

# Inclusive Education in Greece for Refugee and Migrant children

April 2020



To ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.  
Sustainable Development Goal 4

*SDG4 is considered a prerequisite for achieving all 17 Global Goals of Agenda 2030. Obtaining a quality education empowers people everywhere to live more sustainable and healthy lives, fosters tolerance and contributes to more peaceful societies.*

*Although basic education is a fundamental right for all, for refugee and migrant children, it depends rather on the stage they are at in the migrant/asylum process than on their educational needs.*

*Of the 7.1 million refugee children of school age, 3.7 million - more than half – are out of school<sup>1</sup>. All European countries that have received refugee children since 2015 have been making efforts to ensure they go to school.*

## Education for refugee and migrant children in Greece

It is estimated that 31,000 refugee and migrant children of **4-17** years old are in Greece and 13,000 of them are enrolled in formal schools across Greece, **accounting for 42% of refugee and migrant children at school age.**<sup>2</sup>

Since the beginning of 2016, safeguarding the right of young refugees to attend school has been a key concern of the Greek Ministry of Education (MoE). This has been a highly demanding project and actions taken aim to foster the gradual integration of these children into mainstream education.

**Refugee Reception and Education Structures (Δομές Υποδοχής και Εκπαίδευσης Προσφύγων, DYEP).** DYEP address all school age children and the programs are implemented afternoons in public schools, neighboring camps or places of residence. Various subjects are taught, including the Greek language, preparing children to attend the mainstream school. For the school year 2019-2020, 138 schools were designated by the (MoE) to provide DYEP classes.

**Educational Priority Zones (ZEP):** ZEP are reception classes within the mainstream school that refugee students attend parallel to their regular classes. These classes provide differentiated interventions and support refugee children's learning. ZEP are staffed by teachers who are designated for one school year (or less) with no previous experience necessary.

Pupils with no prior education experience in the Greek state education system are normally placed at DYEP structures, unless such structures do not exist in their immediate location. In that case, pupils can register at a mainstream morning Greek State School and, if a sufficient number of newly arrived migrant students request it, the school can host a Reception Class for these students. However, the formation of a Reception Class requires the approval of the Teacher Assembly of the school.<sup>3</sup> The minimum number of students is 7 and the maximum 17.

**Refugee Education Coordinators (RECs)** are appointed across the education regions and facilitate communication between the MoE, the schools where refugee children attend classes and the parents of the children residing in housing programs. RECs have played a crucial role so far as a liaison between refugee families, local authorities and schools.

**Non-formal education:** There are many programs run by NGOs or other non-formal education groups that are making a positive contribution to refugees' education by supporting the formal education of refugee children in collaboration with school teachers through a variety of programs and resources.

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.unhcr.org/steppingup/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.unicef.org/eca/media/10861/file>

<sup>3</sup> [http://www.sirius-migrationeducation.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/NRT\\_Greece\\_2019.pdf](http://www.sirius-migrationeducation.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/NRT_Greece_2019.pdf)

## Examples of good practices



### Greece National Education Sector Working Group (ESWG)

Formed in 2016, ESWG collaborates with the Greek Ministries of Education and Migration Policy and brings together NGOs, UN agencies, academics and other partners under the shared goal of ensuring well-coordinated and equitable provision of non-formal education services, as well as supporting equitable access to formal education for the refugee and migrant population in Greece.

### ActionAid: Student Action Week 2017

The right to education is a fundamental priority for ActionAid globally and in Greece we have been running campaigns promoting the right to education for all since 2004. In May 2017 after the refugee crisis had begun, the Student Action Week was dedicated to the access to education for refugee children. 40,000 young campaigners from 700 schools in Greece sang the campaign song and sent their solidarity messages in the form of kites inspired by a musical story that was the main educational tool of the **campaign**.

### Athens Open Schools (2016-2019)

The Athens Open Schools program was designed to convert school buildings, after dismissal, on holidays and on weekends, into vibrant community centers offering a variety of activities for all ages including refugees. The program was included in the Council of Europe's handbook on "Promoting Human Rights at the Local and Regional Level" as a **best-practice example for promoting the smooth integration of refugee children**.

*"By transforming 25 public schools into centers for scientific, creative and sports activities, as well as for language courses for Athenians and refugees, the city of Athens managed to bring together refugee and Greek children, increase the involvement and interaction of neighborhoods and local schools in the refugee integration process and offer refugee children a safe environment where they can learn and spend time outside of their accommodation centers."*

**Council of Europe's handbook**

## Challenges and difficulties

### THE ENROLLMENT RATE

in mainland Greece	61%
the islands (Crete, North & South Aegean)	6%
Crete	87%
Aegean Islands	3% <sup>4</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Enrollments Dashboard January 2020 shared by Greece Education Sector Working Group

### Low enrollment for refugee children in Eastern Aegean Islands

Access to education remains problematic for children on the **Aegean islands**, where refugees have to remain for prolonged periods in reception centers that were set up for temporary stay, until accommodation is ready in the mainland, while new arrivals outpace the rate of transfers, exacerbating the issue of overcrowding.

### Mobility of refugee population

Families are forced to move from the islands to the mainland, from school to school, from structure to structure and experience different forms of hospitality. Constant and unpredictable mobility disrupt children's educational normality.

*"Perhaps the biggest difficulty is school drop-out during the school year. Last year and this year until about 40% stopped coming and 20% came very rarely. The reasons are obvious. To name but a few:*

- 1. The political environment is unstable, as the legal framework for immigration is constantly changing.*
- 2. Greece is not a destination country for all refugees so at any time children may leave or have no incentive to go to school for a few months and learn a useless language.*
- 3. They change houses every now and then, so they also change areas.*
- 4. The majority of my students are from countries where the school is not a strong institution, so schooling is downgraded.*

*As much as parents feel that they are here temporarily, so do children, therefore the learning process is very difficult. Even if they come to school, they often do not show much zeal or effort as they lack motivation and encouragement. Of course there are many exceptions. So, for me this is the biggest difficulty: to prepare a personalised study program, when the children are often absent and stay behind, until they finally give it up. To give you an example, in October, on a night when the hotels of Omonoia (center of Athens) were evacuated, I lost 12 students out of 22. I did not see them again, we did not hear from them again. At the same time, during the year we have new registrations. This means that the children have to catch up with the rest of the class in the middle of the school year. Refugee children need a place where they feel safe, where they feel they belong and make plans within it; a framework that will somehow try to put some order in the uncertainty they live in. But as long as there is this constant movement, it becomes more difficult."*

**M. Fotakis, ZEP Teacher at the 66<sup>th</sup> Elementary school in Athens**

## Recommendations

**Inclusive schools:** The Greek school applies a knowledge-based curriculum that demands a lot of studying and promotes mostly academic achievement which can exclude vulnerable groups such as refugees, but also makes native students struggle as well. Schools should embrace diversity and every student should feel confident to participate and contribute. The curriculum should give them opportunities to learn from and with their peers and mostly to feel and act as global citizens.

**Teachers and their training:** Teachers involved in refugees' education need further training on inclusive and diversity pedagogies, as they need to cater to the needs of very diverse and disadvantaged learners in flux contents, and prevent any discrimination caused by xenophobia, and cultural differences.

**More opportunities for youth 12-17 years old:** There is a huge gap nationally and globally in secondary education level where enrollment is very low. Actions should be taken to improve the provision of youth education opportunities that can be life changing for youth at these ages.

**Awareness raising campaigns and actions** should be organized to sensitize local communities and all parents to deal with fake news and misconceptions and combat the negative narrative of migration.

**Media trainings** are required on how to cover and report sensitive issues from a human rights-based approach perspective and prevent hate speech narratives.

**Strategic planning** on the education of refugee children should be made, with the involvement and collaboration of all bodies involved for better coordination. At the moment there are many good practices happening in parallel, but no common space to share and exchange ideas.

### MigratED project and Inclusive Education



**MigratED, Migrations and human rights enhanced through technology in education**, is a Global Citizenship Education Project financed by the Erasmus+ Program of the European Union. The aim is to make way and promote a counter-narrative that defends the importance and respect **for human rights, inclusion, intercultural dialogue and cooperation within educational settings**. The main activities of the project include:

- A **Needs assessment** was carried out to record educational projects within each country on migration and human rights and identify teachers needs and gaps in their education, as well as the role digital tools and technology can play in teaching.
- An **International Training of Trainers** was carried out in Bologna, gathering around 40 educational professionals who were trained on managing diversity in education; media and digital tools in GCE; climate change, sustainable development and migration in education; media literacy and participatory video in education. As a continuation **Nationals Trainings** for 60 educators in each participating country were implemented, adjusted to local context.
- **Media literacy workshops** are taking place with youth groups in each country. In Greece the workshops are implemented by Karpos and 5 the youth groups are from 5 secondary education schools in Attiki (Avlona, Kalamos, Argiroupoli, Acharnai, Koropi). Refugee/migrant and native Greek students work together and will produce participatory videos on GCE issues, which will be promoted through peer to peer events. Videos from each country will be part of a collective web documentary titled "Migrants and refugees as desk mates".
- Finally, a **communication and advocacy campaign** will be held at national and EU level, both digitally and through national and international events.



# migratED

MEDIA EDUCATION  
FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

