

Local practices of integration and local networks

The case of Pentalofos

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Foreword

For the PISTE project, the implementing actors from the side of Greece are the NGO HumanRights360 and the Municipality of Voio. The project implementation in Greece focuses on the integration possibilities of unaccompanied minors (UAMs) in small Municipalities. HumanRights360 is a civil society organization established in Greece, that aims to protect and empower the rights of all with no discrimination, but with special focus on the most disadvantaged and vulnerable populations. The Municipality of Voio is a unique case of a small Municipality which manages a shelter for UAMs. Hence, the following Report provides an overview of the framework that influences the integration and participation of UAMs into society in Greece and especially in small Municipalities. More specifically, it provides a presentation on the status quo of integration governance in Greece across levels of administration and goes into depth by observing the local networks.

This research presents the case study of Voio and further explores the local networks in the Regional Unit of Kozani; it was conducted with qualitative methods, using 25 semi-structured interviews to key actors and a focus group which took place from April 2022 until November 2022.

1. Greece: migration profile

Traditionally Greece has been considered a country of emigration. The country's transformation to migration country started in the late 1970s and more widely in the 1990s (Fakiolas, King 1996). According to the estimations of the Greek Statistical Authority in 2021, 921.000 non-Greek citizens lived in Greece, representing 8.6% of the total population (Hellenic Statistical Authority 2021). Albanians hold most of the valid residence permits (62.8%) in Greece (Ministry of Migration and Asylum 2021).

Since 2007 there has been an increase of new arrivals of third country nationals (TCNs) in Greece, due to the country's geographical position rendering it the entry point to Europe (Triandafyllidou 2013). In this context, in 2015 Greece experienced a significant increase in arrivals of asylum see-

kers, mainly due to the Syrian Civil War. That year, 856,723 people arrived by boats to the Greek islands (UNHCR 2016a). The following UNHCR data present the development of sea and land arrivals from 2014 to 2021 (UNHCR 2022).

Table 1. Sea & land arrivals to Greece (2014-2021)

	Land arrivals	Sea arrivals	Total arrivals
2014	2,280	41,038	43,318
2015	4,907	856,723	861,630
2016	3,784	173,450	177,234
2017	6,592	29,718	36,310
2018	18,014	32,494	50,508
2019	14,887	59,726	74,613
2020	5,982	9,714	15,696
2021	4,826	4,331	9,157

Source: UNHCR

The countries mostly represented in the sea arrival figures are Syria and Afghanistan, with the latter gaining a significant percentage rise from 2019 and onwards (UNHCR 2016b; 2017; 2019; Greece Sea arrivals Dashboard - December 2020; 2020; 2021a).

Table 2. Sea arrivals by gender and country of origin (2015-2021)

	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Men	55%	42%	41%	40%	41%	41%	52%
Women	17%	21%	22%	23%	23%	23%	19%
Children	28%	37%	37%	37%	36%	36%	29%
Syria	56%	47%	42%	24%	27%	23%	7%
Afghanistan	24%	24%	12%	28%	40%	45%	20%
Iraq	10%	15%	20%	18%	6%	4%	7%
Pakistan	3%	5%	-	-	-	-	-
Somalia	1%	-	-	-	-	10%	20%
Iran	-	3%	-	-	-	-	-
Congo (RDC)	-	-	3%	6%	7%	10%	-
Algeria	-	-	3%	-	-	-	-
Palestine	-	-	-	5%	5%	-	15%
Other (below 3%)	6%	6%	21%	19%	15%	18%	30%

Source: UNHCR

1.1 Unaccompanied minors

According to the Greek Asylum Law (L. 4939/2022) "applicants with special reception needs" are the vulnerable persons which need special guarantees to enjoy the rights and to comply with the obligations provided by the Greek asylum law and UAMs are of course included in the category of vulnerable persons. The same law provides that an *"Unaccompanied minor"* is a minor who arrives in Greece without being accompanied by a person exercising parental responsibility, care or custody according to Greek law, or by an adult relative who in practice exercises his care for as long as the exercise of these duties has not been assigned to another person in accordance with the law. This definition also includes the minor who ceases to be accompanied after entering Greece".

The fluctuations of the presence of UAMs in Greece are depicted in the figures below, by the National Centre for Social Solidarity-EKKA (EKKA 2022).

Table 3. UAMs in Greece (2018-2021)

Gender	2018	2019	2020	2021
Total	3,741	5,301	4,027	2,225
Girls	6.2%	7.4%	7.3%	9%
Boys	93.8%	92.6%	92.7%	91%

Source: EKKA

The same sources can also provide a good overview of the country of origin of this population.

Table 4. UAMs - Country of origin (2018-2021)

Country of origin	2018	2019	2020	2021
Afghanistan	32%	42%	39%	28%
Syria	11%	12%	11%	11%
Pakistan	30%	22%	23%	24%
Others	26%	24%	26%	37%

Source: EKKA

2. Development of integration policies at national and local level

This Chapter presents the framework of refugee integration and participation of TCNs in Greece, and the public authorities involved.

2.1 General framework

The official texts describing Greece's developing approach towards migrant integration are the following: the *National Strategy for the Integration of Third Country Nationals* (TCNs) (2013); the *National Strategy for the Integration* (2019); and the *National Strategy for the Social Integration of Asylum Seekers and Beneficiaries of International Protection* (2021) (Ministry of Migration and Asylum 2020b).

The issue of integration of TCNs (practically of those who had valid residence permits in Greece) was addressed for the first time within the frame of the National Strategy of 2013. It is important to note that this Strategy was published in a period when Greece had activated legislation allowing for specific categories of migrants to exercise electoral rights at the elections of the Local Government Administration level (L. 3838/2010). Accordingly, the text gave particular emphasis to the need for political participation of long-term migrants (TCNs with valid residence permits who had lived steadily in Greece for at least the last 5 years and, contextually, fulfilled specific preconditions, and children of TCNs over the age of 18 born and residing in Greece and fully participating in the educational system) as well as the need for their inclusion through language and education (*Εθνική Στρατηγική για την ένταξη των πολιτών τρίτων χωρών* [National Strategy for the integration of TCNs] 2013). Nevertheless, the text did not include specific measures, nor did it have a binding character and monitoring tools. Migrants participated in the elections only once (October 2010). Their participation as voters was estimated a 0.002% of the whole electorate (Christopoulos 2013). On 2013 the Council of State declared these provisions unconstitutional (Generation 2.0 RED 2013) so they were subsequently annulled.

The next National Strategy (2019) was different from the first one, and, in the meantime, the overall migration environment had also changed in Greece. From 2013 to 2019 the context had changed due to the increased arrivals of refugees and the consequent establishment of a distinct Ministry of Migration Policy in 2016 (President of Greece 2016). With regards to participation, the Strategy included the intention of reinstating the participation of migrants in the local elections reform. (Ministry of Migration and Asylum 2019). Nevertheless, after the National Elections (2019) the government changed and this amendment was not voted in Parliament (Syntagma

Watch 2020). The Strategy also included specific mentions to measures regarding education, such as the reception classes that had already been set in place and Greek language courses for adults. Nonetheless the new Government announced that this Strategy would not be implemented and a new one would follow (Capital.gr 2021). In the meantime, the Ministry of Migration Policy in 2020, had been reinstated as *Ministry of Migration and Asylum*.

The 2021 National Strategy for the Social Integration of Asylum Seekers and Beneficiaries of International Protection has a narrower focus as its title reveals. This Strategy has a different approach, it doesn't provide for the participation of migrants in elections and is more focused on the concept promoting the "European way of life", which includes training and orientation on the European, national and local socio-cultural context and the engagement of refugees in the local civic life through the Migrant and Refugee Integration Councils-MRICs (see below to find out how they operate). This new Strategy seemed to move towards the approach of assimilation rather than that of integration. During the public consultation for the new Strategy multiple comments of civil society, actors highlighted the lack of specific actions, timeline and budget (*Δημόσια Ηλεκτρονική Διαβούλευση για την «Εθνική Στρατηγική για την Ενταξη» | Υπουργείο Μετανάστευσης και Ασύλου* [Public Online Consultation on the 'National Integration Strategy' | Ministry of Migration and Asylum] 2022).

As far as legislation is concerned, integration is mentioned in the Code of migration and integration (L. 4251/2014) which was introduced in 2014 which was amended multiple times since then. The contribution of the new Code was *inter alia* the fact that it codified the existing legislation, aligning the Greek legislation with the relevant European Directives (as the 2011/51/EU) and that it introduced provisions which addressed the issues of long-term migrants and the Second Generation (those of non-Greek origin who were born or raised in Greece) (Frangiskou *et al.* 2020). The Code also established a protective framework of rights so that TCNs enjoy enhanced protection in accordance with the principles of equality and non-discrimination. These rights refer -among others- to the freedom of movement, the right to education and the equal treatment at work.

Regarding political participation, as mentioned above, electoral rights for long-term migrants have been withdrawn, hence, electoral rights can only be enjoyed after naturalization. The framework for the acquisition of citizenship is split under two distinct categories: First Generation and Second Generation TCNs.

First Generation TCNs refers to those who have been residing legally in Greece for 7 to 10 consecutive years. TCNs of this category can apply for citizenship through the naturalization process, as foreseen in the Greek Citizenship Code, (ratified by L. 3284/2004), which has been amended multiple times. The naturalization process is twofold. The first stage includes the submission of docu-

ments proving that the applicant is eligible (e.g., residence permits etc.) and the payment of a 550€ fee (or 100€ fee for *homogenis*, stateless and recognized refugees). The second stage refers to the “essential criteria”, meaning the evidence that the applicant is integrated into Greek society. The fulfillment of these criteria is proved through a written exam and a series of documents, including a proof of sufficient income (covering the previous 7-10 years). The income criterion is relatively recent (Ministerial Decision 29845/21) and has raised concerns as it severely impacts people who, at some point of their life, have been students or unemployed.

With regards to the Second Generation, according to the Greek Citizenship Code (Art. 1), a child born in Greece is eligible for citizenship from the time they are registered to the 1st class of a Greek primary school if they are still attending the Greek school at the time of declaration of nationality acquisition. However, eligibility also depends on the lawful residence of both parents and the lawful residence of at least one parent for a minimum of five years before birth. If the child is born before the lapse of the five years’ residence, Greek nationality may be acquired after a period of 10 years of continuous lawful residence of the parent.

For children who are not born in Greece, the eligibility for citizenship is connected to their formal education in Greece. A minor who permanently and lawfully resides in Greece, may acquire Greek citizenship if they have successfully attended nine years of primary and secondary education or six years of secondary education (Art. 1b). They can also apply for citizenship within three years of graduation from a Greek university or Technological Educational Institute.

2.2 Governance

The Greek State is organized on a decentralized basis. It comprises two levels of Governance: The Central – State Governance and the Local Self-Government. The former is exercised centrally by Government and Ministries, as well as at a decentralized level (Αποκεντρωμένη διοίκηση [Decentralized Administration]), while the latter is exercised at regional (Περιφέρειες [Regions]) and municipal level (Δήμοι [Municipalities]).

As illustrated below, social integration of migrants and refugees is mainly a matter of the Central Government as the relevant policy areas such as healthcare, housing and education are under its competence.

Until 2016, migrant integration was under the competence of the Ministry of Interior, and more specifically under the competence of the General Secretariat for Population and Social Cohesion (Presidential Decrees 11/2010 and 105/2014). In 2016, the Ministry of Migration Policy was established (Presidential Decree 213/2016) and in the same year the Directorate of Social Integration was established within the (ex) Ministry of Migration Policy (Art. 31 of L. 4375/2016).

Its mission is a. to plan and monitor the implementation of the integration policy; b. to implement the National Strategy for the social integration of legally resident third countries citizens; c. to put in place the corresponding social integration policies and programs, in collaboration with Ministries, self-government bodies, international organizations and civil society bodies, which develop actions in the field of social integration.

After the 2019 National elections, the Ministry of Migration Policy was abolished and merged with the Ministry of Citizen Protection (Presidential Decree 81/2019). In January 2020 the Ministry was reinstated as the Ministry of Migration and Asylum (Presidential Decree 4/2020).

The Ministry's Directorate of Social Integration includes the following departments: the Policy and Program Planning department, the Intercultural Mediation department, the Socio-economic Integration department, and the Support for Beneficiaries of International Protection department (Presidential Decree 106/2020). The Socio-economic Integration department is the one responsible for the cooperation with Local Self-Governments and migrant associations (Ministry of Migration and Asylum 2021d). In 2021, the position of the Deputy Minister for Integration was established (Ministerial Decision 140/2021). This office is responsible for the Integration Directorate and the Special Secretariat for the protection of Unaccompanied Minors (SSPUAM).

In Greece the Regional Self-Governance consists of 13 Regions which do not have any kind of direct competence regarding migrant integration. The Local Self-Governance level consists of 332 municipalities which can implement policies and participate in programs regarding social solidarity and the protection of vulnerable populations.

The interviews carried out with local and central policymakers within the frame of PISTE project highlighted the fact that these actions have not been accompanied with the proportionate direct funding from the Central Government, due to the severe economic crisis that Greece experienced during the 2010s. Moreover, when there are available European or regional funding tools, small and medium scale Municipalities lack the capacity both to identify them on time and to respond to their complicated and technically demanding application procedures. In view of all these facts, the implementation of local initiatives depends on the capacity of the Local Self-Administration and/or on the political efforts of the local leadership.

2.3 Local integration policies

Some forms of locally based integration actors are the Migrant Integration Centres (MICs) and the Migrant and Refugee Integration Councils (MRICs). They are both foreseen by legislation but not mandatory, meaning that their establishment relies on the initiative of the municipalities.

The Migrant Integration Centres are appendages of the Local Community Centers. They are operated by the municipalities (L. 4638/2016), and monitored by the Ministry of Migration and Asylum, more specifically by the Directorate for Social Integration. In 2021, 11 MICs were operating in 10 municipalities across the country, mainly in big Greek cities. Their target group is legally residing TCNs, beneficiaries of international protection and asylum seekers. The services offered include, inter alia, consultation services on integration and networking, Greek language lessons, legal advice, social and psychological support as well as networking and awareness raising activities (Ministry of Migration and Asylum 2020c). According to the most recent data by the end of 2021 49,170 people had received support in the framework of MICs operations (Ministry of Migration and Asylum 2022a).

The Migrant and Refugee Integration Councils (MRICs) operate on a municipal level. They have a consulting role to Municipal Councils, regarding issues that affect migrants and refugees. They were established in 2010 (L. 3852/2010) and their operation procedures were later amended (L. 4555/2018). Their competences are: a) the recording and monitoring of issues faced by migrant and refugee populations in the municipality concerned, with regard to their integration into the local community, their contact with public authorities or the municipal authority; b) the submission of recommendations to the Municipal Council for the development of local actions to promote the smooth social integration of migrants and refugees; and c) the organisation of events to raise awareness and strengthen the social cohesion of the local population.

The members of the MRICs are city councillors, civil society representatives and 5 representatives of recognized migrants/refugees Collective Bodies, permanently residing at the specific Municipality. In case there are no such Collective Bodies in the municipality, the Municipal Council shall invite one of the recognized Bodies active in the region concerned to appoint a representative. If there are no such Bodies in the region concerned or if, even after the appointment of their representative, the total number of 5 representatives is not reached, the Municipal Council shall further invite the most representative secondary or federal organization of collective representation of migrants/refugees, active on a national level, to appoint the remaining representatives, until the total number of 5 representatives is completed. Currently, there is no registry on the existing MRICs and as a result no information on the implementation of this approach nation-wide.

In this context and given the fact that migrants and refugees continue arriving in Greek cities, the rest of the local integration actions rely on local political leadership (Sabchev 2022). That is, they depend on the initiatives taken by local policymakers and thus, on their capacity and know-how. One example of strong leadership on a local level is the municipality of the city of Ioannina, where the local authority has created an integration centre with the support of private foundations and

supports the social participation of migrant and refugee communities in the area, through the provision of technical support to the local MRIC (UNHCR 2021b).

Additionally, active cities on migrant and refugee integration have created the Cities Network for Integration (CNI). This is a Network operating since 2018, now consisting of 18 municipalities. Small, medium, and big municipalities are represented in CNI. The Network is supported by IOM and UNCHR and its goal is the development and exchange of good integration practices (CNI, online published).

3. Integration of UAMs

3.1 Governance

In Greece the competent authority for all the issues concerning the reception and integration of Unaccompanied Minors (UAMs) is the Special Secretariat for the Protection of Unaccompanied Minors (SSPUAM) which was established in 2020 (Presidential Decree 18/2020). It belongs to the Ministry of Migration and Asylum and operates under the auspices of the Deputy Minister for Integration.

The SSPUAM is the national focal point for competent institutions of the EU. It collaborates with members of the EU, third countries, organizations, and services within the EU as well as international organizations with regards to initiatives, measures and programs that contribute to the effective protection of UAMs.

The SSPUAM consists of the following units:

- a. Monitoring and Evaluation Unit for Host Centres
- b. Housing and Relocation Request Management Unit
- c. Unit for the Integration and Support of UAMs
- d. Institutional Protection Unit

The responsibilities of the SSPUAM are the following:

- a. Management of accommodation and relocation requests for UAMs
- b. Management and evaluation of hosting facilities and supervised apartments for minors
- c. Support with regards to social integration of UAMs
- d. Safeguard of the institutional protection of UAMs
- e. Operation of the National Emergency Response Mechanism to identify and locate children in need.

In 2021 the SPPUAM drafted the *National Strategy for the Protection of Unaccompanied Minors*. The same year Greece launched a *National Action Plan for children's rights*, part of which is dedicated to children in refugee and migration context.

3.2 Legal framework

Every time an UAM is identified in the country, the SSPUAM is notified. The accurate and timely age assessment of the child-asylum applicant is crucial for the result of their international protection application and their psychological well-being.

Greece has failed for many years to apply an effective guardianship system for UAMs. According to the previous legal framework (L. 4554/2018) the Public Prosecutor was the temporary guardian of all the UAMs and separated children residing in Greece. However, the Prosecutor would merely assume that capacity in theory. In practice, NGO personnel (where available) were taking the authorization by the Public Prosecutor for covering specific needs (e.g. legal representation) of the child. At the end of 2020 a Network of Temporary guardians (run by the NGO Metadrasi) with limited authorization had been appointed. Their role was expanded in 2021 and the operation of this Network of guardians stopped on August 2021 (AIDA 2022).

As provided in the National Strategy for the Protection of UAMs the Greek Guardianship system for UAMs was needed to be reformed. The guardianship model shall guarantee that the State designs, coordinates and monitors the implementation of the institution of guardianship in Greece, while certified partners implement guardianship on the ground adhering to the standards set forth by the State.

In July 2022 a National System of Guardianship and a new Framework of hosting UAMs in Greece was introduced (L. 4960/2022). The law, as incorporated in the Greek Asylum Law (L. 4939/2022), provides for the implementation of the new Guardianship Scheme, which will provide flexibility to various actors that fulfil specific criteria to provide guardianship services. The main actors to implement the new Guardianship scheme are the Public Prosecutor, the "Guardian" (a legal entity), the "authorized Guardian" (the person designated by the "Guardian" to perform the Guardian's duties in the name and on behalf of the Guardian) and the Guardianship Board (a collective advisory and decision-making body of the SSPUAM).

Regarding the appointment of the guardian the law provides that the Prosecutor a) orders the commission, b) appoints the guardian, c) specifies the personal information and the place of residence of UAMs who are under commissions and d) defines the field of action of the guardian. Additionally, the law provides for the possible actors that can offer the guardianship services, the procedures to appoint a guardian, the content of the guardianship of UAMs, the personnel and

the institutional actors involved and the monitoring and support of the implementation of the new Guardianship system. The SSPUAM, has the duty to develop the operational framework of the new Guardianship system ensuring its effective monitoring, support, and evaluation, in addition it will develop the SOPs for the implementation of Guardianship, the identification of indicators for the Best Interest of the Child Assessment, guidelines in terms of guardianship implementation, training and exchange of best practices with other countries.

This new System is not yet operational.

3.2.1 Provisions for the integration of UAMs

In the Greek legislation, the provisions that refer to the integration of UAMs are those regarding housing and education. Depending on their age UAMs can be placed either in *Shelters* or in *Supported Independent Living apartments (SILs)*. Shelters are buildings operated by NGOs and charities where the minors are housed all together. SILs are apartments where minors over the age of 16, are living in groups of 4 with the support of an NGO. All UAMs receive a monthly allowance.

In order to be admitted in SILs (Ministerial Decision N. Δ11/οικ.60207/2717) UAMs must meet the following criteria: a. have reached the age of 16; b. have been registered by the Reception and Identification Service or the Greek Police or the competent authorities for receiving and examining an application for international protection; c. have the ability to support themselves and assume further responsibilities; d. not suffer from an active psychiatric illness that can put them or other persons at risk; e. not take illegal psychoactive drugs or other toxic substances (e.g. drugs, alcohol, etc.); f. agree to live in the context of SILs.

In terms of capacity, according to the latest available data (March 2022) 72 UAM shelters (with total capacity of 1,993 places) and 121 SILs (with total capacity of 484 places) were operating in Greece. Additionally, there are 6 Emergency Accommodation Facilities with total capacity of 200 places (EKKA 2022).

Once the minors are identified by NGOs or state authorities, their case files are sent via a common standard referral form to the Housing and Relocation Request Management Unit of the SSPUAM and to the National Emergency Response Mechanism in order to be placed in a shelter. The housing request of the actor who refers the child to the SSPUAM includes a brief social history and some vulnerability indicators (e.g. if the minor is a survivor of torture, a victim of trafficking, a single mother, has a disability etc.) to be considered. The vulnerability indicators play a crucial role for the selection of the proper shelter of the child. With regards to formal education, minor asylum applicants and minor children of asylum applicants are obliged to be enrolled in the public education system for as long as the stay in Greece (L. 4939/2022, Art. 55). The enrolment should

take place no later than 3 months from the date of the completion of the identification of the minor. With regards to non-formal education, law envisages the possibility of such activities inside the accommodation centres.

Law 2413/1996 introduced for the first time the concept of Intercultural Schools. According to this law, any school where the 45% or more of its students were non-Greeks citizens, could become an Intercultural School and thus adjust the educational content according to the educational needs of the students. According to the law the purpose of intercultural education was, through the operation of primary and secondary school units, to properly educate children with social, cultural or "educational peculiarities". The Intercultural Education Schools followed the programs of the corresponding public schools, which were adapted in the special social, cultural, or educational needs of their students.

Currently, L. 4415/2016 sets the context for intercultural education and for the operation of intercultural schools. Under the same context, and then under L. 4547/2018 an additional education structure operates, especially for asylum seekers and refugee children. These are the Reception School Facilities for Refugee Education (DYEPs) which operate in the accommodation centers or in the school buildings, in the afternoon. Their curriculum is adjusted to the educational needs of the students and their duration is up to one year with a possibility of extension for one more year.

Furthermore, L. 3879/2010 provided for the Education Priority Zones (ZEPs) meaning Regional Directorates of Primary and Secondary Education where reception classes take place alongside the regular program. ZEPs are established in areas with low overall educational attainment, high dropout rates, and low access to higher education, as well as low socio-economic indicators, such as a high poverty risk index.

Apart from schools, a support system for refugee children education is operating under the scheme of Refugee Education Coordinators (SEPs) (L. 4547/2018, Art. 77). The SEPs are educators operating in accommodation centers or areas close to such centers or areas close to DYEPs. Their tasks include the coordination, monitoring and consultation regarding the smooth operation of refugee education. At governmental level, refugee education is overseen by the Autonomous Department of Coordination and Monitoring of Refugee Education, in the Ministry of Education (Presidential Decree 18/2018).

Non-formal education takes place in a structured educational environment and leads to the certification of qualifications (L. 4763/2020). It may include initial vocational training and adult literacy. Informal learning on the other hand, as defined in L. 3879/2010, refers to learning activities outside of a structured educational environment.

3.3 Policy Framework

The SSPUAM published a *Strategy on the Protection of UAMs in Greece* for public consultation (OpenGov 2022) in January 2022. It should be noted that the Strategy does not have a binding character, nor is it accompanied by a specific timeline.

The Strategy includes 4 pillars of action: a) improvement of the reception and hosting system and safeguarding UAM'' rights, b) implementation of sustainable solutions for every child; c) protection of UAMs from all forms of violence; d) modernization of data collection.

Under the second pillar, the Strategy includes provisions for the integration and participation of UAMs. Based on the results of the IMMERSE project which was funded by Horizon 2020, the Strategy defines 5 key dimensions: 1) access to rights (legal status, health care, compulsory education), 2) language and culture (proficiency in Greek language, maintaining a particular cultural identity during integration into Greek society), 3) well-being (happiness, sense of belonging), 4) relationships (friends, peers, teachers, mentors and institutions), 5) educational achievement (academic skills, completion of compulsory education, attendance of formal post compulsory education) (IMMERSE, no date).

Moreover, the Strategy refers especially to the important role of local communities in integration. More specifically, the Strategy proposes:

1. The development of a UAM Registry at local level
2. The delivery of compulsory Greek language and social studies courses at municipal level
3. Establishment of employment programs at local level with the participation of UAMs and minors of the local community

With regards to the civic participation of UAMs, the Strategy refers to the importance of schools and local youth groups and proposes volunteerism as well as their participation in decision making processes regarding matters regarding them. More specifically, according to the Strategy any effort to promote the civic participation of UAMs involves the participation of local youth. School and local youth associations are considered ideal points of reference for planning such initiatives. According to the Strategy, UAMs need additional support and encouragement, as often the only support network they have in the country are professionals and peers they live with in accommodation facilities. Ways to gradually promote social participation are voluntary work in the community (either following an initiative, organized by the Organization that has undertaken the protection of the minor in cooperation with local institutions and authorities, or organized by the school as an action that concerns all students), the participation of minors in the decision-making process

on various issues that affect them locally or at school, and the planning of a project on issues jointly chosen by the children of a place or school.

4. Migrant and Refugee presence in the Region

The Municipality of Voio is situated in the Regional Unit of Kozani, which administratively belongs to the Region of Western Macedonia.

Figure 1. Location of the Region of Western Macedonia



Source: Wikipedia

At the time of the completion of this Report, the detailed results of the Greek national population census had not been published. Based on the previous census (2011) the population breakdown regarding citizenship of the administrative units that are important for this Report is illustrated in the following table:

Table 5. Permanent Population of the Region of Western Macedonia (2011)

Place of residence	Total population	Non-Greek Citizens			Non-Greek Citizens %
		Total	EU citizens	Non-EU/Stateless/Unknown Citizenship	
Region of Western Macedonia	283,689	11,598	1,092	10,506	4,08%
Regional Unit of Kozani	150,196	5,600	541	5,059	3,72%
Municipality of Kozani	71,388	2,543	269	2,274	3,56%
Municipality of Voio	18,386	669	23	646	3,63%
Municipality of Eordaia	45,592	1,826	203	1,623	4%
Municipality of Servia	14,830	562	46	516	2,55%

Source: Hellenic Statistical Authority

Moreover, it appears that in April 2020, the holders of valid residence permits in Western Macedonia were 9,475. Half of them were residing in the Regional Unit of Kozani (4,707). As far as countries of origin are concerned, the vast majority of non-Greek residents (4,099) were Albanians (Ministry of Migration and Asylum 2020a).

The location of the region of Western Macedonia also played its own part regarding the refugee population movements since 2015. For example, in 2016, when asylum seekers were moving from Greece towards Western European states (mainly through the border city of Idomeni) the city of Kozani had temporarily hosted 400 people in the local Gymnasium (Pappas 2016). Furthermore, the wider region of Western Macedonia has hosted asylum seekers, on a longer-term basis, in the following facilities:

1. Grevena (town of 13.137 residences): In 2016, 650 asylum seekers from Syria were hosted in 2 hotels in the area of Grevena, (ΚΕΔΕ 2016). By 2021 when this hosting scheme ended, the hotels used for hosting asylum seekers had risen to 9. The operation was under the responsibility of the Ministry of Migration and Asylum (IOM 2021).
2. Velventos (city of 3.360 residents): From 9/2020, to 4/2021, 71 UAMs have been hosted in a hotel in the city of Velvento. The operation was implemented by the Greek NGO SolidarityNow (ERTNEWS 2021; SolidarityNow 2021).
3. Neraida (village of 148 residents): Since October 2019, a shelter for 30 UAMs has been operating in Neraida. The shelter is operated by the Greek NGO “Koinoniko EKAV” (*Δομή Κοζάνης [kozani Facility]*, online published).
4. Aiani (city of 2.006 residents): From 4/2018 to 4/2020 the Greek NGO Arsis, operated a facility with an accommodation capacity of 35 UAMs (ARSIS 2020).
5. Kozani (city of 41.066 residents): Since 2021 the NGO Arsis is also coordinating a SIL program for 16 UAMs over the age of 16 in 4 flats (ARSIS 2021).
6. Neapoli (city of 1.442 residents): The Municipality of Voio initially participated through a hotel in Neapoli and then through the municipal shelter of UAMs. The hotel in Neapoli hosted 96 asylum seekers during the period 2019-2020. (Πρωινός Λόγος 2019).
7. Pentalofos (village of 889 residents): Since 2019, the Municipality of Voio has been operating a shelter for female UAMs.

At the time of this Report completion, the official data indicate the existence of no official hosting facility for asylum seekers in the Region of Western Macedonia, apart from the two shelters for UAMs listed above (Ministry of Migration and Asylum 2022b; 2022c).

Figure 2. Map of Regional Unit of Kozani

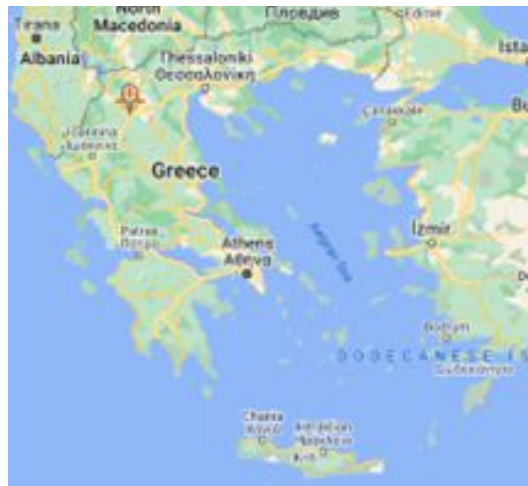


Source: www.travel-greece.org

4.1 Municipality of Voio migration profile

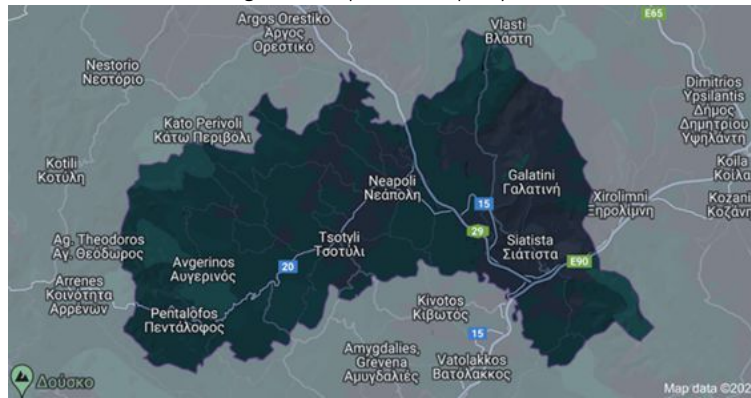
The case study of this Report, in the context of the PISTE project, is the shelter of Pentalofos, which is the only one operated by a local authority in Greece.

Figure 3. Location of Municipality of Voio



Source: Google Maps

Figure 4. Map of Municipality of Voio



Source: Google Maps

According to the last national census (2021) the total population of the Municipality of Voio is 15,060 but no results regarding the number of TCNs residing in the area were available at the time of the Report completion. According to the previous national census (2011), the population of the Municipality of Voio amounted to 18,836 people. According to the same data, 669 residents (3.64%) were non-Greek citizens (Hellenic Statistic Authority 2011). According to even older census data, the non-Greek population moved to Voio mainly during the 1990s. Additional data from the 2001 national census, showcase that the vast majority (87.5%) of the non-Greek population were Albanians, proving that the immigration of this area followed the general migration patterns occurring in Greece at that time. It can be also assumed that the position of Voio, close to the land border with Albania, has also played an important role.

Table 6. Voio Population Development (1991-2011)

	Total Population	Non-Greeks	Non-Greeks %
2011	18.386	669	3,63%
2001	20.430	618	3,02%
1991	23.465	66	0,28%

Source: www.statistics.gr

Table 7. Non-Greek population in Voio (2001) by country of origin

Country of origin	N.
Saint Vincent and the Grenadines	1
Albania	541
Armenia	1

Australia	7
Austria	1
Belgium	1
Bulgaria	2
Germany	3
Georgia	1
United States	19
United Kingdom	1
Spain	4
Cyprus	1
Hungary	1
Uzbekistan	4
Ukraine	4
Poland	3
Romania	1
Russian Federation	20
Czech Republic	1
Philippines	1
Total	618

Source: www.statistics.gr

5. PISTE Case study: The Pentalofos shelter

Pentalofos is a mountain village built at an altitude of 1.018 meters. It is located 60 km away from the city of Siatista which is the capital of the Municipality of Voio and 80 km away from the city of Kozani. Pentalofos became part of the Municipality of Voio in 2010.

According to the testimonies and the desk research, the involvement of both the village of Pentalofos and the Municipality of Voio in refugee reception was the result an existing infrastructure and the need to rejuvenate an otherwise shrinking village. The town of Pentalofos had a Boarding House, supported by the Karoutas Foundation (which is run by the Center of Macedonian Studies). This Boarding House used to host children from low-income families, who attended the local high-school. Initially the building was owned by the church and was placed under the auspices of the National Youth Foundation in 1985. After 1990, the Boarding House started hosting children of Greek descent from the Albanian village Kodër. From then on, the Boarding House gradually also accepted children of Albanian migrants who were living in Greece. This development

led to the establishment of a School for Intercultural Education in 2001 (Vimavoïou 2013). In 2011 all Boarding Houses came under the responsibility of the local authorities (Joint Ministerial Decision 127176/H/2011). Accordingly, the Pentalofos Boarding House came under the responsibility of the Municipality of Voio.

Figure 5. The small village of Pentalofos



Source: www.voio.gr

During and after the economic crisis that Greece faced in the 2010s, the presence of Albanian workers in the area gradually declined. This represented a threat for schools in Pentalofos as there would not be enough children to justify the need for schools, let alone an intercultural one. In the long-term, this would create a vicious circle, resulting in an inevitable population decline.

In this context, in 2016 the local community of Pentalofos decided to make use of the Boarding House as a shelter for UAMs and raised the issue with the Municipality. (News Center 2016). In fact, the Municipality applied to the competent Ministry and the AMIF 2014-2020 fund and the shelter started operating in 2019 (Ministry of Migration and Asylum 2018).

During the period of the interviews, the shelter residents were 39 girls coming mainly from Somalia and Congo. Most of the girls had applied for international protection in Greece and a small percentage of them are relocation/family reunification applicants. It has been reported that the population is not stable as the minors are teenagers and often very close to adulthood. This means that in most cases, the minors do not reside in the shelter for more than one year.

The shelter provides legal and psychosocial services consisting of 1 lawyer, 1 nurse and 2 psychologists. During the period of the interviews, the appointed guardian for the minors was the Public Prosecutor of the city of Grevena, who had provided the lawyer of the shelter the authorization to legally represent the minors. The asylum applications of the girls are examined by the Regional Asylum Office of the city of Thessaloniki, which is located 200 km away from the shelter. Concerns about the completion of the asylum procedures were expressed during the interviews. Specific-

ly, it was noted that the examination of the asylum applications, in all probability, would not be completed until the minors had reached age of majority.

The community of Pentalofos is quite isolated and this has a negative effect on the ability of the minors to participate in extracurricular activities. The Cultural Center of Pentalofos is organizing local events, which are all attended by the girls, still they expressed their wish to visit places with more activities. Pentalofos is located far away from the city of Kozani, which is the most vibrant urban center of the area, where a minor can enjoy extracurricular activities, in addition, Kozani is over an hour's drive away across mountain roads.

5.1 Local networks in the Region of Western Macedonia

In the Voio Municipality there are 3 volunteer groups, focused on blood donations and 19 cultural associations (‘Συμμετέχω - Προσφέρω’ [I Participate – I offer] 2022). The abovementioned groups do not specialize in the issues of migrant inclusion and participation. Apart from the shelter of Pentalofos, the stakeholder mostly related to migration is the Intercultural School, located also in Pentalofos.

In the larger Regional Unit of Kozani, there are three active Civil Society Organizations (CSOs): *Arsis Kozani*, *Koinoniko EKAV* and *GO Alive*. Moreover, the Municipality of Kozani has also been active on the issue of migrant inclusion and participation, being one of the first local authorities to establish a MRIC. Finally, in the city of Servia, there is a General High School which has been involved in a specialized program on refugee inclusion in education and society. No evidence of organized migrant communities’ operation has been observed in the region of Western Macedonia.

The initiatives of the abovementioned CSOs are described below by category.

5.1.1 Civil Society Organizations

Arsis Kozani is a civil society Organization active both in migration issues as well as general community support. Its activities in the city of Kozani cover a wide range of issues, such as education, Roma inclusion, migrant inclusion, and environment. Most of its activities are based on the work of more than 10 volunteer groups (ARSIS KOZANIS 2022).

Regarding migrant and refugee inclusion, *Arsis Kozani* has operated two housing programs for UAMs in the city of Aiani and in the city of Kozani. These actions have a specific timeline. The Organization is also operating the “Free School” for children of all grades, whose schooling cannot be supported by families and for children from the neighborhood. Apart from offering free of charge remedial teaching, preparation for the national examinations, foreign language and computer courses, it provides individualized educational support, psychosocial support, creative and

expression (artistic creations, etc.) activities, recreational activities (excursions, film screenings, etc.) and the "Contra Kozani" football academy. Arsis Kozani has also founded an Adult School, aimed at adults who are facing financial difficulties and want to improve their personal and professional skills (unemployed, low paid, single parent families, migrants, etc.). It also provides free Greek language courses leading to the state certificate of attainment in Greek, foreign languages, and computers skills. In the past, the Organization had operated an Immigration Service Centre which was addressing women of migrant origin, with the purpose of creating a safe space for them. In addition, the Organization has implemented actions towards the inclusion of the local Roma community. *GO Alive* is a youth Organization which used to be situated in the Voio Municipality and its Headquarters are now in the city of Kozani. It is focused on youth work, with empowerment, exchange, and civic participation projects. The use of culture and more specifically the use of poetry as instrument of social inclusion of the refugee population was among their projects (Go Alive 2021).

Koinoniko EKAV focuses on marginalized populations. Since 2021 it has been active in the village of Neraida, where it operates a shelter for UAMs (*Project «Nefeli»* 2022).

5.1.2 Schools

The Regional Unit of Kozani includes 59 secondary schools (ΟΠΕΚΑ 2022). The schools most actively involved in migrant and refugee pupil integration and inclusion are those in Pentalofos and in the city of Servia.

General High school of the city of Servia

In Servia, a town of 2.980 residents, the General High School is attended by the UAMs of the Neraida village shelter. Moreover, the school is participating in the Network "Schools for all" which is the result of the three-year funded project 'Schools for All - Inclusion of Refugee Children in Greek Schools'. This project is supported by the European Economic Area Financial Mechanism, is under the auspices of the Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs and is carried out in collaboration with the Institute of Education Policy (IEP). It is managed by the European Wergeland Centre (EWC) and the grant manager is SOL Crowe, in collaboration with HumanRights360 (The European Wergeland Centre 2022).

The school has been participating in this project since 2001 and has developed an action plan for an inclusive school environment. Additionally, the school has participated in specialized training sessions for the teaching personnel and parents, with regards to refugee inclusion in education (Γενικό Λύκειο Σερβίων [General Lyceum of the city of Servia] 2021). In terms of networking, the school has also organized joint meetings with local and refugee pupils, along with the personnel

of the Neraida shelter for UAMs so that minors and teachers could exchange views and ask questions on the concept of migration (Volaki 2021). Other relevant actions include the publication of school regulations in Farsi language (Γενικό Λύκειο Σερβίων [General Lyceum of the city of Serbia] 2022b) and the cooperation with the local football team “Titan” (Κουρελή [Koureli] 2022). Last but not least, the school has engaged in inclusive and participatory cultural events and activities. Indicatively, multicultural dance lessons, oral history presentations and creative writing workshops (Γενικό Λύκειο Σερβίων [General Lyceum of the city of Serbia] 2022c; 2022d; 2022a).

Figure 6. Action plan for an inclusive school in Serbia

**ΓΕ.Λ. Σερβίων
"Ζήσης Σωτηρίου"**

ΣΥΝΕΔΡΙΟ: 20 ΙΟΥΝΙΟΥ 2022

Πρόγραμμα Σχολεία για όλους
(Συμπεριληψη παιδιών προσφύγων στα Ελληνικά σχολεία)

Σχέδιο Δράσης:
«Μαθητές, εκπαιδευτικοί, γονείς συνεργάζονται για ένα συμπεριληπτικό σχολείο»

Το σχολείο μας, ΓΕΛ ΣΕΡΒΙΩΝ- «ΖΗΣΗΣ ΣΩΤΗΡΙΟΥ»
- 141 μαθητές, 9 μαθητές πρόσφυγες ουσόνδουσι, 5 μαθητές με μεταναστευτικό ποσόδιον
-Εκπαιδευτικοί: 21, Άνδρες: 5, Γυναίκες: 16,
-Γλωσσολόγος και κοινωνική λειτουργός,
-μεταναστευμένοι μαθητές: 75 από εφταναοά χωράδι
-Τμήμα υποδοχής για πρώτη φορά: 9 μαθητές, γλώσσα κυρίως φοροί

Η επωνυμία «Ζήσης Σωτηρίου»
Το σχολείο μας έστι την επωνυμία «Ζήσης Σωτηρίου», πρίντας τον Σερβόδιον αγωνάδι του 1821 που πρόσφερε την περίοοδα του για την ελευθερία της πατρίδος του και για τη μύρσηση των νέων. Έζησε στην Αθήνα και εργάστηκε ως φύλακος στην Εφερία Αρκεσίων της Αρκεσίων.

Η κοινότητά μας
Το σχολείο μας βρόνεται στην πόλη της Περβίων, όπου διαποεί η καταπολέμηση των Σερβίων, της σπασής της παρρηφής βροεί η λίγη Πολιούρτου Η υφελή γέφυρα των Σερβίων επιτρέπει τη συνάντηση των μαθητών του σχολείου μας με τα ουσόνδουσι παιδιά πρόσφυγες της Δομής της Νεράιδος.

Βασικός μας στόχος:
Να βοηθήσουμε τα παιδιά πρόσφυγες στη συμπεριληψη τους
Η συμπεριληψη των προσφύγων μαθητών ως μαθησιακός-παιδαγωγικός-κοινωνικός στόχος

Οι δράσεις:
1. Προβόλντας την αόρση, τη δικαιοσύνη και την αλληλεγγύη
2. Διοόδιον τη γλώσσα μας, μάθη και τη γλώσσα μας
3. Μετάφραση του σχολικού κανονισμού
4. Ψηφιακή εργοκλήθηση για αλληλεγγύη μαθητές
5. Ομάδα Θεάτρου Σκηνή
6. Συμπεριληπτική δικαιοσύνη σχολείου Οργάνη
7. Η μύρση μας ενώνει
8. Η προσφορά γίνεται ιστορία, ποιηση, τραγούδι, χορός

Ομάδα Δράσης:
Κοινότη Αθήνας: Μύρση Ευαγγέλιος, Άδρη Μαρκό, Κοιμηνόδι Παρβίν, Τσεκάρδην Ουαρενία, Κωνστανό Δάτσηος
Σε συνεργασία με όλα τον Σύλλογο Διοδοκόντων του ΓΕΛ Σερβίων
Συνεργασία η συμμορφή της Schools For All, Βασίλειο Μαρκό
Οι εκπαιδευτικοί της Δομής: Βολάνη Ασημίνη-Σταγυνούδιον Αθήνας
Συνεργαζόμενοι φοροί: ΑΡΕΕ, Σύλλογος γυνών-Ποδόδιον, Αθλητικός Σύλλογος ΤΙΤΑΝ, Θεαρωκή ομάδα «Κόκκινη Κοιμήτη», Παιδαγωγικός ούλλογος «Εύφραση Νέοσι» & Το Γενικό Σερβίων

Ευχαριστίες στους μαθητές μας και τις μαθητές μας!
Η ιστοσελίδα μας, ένας κοινός τίπος αναφοράς
<https://blogs.sch.gr/kyseiv/category/ty-tyketo-di-symperilepsi-ton-prosfygon-mathiton-kales-praktikes/>

ΣΟΛ Crowe HUMAN RIGHTS THE EUROPEAN HIGHLAND CENTRE

Source: schoolsforall.org

Pentalofos Intercultural High School

The UAMs’ educational needs in the Pentalofos shelter are managed by the Intercultural School of the village. The Intercultural High School of Pentalofos was established in 2001 (Vimavoιou 2013).

The schedule is adjusted to UAMs' educational needs, meaning that it focuses on language learning, gymnastics, and arts.

5.2 Local Governance: The experience of Kozani's MRIC

The Municipality of Kozani was one of the first ones to operate a MRIC. The first MRIC was constituted by 9 members, appointed by resolution of the city Council. Three members were municipal councilors (one of which was a minority member), 2 members were representatives of migrant communities, and 4 members were representatives of social organizations, which developed activities related to the migrants within the municipality. Non-Greek members should have had a valid residence permit.

In 2018 a new legal framework (L. 4555/2018) made the establishment of MRICs quite challenging. Possible participants were not identifiable in the city of Kozani, because the new provisions included specific prerequisites regarding the form of the migrant communities eligible for participation. This, in combination with the lack of formally established communities in the region, made the participation of migrants very challenging.

Specifically, in 2019, after the municipal elections, the new Municipal Council commenced the establishment of a new MRIC (www.ertnews.gr 2019). According to the minutes of the Municipal Council's relevant meeting, the new law made the identification of migrant participants impossible as there was no recognized body of collective representation of migrants/refugees active within the municipality. Similarly, there is no recognized body of collective representation of migrants/refugees within the Region of Western Macedonia. In early 2020, communications took place with the Forum of Migrants (based in Athens) and the Federation of Albanian Associations of Greece (based in Athens), two associations which have a role of collective representation. Indeed, the Federation of Albanian Associations of Greece provided one candidate, a migrant residing in Kozani, however this was not enough as 5 migrant participants are required for the establishment of the Council.

6. Analysis

6.1 The inclusion of UAMs in remote towns

Generally constant amendments on policies about migrant integration and participation in political life have caused discontinuity, confusion, and fragmentation in the implementation of inclusive approaches at the local level.

6.1.1 Challenges

The interviews revealed that the lack of adequate funding for the integration of UAMs reflects the lack of an integration policy in general. The funding provided by the state for the operation of shelters covers part of the costs but does not provide resources for the support of extracurricular activities (Non-Formal Education). This issue has been particularly important for the summertime when schools are closed.

Another aspect regarding funding is related to small Municipalities' capacity as they seem unable to undertake fundraising activities either due to lack of specialized personnel or personnel in general. It appears that even though there are needs which could be covered by available European tools, the municipalities are not informed about them or do not have the necessary resources to apply for them, due to the very technical and complex nature of the procedure. As regards the daily needs of UAMs, one critical challenge is the appointment of guardians. Greece failed for many years to apply an effective guardianship system and the Public Prosecutor, acting as temporary guardian, used to merely assume that capacity in theory. This effectively means that there is no efficient capacity to focus on the specific protection and integration needs of each child. The new Guardianship system, which was introduced in July of 2022, is not yet operational.

In Greece, there is a number of barriers to inclusive education, including cultural obstacles in school community, of the persistence of stereotypes and some negative views of "foreigners". There is proven lack of a uniform approach to be implemented by school directors, due to reasons which range from lack of knowhow or inadequate training on intercultural education, to incorrect application of the provisions governing children's school attendance on the part of school directors, for example by barring admittance if no teacher has been hired for a reception class. This can lead to students not attending or dropping out of school. As in the case of other Greek areas, in Voio teachers have not received special training on intercultural education, neither have the buildings been refurbished, nor have students received accessible learning materials that are designed for their specific educational needs. Moreover, Reception classes and DYEP are often critically understaffed and unable to operate for the whole school year in the whole country. Schools in Greece start in September, but reception classes and DYEP are often not fully staffed until the middle of the school year. According to the Ministry of Education, in the school year 2021-2022, 97 Refugee Education Coordinators (RECs) were appointed (with 86 currently active) and 110 school units with DYEP classes functioned (83 in primary and 27 in secondary education). Also, 1,358 teachers were recruited for reception Classes of primary and secondary education and 220 teachers were recruited for DYEP classes, in total 1,578 recruitments of teachers during school

year 2021- 2022 (Greek Council for Refugees, Save the Children, Terres des Hommes 2022). The wide range of literacy levels among the students, in combination with the delays in teacher placements, has challenged the access of migrant children to formal education and has had negative effects on their integration and participation. These drawbacks make their access to the Greek citizenship quite difficult as the required written test is very demanding.

The special reception conditions apply to minors up to their 18th birthday, nevertheless, there are no provisions for the smooth transition to adulthood for this population. This means that the young adults are rendered even more vulnerable as they do not possess the tools to lead an independent life in Greece. For example, with regards to housing, they are obliged (with the exception of certain conditions e.g. school attendance etc.) to leave the shelters and move to the regular reception facilities offered by the Ministry of Migration and Asylum, namely the ESTIA housing and cash scheme or the camps. Given the fact that the ESTIA scheme is now at its final stage and soon will cease operating, these subjects that are eligible asylum seekers will be removed from the shelters and apartments and transferred to accommodation facilities (camps) probably in a remote area from where they lived. Those not eligible to apply for asylum (failed asylum seekers) will have to leave the country. The prospect of adulthood means in many cases that their asylum applications are going to be treated differently by the Asylum authorities as the applicants are no longer considered to be vulnerable. Moreover, minors who come of age before a decision on their asylum claim is issued, lose access to many of their rights, the lack of which is considered likely to affect the processing of their case and, therefore, the outcome of the procedure itself. They also lose their right to family reunification with a family member in another European country.

The humanitarian status within the frame of international protection was for many years the necessary safeguard for vulnerable asylum seekers, who did not meet the criteria to be granted international protection. In 2020, the humanitarian status was abolished in Greece and this severely affected UAMs. The precarity of legal residence demotivates UAMs from making active integration efforts, as their effective integration does not improve their prospect of remaining in the country legally. In practice, minors are anxious and demotivated to make integration efforts, as the fear for the future renders any effort futile to their eyes.

This Report covers a period in which children, regardless of citizenship/status, were physically absent from schools, due to the COVID-19 pandemic. In the case of UAMs, this resulted in minimized connections with the local community, which represented more difficulties in learning the Greek language.

6.1.2 Opportunities

The operation of two other shelters in the larger area of Kozani constitutes an opportunity for the shaping of a local network with exchange of good practices and community-building for the UAMs.

The SSPUAM, based also on the National Strategy for the Protection of UAMs has put forward some initiatives for their empowerment and participation: the Mentorship program and the Teenager Network. The Mentorship program attempts to become a good practice for the participatory policy-making approach through the involvement of young adults (mentors) who have been living as UAMs in Greece. The role of these mentors is to empower minors and help them raise their voice to express their needs to the Central administration (Ministry of Migration and Asylum 2021a). Moreover, the group of mentors recently created the Teenage Network in order to spread this action more widely throughout Greece (Moskoff 2022a).

The SSPUAM is improving its capacity on this specific matter through the project “Building Futures, Sharing Good Practices: Migrant Children's Transition to Adulthood UAC Futures” which is funded by AMIF. One of the deliverables of this project is a *Roadmap to Adulthood* highlighting a series of significant milestones facilitating transition to adulthood and how to achieve each milestone (SSPUAM Greece 2022).

On April 2022, the Deputy Minister for Integration announced the launching of a program called *Helios Junior*, focused on the smooth transition of UAMs into adulthood: “*Starting six months before adulthood and ending at the age of 21, the program aims at a smooth transition of UAMs to adult life, i.e. studies, vocational rehabilitation, continuation of their support*” (Hellenic Parliament 2022). However, there is no public information regarding the timeline of this initiative.

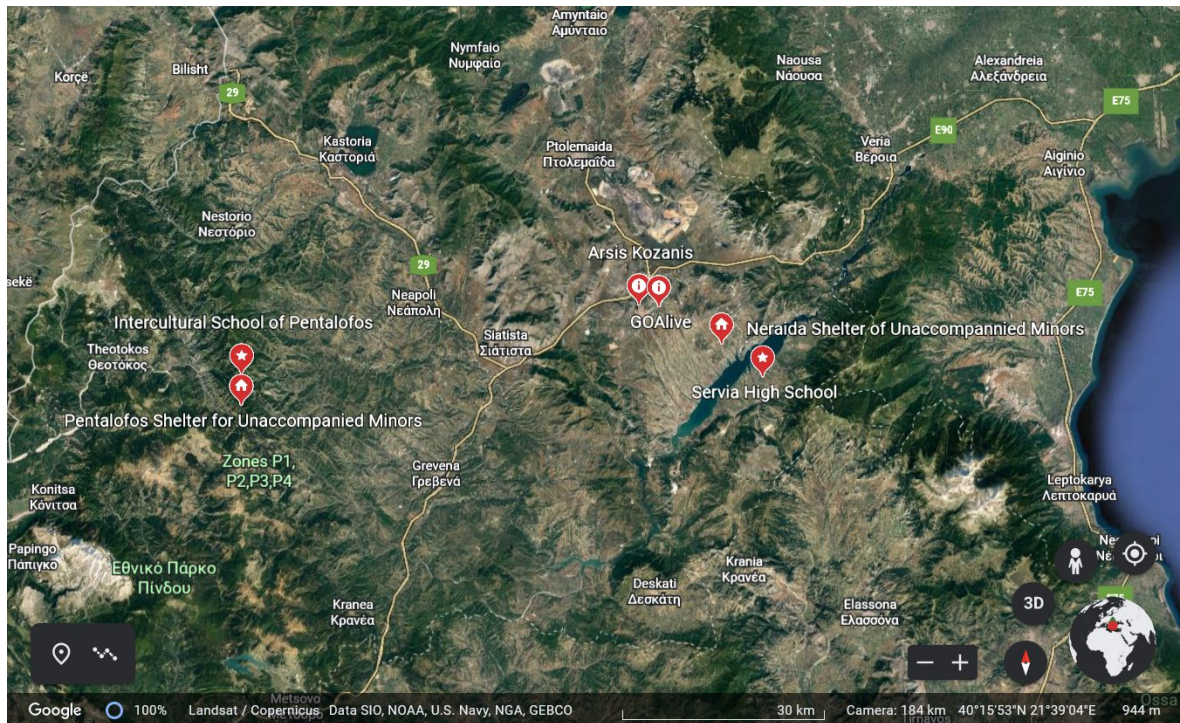
6.2 Interaction with local networks

With regards to the spatial characteristics of reception, apart from urban areas, there are plenty of shelters in small-medium cities around Greece. On the positive side, the relatively small size of these cities provides the children with a safer environment. Nevertheless, when these shelters don't provide easy access to cultural and educational activities, their isolation can potentially become an obstacle towards the integration of minors and the development of their personalities. The geographical location combined with the scattered nature of local agencies makes transport essential to allow access to various collaborative inclusion initiatives.

The case of Kozani is emblematic of the main challenge faced by Municipalities regarding the establishment of MRICs. According to a recent research conducted by the Ministry of Migration and

Asylum, 65% of the municipalities mentioned the lack of recognized migrant communities as the main challenge in the process (Ministry of Migration and Asylum 2022e). Field experiences mention that in practice the municipalities entrusted with establishing an MRIC follow a similar path. In lack of formal organized migrant communities or associations, they reach the national forums of migrant and refugee communities. Then these forums could either identify possible members in the area in question or register local migrants as their members. Nevertheless, this practice is not sufficient because the law clearly states that the 5 migrant participants should be members of different associations, not of the same one.

Figure 7. Dispersion of local actors that run projects for migrants' inclusion.



Source: Google Earth

Conclusions

For many years the situation regarding the protection of UAMs in Greece was problematic. Very often, the authorities were unaware of the existence of the UAMs in the country, while the hospitality structures could not cover their needs. In addition, the protective custody (detention) of minors was widely applied. The establishment of SSPUAM in 2020 with a mission, inter alia, to plan, implement and supervise the National Strategy in Greece for the Protection of UAMs is considered by many a very positive development. A part of the National Strategy for the Protection of UAMs is devoted to finding optimal solutions for the promotion of children's rights and their integration in the Greek society.

Several small and medium sized towns in Greece host shelters for UAMs. Small towns often do not offer cultural and sports activities that facilitate integration and if cultural or sport facilities are located in neighbouring towns, accessible means of transportation are not always in place.

At another level, for many years Greece has failed to operate an efficient Guardianship system which in any case is necessary for the well-being of the minor and can act as a key-factor in the integration process.

UAMs in Greece face a series of educational barriers, mainly due to systemic dysfunctions.

UAMs' transition to adulthood implies a sudden loss of the supportive safety network they have enjoyed. The "ex-minors" suddenly cease to be considered vulnerable and they must become part of the world of adults without being prepared for such a transition. In addition, there is no protective legal provision for UAMs who fail obtaining asylum.

Small and medium sized towns usually lack formal organized migrant communities or associations that can contribute to the integration procedure of UAMs.

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