

Project  
**LIB(e)RO**

Intellectual Output 1 / Activity 2

**National Analysis-Report**

Needs Analysis

ACTION SYNERGY

Greece

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## Introduction

### Action Synergy S.A.

Action Synergy is a private organisation which is working in the field of education and training. It was established in 1987 in Heraklion Crete as a UETP- University Enterprise Training Partnership, a type of organisation which was formed in order to support synergies and cooperation between universities and enterprises in a regional level. Nowadays, Action Synergy has two offices, one in Athens and one in Heraklion Crete and is working on different kinds of projects and European initiatives always in the field of education and training.

In the last 10 years, Action Synergy has become very active in the field of the promotion of social inclusion, through education, of various target groups which are in a vulnerable situation such as Roma, immigrants, refugees, inmates, people of low socio-economic background etc.

One of the main aspects of the work that Action Synergy is doing is the development and maintenance of networks between experts, stakeholders, professionals, authorities, education institutions etc at a local, regional, national, European and International level. This aspect contributes to the ability of Action Synergy to develop projects not only in the regions where it is established but also in other regions of Greece in cooperation with local stakeholders.

For the particular issue of the support of social inclusion of refugees and immigrants, Action Synergy has developed during the last years the following initiatives:

#### **METIKOS- Informal Language Learning for Immigrants ([www.metoikos.eu](http://www.metoikos.eu))**

The project METIKOS aimed to increase the knowledge of the language of their host country through informal language learning methodologies. It has developed a methodology which adapted existing practices in informal learning to the specific needs of the immigrants, it has developed 3 web tools aiming at facilitating the immigrants in this learning process (cyber cafe, databank for language resources and online informal language community), it has created regional networks of stakeholders in the partner regions that were able to promote and sustain this process in the local communities and has implemented language café, Tandem and cyber café sessions to immigrants all over Greece. The project was very successful and the methodology and know-how was transferred to other target groups and in other countries through the METIKOS2 project (<http://ill.org.pl/>).

#### **Safer Places Hopeful Refugees (<http://www.saphor.org>)**

The project Safer Places Hopeful Refugees aims to develop the capacities of organisations dealing with migrant issues through an exchange of best practices within the transnational short joint staff training events and the transnational project meetings. The overall objective of the project is to increase the skills and abilities of people working in partner organisations, stakeholders, local authorities, struggling to respond to and meet all the humanitarian need that refugees face and contribute to the improvements and innovative practice for refugees and asylum seekers.

#### **Cultural Luggage**

The Cultural Luggage project (CULTURLU) is a new project that will start its implementation from November 2017 which is aiming at the social integration of refugees through theatre. Based on common elements from the popular tradition (and most importantly of the fairy tales) of the host

countries and the countries of origin of the refugees there are going to be developed joint theatrical performances (from local and refugee actors) which are going to be presented both to refugee audience and to the audience of the mainstream population.

**Athlisi- Promotion of social integration through the training of the coaches and sport clubs**  
([www.athlisi.eu](http://www.athlisi.eu))

The project ATHLISI aims to promote the social inclusion of children from disadvantaged target groups (including refugees, asylum seekers) through their increased participation in sport activities in the framework of the activities of the sport clubs.

**Youth MIND Education: Youth Migrants'/Minorities' Inclusion, Non-violence, Diversity Education**  
([www.youth-mind.eu](http://www.youth-mind.eu))

The yMIND project is aiming to promote better social inclusion of newly-arrived migrant and Roma children and youth through comprehensive diversity education in school and community-based settings.

**General situation of minor refugees in Greece in the last two years**

The situation in Greece related with refugees is very particular and it is very much related with the status of Greece as a transit country. Greece, before the EU-Turkey Agreement signed on March 2016, was the main door of entrance of refugees in the EU. However, most of the refugees considered Greece as a transit country and therefore they were not very much interested to integrate in the Greek society. After the EU- Turkey Agreement the borders closed and many refugees have found themselves blocked in Greece. Some of them are still waiting for their relocation in other EU countries while others have started to work for their integration in the Greek society.

Minor refugees are a large percentage of the refugee population in Greece. It is estimated that unaccompanied minors accounted for approximately 35 per cent of the total population that crossed from Turkey to Greece in 2015<sup>1</sup>. However, this is only an estimate because the system of registration of unaccompanied minors is underdeveloped and because some either declare themselves to be of age, even if it is apparent that they are underage, while others claim to be minors when obviously adults. Children may try to pass as adults to avoid prolonged detention while waiting to be placed in a reception facility with very limited spaces or to evade any administrative obstacles to their fast journeys through EU borders. Young adults may claim to be underage to enjoy a more lenient treatment. Both practices have reinforced a prevailing culture of disbelief as minors' age and right to protection are continuously doubted and denied by the responsible authorities.

It is estimated that from the 64.000 minor refugees that have entered the country in 2016, it is estimated that finally they have remained in the country 21.000 from which 7.500- 8.500 were living in 34 official open hospitality centres, 1000 unaccompanied minors were living in special guest houses and more than 6.000 children in apartments

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.law.ox.ac.uk/research-subject-groups/centre-criminology/centreborder-criminologies/blog/2017/02/unaccompanied>

and hotels<sup>2</sup>. Most of the unaccompanied minors come from Afghanistan (51%) followed by Syria (33%) and Iraq (13%)<sup>3</sup>.

The situation of the minor refugees in Greece varies a lot. 2500 refugee children attend evening schools in the framework of an education programme which is financed by the European Union and implemented by the Ministry of Education<sup>4</sup>. The International Organisation for Migration (IOM) has the responsibility to transfer and accompany the children from the camps or the hospitality centres in which they live to the nearest school. IOM also provides to the refugee children the necessary school material. According to updated data of IOM (March 2017), 61 school buses transfer every day around 2500 children to 94 schools. Also there are informal education activities which are followed by many children that live inside and outside the hospitality centres.

On the other part, the conditions of living in certain camps are very difficult. Usually, in the camps there is no separation of the children with the adults, fact which poses minor refugees to multiple dangers. There have been also reports that some minor refugees resort to sex for survival and for paying smugglers that will be able to transfer them illegally in another EU country<sup>5</sup>. In order to protect them from the dangers arising from living together with adults, the Greek state at the beginning offered shelter to minor refugees in detention centers. However detention centers were so dangerous and in such poor condition that many minors prefer to sleep rough—exposing themselves to smugglers and people traffickers, drug dealers and pimps—rather than be stuck in a prisonlike environment<sup>6</sup>. Currently, “safe zones” are being built inside the refugee camps in order to increase the protection for unaccompanied adults.

Generally, most of the minor refugees that have decided they want to stay permanently in Greece, through the attendance of the schools and various other programs that are offered have started a long process of social inclusion. However, many of them who still consider Greece as a “transit” country try to find ways, usually through smugglers, to leave for another country (usually Germany, Austria or Netherlands). For this reason, many of the minors “disappear” when they are searched for from the social care services and is very difficult to trace them back<sup>7</sup>.

Attica, as the largest region of Greece hosting nearly 5.000.000 people, half of the Greek population, does not present any regional specificities but reflects the general situation in the country. In Attica there are many schools for minor refugees, there are minor refugees living in shelter houses, in camps, in families, in detention centres, there are stories of successful integration and stories of human rights violation. The region of Attica is also the region where there are the most minor refugees in Greece.

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.efsyn.gr/arthro/ekthesi-gia-ta-paidia-prosfygon-poy-metakinoyntai-stin-ellada>

<sup>3</sup> <http://news247.gr/eidiseis/koinonia/prosfygiko-paidia-1-stoys-2-prosfyges-sthn-ellada.4197362.html>

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.newsit.gr/ellada/Sta-ellinika-sxoleia-pigainoyn-kathimerina-2-500-paidia-prosfygon-kai-metanaston/704318>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2017/apr/18/child-refugees-in-europe-forced-to-sell-bodies-to-pay-smugglers>

<sup>6</sup>

[http://www.slate.com/articles/double\\_x/gender\\_and\\_migration/2017/02/conditions\\_are\\_so\\_bad\\_for\\_young\\_refugees\\_in\\_greece\\_many\\_are\\_turning\\_to\\_smugglers.html](http://www.slate.com/articles/double_x/gender_and_migration/2017/02/conditions_are_so_bad_for_young_refugees_in_greece_many_are_turning_to_smugglers.html)

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.tovima.gr/society/article/?aid=842039>

## 1. Needs of minor refugees

### Profile of the minor refugees interviewed

In the framework of the research for the LIBERO project, 3 minor refugees have been interviewed. Two of the refugees were boys while the third one was a girl. One boy was from Iraq while the other two minor refugees that were interviewed came from Syria. All of them arrived in Greece in 2016. Also, all of them have attended school in their home country and they were all part of the evening school program in Greece. One of the young people (boy from Syria) interviewed wished to stay in Greece permanently while the other two expressed their willingness to leave for Germany. This difference was also reflected to their answers regarding their relation with the Greek culture. The person who wished to stay permanently expressed a very vivid interest for everything related with Greece and its culture (including language, customs etc) while the other two were less interested. The knowledge of Greece (or English) for all the people interviewed was at a very basic level and therefore the interviews were conducted in Arabic with the help of a translator. All the young people interviewed owned a mobile phone with the possibility to access the internet but none had access to a PC or to a laptop.

### Relation with Libraries

The two young people from Syria knew about libraries in their home towns and have visited them while the boy from Iraq visited for the first time a library in Greece. All the three refugees interviewed have visited a library in Greece despite the fact that most of the minor refugees in Greece have not made this visit. Two of the refugees have visited the library as a result of a specific acquaintance program that was promoted by the local public library and one as a result of activities promoted by social workers that are working in the camps. They all liked the experience of visiting the library but, beyond this first visit that they have made, they did not return there. All of the young people interviewed have mentioned that they live near a library or can reach one by public transport.

### The issue of language

The most important problem that was mentioned was the language of the books and the other material that they could find in the library. The knowledge of Greek they have (all of 3) was very elementary and did not allow them to read books in Greek or interact with other educational material. One of the boys knew some English while the other two young people knew only their mother tongue. The boy that wants to stay permanently in Greece was very interested to improve his knowledge of Greek- and spoke better Greek than the other two- while the other two young people were more interested to have access to material in English (or German). However, one of the young people mentioned that there are other uses of library that he could benefit from such as access to high speed internet, quiet places to study etc. Generally the idea of libraries as learning places was widely appreciated.

### E-Learning

Generally the people that were interviewed did not have any experiences with e-learning before in their lives. However, they stated an interest in using an e-learning platform and that they have the basic computer literacy in order to do that (as long as the interface and explanations are in a

language that they can understand). Despite that, they have mentioned that now personal contacts interest them more, so they suggested a combination of e-learning courses with face to face courses or guidance. The boy from Syria has explained that they need more contacts with local people. For the time being they live a segregated life since the evening schools are only for refugees and since they are living with their families in camps separated from the local neighborhoods. He has also suggested that libraries could be the places where refugee minors could meet their local peers and where different kinds of activities could be organized (such as language café). Related with the content of such e-learning platform, the suggestions were the following:

- Language courses (Greek, English, German)
- Local cooking
- Aspects of social life (traditions, customs, sports etc)
- Opportunities for studying/ training/ working

## 2. Needs of librarians and institutions in dealing with minor refugees

In the framework of the project LIBERO, there were interviewed three librarians, two of them from the region of Athens (the Municipal Library of Chaidari and the Children' Library of Kifissia) and one from the region of Western Macedonia (Municipal Library of Kozani). The needs and the capacity of the libraries to support such an action differ a lot depending on the library infrastructure, the library structure and way of working etc.

From the three libraries that have been interviewed only one has until now received refugees in her library (girl minor refugees) in the framework of the program "Reading points" which was promoted by the National Library of Greece. The contact was provided by the organization Network for Children Rights (<http://ddp.gr>) which is working with minor refugees in the refugee camp of Schistos in Attica. One of the librarians had previous contacts with refugees in her free time as she volunteered in the reception centres for refugees (in Piraeus and Elaionas). At the beginning she mentioned that these encounters were very difficult and with a lot emotional load. Later, the practical aspect prevailed since the problems that had to be resolved were a lot and difficult.

All of the participants have answered that the libraries could be transformed to a learning space but there are some practical issues that could make this difficult. One of the librarians have answered that libraries, from their role are spaces which are designed to offer information and "lifelong learning" to everybody without limitations of age, gender, nationality etc. They also use international standards which can be understood by everybody and they can be the perfect learning space for refugees. However, all three librarians stated limitations that could make this difficult:

- There are not collections of books, CD, DVD in the languages of the refugees
- There is not enough space. Two of the librarians interviewed have answered that there is no adequate space in order to develop these "learning spaces".
- Not enough computers. One of the librarians has mentioned that in the library they do not exist computers that are for public use. Two of them have mentioned that they have freely available wifi.
- There is not enough personnel. One of the librarians has mentioned that her library has only one person as staff and therefore in order to support such activities there will be need for external support related with personnel (from stakeholders, volunteers etc). On the other hand, it was mentioned that in order to ensure the continuity and sustainability of the program, the focus should be placed on the staff of the libraries and not on volunteers. One librarian mentioned that the need for the involvement of volunteers will depend on the activity that each time is being organized.
- Trained personnel. One of the librarians has mentioned that libraries do not have staff that is trained in order to implement such activities
- Change in the library stature. One interviewee has mentioned that the statute of the library does not foresee such activities and therefore, in order to be implemented, there should be a change in the library statute.

The librarians have also mentioned that they would need further support in administrative support, personnel management and, most importantly, crisis management. Support could also be provided by local associations, NGOs, local schools etc. Also, one of the librarians has mentioned that she

could offer at least one hour per day for the refugees while another one mentioned that this would depend from the activities that each time are being implemented.

Related with the professional and personal skills, two of the librarians have expressed their interest to participate in the training of trainers course. They have been involved in transfer of knowledge mainly in the framework of conferences related with libraries (organization, promotion etc). The most usual training method was lectures with the use of powerpoint presentations.

Related with social inclusive learning all the participants mentioned that is very important and one participant mentioned that it is the core of the public library according to the declaration of IFLA/ UNESCO. Only one of the librarians has answered that was involved in social inclusive learning mainly through projects since in Greece the institutions that offer systematically such opportunities are only a few.

The suggestions that were made in order to contribute to the successful implementation of the project were the following:

- Development of learning content on teaching methods and methods of transfer of knowledge. One of the librarians has answered that she knows some things but she is not sure how she can transmit this knowledge to other people
- Provision of support for the social networking of the refugees (development of networks with other local people and organisations that can help them with their life)
- Support of the users for everyday issues (development of a CV, use of tablet etc)
- Development of networks between the libraries that are participating in this initiative

### 3. Needs of social workers and institutions in dealing with minor refugees

Three social workers were interviewed for the purposes of the research for the LIBERO project. All three social workers were working in different NGOs which are dealing with refugees, so they all have experience in working with refugees. On the other hand, the degree of cooperation between the social workers and other local stakeholders (such as libraries, local associations, educational institutions etc) was very low. The main challenges that the social workers have identified in relation with their work were the following:

- The uncertainty of the future of the refugees in Greece. As stated also before, most of the refugees that are currently living in Greece are trapped and they want to continue their journey towards Northern Europe but they are not certain about their future. This makes difficult the efforts to integrate them in a country that they consider as “transit”, so the increase of their motivation is crucial. Also, this prolonged uncertainty combined with the traumatic experience of the travel till Greece create pressure, psychological problems, resignation and other issues that social workers have to deal with
- Lack of institutional support. Greece is only now exiting from a crisis stemming from 2010 which has caused a reduction of 25% of the country’s GDP. This has reduced the resources that are available for social work and has made more difficult the work of social workers. Furthermore, there are not clear guidelines related with their work so they have to focus very much on their personal experience without adequate institutional support.
- Great diversity of the situations they have to deal with. Each individual case of a minor refugee is different from another. The support that each minor refugee needs depends a lot on their country of origin, on their status and way of living there, on their schooling, on the travel that they have made until they arrive in Greece, on whether they want to stay permanently in Greece or go in Northern Europe, on whether they live with their families or are unaccompanied etc. This makes their work a lot different than dealing with local young people where the common denominators are more.

Despite the challenges presented there, all the social workers interviewed have appreciated the possibility to have the e-learning platform envisaged by the project. Two of them have seen it as a way to ensure quality time for the minor refugees without them to be necessarily directly involved. One social worker has also mentioned that this could be a great opportunity in order to increase the networking between the local institutions that could work for the inclusion of the refugees.

Related with the content of the e-learning platform, the social workers have made the following suggestions:

- Greek language
- Networking with the local community, local institutions, stakeholders and people
- Greek traditions, social life and customs

Networking and involvement of various stakeholders was also a very important part of the suggestions from the social workers. One of the social workers has suggested that the project would be successful if, beyond the e-learning platform, ensures that all the main stakeholders are involved

in the process of offering minor refugees chances to better integrate in the society. Until now this is done almost exclusively by NGOs and the Ministry of Education. The involvement of other stakeholders would also ease the burden on the shoulders of the social workers.

Two social workers interviewed have expressed doubts on whether an online environmental for learning will be able to be used adequately by minor refugees that are not used to use their mobile phones for learning purposes. They have also suggested that it is important that the language course is combined with elements of everyday culture and everyday reality of the Greek people in order to foster integration.

## 4. Summary and estimation of the actual situation

The analysis of all the interviews that were made with minor refugees, libraries and social workers has shown that libraries can be places of social inclusive learning. In Greece, libraries have not been used as learning spaces as they could be and there is a lack of cooperation between libraries and other stakeholders that are working in the field of the inclusion of refugees. In Greece, the promotion of the relation between refugees, libraries and other stakeholders is the most important part of the project, even more important than the actual e-learning platform that will be developed.

For the e-learning platform, the main challenges identified relate with the language that should be used (given the low language skills of many minor refugees) and the ways with which it is possible to increase the motivation to minor refugees to enter the platform and follow the course. Besides the acquisition of the language skills which is a very important issue (not only in the Greek language but also in English or German), it is necessary that the platform increases the interaction of the refugees with their local community (both institutions and local people). Therefore, it is necessary that through the project the libraries acquire the role not only of a “learning space” but also of a “meeting space” where various activities can be organised both through the platform and outside the platform.

The libraries are going to have various challenges in order to implement this process and for this reason they would need multilateral support mainly in terms of staff, technical support etc. Many libraries are not accustomed with this role and for this reason they will need more time to adapt to it while others are more ready. The training on “how to train” should be an important part of the training of trainers course since many librarians have participated mainly in formal education settings and are not able to transfer knowledge with the use of informal methods and other methods which are more suitable for this target group.

Refugees in Greece still live in a status of segregation. LIBERO project is a wonderful opportunity to create links between refugees and the local communities. The project also has to be flexible and adaptable to each local context it is going to be implemented. Each public library, based on the available infrastructure, is not able to offer the same services to the minor refugees and therefore the activities should be organised on the basis of the available possibilities.

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