

# Hellenic Republic Ministry of Migration & Asylum

**National Integration Strategy** 

The National Integration Strategy was developed by a Working Group appointed by Ms. Sofia Voultepsi, Deputy Minister of Migration and Asylum, in charge of Integration.

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### NATIONAL STRATEGY ON SOCIAL INTEGRATION OF ASYLUM APPLICANTS AND BENEFICIARIES OF INTERNATIONAL PROTECTION

The change of the basic parameters of the refugee crisis (that is efficient surveillance of the sea and land borders and consequent reduction of the migration flows, separation of refugees from migrants and acceleration of the asylum procedures leading to the increase of the number of recognized B.I.P.) have shifted the focus of the center of gravity from the asylum procedures towards the process of integration of the recognized refugees.

Greece, under the Convention of Geneva on the Status of Refugees (1951, ratified by Greece in 1959) as well as the New York Protocol (1967), has the obligation to ensure the possibility of independent living to the same extent as to Greek nationals for all recognized beneficiaries of international protection.

Greece respects and complies with international conventions which are of existential value for our country. However, it is equally important for Greece to ensure for the refugees an autonomous living, so that they can live independently without putting a strain on the national budget.

Therefore, refugees should live with dignity, for as long as they stay in our country due to the extraordinary circumstances prevailing in their own countries. However, given that the European funding tools are planned merely for asylum seekers, this goal should be reached without putting a strain on the national budget and the local communities.

Until now, failure to develop a common European asylum system and a common European return system, in combination with the pandemic crisis has generated new conditions in the area of migration management.

Thus, a need for planning of a New National Integration Strategy has emerged. This shall include a pre-integration stage with training and education for all, a process which will facilitate the relocation in other countries and is useful when the beneficiaries return into their countries of origin.

The New National Integration Strategy (for ref. NISTR) is based on the new action plan of the E.U. and adopts the recommendations of the European Commission on social integration, as formulated in its New Action Plan (24/11/2020) with emphasis on early action and in the process of pre-integration for those having a refugee profile.

Similar recommendations have been formulated by the OECD, the United Nations International Labour Organisation, the ICMPD, an organization operating to find innovative answers to regional challenges related to migration, to which Greece has acceded as its 19<sup>th</sup> member in October 2019.

The strategic goal of the New National Integration Strategy is the protection of Human Rights alongside in parallel with the creation of workplaces in crucial sectors of the Greek economy and increase the GNP so that both Greeks and refugees may benefit.

The New National Integration Strategy is addressed to asylum seekers as well as recognized beneficiaries of international protection and is aligned to the legal framework in force. It includes four basic pillars:

(a) Pre-integration of asylum seekers for the regular transition of adults into their professional life and of minors from non-formal to formal education without

- discrimination. Protection of rights and promotion of the European way of life and of the Rule of Law. Prevention and efficient protection from all forms of violence.
- (b) Social integration of beneficiaries of international protection through intensive education and training programs to facilitate access of beneficiaries to the labour market. Promotion of the European way of life.
- (c) Prevention and efficient protection from all forms of violence, exploitation and abuse through enhancing of reporting mechanisms and
- (d) Monitoring and supervision of the integration process using commonly accepted and measurable indicators.

In terms of its "philosophy", the New National Integration Strategy is inspired by the principle that social integration can be achieved through a two-way process ("two-way integration process") which should be supported by cooperation, dialogue and active involvement of the reception society at all levels (from reception until completion of the integration).

The actions proposed include clear references on support to independent living, social housing, employability and social welfare.

Properly trained and qualified interpreters in the mother languages of the asylum seekers/refugees are present in all actions. Increased focus is placed on skills mapping and enhancement of academic and professional knowledge, training, skills acquisition and language courses.

The educational process is governed by the principle of equal access in quality, non-discriminatory and non-exclusionary education. Apart from formal education, non-formal education is provided in the pre-integration stage, which has an holistic character and includes, in addition to learning Greek, familiarization with the European way of life, principles of democracy, gender equality, sports and special programs concerning disability, prevention of domestic violence, fight against human trafficking.

Having taken into account the above and aiming to peaceful coexistence, the New National Integration Strategy differs significantly from that of 2019, as it really focuses on the integration of refugees into Greek society and not on the creation of parallel social systems that lead to ghettos and increased social marginalization, poverty, radicalization and crime.

Regarding the implementation of the New National Integration Strategy, apart from the coordination and cooperation between the competent Ministries, coordination mechanisms have been predicted at all levels of governance and in particular at the level of local and regional authorities, while an important role is taken by other competent bodies for the preparation, development and planned implementation of various actions, including cooperation with the International Organizations and NGOs.

#### I. PRE-INTEGRATION OF ASYLUM SEEKERS

#### **GOAL 1: ENSURING SAFETY AND PROTECTION**

# Objective 1: Ensuring a safe living environment especially for women, children and people with increased needs of care and reception

- Action 1: Ensuring the presence of multidisciplinary teams (consisting of doctors, psychologists, social workers etc.) in all reception facilities, throughout the whole country. These teams will be responsible for evaluation and assessment of vulnerability and of any risks that asylum seekers face and for their further referral to competent bodies and services. Alternatively, in case physical presence is not possible, ensuring that the above teams can intervene from distance (online).
- Action 2: Ensuring adequate housing structures and support for people with increased care and reception needs (such as children, people with embedded mobility, single-parent families, pregnant women, people suffering from serious diseases, etc.) with the provision of permanent and adequate lighting, safe functional access to toilets-baths and the possibility of immediate movement to special "shelters".

## Objective 2: Early detection and case management of chronic mental health problems and / or disabilities (see also National Action for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities)

- Action 1: Ensuring the presence of doctors and other specialists in local institutions and mental health structures. Beneficiaries of international protection of similar profiles are also recruited to further strengthen the structures, in order to achieve effective and personalized treatment of mental health problems that asylum seekers as well as beneficiaries of international protection face.
- Action 2: Training and development of the personnel working in mental health institutions and facilities of first reception, regarding the most common mental issues asylum seekers face (such as post-traumatic stress disorder) with emphasis on cultural and religious diversity.

### Objective 3: Promotion of sexual and reproductive health

- Action 1: Information sessions on sexual and reproductive health with the
  participation of health professionals of the local medical community (midwives,
  doctors, nurses) and of the civil society, through organizations specialized on the
  specific object, with parallel presentation of the national healthcare system. Raising
  awareness regarding contraception and information on access to safe and medically
  approved contraceptive methods.
- Action 2: Creating friendly spaces for mothers and children inside the reception facilities, where breastfeeding, as well as informative sessions can be held to support parenthood. Providing information on first steps to be taken after childbirth, such as birth certificate and vaccination plan for children.

• Action 3: Ensuring access to maternal and postnatal health care for mothers, taking care for installation of pregnant women and mothers in areas where these services are available and setting up a network consisting of public hospital doctors, private individual doctors and volunteers to provide these services.

### Objective 4: Promote programs against drug and substances addiction

• **Action 1:** The competent Ministries and organizations should develop a close and strong cooperation on the development and implementation of special detoxification programs for asylum applicants facing drug addiction.

### GOAL 2: PROTECTING RIGHTS AND ENSURING ACCESS TO EDUCATION AND PUBLIC SERVICES

### Objective 1: Enhancing access to formal and non-formal education.

• Action 1: For the present action the consultation and coordination between the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Immigration and Asylum is necessary, given the special needs of the refugees/migrants children.

Particular emphasis is placed on ensuring the access to quality education, without segregation or exclusion, principles that apply to the education of both children and adults. The aim, based on the international experience and practice, is the inclusion of refugee children in formal education. Providing customized non-formal education to these children, such as intensive language courses, will facilitate their integration to formal education.

Access to formal education presupposes the development of basic language and communication skills in Greek and English, the recognition of skills through educational activities, cultural exchanges, equal learning and approved programs in terms of structure, content and methodology, which lead to relevant certification.

Enhancing access to higher education by accelerating the recognition of qualifications and skills.

- Action 2: Non-Formal Education (NFE) is provided to asylum seekers by professionals specialized in teaching Greek as a foreign language, in preparatory classes or as additional support, in the formal education system and includes teaching basic concepts in English language.
- Action 3: Strengthening the specific population with vocational training programs, in order to further develop already acquired skills, based on the needs of the local economies.
- Action 4: Ensuring access to Greek public schools for all ages, by strengthening schools in human resources and technological means, including the introduction and implementation of a common enrollment process.

### Objective 2: Ensuring access to comprehensive and accurate information about rights and obligations.

- **Action 1**: Strengthening the provision of legal aid by providing lawyers and legal advisers who will provide, inter alia, information and support on asylum procedures, returns, family reunification and relocation.
- Action 2: In addition to information about asylum seekers procedures, provision of informative sessions on the legal framework in force in Greece for third-country nationals, such as criminal, civil and administrative law, recognized rights and obligations, as an integral part of the pre-integrational procedure.
- Action 3: Developing a digital application per geographical area with all necessary information about all available services, ensuring that this information is accurate, clear and understandable. Creation of digital material (electronic guides) in various languages, about the usual administrative procedures, for asylum seekers and provision of relevant facilities through the official websites of the competent public authorities.
- **Action 4:** Information sessions on the allowances and provided benefits, the eligibility criteria and the application process.

#### **GOAL 3: ENSURING CHILDREN'S RIGHTS**

### Objective 1: Providing child-friendly information and enhancing children's participation in processes involving minors.

- Action 1: Using child-friendly wording for the provision of information on reception
  conditions. Especially for the unaccompanied minors, this information should consist
  of the rights of the child, the national protection framework, the assistance provided,
  the relevant public services and school education. Providing information on the
  protection of children's sexual and reproductive health in order to protect them from
  sexual abuse.
- Action 2: Encouraging the participation of minors in all stages of the processes that concern and affect them.
- **Action 3**: Assuring the appropriate interpretation or intercultural mediation in stages or procedures involving minors.

#### Objective 2: Ensuring access to high quality and non-discriminatory education.

- **Action 1**: Evaluation of the teachers' level of education and skills through development of appropriate tools.
- Action 2: Designing courses based on the needs of the trainees and separating them into appropriate classes (depending on age) for the development of language and communication skills in Greek (preparatory courses).
- **Action 3**: Caring for early childhood and formal schooling, taking additional support measures for children with disabilities.

#### Objective 3: Ensuring representation and training of persons working with minors.

- Action 1: Appointing representatives for unaccompanied minors as well as other persons as reference points in each reception facility, who will act as coordinators, in order to protect the children and resolve their issues.
- Action 2: Training of the persons who will function as reference points and monitoring of their work.
- **Action 3**: Provision of legal assistance in criminal proceedings, involving minors as victims, perpetrators or witnesses, as well as in family law proceedings.

# Objective 4: Training and certification of professionals working with children, with a view to safeguarding their rights.

- Action 1: Developing the skills and knowledge of professionals working with minors, in order to improve further their knowledge and skills on child rights, child protection issues and the relevant legal framework, in order to ensure the rights of minors.
- Action 2: Developing a training and certification process for professionals who are in charge of decision-making for the minor, based on their best interest, especially with regard to unaccompanied minors (setting up working groups, tools, standards, specialized training for social workers / administrators in first reception facilities and for commissioners or representatives of minors).

#### GOAL 4: PROMOTING THE EUROPEAN WAY OF LIFE

### Objective 1: Familiarization with democratic institutions and the concept of Rule of Law.

- Action 1: Familiarization of the targeted population with democratic concepts and institutions, through development of relevant courses (eg on how a democratic society operates and makes decisions, principles of democracy and Rule of Law, European values, etc.).
- Action 2: Presentation (in the context of joint activities within the reception facilities) of the structure of the Greek State, the European Union, the role of the Member States and the basic European values.
- **Action 3**: Information on various issues related to the way of life in Greece and Europe.

### Objective 2: Raising awareness on the principle of non-discrimination, respect for diversity and cohesive societies.

- **Action 1:** Promotion of knowledge and respect for human rights within the community based on national law, human rights law and the principles of human dignity, equality and peaceful coexistence.
- **Action 2**: Raising awareness on issues of religious tolerance and respect for all religions as well as the public space, by organizing workshops and seminars.

### Objective 3: Promoting the development of skills related to everyday life.

- **Action 1**: Organizing workshops for cooking practice, the use of public transport, the street traffic, ordering in a restaurant, seeking instructions, in order to enhance and promote skills related to everyday life.
- Action 2: Enhancing digital skills, so that technology can help the adaption to a new environment.

### Objective 4: Specific information on the rights and obligations of citizens.

• **Action 1**: Conduct of seminars at the reception stage, to provide information on the rights and obligations of citizens in the host countries, the EU and the European way of life.

### II. SOCIAL INTEGRATION OF BENEFICIARIES OF INTERNATIONAL PROTECTION

GOAL 1: SHORT-TERM AND TARGETED SUPPORT AIMING AT THE AUTONOMY OF BENEFICIARIES OF INTERNATIONAL PROTECTION. FAST-PACED ACTIONS AND PROGRAMS ON PROVIDING SERVICES FROM REFUGEES TO REFUGEES (R TO R)

### Objective 1: Development of fast-paced programs with bidirectional participation of refugees (R to R)

- **Action 1:** Participation of refugees to the training of other refugees depending on the ongoing programs and their professional profile.
- Action 2: Promoting training and employment of women refugees, victims of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV), to assist women who belong in vulnerable groups with similar experiences.

### Objective 2: Development of intensive programs to facilitate direct access to the labour market

- **Action 1**: Three-part collaboration between government, professional and employee organizations, for the design of an holistic program that will include guidance, skills evaluation, skills validation/recognition, job placement, professional and language training.
- Action 2: To enhance employment and access to it, based on country needs, it is necessary to provide information on OAED (Human Resources Employment Agency) and how to access it, familiarization with the social security procedures, information about other ways of job search (job search websites, job search agencies), evaluation of the skills and certification of the qualifications granted in third countries.

### GOAL 2: ENSURING THE RIGHTS OF THE BENEFICIARIES OF INTERNATIONAL PROTECTION

#### Objective 1: Promotion of physical and mental health and wellness

- **Action 1:** Development of the skills of health sector employees to provide help to refugees.
- Action 2: Employment of interpreters at mental health institutions and rehabilitation programs for post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) etc., enabling the application of long-term therapeutical programs.
- Action 3: Integrating the promotion of mental health and prevention of mental illness (actualization of programs for the development of personal skills and self-esteem and strengthening mental illness coping strategies).

### Objective 2: Ensuring access to school education for minors or to evening school for adults

- Action 1: Providing free compulsory Greek language courses to adults, leading to a B1 language proficiency certificate, and optional Greek language courses till level C2, with the possibility of acquiring a corresponding language proficiency certificate.
- Action 2: Strengthening the institution of "second chance schools" for adults.
- Action 3: Strengthening the institution of Refugee Training Coordinators and supporting the dynamics of intercultural schools by Ministry of Education in close cooperation with local authorities.

#### Objective 3: Enhancing employability and access to employment

• Action 1: Skills mapping: Evaluation and validation of skills and qualifications which were acquired in third countries (profiling) for the categorization of skills into

groups of high/semi-/low specialization by using certified tools (such as EU Skills ProfileTool for TCNs).

- Action 2: Support of professional skills growth via: professional training apprenticeship a) and b) specialization via initial or ongoing training (VET - Vocational Education Training). Offering the chance to beneficiaries of international protection to acquire recognized skills via VET ("second chance schools", vocational education institutes educational programs for the unemployed). c) conducting training seminar for browsing websites on the internet and searching for a job. Familiarization with technology, with parallel enhancement of their technological d) development of handicraft workshops, where lessons of creating jewels, handbags and other handcrafted items are delivered by professionals. These workshops and produced items will bring profit to the refugees, as they will be a source of income for them. At the same time, retail trade of local businesses will be strengthened. e) facilitating networking with local cooperatives and women's unions for designing ways of developing skills, both for women and for men.
- **Action 3:** Organizing of events/presentations where employers can get in contact with candidate employees according to their profile and needs.
- **Action 4:** Creating incentives for hiring beneficiaries of international protection for internships/practices in enterprises.

#### Objective 4: Ensuring access to trustworthy information and services

- **Action 1:** Optimization of the information provided at public or local authority services, including KEM (Migration Integration Centers) and TOMY (Local Health Units).
- Action 2: Enhancing the knowledge of beneficiaries of international protection regarding their rights and obligations in Greece through electronic and/or printed material available at the competent public services, which should be constantly updated in their native language.
- Action 3: Enhancing the use of technology and digital tools.

### **Objective 5: Create housing opportunities**

- Action 1: Linking housing opportunities to seasonal employment opportunities in tourism sector or agricultural sector.
- Action 2: Creating incentives for homeowners to lease real estate to beneficiaries of international protection.

#### **GOAL 3: DEVELOPMENT OF COHESIVE COMMUNITIES**

### Objective 1: Promote social inclusion and participation of women and young people in the community

• Action 1: Taking initiatives to strengthen the link between women and local clubs and associations (e.g. single-parent families). Creation of clubs and associations within community with meetings on a monthly basis and focus on different thematic units (e.g. cooking month, delivery month, bazaar). The meetings will aim at

- strengthening the connection between women members of single-parent families and supporting their social inclusion (interaction, choosing topics of their own interest).
- Action 2: Inclusion of new refugees and migrants into associations and youth groups, such as the scouts, immigrants' children participation to summer camps, etc.

### Objective 2: Raise public awareness on issues related to the Rule of Law, human rights, social cohesion and integration

- **Action 1:** Sensitization of local communities through close cooperation with Local Authorities.
- Action 2: Organization of sports, social, entertainment activities with the participation of refugees (chess tournament, basketball games, volleyball games).

### Objective 3: Promotion of the European way of living

- Action 1: Planning and delivering educational modules, aiming at the European and national, social, political and economic environment orientation. Provision of free of charge courses that are mandatory and that can often be combined with the Greek language courses.
- Action 2: Enhancing participation in the social, cultural and economic life.
- Action 3: Promoting and facilitating access to humanitarian, social and European studies.

### Objective 4: Developing employment opportunities for refugees locally

- Action 1: Training of refugees in professions that are on demand in the Greek labour market (agricultural crops, tourism, construction, processing, etc.) for the enhancement of relevant knowledge and skills, which will lead the refugees to autonomy and will help at the same time to develop certain sectors of the economy.
- Action 2: Identification of occupations that are declining and are related at the local level to cultural tradition. Support the provision of training and apprenticeship in them.

# Objective 5: Ensuring harmonized geographical distribution of the beneficiaries of international protection

- **Action 1:** Providing incentives so that the distribution of the refugees/migrants after leaving the reception system is proportional to the size of the population of the rural and urban areas in which they will stay.
- **Action 2:** Mapping of residential rural areas that are gradually abandoned, to be resettled through the development of the "social housing" program.
- **Action 3:** Facilities / houses improvements in rural areas, to be used as "social housing" for low-income people, including Greek nationals and refugees.
- Action 4: Linking employment opportunities with permanent housing for beneficiaries of international protection.

# III. PREVENTION AND EFFECTIVE PROTECTION FROM ALL FORMS OF VIOLENCE, EXPLOITATION AND ABUSE

### TARGET 1: ESTABLISHING AN OVERALL FRAMEWORK FOR PREVENTION OF VIOLENCE, EXPLOITATION AND ABUSE

Objective 1: Reinforcement of primary, secondary and tertiary prevention of gender-based violence, child abuse and human trafficking (starting from the premises of the first reception, with emphasis on women and children)

- Action 1: Designing and implementing workshops on gender equality. These workshops are addressed to men, women and adolescents, with the assistance of academic institutions. Designing and conducting informative counseling sessions for children, with emphasis on the importance to respect the limits of others, the body, as well as information about sexual and reproductive health. Designing and implementing sessions about gender equality sessions as it is shaped in modern European societies. Designing and conducting workshops for the prevention of gender-based violence according the legal framework in Greece and in Europe.
- Action 2: Cooperating with the competent authorities for timely detection of evidence of violence and abuse and referral for intervention. Design and implementation of workshops training on the system of prevention, detection and referral, for psychologists, social workers, lawyers and other front-line professionals who provide services in reception facilities, premises hospitality, asylum service, police, coast guard. Learning techniques on how to interview the victim. Risk Assessment Protocol definition and its implementation in hospitals, mental health clinics and housing facilities. Conducting relevant workshops directly on asylum seekers and beneficiaries of international protection. Designing and disposing updated material and information about what constitutes violence and where the victim can go.
- Action 3: Rehabilitation actions (medical services, psychosocial support, support programs). Conducting of educational, creative and artistic seminars to victims of trafficking, in order to support them overcome experiences of violence and abuse they have suffered. The aim is to facilitate the development of interests of the victims (theater, music, painting). Thus, the victims may transcend post-traumatic experiences and avoid possible future abusive behaviors. Developing an holistic program to support rehabilitation of victims through provision of specialized services and participation of victims in several cultural and professional training activities, thereby developing their interests and skills.

### Objective 2: Setting standards for the protection of women, children and people with increased care needs

• **Action 1:** Code of conduct for professionals working with refugee-immigrants, with particular emphasis on those working with minors, women and people with disabilities.

- Action 2: Developing child protection policies (and setting up a policy development working group for them).
- Action 3: Enhancing the knowledge and skills of professionals working with women and minors on issues of violence, domestic abuse and human trafficking.

#### Objective 3: Fight against xenophobia, discrimination and radicalization

Action 1: Developing special educational thematic units aiming at strengthening
equality and social acceptance (to be addressed to students in schools and front-line
professionals). Conducting workshops and creating groups with the participation of
refugees, to prevent their radicalization.

# TARGET 2: REINFORCEMENT OF REFERRAL MECHANISMS FOR VICTIMS OF VIOLENCE, EXPLOITATION AND ABUSE

#### Objective 1: Ensuring an effective response to violence, exploitation and abuse

- Action 1: Definition of standard operating procedures and Action Protocol for the Protection of Victims of Violence, exploitation and abuse and their referral to competent Services and Authorities.
- **Action 2:** Mapping of services available to victims of violence, exploitation and abuse, grouped by type support and area.
- **Action 3:** Developing a database for abuse cases of third-country nationals where all the competent public services may have access.
- Action 4: Ensuring victims' access to legal advice.

#### Objective 2: Strengthening the state monitoring mechanisms

- Action 1: Appointment of responsible persons as reference persons in Public Authorities, Services and Organizations, trained to detect signs of violent and abusive behavior, exploitation and human trafficking. Ensuring the coordination and the monitoring of related cases.
- Action 2: Strengthening the interconnection of a system monitoring violence, abuse and exploitation, with other existing mechanisms (e.g. national referral mechanism for human trafficking) through protocols for cooperation and data exchange.

#### IV. MONITORING THE INTEGRATION PROCESS

# TARGET: MONITORING THE INTEGRATION PROCESS OF INTERNATIONAL PROTECTION BENEFICIARIES

Objective 1: Ensuring the ability of the autonomous living of the beneficiaries of international protection

- **Action 1:** Scheduling regular visits by sociologists to monitor the integration process of beneficiaries of international protection and their referral to available services by providing them with all necessary information.
- Action 2: Customizing digital services provided, so that international protection beneficiaries can also benefit.

# Objective 2: Monitoring the progress of the beneficiary's integration, through commonly accepted and comparable indicators

- Action 1: Developing a monitoring tool based on EU-Zaragoza integration indicators, according to which four areas have been identified as priority areas: Employment, education, social inclusion and participation of immigrants and refugees in the democratic process as active citizens.
- **Action 2:** Training of specialized personnel on how to properly use the tool's findings, to design a continuous adjustment of effective social integration strategies.