involvement (socializing, entertainment etc.)**



Vocational training for young individuals (kitchen assistants) & connection with the labor market

Narratives... Realities for Organizations

- **Social service providers have to have a clear and concrete standpoint with regard to service for all and with all**
- **Project - Filled centered approach in representation of narratives**
- **Is advocacy within our scope of activity? Sensitive role of organizations?**
- **Indirect (provision of services) & direct narration (sensitization & awareness campaigns)**
- **Successful or/unsuccessful narratives?**
- **Financial and human resources for capacity for building awareness campaigns even individual media means (spots, videos etc.)**

Narratives... Media of Change

- **Story telling**
- **Along with services provided let people talk about their stories - Bring individuals in the foreground – Make their voices heard**
- **Exclude stories rising fear resulting to suspicion & division**
- **Promote the type of communities we would like to grow in –democracy, equal rights, dignity and safety for everyone**
- **Start with local – immediate reality**
- **Focus on common aspects of concern**
- **Avoid labels as they stigmatize and technical terms**
- **Respect individuals narrating –exposure, sensitivity due to cultural reasons etc**

!!THANK YOU !!