



## **NRT GREECE 2019**

### **Report**

*Author:* Prof. Nektaria Palaiologou, University of Western Macedonia and International Association for Intercultural Education

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Athens, 20<sup>th</sup> June 2019 - World Refugee Day



## *Context*

### **Refugee, migrant education and social policies in greece: finding synergies and sustainable policies**

On 7<sup>th</sup> July 2019, a new government has been elected in Greece, for the forthcoming four years. The new Minister of Education as well as the new vice Minister of Migration Policy will be interviewed in order to select data about the new forthcoming education policies. Amongst the first announced structural changes are the transfer of the Autonomous Department of Coordination of Refugee Education, as well as of other Departments, at the General Secretariat of Primary, Secondary and Special Education, according to the Presidential Decree No 84 (17<sup>th</sup> July 2019).

Specifically, the Autonomous Department for the Coordination of Refugee Education had been established as an autonomous body within the Ministry of Education since August 2018. Now, its competences, jurisdictions responsibilities and personnel vacancies are transferred to the General Secretariat of Primary, Secondary and Special Education.

Greece, responding to the mass increase of refugees, asylum seekers and newly arrived migrants right after the refugee crisis of 2015, altered the regulations and guidelines on school placement and assessment of their prior educational experiences so as to protect and safeguard children's universal right to education (Φ.6 / 1063/82763 / Δ1 / 23-05-2016 / Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs). They have published the following decisions and regulations which are mandatory, while leaving minimum to no limits on schools' autonomy over the assessment process.

There is specific provision for the educational needs of refugee and asylum seekers' children who live in RICs (Reception and Identification Centres) and RHCs (Reception and Hospitality Centres). The relevant educational policies are referred at the Common Ministerial Decree 139654/ΓΔ4 regarding the establishment and functioning of DYEP (Education Reception Structures for Refugees), as noted in the government gazette ΦΕΚ2985/Β' /30-8-2017. These procedures are common at national level and mandatory. There is no school autonomy, as these are central education policies. Guidelines at national level are provided before the beginning of each school year (Annual Ministry of Education circulars about pupil registration at Kindergarten and Primary Schools). Pupils with no prior education experience in the Greek state education system are normally placed at DYEP structures, unless such structures do not exist in their immediate location. In that case, pupils can register at a mainstream morning Greek State School and, if a sufficient number of newly arrived migrant students request it, the school can host a Reception Class for these students. However, the formation of a Reception Class requires the approval of the Teacher Assembly of the school.

## *National Round Table*

The National roundtable took place on 20<sup>th</sup> June 2019 on the occasion of the "International Refugee Day" and was jointly organized by the University of Western Macedonia and the Hellenic Open University.

A wide range of stakeholders gathered together: 10 participants from the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Migration Policy, 10 representatives of NGOs and Migrants' Fora, 20 teachers/educators working in refugee



settings (formal and non-formal) and 20 student teachers from the Hellenic Open University leading the Languages, Refugee and Migrants programme. The event was split into two methodological parts: an initial panel of 8 invited experts- national and international- provided input on the key identified issues and stimulated an open debate with the participants. The second part was made up of two seminars: one on Refugee Education Material and the other on Intercultural Mediation.

The aim of the NRT 2019 was to reflect on sustainable refugee and migration policies intended as long term policies related to the broad needs of these vulnerable groups, i.e. social and education needs in the frame of a welfare state, within the agenda of national priorities and in line with European directives.

### *Inputs and debate points*

Official greetings from the Dean of the School of Humanities Prof. Antonis Lionarakis, from Assoc. Professor Nikos Sifakis, from the Rector of the University of Western Macedonia Prof. Antonis Tourlidakis and from the Ministry of Education and Religion (independent department of coordination and monitoring of refugee education) Ms Stavroula Pantazi opened the event.

Ioanna Pouligianni, from the Directorate of European and International Affairs Department of the Greek Ministry of Education and Religion, also in her capacity of national representative of the Eurydice Network, recalled that the European Commission has put the integration of refugee and migrant children in the school environment high in its political agenda. Through the Eurydice network, the EC explores good practices and innovative models, while identifying needs and gaps across Europe. She provided a comparative perspective to better visualise where Greece stands compared to other European countries. The low educational performance of refugee and migrant children and their high school dropping levels are seen as serious problems by 17 European countries: Belgium, Czech Republic, Denmark, Spain, France, Malta, Netherlands, Austria, Portugal, Finland, UK, Northern Ireland, Liechtenstein, Norway, Serbia, Northern Macedonia.

Greece experiences issues shared by other education systems across Europe including the low consideration of non-academic aspects of the school process (social, psychological and health issues); teaching methodologies not tailored to children with a different mother tongue; limited learning support; lack of social and emotional support; scarce provision of teacher training, in particular on management of multicultural classrooms; low levels of school and family collaboration. In this context, among early school leavers, the percentage of foreign-born children remains much higher than the percentage of indigenous children.

According to Ms Pouligianni, evidence shows that, in primary school, children speaking their first language at home and the hosting language at school tend to have a lower sense of belongingness to their school environment and become frequently victims of bullying from their peers.



Xenia Passa brought in the comparative perspective of UNHCR. According to UNHCR's global figures, 92% of children and 61% of refugee children worldwide attend Primary Education. 84% of teenagers go to junior high school (Greek Gymnasium), while 23% of them are refugees. With regard to higher education, the percentages are much lower registering only 37% of young people worldwide reaching this level, with just 1% of them being refugees. According to the same statistics, Greece shows similar school attendance percentages in all grades regarding the general population, although refugee students are less represented in the respective statistics. UNHCR estimates that the number of school-age refugee children in Greece is 19,000. The main countries of origin are Syria, Iraq and Afghanistan. Their access to the education system remains still very challenging: the provision of information is incomplete and educational opportunities limited; parents do not always allow girls to go to school; the relationship between students and teachers remains problematic; procedures for integrating children with disabilities are complicated. Moreover, schools are often far from where refugee families are accommodated and the transportation of children is not always guaranteed; local communities' attitudes are generally negative; several incidents of discrimination within the school have been reported; informal education is limited as well as training in skills (computer lessons, sports, recreational activities). For adult refugee graduates more particularly, there is no accessible recognition procedure for their degrees, while Greek language courses are limited and of low quality.

UNHCR had to design from scratch the accommodation scheme implemented in Greece since it was the first European country which set up camp facilities for refugees and asylum seekers. Ms Passa presented the different types of accommodation (e.g. RIC, RHC, protected apartments etc.) that are provided for refugees, while referring to the difficulties presented to those recognized refugees who are called to exit the housing and financial support program due to exiting time limitations.

Tita Caesari-Ernst, representative of UNICEF, identified the variety of the hospitality forms for refugees (Reception Centers, Hospitality Centers, Apartments for Unaccompanied Minors, Homes for Unaccompanied Minors and Families, Children at Squattings, etc.) as one of the main problems of family mobility. Families are forced to move from school to school, from structure to structure and experience different forms of hospitality. This is an issue for both children and teachers who feel frustrated when students they have worked with leave in the middle of the year. She noted that international organizations had learned to operate in countries where there were large camp-villages whereas they were unprepared for what they met in Greece. At the same time, the Greek school has a peculiarity: it demands a lot of studying as homework. It is difficult to provide tutoring or private lessons to refugees and asylum seekers since their housing conditions are challenging.

Evie Trouki, representative of the Institute of Educational Policy and responsible for the ESPA programme for teacher education, stated that Greece has been called upon to create its own system. The university community has been challenged, experimented and continues to experiment and create good practices. She introduced the ESPA programme and highlighted its two key objectives: to win the school climate and to develop cooperation



between the school community and the local community. Within this framework, the Institute of Educational Policy trained 655 educators (school counsellors, school managers, training officers from the Regions, etc.). Training materials and actions for refugee education (teacher's guide, special educational material, proposals for language teaching and natural sciences) have been prepared. Dr. Trouki pointed out that the Curricula for the Reception Classes were redesigned on the acknowledgement that all school subjects are very much language based. Finally, she pointed out that refugee education gave the institute the opportunity to revisit and revise all curricula under a more holistic perspective.

Programmes for refugee education implemented by the University of Thessaly, led by Professor George Androulakis, were awarded two European Distinctions (European Language Label 2012-2013 and 2017). Speaking about the rationale of the recent PRESS programme, Professor Androulakis noted that "if we do not know the target population we are approaching, it is very difficult to set goals." That is why, in designing the programme's actions, the university team tried to integrate refugees. The key goal is to generate creativity and resourcefulness. In this context, techniques of translanguaging have been developed (Greek, English, Arabic, Farsi) and evaluated by the participants themselves.

The President of the Department of Education and Pedagogical Sciences, Professor George Nikolaou, referred to the know-how that Greece has now developed in the management of multiculturalism and to the invitations received by Greek experts at international conferences. He made a critical comment on EPZ (Educational Priority Zones), an innovation that has been used for years in France and was successfully transferred in the Greek Educational system in order to compensate for social inequality at specific geographical areas. He claimed that EPZ "should have been extended more widely so that refugee children could integrate socially, culturally, professionally". Last but not least, he referred to the difficulties in operating Welcoming Classes and Educational Priority Zones in Greek schools due to several challenges ranging from infrastructure deficiencies to sporadic racist incidents from members of the local communities.

IOM Education Program Coordinator, Yannis Babeas, showcased IOM's programme by focusing, in particular, on the transfer of refugee children to schools, the supply of school bags and care for extracurricular activities. He argued that key problems occurring in the past years such as the negative reactions of teachers and local communities have been largely overcome.

Additional practices showcased in the debate included the STEM programme providing training to women with science degrees, led by the Hellenic Refugee Council; the "Xenios Zeus" programme, an initiative of the the Education Region of Central Macedonia in collaboration with the University of Western Macedonia, offering language support material for the education of refugee students (the programme, which was awarded by the State Scholarship Foundation, is available for free on the internet). Initiatives from Norway and particularly the



actions of the NAFO Center (National Center of Multicultural Education) were also introduced by Professor Fred Carlo Anderson of the University of Oslo and contributed to generate learning through a transnational perspective.

## *Conclusions*

Participants claimed that the NRT 2019 Conclusion session set the basis for further discussing the goals and aims of possible future synergies so as projects and research schemes could better meet the country's policy gaps.

They acknowledged the need of sharing more "evidence" and "data" produced by their various from projects and researches with the final ambition of creating a wide national data set. Participants recognised the difficulties in collecting data that could be comparable. Thus, they strengthened the need to validate it through proper contextualisation and description (e.g. how data was collected, at which level etc.)

In the perspective of the next NRT, participants will invest more in the presentability component of data, outcomes and key achievements of their projects, by highlighting trends and making more use of infographics. This is expected to better connect NGOs, Migrant Forums and Public Sector Representatives. Particular emphasis was put on the need of continuing the collection of good practices, to bring added value to the multistakeholder discussion. They also advocated for setting the debate of the NRT 2020 on the topic "What is a good practice in the context of Migrants' Children Integration?". In such context, matters of transferability and exportability of good practices could be investigated alongside the possibility of analysing challenges when they are implemented in other contexts. Matters of funding, durability and criteria of defining and measuring a good practice should be further explored in the near future.

Last but not least, all stakeholders declared their interest in peer dynamics that could lead to any type of recommendation in terms of all-inclusive policies and practices. Research results and project outcomes should better inform EU policies on inclusion and promote mainstreaming.



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### **Participants**

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Name	Organisation/ institution	Position in organisation/ institution
<b>POLICY MAKERS</b>		
Karvouni Alexandra	Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs	Deputy Head of Sector E (Interconnection with European Higher Education Policies) of the Directorate of Organizational and Academic Development.
Euthimiou Elisavet	Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs	Head of Sector C - Quality Assurance and Documentation, Directorate of Organizational and Academic Development
Poulogianni Ioanna	Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs	Directorate of European and International Affairs - Sector A of the European Union
Kaisari Ernst Tita	Unicef	Educational Specialist
Passa Xenia	UNHCR	Protection Sector
Baveas Yannis	IOM	Educational Project Coordinator – IOM Emergency Operation Unit
Papagianni Victoria	Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs	Separate Sector for the Coordination and Monitoring of Refugees Education
Pantazi Lina	Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs	Deputy Head of Liaison Division with European Policy – General Directorate for Higher Education
Trouki Paraskevi	Institute of Educational Policy	Head of Department regarding Minority and Intercultural Education
Mansola Magarita	UNICEF Non Formal Education Consultant (Refugee and Migrant Response)	Education Consultant/ Teaching and Learning Specialist. Educational Psychologist CPsychol
Mavromatidis Ilias	Institute of Educational Policy	Appointed Informatics teacher at the Institute of Educational Policy – Office of Projects and Actions
<b>MIGRANT-LED ORGANISATIONS</b>		
Plevria Despoina	EDEM-part of EUMentors STEM ERASMUS + Programme for migrants	Part of Consultation Committee of Attiki's Region - Informatics
Malliou Dimitra	Migrants Forum in Greece	Member of the Coordinating Committee of the Migrant Forum in Greece. Founder and Coordinator of the "Nationwide Network of Women Migrants"
Rouni Betty	EDEM-part of EUMentors STEM ERASMUS + Programme for migrants	Part of Consultation Committee of Attiki's Region - Engineer
<b>TEACHERS, TEACHER-TRAINERS, SCHOOL-LEADERS OR OTHER SCHOOL REPRESENTATIVES</b>		
Dosios Grigoris	Municipality of Chaidari	Science Teacher – Interpreter at REC Skaramagkas
Kaliva Aikaterini	REC Skaramagkas – Ministry of Education	Coordinator of Refugee Education (CRE)
Oikonomidi Konstantina	REC Skaramagkas – Ministry of Education	Coordinator of Refugee Education (CRE)
Prekate Victoria	REC Skaramagkas – Ministry of Education	Coordinator of Refugee Education (CRE)
Apostolidou Elsa	Arsis NGO	Educator in shelter for refugee unaccompanied minors
Samara Stavroula	REC Malakasas – Ministry of Education	Coordinator of Refugee Education (CRE)
Skeva Avgi	REC Lauriou – Ministry of Education	Coordinator of Refugee Education (CRE)
Neroupou Eleni	EKPA	Primary School Teacher
Politi Evaggelia	EKPA	Primary School Teacher
Altouchova Galina	Intercultural Education	Intercultural Education Trainer – ex coordinator of Refugee Education at Skaramakas REC
Aggeli Thania	1 <sup>st</sup> Evening Vocational School of Athens – Refugee Education	Adult Educator, Philologist, PHD Candidate on Adult Education, Post Graduate Student at LRM
<b>PARENTS- AND STUDENT REPRESENTATIVES</b>		
Kefallinou Olga	H.O.U.	Post Graduate Student of LRM (Language Education for Refugees and Migrants)
Kitsiou Niki	H.O.U.	Post Graduate Student of LRM (Language Education for Refugees and Migrants)
Christopoulou Pigi Maria	Panteio	Post Graduate Student in Social Science



Sofianidou Polixeni	H.O.U.	Post Graduate Student of LRM (Language Education for Refugees and Migrants)
Kontou Katerina	H.O.U.	Post Graduate Student of LRM (Language Education for Refugees and Migrants)
Lampri Vassiliki	H.O.U.	Post Graduate Student of LRM (Language Education for Refugees and Migrants)
Panagopoulou Dimitra	H.O.U.	Post Graduate Student of LRM (Language Education for Refugees and Migrants)
Tsouma Maria	H.O.U.	Post Graduate Student of LRM (Language Education for Refugees and Migrants)
Liontou Maria	University of Western Macedonia – H.O.U.	PHD candidate on Intercultural Education and Post Graduate Student of LRM (Language Education for Refugees and Migrants)
Karagianni Marianna	EKPA	Primary school Teacher
Afentaki Maria	University of Western Macedonia	PHD candidate on Intercultural Education
<b>OTHER RELEVANT STAKEHOLDERS</b>		
Maniadaki Ioanna	Blazakis Special Care Centre	Senior Social Worker
Mpratsali Konstantina	Noesis. gr	Social Worker
Korompilia Maria Mirella	18 Ano	Psychotherapist
Vragala Dimitra	Arsis NGO	Education officer
Palios Zacharias	H.O.U.	Faculty Member
Andersen Fred Carlo	Faculty of Education, Ostfold University, Haden	Associate Professor
Androulakis Giorgos	University of Thessaly, Department of Primary Education / H.O.U.	Professor of Sociolinguistics / Press Project (H.O.U)
Nikolaou Giorgos	University of Patras, Pedagogical Department of Primary Education	Professor in Intercultural Pedagogy
Delithanasi Maria	APE News Agency	Journalist
Sifakis Nikolaos	Hellenic Open University, School of Humanities	Associate Professor, The Teaching of English for Specific Purposes
Palaiologou Nektaria	University of Western Macedonia	Associate Professor of Intercultural Education