SIRIUS - Policy Network on Migrant Education

MULTI-COUNTRY PARTNERSHIP TO ENHANCE
THE EDUCATION OF REFUGEE AND ASYLUM-SEEKING YOUTH
IN EUROPE – PERAE

Refugee Education in Greece

2018

Palaiologou, N.; Michail, D.; Toumpoulidis, I.

University of Western Macedonia
Parko Agiou Dimitriou Postcode 50100, Kozani
Tel. 2461056200
Fax. 2461056201
info@uowm.gr

“Multi-country Partnership to Enhance the Education of Refugee and Asylum-seeking Youth in Europe” is funded by Stiftung Mercator
# Table of Contents

1. Introduction .................................................................................................................. 3

1.1 The structure of education system in Greece ............................................................... 4

1.2 Refugee children's general access ............................................................................. 6

2. Desk Research .............................................................................................................. 7

2.1 Asylum in Greece ....................................................................................................... 7

2.2 Legal setting ............................................................................................................... 10

2.3 Institutional setting .................................................................................................... 12

2.4 State of literature ....................................................................................................... 15

3. Fieldwork ..................................................................................................................... 18

3.3 Results ....................................................................................................................... 20

3.3.1 Social integration ................................................................................................. 20

3.3.2 Interaction with other students ........................................................................... 20

3.3.3 Assessment of refugee education in Greece ......................................................... 21

4. Conclusion .................................................................................................................. 22

5. Reference .................................................................................................................... 23

6. Annex ......................................................................................................................... 25
1. Introduction

This report is conducted in order to contribute to the purposes of SIRIUS, a European Policy Network on the education of children and young people with a migrant background. Sirius has established a multi–country partnership within Europe that aims to address and highlight inadequate access to quality education for asylum – seeking and refugee youth throughout the European Union. For this purpose, our attempt is to show in the clearest possible way the educational support and policies for young refugees in Greece.

Greece has been for many years a “migrant-sending” country. In the '50s and '60s a significant number of Greeks migrated to Western European countries, as well as to America and Australia, looking for job opportunities and better living conditions. Only at the beginning of the decade of 1980 the country began to develop its first educational integration policies on the occasion of the return of repatriated Greek emigrants, particularly from the former Soviet Union countries (Georgogiannis, 2006). For this cause, Greek state established the institution of reception and tutorial (coaching) classes (Law no.1404/1983). The large number of second and third generation migrants and the new waves of immigration from Eastern European countries in the early '90s were the reason for the adoption of the first law on intercultural education (Law no. 2413/1996). The law set as purpose of intercultural education to organize and enable “primary and secondary school units to provide education to young people with educational, social or cultural inequalities” (article 34, paragraph 1). Moreover, the geopolitical position of Greece made it a refugee reception country. Refugees were arriving to the country as a first stop, with the intention to relocate to Northern European countries.

The massive refugee crisis on 2015 forced Greek state to respond to the new circumstances. With a series of legislative initiatives, the government tried to shield institutionally the education of refugees, in response both to the global humanitarian crisis and the European directives and commitments. Malfunctions emerged immediately: delays, lack of coordination, inhuman conditions in reception centers, lack of central policy planning. However, conscientious efforts were made that should be recognized. A flexible scheme for education of refugees has been developed (within and out of the limits of reception centers), teachers have been hired to work in the reception facilities and non-governmental and international organizations offer their services by providing educational and creative activities to refugee students. So far, the results are encouraging.


3 Page 2450
In 2016 Greek Asylum Service received a total number of 51,091 asylum applications of which 14,806 were children aged 0 - 13 and 4,915 between 14 - 17 years old (Ministry of Migration Policy, 2016). In the above total are also included unaccompanied minors who are estimated to be 2,352. Despite the urgent need for education and integration for these young refugees it seems that Greek Educational System was unprepared. Greek government itself has characterized school year 2016 – 2017 a “preparatory year”, focusing on the transition of refugee children from camps to school life and culture (Ministry of Education, 2016). That reflects both the lack of educational measures on refugee integration so far and optimism for more efficient policies during the next school year (2017 – 2018).

1.1 The structure of education system in Greece

In Greece education is organized by the Ministry of Education, Research and Religious Affairs and is implemented locally by the regional directorates of primary and secondary education. Education is compulsory for all children aged between four and eighteen years old. Greek education system is divided into three distinct steps (Law no. 1566/1985):

1 Primary Education (4 – 12 years old)

2 Secondary Education (12 – 18 years old)

3 Higher Education – Tertiary Education (18+)

1 Primary Education

Comprises both nursery education (for children from 2 to 6 years old) and elementary education (for children from 6 to 12 years old). Primary education is provided in nursery and primary schools. It includes nursery stations (1 - 4 years old), day nursery (2 – 4 years old) and kindergartens (4 - 6 years old). Kindergartens may be part of centers that work together with state nursery schools (nursery centers).

A) Pre – primary schools

Pre - school life starts earlier at the age of 2,5 years old. Toddlers attend a special day – care center or nursery schools that are either state - run or private. Additionally, children may attend the Primary Day – Long School which functions within a larger time schedule (from 8.00 – 16.00) compared to the typical kindergarten that runs from 7.45 – 13.05. Pre - primary education is provided in kindergartens operated either independently or in care centers. Attendance lasts two years and an infant in order to be enrolled must have completed its fourth year of age. Kindergartens can be either one - seated (7 - 30 infants) or two-seated (31 - 60 infants).

B). Primary schools

Elementary schooling is compulsory. Attendance lasts six years and includes six grades. Students start at the age of 6 and finish at the age of 12. They are taught subjects such as Greek language, Mathematics, Science, Geography, Religion (from 5th grade), Physical Education, History, Foreign Languages (English, French, German), Computers, Art and Craft, Environmental Studies and more. Students do not take exams at the end of the school year to qualify for the next grade. School starts at 8.00 and finishes at 13.15 or 14.00 depending on the daily schedule. Besides there are all – day primary schools finishing at 16.00.

2 Secondary education

It is organized for minors from 12 to 18 years old who have completed their six - year elementary education. There are two educational cycles in secondary education: junior high school (for students from 12 to 15 years old) and senior high school (for students from 15 to 18 years old). Each cycle lasts three years.

A) Junior high school

Secondary education attendance in junior high school is compulsory and is addressed to students aged 12 - 15. The duration of studies is three years and includes three grades (A, B and C). It can also operate in evening classes for working (must be at least 14 years old) or adult students. Students take written exams at the end of the school year in June, to qualify for the next grade. Students who do not succeed, retake an examination in September. Finally, the students who graduate are awarded a Junior High School Diploma that allows them to continue further their studies in Senior High School (Lyceum).

B) Senior high school (Lyceum)

Students with a Junior High School Diploma can be enrolled in Senior high schools without exams. The duration of studies is three years and includes three grades (A, B and C). Senior high schools can also be divided in morning and evening classes (for working students). Students who graduate from Senior high school (General or Vocational) are awarded a High School Diploma and are entitled to take National Examinations at the end of the school year to enter Higher Education.

3 Higher Education – Tertiary Education

Educational institutions of Higher Education can either be Higher Technological Institutes or Universities. Attendance at each of these lasts four years with the exception of Polytechnic Schools and Medicine Schools (where the duration is 5 years and 6 years respectively). A four - year university degree is equivalent to a Bachelor's Degree (Bologna Treaty) and allows students to continue their studies on a Master's Degree level (two years minimum duration). Students who do not wish to take National Examinations can enroll in Vocational Training Institutes and practice technical professions.
1.2 Refugee children’s general access

The parents of refugee children who wish to enroll in the Morning School, contact the nearest to their home Directory of Education in order to direct them to a specific school. Education Directorates have the supervision, are informed and responsible to guide refugee parents to the appropriate school as well as inform them regarding the document procedure. The principals enroll the children and take the necessary actions to the Ministry of Education in order to create Reception Classes or other supporting educational structures in the school. For a foreign secondary student to be enrolled in Secondary Education schools in Greece, he/she needs to hold a diploma or proof of study or any other relevant document of educational status (Circular 108457/D24-7-2016). For registering underage citizens of third countries in Greek schools of all levels certain respective documents are required from the nationals.

In exceptional circumstances, with insufficient documentation students can be enrolled in public schools as third countries children if they:

a) are protected by the Greek State as beneficiaries of international protection or under the protection of the UNHCR United Nations,

b) come from areas where the situation is unsettled,

c) have applied for asylum,

d) are third countries nationals residing in Greece, even if their legal residence has not been regulated in this country

The school director indicates the bodies to which the person can apply to supplement the relevant documents and support the procedure as far as possible. For this purpose the school may request the assistance of a social service of the nearby municipality or any other relevant administrative authority. By completing the documentation the student enrolls at the school with the information stated by his/her guardian.

Unfortunately, this is the formal procedure provided by Greek and European law. In reality, the access of refugee students in Greek education system is not that easy. Directorates of Education have not trained staff or interpreters to direct properly to the parents of refugee children. In addition, some school principals refuse to enroll refugee students due to incomplete documentation and in several cases Greek parents have reacted against the “newcomers” claiming that they would introduce diseases to schools (Euronews, 2016).
2. Desk Research

2.1 Asylum in Greece

Greece has been traditionally for many decades an emigration country. Nevertheless, over the last decades, due to its geographic location (crossroad between the countries of northern and central Europe and the countries of Asia and Africa) it has been turned into a country of destination and entry to the EU. Therefore, a reliable asylum procedure as part of a comprehensive management system of migration flows is essential. Greek legislation over asylum seekers is established under two basic laws:

a) Law no. 4375/2016 “On the organization and operation of the Asylum Service, the Appeals Authority, the Reception and Identification Service, the establishment of the General Secretariat for Reception, the transportation into Greek legislation of the provisions of Directive 2013/32/EC ‘on common procedures for granting and withdrawing the status of international protection (recast)’ (L 180/29.6.2013), provisions on the employment of beneficiaries of international protection and other provisions”.

b) Law no. 3907/2011 “Establishment of an Asylum Service and a First Reception Service, adaptation of the Greek legislation to the provisions of Directive 2008/115/EC ‘with regard to the common rules and procedures in Member States for the return of illegally staying third – country nationals’ and other provisions”.

The Asylum Service was established under Law no. 3907/2011. It is the first autonomous institution in our country that is in charge of the examination of international protection claims. It forms part of the Ministry of Migration Policy and started operating on 07/06/2013. The Asylum Service, as part of its mission, is responsible especially for the following (Ministry of Migration Policy, n.d.):

- supporting the planning and drafting of a national policy on granting asylum or other forms of international protection, as well as monitoring and evaluating the implementation of this policy,
- receiving, examining and deciding upon international protection claims in the first instance,
- informing international protection claimants on the examination process of their claims, as well as on their rights and obligations during that process,
- collecting and evaluating information regarding the economic, social and political situation in the countries of origin of the third country nationals, as well as continuously monitoring any

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6 Law no. 3907/2011 Official Government Gazette A - 726.1.2011 entitled “Establishment of an Asylum Service and a First Reception Service, adaptation of the Greek law to the provisions of the 2008/115/EC Directive ‘relating to the common rules and procedures applied by the member states regarding the return of illegally resident third country nationals’ and remaining provisions”. It has now been replaced with Law no. 4375/2016
developments occurring in these countries, in cooperation for this purpose with Greek and other authorities, especially pursuant to international agreements,

< supplying international protection claimants, as well as beneficiaries of international protection, with all necessary legal and travel documents as provided by law,

< processing of refugee family reunification claims,

< facilitating asylum seekers regarding material reception conditions in collaboration with other co–responsible actors,

< preparing legal texts and administrative acts on issues of its competence and

< cooperating with local actors, independent authorities and non–governmental organizations, EU organs and organizations, as well as international organizations in order to accomplish its mission in the most efficient way.

Finally, the Asylum Service provides administrative support to the Appeals Authority, which was also established by Law no. 3907/2011. It is composed of the Central Service, situated in Athens, and Regional Asylum Offices and Asylum Units around the country that are gradually put into operation. Due to rapid increase in the numbers of asylum seekers in Greece during the first months of 2016, and in an attempt to safeguard their status as asylum seekers, the Asylum Service is currently realizing a program for their pre–registration with the support of United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and European Asylum Support Office (EASO).

In 2015 the Greek Asylum Service registered 13,195 applications for international protection. This number is estimated to be 40% higher than 2014. In 2016 there is a great increase of international protection claims, partially due to Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia’s change in policy, according to which the country decided to gradually refuse to allow the passage through its territory of refugees and migrants (Ministry of Migration Policy, n.d.). In addition, following the Common EU – Turkey Statement there was a mass submission of international protection claims (approximately 8,500 claims in a period of two months).

The table 1 below gives the general data of Asylum Applications in Greece from 7th June 2013 until 31st January 2017:
**Table 1: Asylum Applications 2013 - 2017**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2013</th>
<th>2014</th>
<th>2015</th>
<th>2016</th>
<th>2017</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>4814</td>
<td>9432</td>
<td>13195</td>
<td>51091</td>
<td>6346</td>
<td>84878</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monthly average</td>
<td>688</td>
<td>786</td>
<td>1100</td>
<td>4258</td>
<td>6346</td>
<td>2021</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Ministry of Migration Policy, Asylum Service (Statistical Data of the Greek Asylum Service from 7.6.2013 to 31.1.2017)*

Moreover, as far as the countries of origin are concerned table 2 demonstrates that the vast majority of refugees comes from Syria (with a rapid increase between 2015 and 2016), following by Afghanistan. Here are the first ten countries of origin for Asylum Applicants from 2013 to January 2017:

**Table 2: Asylum Applications – Countries of Origin**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2013</th>
<th>2014</th>
<th>2015</th>
<th>2016</th>
<th>January 2017</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SYRIA</td>
<td>252</td>
<td>773</td>
<td>3492</td>
<td>26692</td>
<td>2288</td>
<td>33497</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AFGHANISTAN</td>
<td>803</td>
<td>1709</td>
<td>1720</td>
<td>4371</td>
<td>1198</td>
<td>9801</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PAKISTAN</td>
<td>610</td>
<td>1618</td>
<td>1823</td>
<td>4695</td>
<td>638</td>
<td>9384</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IRAQ</td>
<td>107</td>
<td>174</td>
<td>661</td>
<td>4812</td>
<td>724</td>
<td>6478</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ALBANIA</td>
<td>419</td>
<td>569</td>
<td>1003</td>
<td>1420</td>
<td>106</td>
<td>3517</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BANGLADESH</td>
<td>230</td>
<td>634</td>
<td>739</td>
<td>1215</td>
<td>106</td>
<td>2924</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IRAN</td>
<td>131</td>
<td>361</td>
<td>242</td>
<td>1096</td>
<td>128</td>
<td>1958</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GEORGIA</td>
<td>342</td>
<td>350</td>
<td>386</td>
<td>688</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>1835</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PALESTINE</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>852</td>
<td>413</td>
<td>1416</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ALGERIA</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>187</td>
<td>131</td>
<td>889</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>1367</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In 2013 a total of 437 asylum applications were submitted to Asylum Service, aged between 0 – 13 years old and 309 applications aged 14 – 17 years old. In 2014 a total number of 695 refugees aged 0 – 13 years old and 660 refugees aged 14 – 17 years old also applied for asylum, while the corresponding numbers in 2015 were 1,713 (aged 0-13) and 784 (aged 14-17). The rapid increase in numbers in 2016 is showed below (unaccompanied minors included):

**Table 3:** Asylum Applications – Age and gender ranges

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age ranges</th>
<th>2016</th>
<th>January 2017</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Men</td>
<td>Women</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0 - 13</td>
<td>7691</td>
<td>7115</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14 - 17</td>
<td>3531</td>
<td>1384</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Ministry of Migration Policy, Asylum Service (Statistical Data of the Greek Asylum Service from 7.6.2013 to 31.1.2017)

**2.2 Legal setting**

Greek government since the summer of 2016 (the hot summer of refugee crisis?7) embarked on a series of legislative measures for the education of the children of refugees which can be summarized in three main legal settings:

*Law no. 4415/2016*: “Arrangements for Greek language education, intercultural education and other provisions”;

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Joint Ministerial Decision no. 152360/CD4:\textsuperscript{9} “Establishment, organization, operation, coordination and reception facilities training program for education of refugees, criteria and recruitment process”,

Ministerial Decision no. 131024/D1\textsuperscript{10}: “Settings on Educational Priority Zones - Establishment of Reception Classes - Reinforcing Coaching Classes and Reception Facilities for education of refugees in school units”.

In addition to the above, the Greek Ministry of Education, Research and Religious Affairs issued the same year (2016) two explanatory circulars to the schools units of Secondary Education regarding the terms and conditions for registration of foreign pupils to Greek public schools:

a) Circular no. 108457/D2\slash 4-7-2016\textsuperscript{11}: “Circular on the registration of foreign pupils with insufficient documentation to schools”

b) Circular no. F1/143733/D2/7-9-2016\textsuperscript{12}: “Foreign pupils registration”.

Among others, special emphasis was placed on cooperation between the Ministry of Education, Research and Religious Affairs and non-governmental organizations for the education of refugee children. Specifically, the Greek Ministry of Education invited every international organization and non-governmental organization that wished to provide educational activities in refugee reception centers. These activities are part of the non-formal education and are implemented at different hours and days of the program of nursery and reception classes for the refugee pupils. The organizations that were interested had to fill out (until 15 September 2016) an on line form in order to obtain relevant certification from the Educational Policy Institute. It is estimated that until now more than 32 non governmental organizations and 36 voluntary groups keep providing educational activities in more than 40 reception centers (Scientific Committee for the Support of refugee children, 2016).

\begin{itemize}
  \item Joint Ministerial Decision no. 152360/CD4 “Establishment, organization, operation, coordination and reception facilities training program for education of refugees, criteria and recruitment process” OGG B - 3049/23.9.2016
  
  \item Ministerial Decision no. 131024/D1 “Settings on Educational Priority Zones - Establishment of Reception Classes - Reinforcing Coaching Classes and Reception Facilities for education of refugees in school units” OGG B – 2687/29.8.2016
  
  \item Circular no. 108457/D2\slash 4-7-2016: “Circular on the registration of foreign pupils with insufficient documentation to schools”, available in http://dide-a-ath.att.sch.gr/new/images/stories/ekp_data/egkl_eggr-allod-math_el-dik_5-9-16.pdf
  
\end{itemize}
Having mentioned the legislative framework we will focus on specific amendments introduced by article. Law no. 4415/2016 (article 38) stipulates the establishment of reception facilities for refugee education as well as the organization, operation, coordination and training programs on them. According to the Joint Ministerial Decision no. 152360/CD4 (article 1, paragraph 1), in every school unit located near reception centers an independent refugee reception and education facility is established, which may include more than one classes, depending on the number of refugee pupils. Furthermore, for children aged between 4 – 5 years old staying in accommodation centers, reception and education facilities are established as nursery schools’ departments that will function within the limits of accommodation centers (article 1, paragraph 2). The minimum number required for a reception facility class is 10 pupils and the maximum 20 pupils (article 1, paragraph 5). A management team is responsible for the coordination and monitoring of educational programs in the reception facilities. The team also coordinates the implementation of school operations through the Asylum Fund (article 1, paragraph 6). The setting process of schools that are hosting classes for refugee pupils is based on two criteria: a. reasonable distance from the hosting center and b. available and suitable classrooms for refugee pupils.

The Ministerial Decision no. 131024/D1 defines as Educational Priority Zones all Primary and Secondary Education Regional Directorates that include Primary Education School Units, where Reception Classes and Reinforcing Coaching Classes for refugee children can be hosted (article 1, paragraph 1). The establishment and operation of Educational Priority Zones aims to support education of refugee children through: a. Learning Greek as a second language, b. organizing programs, educational interventions and activities. Finally according to the Circulars mentioned above, foreign pupils can be enrolled in secondary schools in the country anytime during the school year.

2.3 Institutional setting

The Ministry of Education, Research and Religious Affairs, in order to fulfill the educational needs of refugee children set up a Scientific Committee (under the Ministerial order of 18/03/2016), which provided specific recommendations for refugee education (June 2016). The proposal was fully endorsed by the Ministry, with the cooperation of the Ministry of Migration as well. The proposal concerned actions needed to be implemented under the auspices of the Greek Ministry of Education, Research and Religious Affairs for the
children of refugees residing in Greece and has been submitted for evaluation and final approval (by the Ministry’s leadership). The results are expected to be shown in the next school year (2017 – 2018).

The proposals are divided according to the time frame of their implementation. In the first phase, actions are proposed for the summer months within the camps (creative activities, learning elements of the Greek language etc.). In the second phase, scenarios are presented for the operation of pre – school education areas within the camps for the gradual integration of children aged 7 – 13 years old in the Greek education system (reception classes, afternoon classes) as well as educational activities for older adolescents (Scientific Committee, 2016: 148).

Some of the basic recommendations made by the Committee:

   a) Special care for teaching the mother tongue to children which have a high possibility of returning to their home country. Alongside the teaching of the Greek language, the Committee suggests that lessons of the mother tongue should be provided by teachers from the refugee community or other native speakers of the mother tongues of children and monitored preferably by an international organization (S.C, 2016: 149).

   b) Attendance of study programs in other European languages, provided by a recognized body that will ensure the certification of their studies and the parallel teaching of Greek (S.C, 2016: 149).

   c) Reception or afternoon classes in school for most children, integration of a limited number of refugee children with basic knowledge of the Greek language in the morning program and small interventions in the morning program wherever possible (S.C, 2016: 148).

It is essential to clarify that Greek educational legislation does not provide for specific separation for refugees according to the period of arrival. That means that every refugee pupil can attend a reception and education class depending on his/her age and level of knowledge of Greek language.

The educational scheme for refugee education contains three basic forms:

   1 Reception and Education facilities (mostly in accommodation centers)

   2 Reception Classes (Level I & II, exclusively in school structures)

   3 Reinforcing Coaching Classes (exclusively in school structures)

1. Reception and education facilities:

   a) as nursery school departments (ages 4 -5), within the limits of reception centers. Working hours: 8.20 – 13.00,
b) as primary (ages 6 – 12) and high schools (ages 13 – 15) departments, within the limits of reception centers. Working hours: 8.30 – 12.30,

c) within the school units (primary and high schools) that are close to a reception center. Working hours: 14.00 – 18.00.

The establishment of Reception and Education Facilities is an unprecedented factor for Greek education system and the school year 2016 – 2017 is considered a transitional year (as mentioned above) during which the first integration steps will begin.

In particular:

**Pre – primary education** (Nursery Schools, age range 4 – 5):

Refugee children aged between 4 – 5 years old who live in reception centers attend nursery classes within the limits of every center, in order to stay close to their parents. For this purpose the Ministry of Education hires nursery school teachers with funding from the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF). The timetable of these nursery schools is from 8.20 until 13.00. These nursery schools follow the regular timetable and curriculum of the common Greek all day nursery schools and function as their departments. At the same time, non - governmental and international organizations provide educational programs and creative activities for the children.

**Primary Education** (age range 6 – 12) - **Secondary Education** (Junior high school, age range 13 – 15):

Reception and education facilities for children aged from 6 - 12 and 13 – 15 can either exist within the limits of the reception center (morning classes) or as school units’ departments (afternoon classes). The timetable is from 8.30 to 12.30 for morning classes and from 14.00 to 18.00 for afternoon classes (4 teaching hours). Lessons taught are: Greek language, English, Mathematics, Physical Education, Computers and Arts (primary schools) and Greek language, English, Mathematics, Physical Education, Informatics and Civics (for junior high schools).

For students aged 15 years old and above intensive Greek language courses combined with sporting and artistic activities are provided, as well as technical and vocational training programs. After learning the Greek language they are able to continue their studies at technical, professional and other relevant schools of the country or to continue their education in the Greek Lyceum.

19 Detailed timetable and teaching time per subject in the Annex
2 Reception Classes

a) Level I

Reception Classes’ program includes two circles of lessons as part of school’s timetable. Pupils with little or zero knowledge of Greek language can enroll Reception Classes I where they attend an intensive Greek language learning course and also some courses in their “regular” class, such as: Physical Education, Art, Musical Education, Foreign Language (or another relevant course, according to Teacher’s Board in cooperation with the School Counselor). The duration of attendance is one school year or more.

b) Level II

Reception Classes level II can be attended by pupils with moderate level of Greek language, who still face difficulties in attending courses in the regular classroom. Classes level II provide to those pupils additional support in Greek language learning or any other module, either within the classroom (with an extra teacher) or outside the classroom. Duration of attendance is up to three years. The reintegration of the student to the regular class following a decision by the teachers council in collaboration with the school counselor is possible, if found that he is able to attend all courses with no difficulties.

3 Reinforcing Coaching Classes

Reinforcing Coaching Classes can be attended by Romani children, foreigners, repatriated, refugees, coming from socially vulnerable groups that have not attended reception classes and face language difficulties during their entrance to regular class.

2.4 State of literature

By establishing (for primary and compulsory secondary education) special reception classes in the afternoon hours the aim of the state is to provide psychosocial support and gradual integration for refugee children in the Greek educational system. This happens after a preparation period, for the benefit of schools and refugee pupils as well. A transition from life in the camps to integration into the Greek educational system is essential in order to obtain refugee children the opportunity to learn the language and fill any gaps they might have in their education. Reception classes provide English and Greek language lessons, mathematics and information technology in order to achieve either the inclusion of children in the Greek educational system from the next school year, or their integration into the school system in another European country, in case of relocation of their families (Scientific Committee, 2016). This way a flexible institutional and didactic intervention scheme is formed for the total support of newcomers. Attendance lasts up to one academic year with possibility of extension or subsequent inclusion in regular classes of Greek public school.

For an easy transition to the Greek school environment and a gradual familiarity with Greek language the Institute of Educational Policy developed and formed a material for refugee students in primary (age groups 6 - 12 years old) and secondary (age groups 12 - 15) education for Greek language learning. This material is based on curricula of 2012 adapted to new learning needs. These are textbooks designed for teaching Greek
as a second language (i.e. for non-native speakers) in the context of intercultural education programs of Ministry of Education: a. Muslim children education program (courseware: “Where is the fuss?”, “The footprints”, “Let’s go to the market” and “Have a nice trip”, for ages 7 – 9) and b. “Integration of repatriated and foreign students in Primary Education (“Hello 1”, “Hello 2”, “My little dictionary 1”, “My little dictionary 2”, for ages 10 - 12). The proposed materials are based on the main principles of intercultural education: equality (equal opportunities in education) and recognition of diversity (linguistic, cultural, religious). Their common responsibility is developing skills and abilities for refugee students aimed at their personal development. The teaching materials have also taken account of the communicative language lessons dimension, which is consistent with the basic theoretical principles for the teaching of a language as second: the student learns more effectively when taught in an authentic communicative environment and language stimuli are directly associated with the experience, knowledge, interests and desires of children. Common also assumption is that learning a foreign language is easier and more effective when there isn’t a single “object teaching” but also a medium of teaching other subjects – lessons (i.e. art, mathematics etc.) that can also work supportively to the language lesson.

The educational goals are common in all age groups for children who attend reception and education facilities. For ages 10 – 15 are set additional goals taking into account the different experience of children (background of formal education in their home country schools, in the camps etc). In conclusion, the expected learning outcomes are basically common to all ages.

**Communication skills**

**Students being able to:**

- Understand and use everyday expressions and basic phrases to express daily needs,
- Present themselves through repeated language patterns (e.g. I am Fereste, I am 8 years old and I come from Afghanistan),
- Formulate basic questions,
- Recognize and name items of his/her environment (school, residence, neighborhood, food),
- Do simple items and people descriptions,
- Understand simple rules and orders.

**Understanding spoken language**

**Students being able to:**

- Perceive intuitively that the form of the spoken word depends on the relationship between the participants, topic and speaker’s purpose (ages 10 – 15),
- Ask simple questions in order to understand information that he didn't notice,
< Understand and implement simple spoken instructions,

< Be familiar with non-linguistic factors (gestures, facial expression, body language) and paralinguistic (intonation, pauses, pronunciation, tone, voice intensity) phenomena in order to understand the communicative function in conjunction with the words that accompany it.

Reading comprehension

Students being able to:

< Recognize letters of the alphabet (in plain text or individually) words and basic phrases,

< Understand individual words, simply verbally sets and texts, such as brief descriptions, instructions etc.,

< Read and understand a short simple text to derive information or perform certain activities.
3. Fieldwork

3.1 Introduction

This fieldwork was conducted in a period of 4 months (from December 12th 2016 until March 20th 2017) via online questionnaires that were distributed to teachers who work in refugee education, with a central coordination and supervision from the Regional Office of Primary and Secondary Education of Central Macedonia – Greece. The fieldwork focused on refugee education in Central Macedonia (Northern Greece), where there is the highest number of refugee reception centers (12). According to the Scientific Committee's Report for the Support of Refugee Children (2016), the total number of refugees in Northern Greece is estimated to be 15,637 of which 5,581 are underaged from 0 to 18 years. In the above numbers the refugee camp of Idomene (a small village close to Greek borders with Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia) was not included. The aforementioned camp was the most populated refugee camp in Europe in 2016 after Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia's decision to close its borders for refugees and migrants (Asylum Service, 2016). Therefore, the region of Central Macedonia is particularly important for refugee education provision. Apart from Northern Greece, there is a representation of a reception center in Leros island (Dodecanese, Southern Aegean Sea), another important refugee destination.

Unfortunately, we only managed to gain a limited number of respondents (9 teachers and 6 students). An unofficial explanation could be the lack of experience in refugee education of most of the teachers that led them to avoid sharing their personal insights. But still, the results can be considered useful and indicative of the current situation.

3.2 Limitations of the study

This is the very first study concerning refugee education in Greece. Education of refugees in Greece presents some significant differences compared with other European countries. These differences need to be taken into account for a better understanding of the results. That said, two basic factors:

a) All refugee education facilities are subject to constant changes, modifications and deletions and there is a constantly changing number of refugees in reception centers.

b) School year 2016 – 2017 is considered (by Greek Ministry of Education) as a preparatory (or transitional) year for refugee children in order to achieve in school year 2017 – 2018 their smooth integration into the Greek educational system. So far, the education provided in Accommodation Centers is largely based on volunteer work and non – governmental organizations' contribution.

There is an ongoing process by the Ministry of Education concerning refugee children's education that has not been implemented yet.
Table 4: Informations about the interviews

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Grade – Age range</th>
<th>Total number of students</th>
<th>Number of refugee students</th>
<th>Number of teachers interviewed</th>
<th>Number of students interviewed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2nd primary school</td>
<td>Thessaloniki</td>
<td>Afternoon class at school place</td>
<td>E'</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reception Center Diavata</td>
<td>Diavata (Thessaloniki)</td>
<td>Preparatory class within the limits of reception center</td>
<td>A'</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reception center</td>
<td>Leros</td>
<td>Morning class within the limits of reception center</td>
<td>6-18 years old</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reception center Vasilika</td>
<td>Vasilika (East Thessaloniki)</td>
<td>Informal education by NGO within the limits of reception center</td>
<td>6-9 years old</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reception center Vasilika</td>
<td>Vasilika (East Thessaloniki)</td>
<td>Reception Center</td>
<td>6-9 years old</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12th Primary School Neapoli</td>
<td>Neapoli (Thessaloniki)</td>
<td>Afternoon class at school place</td>
<td>A'</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3.3 Results

3.3.1 Social integration

The data of the research demonstrate a problematic integration due to the new school environment, previous school experience (or lack of school experience) and language difficulties faced by the refugee students. The teachers who work in reception education admit that they assign tasks depending on student’s level or his/her familiarity to school context and degree of readiness. “Many students didn’t attend school on daily basis, so I had to assign more tasks to those who were more consistent”, says a teacher who works in a reception center. The determining factor of participation seems to be the language barrier. All six students participated in the research mention as main difficulty in school “the language” or say that “Greek is a difficult language.” Instead they mention that they do enjoy school lessons such as: computers, mathematics and physical education. Teachers also try to apply different methods during class based on intercultural approach, such as experiential exercises, role play and cooperation within the students. “Students with common mother tongue sit together to help each other. Those who speak the Greek language better become my assistants and translate to the others. They enjoy it” (teacher in reception center).

3.3.2 Interaction with other students

Student – student interaction is characterized by initial reservedness at the beginning of school year and eventual willingness to exchange experiences and getting to know each other. There is a tendency of getting together only with same cultural groups (e.g. Kurds Syrian Arabic speaking, Syrians and Afghans), but over time students seem to overcome their hesitation. On the contrary there seems to be an instant bonding between refugee students and teachers, who are being treated as symbols of trust and admiration during class and break time. “They felt a strong need for learning and had a strong need for reward, even for the simplest things. They gained power from ‘well done’ and waited for the teacher in the school entrance”
(NGO Teacher in reception center). He adds that refugee students “sought the companionship of the teacher. They were discussing with me exercises they had, they were speaking Greek and were showing great interest in learning new things. During breaks they were also looking at the world map, asking me to show them Greece in the map, trying to understand the distance between Syria and Greece.” But it is also shown on student’s answers. A student from Syria said: “I like when the teacher is happy when we learn things and tells us “excellent!”. Also I like when the teacher makes me her assistant and puts me to translate the other children during the learning process.”

3.3.3 Assessment of refugee education in Greece

The vast majority of respondents consider refugee education in Greece being in an early stage or in “it’s infancy”, while at the same time underline the need for a reorganization of refugee education policy in Greece with special regard to improving living conditions in reception centers, teacher’s training and intercultural education. They also add the total lack of training of teachers who teach in classes with refugee students and express their personal worry for inefficient teaching methods. “The urgent need for teachers in the reception facilities didn't leave much space for adequate training. However, from now on it would be very useful to have specialization courses in order to provide refugee students with efficient and accurate education” (Teacher in reception center).
4. Conclusion

Once again we will repeat that school year 2016 – 2017 has been characterized by the Greek Ministry of Education, Research and Religious Affairs as a “transitional year.” This assumption explains, but does not necessarily justify the lack of preparation of the Greek State on refugee education.

A transition from life in the camps to integration into the Greek educational system is essential in order for refugee children to acquire the ability to learn Greek and fill in any gaps in their education due to the lengthy removal of many of these from their home country’s schools (Scientific Committee, 2016). To achieve the integration of refugee children in the Greek education system a prerequisite is:

a) Greek language learning,

b) The organization of intensive courses for any children that have been out of school for a long time and have knowledge gaps,

c) The planning of the support of refugee children that become integrated into the Greek school.

The integration into the Greek education system should be planned in a way that supports the refugee children’s chances of success so that they stay in school and do not drop out early. The educators, pupils, families and local communities (Greeks and refugees) should also become involved in the education of refugee children, to the best possible way.
5. Reference


Joint Ministerial Decision no. 152360/CD4 (Official Government Gazette B – 3049) entitled “Establishment, organization, operation, coordination and reception facilities training program for education of refugees, criteria and recruitment process”


Law no. 3907/2011 (Official Government Gazette A – 7/26.1.2011) entitled “Establishment of an Asylum Service and a First Reception Service, adaptation of the Greek law to the provisions of the 2008/115/EC Directive 'relating to the common rules and procedures applied by the member states regarding the return of illegally resident third country nationals' and remaining provisions”

Law no. 4375/2016 (Official Government Gazette A – 51/3.4.2016) entitled “On the organization and operation of the Asylum Service, the Appeals Authority, the Reception and Identification Service, the establishment of the General Secretariat for Reception, the transportation into Greek legislation of the provisions of Directive 2013/32/EC 'on common procedures for granting and withdrawing the status of international protection (recast)' (L 180/29.6.2013), provisions on the employment of beneficiaries of international protection and other provisions”


Ministry of Migration Policy, Asylum Service http://asylo.gov.gr/en/


UNHCR http://www.unhcr.gr/
6. Annex

In Diavata Thessaloniki, one of the host structures for refugees in North Greece, there has been an attempt to show the number of NGO’s that are involved in refugee education and the kind of education and activities they provide (Scientific Committee for the Support of refugee children, 2016). An overview of the results is shown below:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organization</th>
<th>Timetable</th>
<th>Working Status</th>
<th>Educators participating in every action</th>
<th>Activities</th>
<th>Outdoor activities</th>
<th>Children covered by the action</th>
<th>Actions separation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Crazy Balloon</td>
<td>Tuesday 16.00-19.00</td>
<td>Volunteers</td>
<td>18-20 people alternately in a total of 25 people</td>
<td>Team ball games, music and movement education, painting, construction</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>80 people, 8-10 children aged up to 6 years old, 70 people aged 7-13, 20 children aged 14-16</td>
<td>Addressed to all</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Humanity Crew</td>
<td>Every day, weekends included, from 11.00 until 18.30, 1 hour break at noon</td>
<td>Volunteers</td>
<td>3 educators: 1 psychologist, 1 art therapist, 1 factotum. They don’t provide education, but recreational, educational activities</td>
<td>1. psychosocial support 2. entertaining games that include Arabic language teaching 3. social activities (cooking, discussion, gifts, educational games) 4. psychological support to unaccompanied children</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>From 8 – 17. 1. Psychosocial support for ages 8-17. 2. Psychosocial support for teenage girls aged 12-16. 3. Art therapy for young children</td>
<td>Separated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I.R.C</td>
<td>Every day 9.00 – 17.00</td>
<td>Salaried</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>Health education (personal)</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>10 – 20 children aged</td>
<td>Addressed to all</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Diavata Thessaloniki
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organisation</th>
<th>Activity Description</th>
<th>Age Range</th>
<th>Volunteer Type</th>
<th>Duration</th>
<th>Addressed To</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ANTIGONE-Information and Documentaion Centre on racism, ecology, peace and non violence</td>
<td>Music and movement activities, sports, chess lessons, painting, cartoon movies translated in Arabic and Farsi</td>
<td>between 7 – 15 years old</td>
<td>Salaried</td>
<td>Monday, Thursday and Friday 16.00 – 19.30</td>
<td>all</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independent Artists’ Group</td>
<td>Painting</td>
<td>60-80 children, 12-15 children aged 4-6 years old, 40-55 children aged 7-12 years old and less 13-18 years old</td>
<td>Volunteers</td>
<td>Saturday 10.00 – 13.00</td>
<td>Separated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independent English Group</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>50 children from all age range, playful form for ages 3-6, regular lessons with playful form for 6-9, regular lessons for 9-</td>
<td>Volunteers</td>
<td>Every Thursday 10.00-13.00</td>
<td>Addressed to all</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Institution</td>
<td>Volunteer Time</td>
<td>Volunteers</td>
<td>Creative Activities</td>
<td>Separated</td>
<td>Children Addressed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------</td>
<td>----------------</td>
<td>------------</td>
<td>--------------------</td>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>--------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coperti</td>
<td>2 hours every day</td>
<td>Volunteers</td>
<td>10-14 alternately from a total of 30</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>15 (girls), 15 adults (men) separated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pedagogical Faculty Group, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki</td>
<td>Twice a week until Easter. After 1st May once a week</td>
<td>Volunteers</td>
<td>2-3 coordinators, 10 students</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>250 children up to 12 years old</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SOS Children’s Villages</td>
<td>1. Monday, Wednesday, Friday 10.00-13.00 creative activity, gymnastics for teenagers, 2. Tuesday, Thursday gymnastics for teenagers, 3. Saturday afternoon gymnastics for teenagers (football)</td>
<td>Salaried</td>
<td>Initially 50 volunteers and 5 salaried (1 coordinator, 1 gymnast, 1 philologist, 1 early childhood educator, 1 art teacher), 2 translators (Arabic, Farsi). In total, in every activity participating at least 10 volunteers</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>60-80 children, mostly girls</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Volunteers Association For the Support of</td>
<td>Tuesday 10.00 – 13.00</td>
<td>Volunteers</td>
<td>8 educators</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>80-120 children. Boys’ football team. 6-12 years old: participate in handicraft without scissors activity and puppetry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Creative Workshops (painting, construction)</td>
<td></td>
<td>20-50 people. 8-15 children up to 6 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organization</td>
<td>Day(s)</td>
<td>Type</td>
<td>Participants</td>
<td>Activities</td>
<td>Age</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------</td>
<td>--------</td>
<td>------</td>
<td>--------------</td>
<td>------------</td>
<td>-----</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minors and Youth</td>
<td></td>
<td>Volunteers</td>
<td>4-15 people alternately from a total of 25 people</td>
<td>International games, songs from Scouts, Guides</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Greek Guiding Association</td>
<td>Wednesday 11.00-13.00</td>
<td>Volunteers</td>
<td>7-9 people</td>
<td>Creative workshops (games, painting, construction), ground games (snake, lame etc)</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Smile of the Child</td>
<td>Monday 16.00 – 18.30</td>
<td>Salaried</td>
<td>10-15 volunteers each time, in a total of 70-80 volunteers alternately</td>
<td>Sports, painting, musical &amp; movement activities, team games</td>
<td>Not at the moment, but is scheduled</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Young Men’s Christian Association (UMCA) Thessaloniki</td>
<td>Tuesday and Sunday, 10.00 – 13.00</td>
<td>Volunteers</td>
<td>10-15 volunteers each time, in a total of 70-80 volunteers alternately</td>
<td>Sports, painting, musical &amp; movement activities, team games</td>
<td>Not at the moment, but is scheduled</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Primary education’s (morning classes) timetable is as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8:30 – 8:45</td>
<td>15’ Welcoming Pupils</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8:45 – 9:30</td>
<td>45’ 1st teaching period</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9:30 – 9:45</td>
<td>15’ Break</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time</td>
<td>Duration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------</td>
<td>----------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9:45 – 10:30</td>
<td>45'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:30 – 10:45</td>
<td>15'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:45 – 11:30</td>
<td>45'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11:30 – 11:45</td>
<td>15'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11:45 – 12:30</td>
<td>45'</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Primary and high schools (within school units, near reception centers), have an afternoon timetable as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Duration</th>
<th>Period</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>14:00 – 14:15</td>
<td>15'</td>
<td>Welcoming Pupils</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14:15 – 15:00</td>
<td>45'</td>
<td>1st teaching period</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15:00 – 15:15</td>
<td>15'</td>
<td>Break</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15:15 – 16:00</td>
<td>45'</td>
<td>2nd teaching period</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16:00 - 16:15</td>
<td>15'</td>
<td>Break</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16:15 – 17:00</td>
<td>45'</td>
<td>3rd teaching period</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17:00 – 17:15</td>
<td>15'</td>
<td>Break</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17:15 – 18:00</td>
<td>45'</td>
<td>4th teaching period</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In primary schools teaching time per subject is formed as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Courses</th>
<th>Hours per week</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Greek language</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In high schools teaching time per subject is formed as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Courses</th>
<th>Hours per week</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Greek language</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mathematics</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical Education</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Informatics</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Civics</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>