

Project
LIB(e)RO

Intellectual Output 1 / Activity 2

National Analysis-Report

Situation Analysis

National Library of Greece

Greece

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Introduction

This report aims to describe the current situation of minor refugees in Greece as well as the information services that Greek public and municipality libraries and other actors have developed and/or customized to address the refugees' needs. First, we present the governmental and non-governmental actors both in the library sector as well as those in migration. Then, an attempt to record the measures taken for the minor refugees' integration in Greece as well as in the western way of life is described. Specifically, a focus is placed on the activities and services offered by libraries in Greece and other governmental and non-governmental actors, in cities where large amounts of refugees currently reside. In addition, an overview of pedagogic resources available for refugees are provided. Finally, we summarize and draw conclusions in relation to the situation studied as well as to the importance of LIBERO project in the Greek library sector.

In this point, it is important to provide a definition for two terms used in this deliverable that is "refugees" and "migrants". *"Refugees are persons fleeing armed conflict or persecution and are defined and protected under both national legislation and international law. They cannot be expelled or returned to situations where their life and freedom would be under threat"* whereas *"Migrants chose to move not because of direct threat of persecution or death but mainly to improve their life... Countries deal with migrants under their own immigration laws and processes"* (UNHCR, 2016). Although we will refer mainly on refugees, we consider that LIBERO project concerns potentially both populations.

General situation of minor refugees in Greece

Since 2015, more than one million refugees and migrants have arrived along the Eastern Mediterranean route through Turkey to Europe, in an attempt to escape war, terror, poverty, and repression. Most of them come from Syria and neighboring countries namely Afghanistan, Iraq, Pakistan, as well as from North African countries namely Algeria, Morocco etc. (Greece Factsheet, 2017). Because of Greece's geographical position and economic situation, our country has been mainly considered by them as a transit point, as a passing to Europe.

Migrants massively attempted the dangerous sea crossing from Turkish coasts to Greek islands of Lesbos, Chios, Leros, Kos and Samos. United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees' (UNCHR) latest document on dead and missing people refers to 1.277 people, mostly women and children, who lost their lives trying to cross the Aegean Sea (UNCHR, 2017). Greece has not been prepared for managing the difficult situation prevailing at the islands of entry, mainly because of the extreme austerity measures and economic crisis that it was dealing. At the beginning of the "refugee crisis", a series of hotspots were created both in the islands as well as in mainland. These hotspots were open camps managed by UNCHR and several NGO's while state authorities were mainly responsible for the registration of asylum seekers.

After the EU-Turkey Agreement in March 2016, the Greek government, following the directives of the European Union for urgent management of the situation, converted the camps into "closed" Reception and Identification Centers (RICs). In RICs, asylum seekers were detained until their final status was defined. However, according to a study led by the Greek Council for Refugees and other actors, this approach did not manage to relieve the pressure from the islands; instead it led to an increase in the number of asylum applicants waiting trapped in prolonged detention exceeding often

the time limit set by the law. As a result, the pressure to control the arrivals had often led to more repressive measures and violation of human rights that affected also the psychosocial well-being of minor refugees and mainly unaccompanied minors who have been detained in these structures (Dutch Council of Refugees, 2016).

After the closure of the Balkan route and with the implementation of the EU-Turkey Agreement on March 2016, more than 60.000 refugees stayed trapped in Greece. Currently almost 48.000 people reside on the Greek mainland and 14.000 on Aegean islands. A recent UNICEF (2017) report estimates the current number of refugee children in Greece at 20.300. There has been a decrease in the number of children as their proportion in the general refugee population has fallen from 37% in 2016 to 33% in 2017. Most children arriving to Greece are from Syria, Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Iraq. Unaccompanied children (UAC) are now estimated to be 2.350, most of them being from Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Syria.

As far as accommodation is concerned, in June 2017, UNCHR estimated that 57% of the accompanied children live in urban areas, in apartments and hotels within the UNHCR accommodation scheme, while 34 % are in accommodation sites, some of them being relatively close to urban areas (2 to 20 km). 6% are in UAC shelters and 3% in RICs. Regarding the unaccompanied children, UNCHR refers to 1.000 out of 2.350 children who benefit from protection in UAC shelters managed by various NGOs while 1.350 children are on the waiting list for a place in a shelter and are currently either detained in police stations and RICs at the islands of entry or stay in “safe zones” within temporary accommodation sites at the mainland (UAC, 2017).

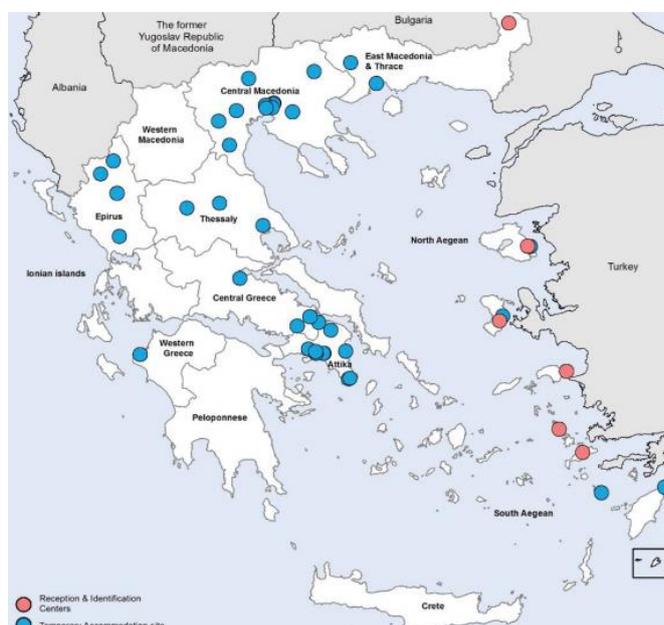


Figure 1. Site profiles, June 2017/ UNCHR¹

According to UNCHR (2017), refugees residing on the islands continue facing many risks, particularly the risk of sexual and gender-based violence. Reception conditions at most of the RICs have been

¹ Europe Refugee Emergency Weekly map indicating capacity and occupancy (Governmental figures) As of 01 August 2017 10:00 a.m. EET / UNCHR. <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/download/58630>

quite challenging given that the structures are overcrowded, whereas sometimes they lack basic amenities such as beds, hygiene conditions, infant alimentation and food quality as well as regular access to essential services, namely psychosocial counselling and healthcare. In “Moria”, that is a hotspot in Lesbos, unaccompanied minors have been held for a period in a separate barbed-wired area whose door was locked, waiting for a place in a shelter. UNHCR observes a general upward trend in the detention of children nationwide. Although the National Centre for Social Solidarity (EKKA)² is kept updated on the situation and number of unaccompanied children, however alternative care options are difficult to be found. This is due to the limited capacity of shelters and safe zones as alternatives to detention and the reduction of available spaces in shelters. The insufficiency of appropriate protection structures for unaccompanied children makes them extremely vulnerable and exposes them at high risks, -- sexual and/or economic exploitation-- in order to pay smugglers and flee Greece.

Access to formal or non-formal education is limited. Although data on refugee and migrant children out of school is largely missing, it is estimated that only 29% of the estimated 12.000 school age children (6 to 17 years old) in Greece attend formal education (2.500 children living in refugees’ accommodation sites attend formal education afternoon reception classes) and another 35% are covered by non-formal education activities organized by NGOs and volunteers (UNICEF, 2017). 36% of children (including 40% of all children in urban areas) are not attending any type of education (UNHCR, UNICEF & IOM, 2017).

In June 2016, the “Committee of Support of Refugee Children” which was set by the Ministry of Education, recorded the educational activities and the existing conditions at each accommodation site along Greece. The conclusions of the report are not satisfactory. Very few sites had appropriate teaching-activities space. Often activities take place outdoor depending thus on the weather conditions. There are deficiencies of equipment, especially educational equipment, and absence of heating/air-conditioning, very limited playgrounds and children areas which are not always supervised. The report refers to *“basic deficiencies and unsuitable conditions which in many cases are deemed to expose participants to risk”* (MREFA, 2016). Minor refugees have been going through various difficulties: the war, loss, family separation, exploitation from smugglers, the dangerous trip, detention of the unaccompanied minors, gender and sexual violence, the language barrier etc. These facts have certainly affected their psychological situation and have created feelings of fear and insecurity. This must be considered by all actors involved in minors’ social integration. The economic situation and the crisis that Greece is faced with all these years makes it a challenge. However, no one can deny that despite the difficulties, Greece accepted the largest number of refugees in a short period of time and responded with all measures³ possible while facing internal austerity measures and poverty.

The situation of libraries and librarians in Greece

The situation of libraries in Greece is obviously very much connected to the general financial situation of the country during the period in question. According to the most recent statistical analysis by the Hellenic Statistical Authority (2014)³, 474 libraries are registered in Greece. These are, the National Library of Greece, 45 public libraries, 164 municipal libraries and 265 libraries as legal

² National Centre for Social Solidarity (EKKA) is the state agency that collaborates with the NGOs in order to provide emergency shelter to unaccompanied children.

³ <http://www.statistics.gr/el/statistics/-/publication/SCI06/> (last accessed on 31 August 2017)

entities (i.e. private libraries). The number of employees at that time was 1.787, of which 913 were professional librarians. Most libraries, especially the public, fall under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Education, while the municipal libraries under the Ministry of Interior. Consequently, their main funding derives from the state budget.

Austerity policies have had a strong impact on all sectors, including libraries. The funding and the available staff are inadequate to efficiently support the functions and services offered. However, non-governmental funding mainly from private institutions, such as Stavros Niarchos Foundation (SNF) has contributed significantly in supporting libraries to satisfy their goals. An encouraging element during the last years is that book lending and libraries' activities have increased, according to the latest statistics (Hellenic Statistical Authority, 2014).

The role of National Library of Greece

National Library of Greece (NLG) was officially established in 1834. Its role is to collect, organize, preserve and offer access to all written scientific and cultural production of Greece, as well as to material related to Greece which is produced abroad. It also operates as the official national center for providing guidelines and establishing standards related to libraries. Currently, NLG counts 122 employees (72 permanent and 50 temporary positions).

National Library of Greece serves as the coordinator of the Greek Libraries Network, Specifically, it collaborates with the public and municipal libraries for developing and promoting reading and knowledge campaigns. In October 2017, NLG is moving to its new premises within the Stavros Niarchos Foundation Cultural Center (SNFCC) after receiving a large donation from the Stavros Niarchos Foundation and the support of the Greek State. This transition signals the initiation of participations in multiple new projects and actions, the setting up of new services and activities as well as collaborations with various actors, all of which are expected to significantly support its role as a pylon of knowledge.

1. Governmental and non-governmental bodies

Below, a detailed list of governmental and non-governmental bodies that operate in Greece and develop and offer services to both libraries and refugees is presented.

Libraries

As already mentioned, in Greece there are 474 libraries, some of them are more active than others in offering services to migrants and refugees. We have already mentioned the **National Library of Greece** and the **Greek Libraries Network**⁴. This Network currently has 174 libraries-members. It was set up to assist Academic, Research, Public, Municipal and School Libraries to develop and progress the services they offer to their public. Many educational programs were developed and offered during the last years from Network through various entertainment and educational activities. One such example is the “Summer Reading Campaign” for promoting reading to children and young adults. It is offered every year for the past 4 years from all the libraries of the Network.

Other bodies of importance in the library sector are mainly the following:

The **General Council of Libraries** was established by the Ministry of Education with the aim to identify and update the short and long-term goals of libraries, as well as to develop the necessary strategies to assist libraries to achieve their goals.⁵

Association of Greek Librarians and Information Scientists⁶ is the scientific and professional association representing the professional librarians of the country. It aims to promote library science, contribute to the recognition of the role of the librarian and assist in the development and modernization of Greek Libraries. It also aims to disseminate to Greek librarians current national and international developments on issues relevant to Library Science. Finally, to inform on relevant seminars, conferences and other events taking place both in national and international level.

The **Organizing Committee for the Support of Libraries** was established in 2003 by representatives of Greek and international organizations to contribute to the development of libraries in Greece. It consists of the following bodies: a) National Library of Greece, b) Association of Greek Librarians and Information Scientists, c) National Documentation Center, d) Eugenides Foundation, e) the Lillian Voudouri Great Music Library, f) Goethe-Institut Athens, g) Cervantes Institute of Athens, h) US Embassy Documentation Center, and i) Nordic Library.

⁴ <http://network.nlg.gr/> (last accessed on 31 August 2017)

⁵ <http://www.avgi.gr/article/10976/6457165/demosies-bibliothekes-mellon-kai-prooptikes> (last accessed on 31 August 2017)

⁶ <http://www.eebep.gr/> (last accessed on 31 August 2017)

Hellenic Academic Libraries Link (HEAL-LINK)⁷ is a consortium, whose members are all public Universities and Technological Educational Institutions of Greece. It aims to establish common policies for all institutions-members and promote collaboration. One significant initiative of HEAL-LINK relates to managing the electronic journals. Specifically, a joint subscription of electronic resources was succeeded which assisted to further organize journal collections, share costs among higher educational institutions, and gain access to more electronic resources to cover users' information needs. Another important achievement of HEALink is the creation and operation of the Union Catalog of the Greek Academic Libraries and the use of the bibliographic records by each member of the Consortium.

Future Library⁸ is a “*non-profit organization devoted to reinforcing the significance of libraries as knowledge, creativity, and interaction-promoting institutions. It was established in Veria in 2011, addressing the call of the Stavros Niarchos Foundation to contribute to the development of a sustainable network of public and municipal libraries across Greece*”. This initiative contributed in strengthening the collaboration between libraries and converting them into modern reading, creativity, and innovation centers. The result of this initiative was the creation of the Greek Libraries Network which is now coordinated by the National Library of Greece.

Refugees

In Greece, there are various governmental and non-governmental actors who are involved in working with refugees. Some of them are presented in brief below.

The **Reception and Identification Service**⁹, is an independent agency under the Deputy Ministry of Migration Policy General Secretariat of Reception. It was established in 2011. Its mission is the effective management of third country nationals who cross the Hellenic borders without legal documents and/or procedures, by placing them in first reception procedures. After the EU-Turkey Agreement, the Ministry of Migration established the **Reception and Identification Centers (RICs)** or “hotspots”, as a permanent referral mechanism and as points of entry at the islands, to identify, register and fingerprint refugees and migrants, and support the implementation of relocations and returns. Newly arrived asylum seekers are detained until the established procedure is completed. There are currently 6 RICs in Greece, 5 in islands (i.e. Lesbos, Chios, Kos, Leros and Samos) and 1 in the region of Evros (Greek -Turkish borders).

The **National Center for Social Solidarity (EKKA)**¹⁰ is a State Organization under the authority of the Ministry of Labor, Social Insurance and Social Solidarity. The objective of the EKKA is the coordination of the network that provides social support, accommodation and care to individuals, families, groups, and populations experiencing crisis situations or need emergency social aid.

⁷ <http://www.seab.gr/> (last accessed on 31 August 2017)

⁸ <https://www.futurelibrary.gr/en/> (last accessed on 31 August 2017)

⁹ <http://firstreception.gov.gr/index.php?lang=en> (last accessed on 31 August 2017)

¹⁰ <http://www.ekka.org.gr/EKKA!show.action?lang=en> (last accessed on 31 August 2017)

KEPOM is a recently established body of the Ministry of Interior which acts as a coordinator center for the management of the Refugee crisis and responsible for the transfer and distribution of refugees in Greece.

In the education sector, in 2016, the Ministry of Education set the **Committee of Support of Refugee Children** to record all refugee children of preschool, school, and post-school age, with the aim of identifying the needs for support, care, and education, as well as the needs on human resources and infrastructure. The Ministry of Education collaborates with IOM and UNHCR to manage the minors' educational needs and to provide school equipment and transportation of children to schools. In addition, the **Institute for Educational Policy (IEP)**¹¹ supports the planning of the Ministry of Education for the educational integration of minors.

The **Hellenic Observatory for Intercultural Education (EPADIPE)**¹² is a scientific association focusing on the cultural pluralism of the Greek society and aspires to contribute to the strengthening of intercultural dialogue, the expansion of research in the field of intercultural education and the introduction and support of innovations at school.

The **Greek Council for Refugees (GCR)**¹³ is an association founded in 1989 with the mission to defending the rights of people who are entitled to protection in our country, and to promote their smooth integration into local society. Refugees and beneficiaries of international protection in general - particularly vulnerable cases such as unaccompanied minors, victims of trafficking, victims of torture, etc. - are the target group of GCR.

European Union National Institutions for Culture (EUNIC)¹⁴ mission is to promote European values and to contribute to cultural diversity inside and outside of the EU through collaboration between European cultural institutes. EUNIC's aim is to expand the role of culture in Europe and to strengthen cultural dialogue, exchange and sustainable cooperation worldwide. Recently, it got funded to support projects that promote western values and way of life to refugees through arts and culture.

Regarding NGO's in Greece, apart from the international NGO's "Doctors without borders", "Doctors of the world", IRC etc. who are mainly active in refugees' health issues, there are numerous Greek NGOs who work with refugees, offering them accommodation, legal aid, educational activities etc. Some of the NGO's that contribute significantly to the protection and accommodation of unaccompanied minors are **Hellenic Red Cross, Praksis, Arsis, Iliaktida, SOS villages** etc. Their mission regarding unaccompanied minors is to take actions for the elimination of social exclusion and the defense of refugees' rights. In this frame, they cooperate with public and private services as well as with UNCHR for their safe adaptation and integration into the Greek reality with the aim of independence and self-reliance or reunification with their families living on European territory.

Other actors involved with (minor) refugees are the following.

¹¹ <http://iep.edu.gr/el/> (last accessed on 31 August 2017)

¹² <http://paratiritirio.web.auth.gr/index.php/2014-05-15-15-54-56> (last accessed on 31 August 2017)

¹³ <http://www.gcr.gr/index.php/en/> (last accessed on 31 August 2017)

¹⁴ <http://athens.eunic-online.eu/?q=content/mission-statement-0> (last accessed on 31 August 2017)

The **Network for children's rights**¹⁵ is a nonprofit association that aims to promote social sensitivity and intervention for problems concerning children's rights. During the last years, the Network is very active in working with minor refugees.

The **Greek Forum of Migrants**¹⁶ is a network of migrant organizations and communities. Its main objective is to contribute to the difficult and long process of integration of migrants into the Greek society, enhancing the involvement of the migrants themselves and their collective and individual responsibility in this direction.

The **Greek Forum of Refugees**¹⁷ is a network of individuals, legal professionals and communities, working to support asylum seekers, political refugees and stateless persons. Its mission is to defend the rights and protect the freedoms of refugees and asylum seekers, inform, and raise awareness around access to refugee status, and general immigrant and refugee issues.

METAdrasi, Action for Migration and Development¹⁸ is an NGO which operates mainly in the interpretation services and the protection of unaccompanied children.

ANTIGONE Information and Documentation Center on Racism, Ecology, Peace and Non-Violence¹⁹ is a non-profit organization which develops activities on anti-racism and non-discrimination, human rights, social ecology, peace and non-violent conflict resolution. It participates in various projects for the social inclusion of refugees.

Finally, in demonstration of solidarity to refugees, volunteers from social centers, squats, collectives, and other social movements have contributed a lot in helping refugees to cover basic needs, including accommodation, clothes, food, medicines and health aid, activities for children and language lessons. Volunteers' initiatives have been of immense importance for refugees and migrants during these years, especially before the State takes over the management of the accommodation sites.

¹⁵ <http://ddp.gr/> (last accessed on 31 August 2017)

¹⁶ <http://www.migrant.gr/cgi-bin/pages/index.pl?arlang=English&type=index> (last accessed on 31 August 2017)

¹⁷ <http://refugees.gr/> (last accessed on 31 August 2017)

¹⁸ <http://metadrasi.org/en/home/> (last accessed on 31 August 2017)

¹⁹ <http://www.antigone.gr/en/home/> (last accessed on 31 August 2017)

2. Measures on a local, regional and national level

Libraries

This section aims to record the type of measures (activities, projects, initiatives etc.) taken by Greek public or municipal libraries and other actors, governmental or not, regarding social inclusion of (minor) refugees. In this context, the method of desk research and interview were used to collect the required information. Specifically, we searched among the 474 libraries to identify those that were geographically close to the areas that RICs were created. This was based on the assumption that these libraries would more likely develop and/or customize information services for the refugees residing in the RICs. In this context, 13 libraries (8 public and 5 municipal) were identified.

8 interviews were then carried out with the directors of these libraries. The main questions inquired related to:

- The current resources of the libraries (i.e. number of employees, equipment, available material in refugees' languages etc.);
- the frequency of use by the refugees;
- the type and frequency of activities designed specifically for (minor) refugees;
- the degree of collaboration among the libraries and other actors in the field;
- the eventual limitations that may impede action taking;
- their needs in order to be able to support social inclusion of minor refugees;
- the librarians' opinion about the information needs of minor refugees;

We also posed the same questions to two NGOs which use the library concept as a mean to promote social integration.

Only in 2 out of 8 cases, the refugee accommodation sites are in proximity with the library (about 2 km) whereas the rest of the sites are located 10-20 km away from the city center and the access to it is often difficult. Three libraries (including a case where the site is in the city center) have never been visited by refugees and have not been involved in any kind of activities for them. The rest 7 libraries are visited by refugees, some on weekly basis and some more seldom.

In the cases that refugees visit the libraries, the services mostly used by them are computers, internet, board games, audiovisual material, reading rooms (especially for reading children's books and travel guides) and in one case for foreign language lessons carried out with volunteers. Only 2 libraries obtain only a few books in refugees' language. None of them provides special tools for the refugees, such as Greek language dictionaries or other e-learning tools.

Only 3 of these libraries occasionally organize activities offered to refugees. Specifically, the **Public Central Library of Samos** in collaboration with UNCHR and NGOs have organized library tours for acquaintance with the library, narration of fairytales with the presence of an interpreter and creativity activities. The **Central Municipal Library of Thessaloniki** has a mobile library that visits at a regular basis the "Diavata" accommodation site to serve minor refugees. The **Public Central Library of Veria** in collaboration with secondary schools has organized creative writing workshops for teams of Greek and Syrian teenagers, with the presence of an interpreter. In addition, it organized a cooking event which took place at the cooking seminars space of the library, where Greeks and Syrians cooked their local recipes and ate together. However, many of the refugees living in Veria have now been relocated to other European countries and visits are not so frequent anymore. The

Central Public Library of Serres in collaboration with teachers organized an educational program for local students to raise awareness and talk about the importance of volunteering. The library is planning to collaborate with the responsible actors at the RICs to start organizing visits at the library.

As we observe, limited actions have been organized by libraries for (minor) refugees to support their integration process. Most of the librarians mentioned the language barrier and the alienation of refugees in remote areas as the main barriers which prohibit libraries from being active in this issue. In addition, many librarians referred to lack of resources needed to reinforce libraries and support new projects -- additional human resources, funding and equipment. Another challenge mentioned is the difficulty to deal with parents who express fear and insecurity about their children's health within the library spaces. Finally, the librarian from the Public Central Library of Samos Island referred to the length of refugees' stay in the islands which hinders the long-term planning of activities.

In relation to the kind of programs/services/activities/tools that could support the integration of minor refugees into the Greek society, most of the librarians believe that the main information needs refer to learning the Greek language, participating in educational programs and in learning/creativity/socialization activities to successfully integrate in school life. They need to feel welcomed, to interact with their Greek peers and with mutual interest groups through common activities, to learn about Greek culture but also to talk about their culture, to discover the city they live in through organized city tours. Other needs mentioned are access to knowledge and information, free access to internet, to dictionaries and books in their language, to English lessons, movies, games and other entertainment activities.

Regarding what librarians additionally need to support minor refugees, almost all the librarians focused on the need to enrich collections with books and other material in their language. The need for additional training (seminars, workshops etc.) for librarians to approach refugees more easily was also raised. Specifically, they proposed seminars on social approach of refugees/migrants and other minorities and have a specific methodology for social inclusion, seminars about their culture, traditions, religion etc. and seminars on how to manage urgent situations such as a refugee crisis. Educational experience and trainings on educational programs planning and implementation were also mentioned. In addition, some referred to the need to facilitate communication and collaboration with other actors (municipality, primary and secondary schools, teams of volunteers etc.) to get a clear image on refugees' situation and co-organize the appropriate actions. Other needs expressed were the participation of interpreters, additional technological equipment and communication with libraries from abroad to share experiences and get informed on best practices and relevant policies.

Apart from libraries, other actors such as NGO's have used libraries as an integration tool to provide refugees with access to information, books and other resources.

The NGO Praksis has managed through donations to create a library within the premises of the Homeless Reception Centre. Today the library counts 5.000 books, mostly literature. However, only few books are in Arabic or Farsi. Library is open for vulnerable social groups, including unaccompanied minors, who benefit from Praksis' programs. In the same premises, a play room with a library of mainly pre-school age books is provided for children. Praksis' library has contributed to creating small libraries at the Accommodation Centers for Unaccompanied minors by donating school aid and juvenile literature books. However, the difficulty to acquire new books and the lack of volunteers to support activities impede the library from efficiently dealing with minors' information needs.

Access to libraries is difficult for most refugees who live alienated from the urban areas in remote accommodation sites. For this reason, volunteers started collecting books and creating small libraries inside the sites. The first library in a refugee accommodation site was created in 2016 in “Elliniko” thanks to a volunteer’ initiative. Initially the collection consisted of 300 books. Later the collection was moved in a container in Schisto site²⁰ and it currently counts 1000 books (mainly Farsi, Greek and English), thanks to “crowd funding” sources. The library is currently run by local volunteers but refugees are trained to self-manage it. In 2017, the volunteers who took this initiative, created the NGO “We need books” with the goal to create multicultural spaces as meeting places where they can house the constantly rising collection of books and provide refugees with helpful information, language lessons etc. The same team of volunteers has created a library of approximately 1000 books at the Catholic Relief Services’ shelter in Athens.

The gap created by the lack of libraries inside accommodation sites, is filled by mobile libraries initiatives. In November 2016, two volunteers coming from abroad, developed a library space for “Vasilika” site in the north part of Greece. However, the need for a mobile library was evident to bring scarce resources to as many sites as possible. As a result, they purchased a van and convert it to the ECHO Refugees’ Library (Education Community Hope and Opportunity). The library provides language learning resources, access to online learning platforms through tablets, books in Arabic/Farsi/Urdu/French/English and Greek. Overall, it was found that the resources most useful to refugee users are those for learning languages namely English and Greek, particularly resources with audio support and transliteration in their own language (so they can learn the sounds of the new language through their own script). Language apps like DuLingo and Memrise have proven very useful, as have lexicons such as those developed by “Metadrasi”. As ECHO is a small project run by only a handful of people, the main restrictions are funding and gaining access to sites that often have very tight restrictions on who can enter and provide services. Gaining access is a long process that slows down the library work significantly.

a) Refugees

During the last years, many actors have taken numerous initiatives on educational or other type of activities to promote social inclusion for refugees. In this context, numerous educational interventions are organized inside the accommodation sites by a heterogeneous group that includes international and Greek NGOs, various associations, volunteers or even refugees. According to the report of the Committee of Support of Refugee Children, of the interventions organized, about two thirds of cases are for educational activities of creative engagement such as games, painting or psychosocial support. In only one third of the cases, lessons carried out are mentioned. They are primarily English lessons and secondarily Greek or -more rarely- math. There are very limited cases where activities are organized outside the structures, such as visits at museums, cinema, libraries, etc.

In some cases, non-formal education projects are organized where formal education is not yet available. For example, the NGO **METAdrasi** organized a free non-formal summer education program, aiming at preparing refugee and migrant children for the upcoming school year. This activity was addressed to children and adolescents aged 6 to 17, living in refugee sites, shelters for unaccompanied minors, rented flats, and squats. This activity was implemented by METAdrasi’s

²⁰ Schisto accommodation site hosts 1000 Afghan refugees in containers.

volunteers, in a city center school belonging to the Municipality of Athens, as part of a “Stavros Niarchos” Foundation initiative entitled “Open Schools”. A similar action, organized by the “**Network for children’s rights**” in collaboration with “Save the children” is that of “School without borders” which took place in July 2017 at the accommodation sites of Schisto and Elliniko and lasted a month. In this initiative, teachers and volunteers offered recreational and learning activities to children with the aim to bring them closer to the Greek language and thus prepare them for the school life. The Network for children’s rights has been very active with minor refugees including unaccompanied children. It offers Greek and English lessons, socialization activities, vocational training, and psychological, medical, and material support. It has a lending library, computers and games and organizes many learning and artistic activities, web radio etc.

On April 2017, the Network for Children’s rights, thanks to the cooperation and support of “Save the Children” and the assistance of the daily Greek newspaper “Efimerida ton Syntakton” (EfSyn), started the production of the Journal “Migratory Birds”. “Migratory Birds”, was put together by Afghan refugee girls who live in “Schisto” accommodation site, and it is now the first newspaper written exclusively by refugee, migrant and Greek teenagers. The publication of the newspaper is part of the Network for Children’s Rights program entitled “Contact points”, which aims to improve communication between refugees and the Greek community, build understanding and bridge the gap between life inside the refugee sites and the real life. The program focuses mainly on the enhancement of dialogue inside the community of the refugees’ sites and preparation for communicating with the outside world. In addition, it aims to introduce minors with the social and cultural European and Greek way of life and the start of the integration processes through communication and acquaintance with their Greek peers and mutual interest groups.

The **Intercultural Centre for the Promotion of Refugee Integration “PYXIS”** within the **Greek Council for Refugees** is a center of information addressing refugees and asylum seekers in our country but also of local community’s awareness, which organizes and implements various cultural and educational activities like courses of Greek and English language, of computers, of remedial teaching, etc., while, at the same time, it offers counselling and guidance services.

The **Greek Forum of Migrants** in cooperation with **Melissa**²¹ and the **Greek Refugee Forum** organizes various courses and cultural and social activities for refugees aged 15-26 under the “Alef” program, with the support of the NGO Mercy Corps and the City of Athens. Within the framework of the program, they offer Greek and English language courses, IT courses, visits to museums and cultural centers, excursions as well as informative visits to agencies and organizations that provide services to refugees and migrants.

The “**Online information on social benefits for refugees, asylum seekers and migrants**” project is implemented by the **Greek Forum of Refugees** within the “Points of Support” program. It is an online platform, that aims to keep updated every refugee and migrant about organizations providing social benefits and assistance in Greece. The project features initiatives and organizations operating in different fields: education and training, Greek language lessons, accommodation, alimentation and clothing, medical, psychological, legal and social support etc.

²¹ Melissa is a network for migrant women in Greece, promoting integration empowerment, communication and active citizenship. Some of their basic activities are greek language lessons, psychological and social support, programs of creative thinking through art etc.

ANTIGONE participates in several projects²² in collaboration with other NGO's to increase the capacity of refugees and asylum seekers to participate more fully in Greek society. In the frame of the project **INCLUSIVE** which aims at the inclusion of refugee students in the Greek school community, it runs workshops in primary schools, secondary schools and lyceums broadly for the sensitization of students on human rights with a particular emphasis on refugees and displaced persons rights, while at the same time it has a consistent presence in afternoon schools working with refugee students on team building and peaceful cooperation.

A few universities have also been involved in activities and language courses. The University of Athens (UoA) set up an Observatory-Network of Solidarity and Support for refugees to efficiently coordinate the solidarity actions of the University's community. In this context, it designed, specifically for refugees, a new program of Greek language lessons through an e-learning platform. In addition, project P.R.E.S.S.²³ (Provision of Refugee Education and Support Scheme) is an initiative of the Hellenic Open University which aims to address the educational and integration needs of refugees currently residing in Greece. The project's first axis entails qualitative and quantitative research on the linguistic, educational and communication needs and expectations of refugees (according to age and other analytic parameters). The second axis aims at the linguistic and cultural integration and adjustment of refugees (children and adults) through non-formal and informal learning interventions. The third axis focuses on awareness-raising, provision of support services and targeted interventions for the long-term educational empowerment of refugees in Greek society.

Finally, several conferences and seminars are organized for people who work with refugees on the education and the role of cultural institutions in integration. The Organizing Committee for the Support of Libraries has organized workshops on best practices of foreign libraries regarding activities for refugees. The European Union National Institutes for Culture (EUNIC) Athens has organized a Conference on the role of culture in refugee integration into local communities. The Hellenic Observatory for Intercultural Education (EPADIPE) has organized several seminars and conferences on best practices in the intercultural education field, focusing much in education for young refugees.

²² <http://www.antigone.gr/en/projects/> (last accessed on 31 August 2017)

²³ <http://www.press-eap.net/> (last accessed on 31 August 2017)

3. Pedagogic resources

As far as libraries are concerned, we observe a lack of pedagogic resources which could be used by librarians to support the information and learning needs of refugees or by refugees themselves. The existing resources are limited in few books in the language of refugees, mainly children's books.

However, other actors have been involved in creating resources mainly for the acquisition of the Greek language. There are resources, either in electronic or other form, for different levels of users. These resources usually include vocabularies, grammar guide, exercises etc.

METAdrasi – Action for Migration and Development, in collaboration with other actors, has created various pedagogic resources and tools for refugees to facilitate day-to-day communication between refugees and migrants with Greek or English-speaking persons and to support the social integration of refugees and migrants. A few examples of tools are the

- Digital dictionary in 5 languages,
- a Mini Lexicon for Basic Communication in 6 languages,
- “Entaxei” a multilingual support tool for children and teenagers,
- MAZI, the Multilingual guide for education in Greece,
- GEFYRES, a Bilingual Refugee Support Guide etc.²⁴

As mentioned, National and Kapodistrian University of Athens (UOA) has also “designed a Greek language learning program specifically addressed to refugees. The program is without cost and can be followed remotely through a specially designed educational platform.”²⁵

²⁴ <http://metadrasi.org/en/our-activities/> (last accessed on 31 August 2017)

²⁵ <https://elearn.elke.uoa.gr/refugees.html> (last accessed on 31 August 2017)

4. Summary and estimation of the actual situation

Greeks

Greece started receiving migrants during the 90s whereas the main stream of refugees being recorded in 2015 and onwards, which is quite recently in comparison with other European countries. During these years, few measures for migrants' social inclusion had been taken. There is a need to raise awareness among the Greek public to further promote understanding, acceptance, tolerance and integration. We cannot overlook incidents at various schools with parents demonstrating aggressively against minor refugees going at the same school with their children. Incidents that could be avoided if activities bridging the gap between the Greek society and migrants were offered by cultural and educational institutions. Consequently, there is a need to promote social sensitivity and interaction as well as intercultural understanding and tolerance. These are very essential lessons that civil servants, teachers, librarians, social workers, parents etc. must take to teach.

Refugees

Considering the large number of refugees and migrants that live currently in our country, we would admit that there are not adequate actions to support minors' social integration and educational needs. Schools are the ideal places for learning, entertainment, interaction and integration. However, the majority does not receive formal education. The existing informal opportunities cannot be reached by everybody. Access to the cities is quite difficult for those living in refugee sites. At the same time, it is often difficult for local actors to gain access to the sites since they have tight restrictions on who can enter and provide services. As a result, they have a strong feeling of alienation and lack of interaction with Greeks, which makes their social integration difficult. Unaccompanied minors cannot adapt and integrate if kept for so long away from the UAC shelters, especially if they are detained.

There is a deficiency in activities related to cultural and civic education that would help them to understand the society they live in, as well as vocational training to be able to integrate into job markets. Most of the actors involved, deal with the basic needs of alimentation, accommodation, health and legal assistance, as well as entertainment activities for children. Greek language lessons are mainly based at the presence of refugees and E-learning opportunities are scarce.

Greece is a case because it is still considered by many refugees as a transit country where they need to feel a temporary relief until they manage to settle in other European countries. Considering that, many refugees, including minors are not interested in learning the Greek language and culture and do not feel the need to adapt to the Greek reality.

Libraries

The financial crisis in Greece, the last ten years has substantially affected all domains, including obviously education, culture, libraries etc. Lack of human and financial resources impedes institutions to engage with new activities. It was evident that it is important to promote libraries as meeting places for social interaction and integration of minor refugees. In most libraries, there is a lack of material in the refugees' language, pedagogic resources, and training tools for librarians and

refugees. Intercultural communication activities are scarce within libraries' spaces. Libraries must be supported themselves to manage supporting refugees. However, some libraries are well equipped and have already the infrastructure for activities to take place. The same resources as well as the experience gained from various educational programs of the past can serve as a basis for developing activities for minor refugees.

While we observe a wide range of collaborations between NGOs and various attempts to prepare both local community and the newcomer groups of young refugees to co-exist, unfortunately the same cannot be said for libraries. Only few libraries have acted towards this direction. They started collaborating with other institutions and got involved in initiatives. Communication and collaboration with authorities and actors in charge of the sites and shelters must be facilitated. Also, collaboration between libraries is necessary. The educational programs of NLG and the Network of Greek Libraries have certainly set the ground and the intellectual/cognitive/material/technical infrastructures for further actions in the field of education and reading promotion. Libraries must take advantage of these infrastructures and the experience acquired to include also refugee children in the learning process and thus support their social integration. Libraries, serving as well-equipped centers of information, accessible to all people without any discrimination, can play a significant role as both meeting and learning spaces for minor refugees. However, librarians need to be trained to engage with refugees, develop programs and activities.

LIBERO

Given the limited e-learning tools that can be used by refugees in Greece, LIBERO can further complement existing educational programs, such as online Greek language lessons, cultural education, vocational training etc. This implies that libraries must be supported with technological equipment to offer access to the e-platform. Physical interaction with local communities is indispensable for social inclusion. LIBERO could also provide access to all possible learning/creativity/socialization/entertainment/sports activities that physically take place in each region.

LIBERO is an ideal opportunity for minors who don't receive formal education or have no easy access to Greek courses and other activities based on presence. Also, given the inadequate experience and knowledge of librarians on dealing with vulnerable groups, minorities etc. LIBERO will be very useful for providing training material for librarians on social approach and inclusion. The platform could also provide information on relevant events, seminars, workshops etc. per region. It should also facilitate communication and experience exchange between libraries from abroad and provide a common view to best practices.

To conclude, LIBERO is a great opportunity to promote collaboration between librarians, social workers and other actors working with refugees. All these actors will act together to overcome the language barrier and bridge the different cultures, values and backgrounds. Through the learning process minor refugees will overcome their insecurities and feelings of alienation while getting familiarized with the western way of living.

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List of useful links

1. Governmental and non-governmental bodies

- Libraries

Greek Libraries Network <http://network.nlg.gr/>

Association of Greek Librarians and Information Scientists <http://www.eebep.gr/>

Hellenic Academic Libraries Link (HEALLINK) <http://www.seab.gr/>

Future Library <https://www.futurelibrary.gr/en/>

- Refugees

Reception and Identification Service <http://firstreception.gov.gr/index.php?lang=en>

National Center for Social Solidarity <http://www.ekka.org.gr/EKKA!show.action?lang=en>

Institute for Educational Policy <http://iep.edu.gr/el/>

Hellenic Observatory for Intercultural Education (EPADIPE)
<http://paratiritirio.web.auth.gr/index.php/2014-05-15-15-54-56>

Greek Council for Refugees <http://www.gcr.gr/index.php/en/>

Network for children's rights <http://ddp.gr/>

Greek Forum of Migrants <http://www.migrant.gr/cgi-bin/pages/index.pl?arlang=English&type=index>

Greek Forum of Refugees <http://refugees.gr/>

We need books <https://weneedbooks.org/>

Metadrasi <http://metadrasi.org/en/home/>

ANTIGONE <http://www.antigone.gr/en/home/>

2. Measures

List of services of the Greek Forum of Refugees <http://refugees.gr/social-services-en/>

List of projects of ANTIGONE center <http://www.antigone.gr/en/projects/>

PRESS project <http://www.press-eap.net/>

METAdrasi's activities <http://metadrasi.org/en/our-activities/>

3. Pedagogic resources

Digital dictionary in 5 languages http://www.metadrasi.org/lexiko/select_language.htm

List of pedagogic resources <http://metadrasi.org/en/our-activities/> (EDUCATION)



Greek language E-learning program for refugees <https://elearn.elke.uoa.gr/refugees.html>