



Report of Education for Refugees in Greece 10o Gymnasio Hrakleioy



Many child refugees and migrants stranded in sites across Greece (20000 estimated school-going-age children) are out of school, because their education has been disrupted for 1,5-2 years on average due to war and displacement. In some cases, some have never been to school. This disruption to learning may have impact on children's cognitive and social development and their overall future. Education has emerged as a top priority for children and their caregivers. Specifically, the learning needs of children include first language literacy and numeracy, Greek and English language learning.

Children are not accessing either formal or non-formal education on a regular basis in designated learning spaces. Since the borders to FYR of Macedonia closed, families and children are expected to remain in reception sites for several months which presents an opportunity to authorities, donors and humanitarian organisations to prevent further disruption to their learning, not only leaving it to efforts by refugee volunteers and volunteer organisations.

This academic year the Ministry of Education announced and is deploying a refugee education plan the "Reception Classes". About 7.000 children aged 6-15 will be transported by bus from refugee sites to nearby schools to attend separate 'reception classes' in the afternoon, and school bags containing school kits including notebooks, pens, pencils and other educational materials will be distributed to all children. Kindergartens for children aged 4-6 will be established in refugee accommodation sites.

Children residing in urban settings can be enrolled individually in nearby Greek schools, being taught along with Greek students. While this is a tremendously welcoming initiative, many clarifications are needed, such as the timeframe, difficulties in learning in Greek, documentation requirements, and a differentiation for island and urban children. The aims of the plan are to increase the rates in various factors such as girls receiving education, benefiting from informal education classes and benefiting from psychosocial support, including arts, play, sports and recreational activities.

"I had to stop my education last year, but now I'm back to school. I hope to become a pilot one day. I speak English, but I have to study more," said 10-year-old Hamza from Syria. He attends classes in a primary school in Greece and adds: "Going to school is always nice!"

"Sourour, Niloufar and Shahiba are my best friends and we go to primary school together. I am sharing my desk with Sourour!" says 7-year-old Shabanen from Afghanistan, full of enthusiasm just before she catches the school bus.

We must say that this education plan (parallel classes to learn basic skills) is for this year and in the next academic year all refugees are planned to be included in normal school life since their stay in this country is prolonged.

In our island, Crete, 500 refugees will be transported from other islands to stay in provided facilities and children are planned to attend in nearby schools. There is not yet a decision from the local authorities and the Ministry of Education if our school will be participating in this plan.

Our school has not encountered refugees as students yet only migrants. The provisions taken to make their inclusion easier is not requesting grades for subjects in the first year and in the second year requesting a 20% lower grade in order to advance to the next class. Also, students can attend after school classes by other teachers to improve their skills in basic subjects. This year for the assistance of a student from Bulgaria who does not know the Greek language and is attending his first year at a Greek School a tablet is provided as a translation tool.

For the support of refugees and migrants there are various NGOs and volunteer organisations offering informal education and provisional support such as the International Organisation of Migrants and the Greek Council for Refugees.

Sources:

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