



VOLUNTEERING AMONG IMMIGRANTS

Greece National Report



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Table of Contents

Tables and Figures	4
INTRODUCTION	5
PART A: MIGRATIONS AND VOLUNTEERING AT NATIONAL LEVEL.....	7
1. General framework of migration in Greece.....	7
1.1 Historical context: emigration, immigration, transit migration	7
1.2 Policy context: an overview of migration policies.....	12
1.3 Socio-economic context: facets of migrants incorporation.....	16
2. Volunteering and migrants in Greece	20
2.1 Civil society and volunteering in Greece.....	20
2.2 Volunteering and the connection to migrants	24
2.3 Volunteering among migrants	28
PART B: NATIONAL AND LOCAL RESEARCH	32
3. National online survey: preliminary results.....	32
3.1 Methodology and sampling.....	32
3.2 Voluntary organisations: description of the sample	33
3.3 Volunteering of migrants: key features and outcomes	37
3.4 Volunteering for migrants: activities and impact.....	41
3.5 Concluding remarks	44
4. Qualitative research at the local level: preliminary analysis.....	46
4.1 Focus Group discussions with volunteers and beneficiaries	46
4.1.1 Access to the field, participants, methodology.....	46
4.1.2 Key findings	47
4.1.3 Concluding remarks	56
4.2 Individual interviews with volunteers and key informants.....	56
4.2.1 Access to the field, participants, methodology	56
4.2.2 Activities and forms of engagement	58
4.2.3 Motives and experiences.....	64
4.2.4 Limits to volunteering	68
4.2.5 Impact and the role of policies	71
4.2.6 Concluding remarks	75
CONCLUSIONS.....	76
Bibliography.....	78



Tables and Figures

List of Tables

Table 1. Foreign nationals in Greece, 2001-11, top-20 nationalities.....	9
Table 2. Focus groups sample & profile of participants.....	46
Table 3. Aristotle University interviews sample: profile of participants	59
Table 4. Hellenic Red Cross interviews sample: profile of Participants.....	61

List of Figures

Figure 1. Apprehensions of irregular migrants and asylum applications, 2005-2017.....	11
Figure 2. Unemployment rate & part-time work, Greek & foreign nationals, 2003-2017.....	19
Figure 3. Organisations' year of establishment.....	34
Figure 4. Type & form of organisations	34
Figure 5. Organisations' level of intervention.....	35
Figure 6. Organisations' areas of intervention	35
Figure 7. Age of volunteers	36
Figure 8. Socio-economic status of volunteers.....	38
Figure 9. Benefits of migrants' volunteering.....	39
Figure 10. Factors hindering migrants' voluntary participation	40
Figure 11. Factors that can facilitate volunteering among migrants	40
Figure 12. Frequency of voluntary activities addressed to migrants in the last 2 years	41
Figure 13. Evaluating the benefits of volunteering for/with migrants.....	42
Figure 14. Evaluation of the benefits of voluntary activities on the local context.....	43
Figure 15. Factors limiting the effectiveness of voluntary activities	43



INTRODUCTION

At the onset of what came to be called the “European refugee/migration crisis” of 2015-16, a massive movement of solidarity to migrants and refugees has surged in Greece against all odds. It came at a time of much disillusionment from “high politics” and government change, amidst capital controls, deepening recession and prolonged austerity, and despite the electoral rise of the far right and the spread of racist violence in previous years. This included a wide-spanning range of various types of voluntary activities, including plenty that were not self-defined as ‘volunteerism’ but rather as “activism” and “solidarity”, by a multiplicity of actors, formal or less organized ones: from large international humanitarian organisations, national NGOs, political parties or the Church, to small-scale, local, grassroots and often makeshift groups and loose collectivities, as well as the spontaneous initiatives of “common people”, even on an individual basis. The latter in particular were actually found on the forefront “from the beginning”, long before the deployment of big humanitarian actors or the state apparatus, helping out in various ways and forms. The actual content of activities, but also the forms of engagement have been shifting over time and across space, depending on the site, context and needs and reflecting shifting conditions and policy developments at both national and EU levels.

But the odds against this explosion of volunteerism and solidarity were not limited to the rather negative economic and political conjuncture. They also related to the extent, position and role of civil society in Greece, and the tensions and contradictions within. Up until recently, all measurable indicators were considerably low for a “developed country”, and the Greek civil society was thought to be weak and underdeveloped, reflecting Greece’s incomplete pathway to modernization. Yet, in the last two to three decades, formal civil society organisations have been growing and expanding their scope and activities. Moreover, the contribution of informal civil society actors has started being acknowledged, especially in the advent of Greece’s debt crisis, austerity, the politics surrounding these and their devastating social and economic effects. So, if the 2015-16 “refugee crisis” has marked a turning point, the booming and diversification of civil society and voluntarism in Greece have a recent history that goes back at least to the rupture signalled by the economic crisis at large. Yet its seeds can be traced in socio-political transformations even earlier, including the rise of migrant politics in the Greek public sphere and the increasing participation of migrants in social and political life, ever since the country has transformed into a migrant destination and “host society”.

Both during the unfolding humanitarian emergency and in its aftermath, of crucial importance has been the involvement of migrants and refugees themselves, which further underlines a shift from solidarity *to* or charity *for* migrants, towards activism and volunteering *with* and *by* migrants. This latter issue bears both a premise and a challenge, which the VAI project attempts to address through various means, among which the present study. The project relates volunteerism, as a feature of civic



participation and active citizenship, to the notion and processes of migrants' incorporation. The research on which this report is based explores what does this may mean in practice, by analysing the context and motives of volunteering from the perspective of both organisations and individuals, by exposing its possible tensions and contradictions, and by reflecting on ways to overcome these and multiply the benefits for all parts involved: individual volunteers whether migrants or not, "beneficiaries", organisations, migrant communities or local societies.

The report provides an insight into migration and volunteering in Greece and a preliminary analysis of the VAI research. It is divided into two broad Parts, each subdivided in distinct sections. Part A is based on a review of the literature and secondary data. It first presents an overview of Greece's immigration history, the evolving socio-economic context of migrant settlement and incorporation, and the development of Greek immigration and asylum policies. It then looks at the peculiarities of the Greek civil society before focusing specifically on volunteering activities relating to migrant issues and on aspects of migrants civic participation.

Part B offers a first analysis of primary research on volunteering among immigrants carried out in Greece between May-July 2018. The study was headed by a research team at the School of Spatial Planning and Development, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, and was assisted by colleagues at the Volunteers' Supervision & Mobilization Department, Social Welfare Division of the Hellenic Red Cross in Athens. The research methodology has been based on both quantitative and qualitative tools, common among all VAI project partners involved in the study (also in Italy, Germany and Austria), which further structure this second Part. Both offer a more local account mostly from major urban centres (Thessaloniki, Athens, Piraeus), focusing on issues such as the context of volunteering, types of activities, motives of individual volunteers and the challenges of migrant mobilisation, the benefits and impact but also constraints of and obstacles to (migrant) volunteering, the role of policies, and examples of good practice.

The report closes with some concluding remarks on the above.



PART A: MIGRATIONS AND VOLUNTEERING AT NATIONAL LEVEL

Part A of the report is devoted in providing an overview of the broader context in which to understand migrations and volunteering in Greece. It is primarily based on a review of relevant literature, but builds also on secondary data and "grey" sources, such as websites, news items, leaflets and brochures, etc. Research and review of the material collected by the VAI research team at the School of Spatial Planning and Development, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, has started in February 2018 and went on until the first drafting of this report in August 2018. The Part is divided into two broad chapters, each structured into different sections. The first Chapter begins by placing the Greek experience of migration in a historical framework so as to understand continuity and change in population movements from, to and through the country. It next offers a glance at the development of the Greek policy framework for immigration and asylum, including measures promoting immigrants' integration. It then moves on to discuss aspects of immigrants' socio-economic incorporation. The second Chapter embarks from an overview of the peculiarities of civil society and voluntarism in Greece. It then discusses the transformations brought about by immigration. It finally accounts for the rise of migrants' civic participation and instances of volunteering among immigrants.

1. General framework of migration in Greece

1.1 Historical context: emigration, immigration, transit migration

During the last quarter of the 20th century, Greece has transitioned from an emigration country to a migrant destination. Yet its history of international population movements since the emergence of the modern Greek state has been more complex. Part of this complexity relates to the process of nation-state formation, which involved shifting borders that kept redefining national territory between the late 19th and early 20th century (Baldwin-Edwards and Apostolatou 2008). In this process, Greece has experienced large population inflows, e.g. of Orthodox Christians from Ottoman provinces or from the European and Mediterranean diaspora. Especially the long turmoil of the Balkan wars, the first World War and the Greco-Turkish war of 1919-1922, which largely resulted in the consolidation of contemporary borders, involved displacements and resettlements of people peaking with the great population exchange between Greece and Turkey that determined the expulsion of about half a million Muslims, and the settlement of nearly 1.5 million Christians in Greek territory (*ibid.*).

Yet in the course of the 20th century, Greece emerged as a country of emigration. The first mass wave had actually started in the context of the 1890s economic crisis, which led nearly one sixth of the population out of the country between 1890-1914 (Kasimis and Kassimi 2004). During the first quarter of the 20th century, some 420,000 are estimated to have emigrated across the globe, mostly to the US (Fakiolas and King 1996: 172). A second major outflow occurred in the period following the second world war and up until the 1970s: between 1945 and 1974, gross emigration amounted to about 1.4



million people, with outflows peaking during the first half of the 1960s and then again towards the end of that decade (*ibid.*). Although this is largely considered as primarily labour migration, and during the early decades was mostly associated with the stagnation of the rural economy and the hardships at the Greek countryside, the beginning and end of the period were marked by political events: the Greek civil war of 1945-49 and the military dictatorship of 1967-74. Significant numbers were directed overseas: according to official statistics, out of a gross total of 1.155 million who emigrated between 1955-1973, more than one fifth headed to North America, and 170.2 thousands to Australia; the majority though emigrated to European destinations, with more than half becoming "guestworkers" in West Germany (*ibid.*: 173).

While emigration to overseas destinations would often result in permanent settlement, emigration to Europe was for many a short-term option. Fakiolas and King (1996: 172,174) report that at least one quarter of all emigrants of the period 1945-74 have returned, while about 250,000 repatriated between 1974 and the late 1980s, mostly from European countries. The rise of unemployment in industrialised countries in the context of the 1970s "oil crises" was among the main factors that determined return, perhaps alongside adaptation difficulties partly relating to strict long-term settlement and naturalisation policies, especially in Germany. Domestic developments also played significant role, including economic growth, rising living standards, democratisation since 1974 and EU membership since 1981. Additionally, about two thirds of the 65,000 political refugees who had fled to the former "Eastern Bloc" with the defeat of the communist camp in the Civil War had also repatriated by the late 1980s (*ibid.*).

Return migration was among the main drivers of net migration rates turning positive around the mid-1970s. It is at about the same time that foreign labour started being recruited (e.g. from Pakistan and Egypt), alongside increasing though still limited numbers of foreign students and refugees in the decades to come. Regarding the latter, growing entry restrictions and immigration controls in northern European countries had begun turning Greece into a transit space and "waiting room" for migrants and asylum seekers heading "to Europe" (Mousourou 1993; Black 1994). In this, geography played a key role: Greece's isolated position at the southeast corner of the EU, at the crossroads of three continents, and with a vast coastline and numerous small islands, make its borders easy to cross and difficult to patrol (King 2000). Immigration intensified in the early 1990s, when, with the fall of the "Iron Curtain", thousands of Albanians – including people of ethnic Greek roots - crossed the borders overnight, while large numbers of migrants were arriving from other Balkan countries (Hatziprokopiou 2006). In the meantime, ethnic Greek migrants from the collapsing Soviet Union have continued entering the country since the second half of the 1980s (Diamanti-Karanou 2003).

So, by the 1990s, Greece had become a de facto migrant destination. Apart from a few thousands of earlier established migrants, the decade was marked by large-scale unauthorized inflows, primarily from the Balkans and the ex-USSR, the former initially characterized by high seasonality and circularity. Immigration from Albania came to



dominate the picture; after the great exodus of 1990-92, it picked again with the unrest following the collapse of the informal “pyramid” banking schemes in 1997, and went on albeit in lower pace. Similarly, Bulgarian migrants started arriving since 1989, but many came around the mid-1990s following a severe economic crisis in their country. At the same time, alongside the ethnic Greeks from former Soviet republics, there also came migrants from the same countries without claims to Greek ancestry (Hatziprokopiou et al. 2007). As shown in Table 1, the 2001 Census recorded more than 762,000 foreign citizens living in Greece, making up 7 percent of the country’s population - a spectacular growth within a decade¹. More than half were from Albania alone and another 16.2 percent from the Balkans (Bulgaria and Romania), Eastern Europe (Poland) and the former USSR (primarily Russia, Georgia, Ukraine, Armenia).

Table 1. Foreign nationals in Greece, 2001-11, top-20 nationalities

	2011			2001		
	COUNTRY OF CITIZENSHIP	N	%	COUNTRY OF CITIZENSHIP	N	%
	TOTAL POPULATION	10815197		TOTAL POPULATION	10934097	
	FOREIGN NATIONALS	911929	8.4	FOREIGN NATIONALS	762191	7.0
1	Albania	480824	52.7	Albania	438036	57.5
2	Bulgaria	75915	8.3	Bulgaria	35104	4.6
3	Romania	46523	5.1	Georgia	22875	3.0
4	Pakistan	34177	3.7	Romania	21994	2.9
5	Georgia	27400	3.0	United States	18140	2.4
6	Ukraine	17006	1.9	Russian Federation	17535	2.3
7	United Kingdom	15386	1.7	Cyprus	17426	2.3
8	Cyprus	14446	1.6	Ukraine	13616	1.8
9	Poland	14145	1.6	United Kingdom	13196	1.7
10	Russian Federation	13807	1.5	Poland	12831	1.7
11	India	11333	1.2	Germany	11806	1.5
12	Bangladesh	11076	1.2	Pakistan	11130	1.5
13	Germany	10778	1.2	Australia	8767	1.2
14	Egypt	10455	1.1	Turkey	7881	1.0
15	Moldova	10391	1.1	Armenia	7742	1.0
16	Philippines	9804	1.1	Egypt	7448	1.0
17	Armenia	8113	0.9	India	7216	0.9
18	Syria	7628	0.8	Iraq	6936	0.9
19	Afghanistan	6911	0.8	Philippines	6478	0.8
20	United States	5773	0.6	Canada	6049	0.8
	OTHER	85811	9.4	OTHER	76034	10.0

Source: Census data, resident population, 2001; 2011, www.statistics.gr

¹ The 1991 Census had registered just over 167,000 foreign nationals, 1.6 per cent of the population, with more than 40 percent originating from “developed-world” countries of Europe, North America and Oceania.

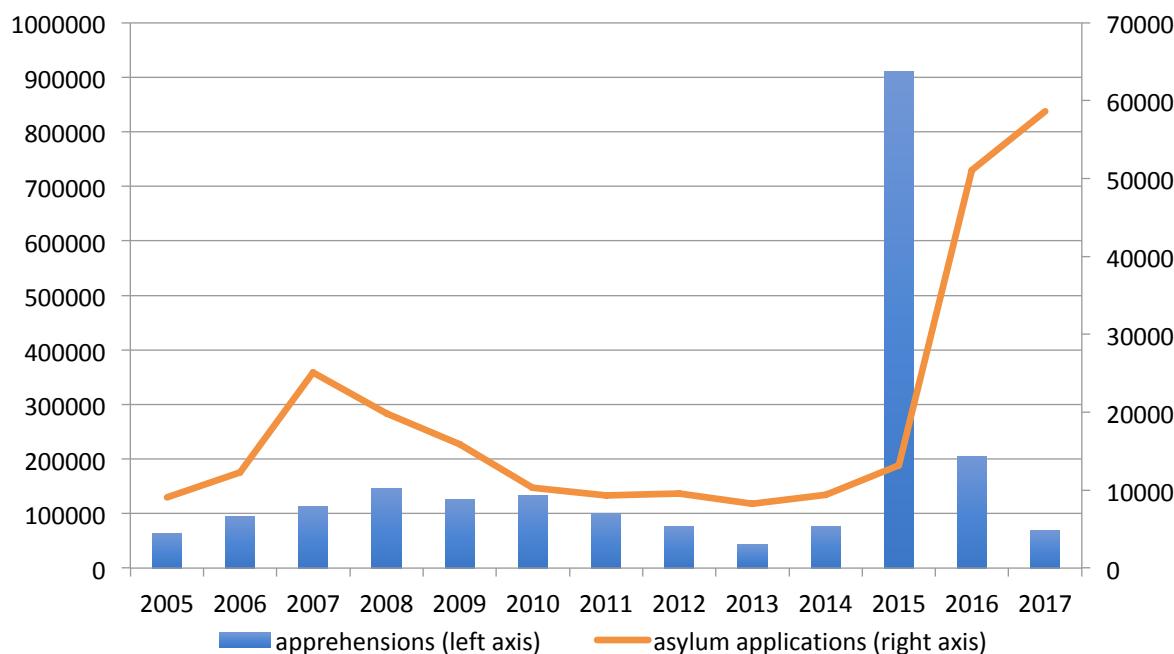


During the 2000s, migratory patterns diversified and became more complex. Immigration from Albania went on, as did seasonal movements from other Balkan countries (Hatziprokopiou 2006). The eastwards EU enlargements of 2004 and 2007 altered mobility patterns for migrants from countries like Poland, Bulgaria or Romania (e.g. Hatziprokopiou and Markova 2015). Meanwhile, developments in immigration and integration policy opened up the way for increasing numbers of migrants to acquire some form of legal status, while those of ethnic Greek origin gradually took the path to citizenship. At the same time, however, as indicated in Figure 1, "mixed" migration flows grew considerably, increasingly through the Turkish-Greek borders, especially in the second half of the decade, including many people heading to other EU countries (Papadopoulou 2004; Cabot 2013). In 2010, 90 percent of all apprehensions for irregular entry into EU territory were estimated to have occurred in Greece, compared to 50 percent in 2008 (Kasimis 2012). New arrivals mostly originate from South Asia (Pakistan, Bangladesh, Afghanistan), and the Middle East (Iraq, Egypt, Syria), but also other parts of the world (the Philippines, China, Nigeria). These shifts were partly depicted in the 2011 Census. As also illustrated in Table 1, the composition of Greece's immigrant population exhibited signs of both continuity and change with respect to previous patterns. Its size has overall grown by about 20 percent in a decade, with foreign nationals amounting to about 912,000 people or 8,5 percent among the country's residents. Considering that many ethnic Greek migrants had already acquired citizenship, the overall share of people of migrant origin should exceed 10 percent.

It is about then that the economic crisis spiralling since 2008-2009 started impacting decisively on migration patterns in various ways, with many established migrants reconsidering their strategies. Geographic proximity, EU citizenship or visa-free travel determined shifting mobility paths e.g. for Albanians, Bulgarians or Romanians, including return migration, often temporary or ambivalent, as well as circular movements or subsequent migration to other countries (Michail 2013; Gemi 2013; Hatziprokopiou and Markova 2014). However, while until 2010 the majority of those leaving Greece were foreign citizens, according to official estimates, the picture is reversed in the years to come. The emigration of Greeks gains momentum as the crisis deepens, with about half a million estimated emigrants between 2010-2016, indicating a reversal of the country's migration transition (Pratsinakis et al. 2017a). Although the trend of young professionals seeking better career opportunities abroad has been going on since the 1990s (Labrianidis 2014), this became a necessity choice imposed by the crisis, not only affecting growing numbers of the educated youth but increasingly other segments of the population (Labrianidis and Pratsinakis 2016; Pratsinakis et al. 2017b).



Figure 1. Apprehensions of irregular migrants and asylum applications, 2005-2017



Source: Hellenic Police website (www.astinomia.gr, statistics section, webpages in greek only). Data on asylum applications since June 2013 come from the new Asylum Service (asylo.gov.gr/en/?page_id=110); 2005 apprehensions data are from Maroukis (2008: 60, table.13).

Nevertheless, if the current decade began with growing concerns about brain-drain (*ibid.*), since the mid-2010s immigration is back on the agenda - but in a different way. The surge of migration flows earlier underlined was only a prelude to what came to be known as the “European migration/refugee crisis” of 2015-16. As shown in Figure 1.1, the decline that occurred between 2010-2013 was not to last for long, given the conflicts going on in the eastern Mediterranean and the Middle-East since the so-called “Arab Spring” of 2011, but also to broader instabilities and conflicts in more distant lands in Asia and Africa. The figure depicts the unprecedented migratory wave in 2015, when, of over one million people who sought refuge in Europe that year, more than 860,000 did so by crossing through Greece, especially through the eastern Aegean islands².

Since the EU-Turkey “common statement” of 18 March 2016, and European and Greek policies thereafter, the numbers of new arrivals have dropped, while - as observed in the Figure - there has been a sharp rise in asylum applications, with annual numbers exceeding 50,000 in 2016 and approaching 67,000 in 2018. In the words of Pratsinakis et

² The Figure is based on police data on apprehensions, which may not be accurate in capturing actual migration “flows” and can be biased in various ways. They refer not to numbers of people, but to numbers of arrests: “flows” are often overestimated, since the data measure apprehensions for irregular entry *and* stay, hence the same person could have been counted at least twice: on the border and in the mainland. On the other hand, however, some migrants always escape arrest. Needless to say that the data inevitably reflect enforcement as well as monitoring of border and immigration controls.



al. (2017a: 11), "while at the outset of the crisis Greece was a transit country in refugees' attempt to reach their desired destinations ... the EU sealed-borders policy reinforced the country's role as an internal borderland of migration control within EU territory". Even more, the restriction of migrants' mobility from the Greek islands to the mainland has created a "double frontier" (Cantat 2018). Lately, a renewed increase of new arrivals is being recorded, especially through the Turkish-Greek land border³.

1.2 Policy context: an overview of migration policies

Mass immigration in the early 1990s found the Greek polity totally unprepared, at a time of political instability, repeated elections and frequent government changes (1989-1993). The pre-existing legal framework dated back to 1929, and mostly concerned the Greek diaspora and the emigration and repatriation of Greeks. Immigration policy for the new era started being designed with Law 1975 of 1991, voted in parliament under conservative majority (New Democracy) to regulate the entry, work and residence of immigrants in Greece. Criticism back then focused on the Law's repressive logic, since the principal responsibilities fell upon the police, and on its failure to realistically respond to the new situation, as there were no provisions for the legalisation of migrants already present in the country (Karydis 1996; Kourtovic 2001). For almost a decade, hundreds of thousands of immigrants lived and worked without documents; arrests and deportations under the infamous and defamatory "scoopa" (=broom) operations became the order of the day, and decisively contributed to the stigmatization and criminalisation of immigrants in Greek society at large (*ibid.*; Hatziprokopiou 2006; Dalakoglou 2012).

A more pragmatic approach started being put in place by the social-democratic government successors (PASOK) during the second half of the 1990s. Following a bilateral agreement with Albania regulating the possibility of inviting Albanian "guestworkers" for seasonal work (with limited outcomes in practice), there came two presidential decrees in 1997 initiating a two-step mass regularisation programme administered by the Greek Manpower Organisation. Within the next couple of years, more than 371,600 applications were submitted (65 percent by Albanian migrants) and by the early 2001, about 219,000 had been granted a stay permit (Fakiolas 2003). In recognition of the country's new position as a migrant destination and of immigrants' presence as a de facto reality, three subsequent regularisation schemes took place within the next decade, each associated with respective amendments to the legal framework. The second "amnesty" programme was initiated with Law 2910 of 2001, and received nearly 368,000 applications (*ibid.*), while a third was enacted with Law 3386 of 2005 involving about 200,000 applicants, and a fourth one came in 2007 (Law 3536/2007) though limited to special categories of migrants (Triandafyllidou 2013).

³ Police data record nearly 685 percentage growth in the number of arrests at the Greek-Turkish land border (Orestiada district) during the first six months of 2018, compared to the same period last year.



Like the first programme split the process in two stages, with many immigrants failing to proceed to the second one as a result of very tight criteria, the second programme separated work and stay permits further increasing bureaucratic obstacles. Among these, the short duration of stay permits, severe delays in their issuing, high fees, or the continuous requirement of submitting proof of formal employment through social insurance stamps, not only made it difficult for many migrants to regularise their status or renew their permits afterwards, but also deterred many from applying at a first place (Hatziprokopiou 2006). For those reasons, the applicants in those programmes partly overlapped, since those whose application was unsuccessful would reapply next time (Triandafyllidou 2013). Even so, over the past decade the majority of migrants already present in Greece have gradually managed to secure legal documents: e.g. with the first two programmes, a total number of about 580,000 stay permits were valid in June 2003 (Fakiolas 2003), while by the end of the last regularisation, nearly 585,600 immigrants were on a valid stay permit in Greece at the end of 2007 (Triandafyllidou 2014).

The aforementioned legal changes contributed towards a more realistic policy approach, despite persisting problems and gaps. With the 2001 Law, the emphasis started shifting from purely security concerns to labour market issues, as a good deal of responsibilities were transferred from police authorities to the ministries of Interior and Labour and to local governments (Hatziprokopiou 2006). At the same time, that Law initiated an integrated migration management approach, combining border controls with provisions for "guest-worker" invitation schemes, and including measures for immigrants' integration. This approach was taken further and acquired substance with the 2005 Law, voted with the return of New Democracy to power, which sought to regulate all matters of entry, stay and integration of third country nationals in Greece. Even though it excluded refugees and asylum seekers from its provisions - crucially at a time when these types of "flows" had started spiralling - it devised a series of permits for different categories of foreign residents (workers and self-employed migrants, businessmen and investors, students and researchers, etc) and specified the conditions for family unification. It further drafted an Action Plan for migrants' integration, which although remained largely on paper in the years to come, it set the basis for more recent policy measures in that direction, including language learning, familiarisation with Greek history and culture, labour market integration, and civic participation.

In the meanwhile, a separate set of measures applied to ethnic Greek migrants, mostly from the former Soviet Union and from Albania. While both categories of migrants were treated as "repatriates" and encouraged to settle permanently in the country, they were subject to different policy approaches. The former were granted citizenship in a short timespan, and many passed through a special programme of reception and integration, which included support for access to housing and the labour market. The latter were granted a "special card for ethnic Greeks", which gave them certain rights but was subject to frequent renewals. While, by the early 2000s, most of the former had already become Greek citizens (125,000 of an estimated 180,000 in 2003, according to



Christopoulos 2007: 272), the latter had to wait until the end of that decade before the path to citizenship opened up for them (Triandafyllidou 2014). Clearly the migration policy framework was not only exclusive but also highly complex and fragmented, and strongly influenced by national identity considerations privileging some categories of migrants over others (Triandafyllidou and Veikou 2001; Pratsinakis 2014).

The 2005 legislation, as modified in 2007 (Law 3536), has governed all matters of entry, stay and integration of immigrants in Greece for about a decade. On its basis, a series of separate measures and provisions in different and often irrelevant pieces of legislation have resulted in an extremely fragmented policy framework, which subsequent governments sought to codify, concluding in the Migration and Social Integration Code of 2014 (Law 4251). A look at stay permit statistics over time reveals high fluctuations in the numbers of legally resident migrants, reflecting among others the deficiencies of the system, e.g. with respect to bureaucratic delays, permit expirations and the complicated procedures to renew them, as well as legal gaps and the rather short-sighted planning. For instance, as time went by, thousands of migrants' children reaching adulthood were found in a legal limbo since no provisions applied to them after they stopped being covered by their parents' stay permit as dependents. In addition, with the outbreak of the crisis and the rise of migrant unemployment since 2009 (see next section), the persisting connection between legal presence and regular employment resulted in many long-residing immigrants not being able to renew their permits as they lacked social insurance contributions. Furthermore, criteria for stable long-term or permanent residence remained tight whilst the question of political rights and/or citizenship was not touched. What is more, no measures had been taken to build a solid asylum system and address growing new arrivals since the second half of the 2000s. In the early 2010s, in a period of deepening crisis, increasingly tight fiscal policies and political instability, a number of steps had been taken, initially by PASOK, to address some of those issues: one the one hand, facilitating migrants integration and, on the other, rationalising the Greek asylum system in an attempt to manage migration flows.

Until the 2000s, the basis of the legal framework determining Greek citizenship was dating back to the Citizenship Code of 1955, obviously with various amendments and modifications in the meantime (Christopoulos 2007). This was replaced by Law 3284 of 2004, which, among others, expanded the possibilities for foreign nationals and their offspring to acquire Greek citizenship. On these grounds, Law 3838 of 2010 came to provide a relatively easy path to citizenship for children born or schooled in Greece, as well as to grant political rights at the local level to long-term residents. These measures were later judged to be anti-constitutional by the Council of State and on these grounds cancelled by the conservatives in 2013, only to be partly reinstalled after modifying the provisions for the second-generation's access to citizenship (Law 4332) by the left-majority government that came to power in 2015. Additional legislation in 2011 further solidified the institutional framework for migrants' integration, with measures such as facilitating the acquisition of long-term EU resident status, reducing the amount of fees



for citizenship or stay permit applications, reducing the number of social insurance stamps required as proof of legal employment, speeding up procedures for stay permit renewals, and introducing a voucher system to regulate formal employment of domestic and care workers (Triandafyllidou 2013; 2014). In the meantime, a reform in local and regional government (Law 3852/2010) introduced the creation of "Migrant Integration Councils" at a municipal level, to be composed by council members and local stakeholders including migrants themselves, with a consultative and advisory role.

On the other hand, the management of asylum in Greece had been suffering from chronic malfunctions and deficiencies, partly owing to security concerns that have long kept it under the direct jurisdiction of police authorities (Black 1994; Sitaropoulos 2000; Papadopoulou 2004). Extremely slow decision procedures and exceptionally low asylum approval rates had essentially deterred newcomers from applying⁴. Even if this "worked" as long as asylum applications remained low (Sitaropoulos 2000), with the surge of new arrivals around 2008-12 it resulted in piling numbers of pending applications⁵. Law 3907 of 2011 came to set up an independent Asylum Service, which was to be formally enacted in June 2013, as a step towards a quicker, more effective, decentralised and fair asylum system, complying with EU policy and practice. The same Law also established an independent First Reception Service, to provide temporary shelter to migrants arrested for irregular entry or residence, during which they were to be identified, registered and medically screened, and would be offered psychosocial support and the opportunity to apply for asylum, if eligible. Lastly, the Law opened the possibility of regularization for migrants and rejected asylum seekers based on proof that they have been living in Greece for the past 12 years.

Despite these improvements, however, the last few years have been marked by intensifying border controls and enforcement against "irregular migration", with EU support, as evident e.g. in the increasing intensity of FRONTEX operations (see Afouxenidis et al. 2017). This included measures such as the building of a border fence at the north-east Greek-Turkish border (Kiritsoglou and Tsimouris 2016), the police operation "Xenios Zeus" targeting migrants primarily in Athens in ways reproducing racist stereotypes (Dalakoglou 2013), the dramatic rise of expulsions (Triandafyllidou 2014: 21), or the explicit use of detention as a means to deter further inflows (Kotsioni 2016). The "refugee crisis" of 2015-16 thus exploded within a rather repressive environment which continued, despite the originally "good intentions" of the left-leaning government at the time. Once the borders were sealed along the so-called "Balkan route", and especially after the March 2016 "common statement" between the EU and

⁴ E.g. see the decline of asylum applications after 2007 in Figure 1 (previous section), at the very same time when migration flows started spiralling. As an indication of poor asylum approval rates, see e.g.

Triandafyllidou (2014: Table 8) reporting first-instance recognition rates as low as 0.51 percent for refugee status, 0.54 percent for humanitarian status, and 1 percent for subsidiary protection recognition.

⁵ As a result, for certain groups of migrants who made use of the asylum system, their application certificate (the "Pink Card") practically functioned as a kind of temporary stay permit.



Turkey, the Greek government moved to adjust the framework for asylum to the new situation and comply with EU directives, with Law 4375 amending and specifying provisions of the 2011 asylum legislation. A latest addition to the legislation came in May 2018 (Law 4540), further harmonising Greek policies with the EU asylum system.

Labelling the situation as “emergency” has justified the sheltering of newcomers in refugee camps across the country (Pratsinakis et al. 2017a; Anastasiadou et al 2017; Tsavdaroglou 2018), even though the numbers of those “trapped” in Greece were now far from significant. From 44 such sites in the mainland and another nine in the islands that were active in early 2017 (Pratsinakis et al. 2017a), by June 2018 their number has been reduced to 26 “open temporary hospitality structures” and a “reception and identification centre” (“hot spot”) in mainland Greece, plus five “hot spots” and two open reception facilities on the islands. According to UNHCR estimates, mainland sites currently host 16,141 people (nearly 40 percent in Attica and another 25 percent in Central Macedonia), while nearly 13,000 migrants are accommodated in island-based camps (more than half in Lesvos, 26.6 percent in Samos)⁶. The closure of camp facilities relates to various reasons pointing to a reduction in the numbers of those subjected to accommodation in those sites. One was relocation to other EU countries (now suspended), which progressed slowly and never reached but a third of the number originally planned; by the end of 2017, a total of 21,710 migrants had been relocated (45 percent to Germany and France)⁷. Another was the initiation of programme ESTIA involving the temporary accommodation to apartments, under which 21,242 people are currently (31 July 2018) accommodated, about 68 percent in Attica, 21.5 percent in Northern Greece, and just 6 percent on the islands⁸.

1.3 Socio-economic context: facets of migrants incorporation

The Greek transition from emigration to immigration has been studied within the framework of a broader migration “turnaround” in Southern Europe as a whole, whereby similar pathways were followed by Italy, Spain and Portugal (King et al 1997; King 2000). Apart from the reasons relating to geography and the broader (geo)political and economic factors earlier mentioned, this transition is linked to the region’s shifting position in the international division of labour, and to persisting economic and demographic inequalities in the Mediterranean periphery (*ibid.*; King and Rybczuk 1993). Within this frame, and in a context of labour market restructuring and increasing exposure to international competition, internal socioeconomic transformations of the past few decades common to the four countries have contributed to a growing demand for migrant labour: growing female employment, expanding tertiary education nurturing

⁶ See the UNHCR’s Mediterranean situation operation portal for Greece (data from the Site Management Support): <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/download/64795>.

⁷ As above (data from the EU emergency relocation mechanism):
<https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/download/62510>.

⁸ As above (data from the ESTIA Accommodation Capacity weekly update):
<https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/download/64982>. See also the ESTIA website: <http://estia.unhcr.gr>.



higher job prospects for the youth, the abandonment of the countryside due to post-war urbanization, ageing populations, welfare deficits, rising living standards, as well as the high seasonality of key economic activities, and the existence of large informal economies (Pugliese 1993; Reyneri 1999; King 2000; Hatziprokopiou 2006).

All these apply specifically to the case of Greece. Migrant labour fed a domestic demand for cheap and flexible work primarily for low-skilled and/or manual positions, to an extent reflecting both chronic weaknesses and restructuring trends of the Greek productive and employment structures (Vaiou and Hadjimichalis 1997; Hatziprokopiou 2006). Especially during the 1990s, with the majority left in a legal vacuum without any opportunity to regularise, migrant workers were largely absorbed by the informal sector of the economy, often in highly exploitative conditions and facing multiple forms of social exclusion (Lazaridis and Psimmenos 2000). Their main employers were of two kinds. On the one hand, small and medium-sized enterprises (the dominant company type in Greece), which – faced with a crisis relating to international competition and technological change, chose to “invest” in labour-intensive activities and in the availability of low-cost and unprotected labour (Labrianidis et al. 2004). On the other, owing to higher living standards and the aforementioned societal transformations, individuals and private households found in the cheap work offered by (particularly female) migrants the means to satisfy emerging needs, e.g. related to the enlargement of the housing space, the inadequate number of state kindergartens and care facilities for the elderly, or the low participation of men in housework (Fakiolas and Maratou-Alipranti 2000). Overall, migrants covered gaps and shortages in labour supply in specific sectors and fields of economic activity - such as construction, small-scale manufacturing, tourism, agriculture, cleaning, and care services – in a highly segmented and gendered labour market, and with many regional variations (e.g. Hatziprokopiou 2006).

For more than a decade, the labour market integration of migrants reflected the general prosperity characterising the Greek economy, related to the relatively high growth rates between 1995-2007 (Pelagidis 2010), and the optimism associated with joining the Euro and preparing for the 2004 Olympics. Larger companies and large-scale public development and infrastructure projects increasingly employed migrant workers alongside small firms, self-employed people and households. Despite persisting precarity, the rationalisation of the policy framework determined the move of the majority of settled migrants to secure legal status, and hence to social security, improved working conditions and higher remuneration (Hatziprokopiou 2006). Together with individual pathways e.g. in respect to adapting to a new environment, learning the language, building social networks, etc, many have experienced a gradual improvement in their living conditions. In addition, with the formation of “ethnic” communities, especially in major cities, some migrants have moved towards self-employment and entrepreneurship (Labrianidis and Hatziprokopiou 2010; Hatziprokopiou and Frangopoulos 2013). On the other hand, the more demanding, precarious, poorly-paid, low-skill and low-status jobs are reserved for the newcomers, contributing to the



emergence of a complex socio-ethnic hierarchy (Kandylis et al. 2012) and socio-economic stratification among Greece's migrant population, with diverging legal statuses, labour market positions, as well as life prospects and conditions.

Moreover, the migrant population is unevenly distributed across the country, with important variations between regions and localities, partly following Greece's population geography, but crucially reflecting the geography of production and employment. In 2011, about half were concentrated in Attica (the vast majority in Athens), some 13 percent in central Macedonia (mostly in Thessaloniki), with significant presence in Crete and the Peloponese (about 7 percent in each region). This had different implications in different local settings, and produced different outcomes in terms of the migrants' socio-economic incorporation. In metropolitan areas, particularly in Athens, the settlement and integration pathways of migrants gave way to new residential geographies, changing patterns of segregation and the formation of "ethnic neighbourhoods" (Arapoglou et al. 2010; Kalandides and Vaiou 2012; Kandylis 2015). On the other hand, the settlement and work of migrants in provincial towns the countryside has contributed to the revitalisation of certain rural communities and economies (Kasimis and Papadopoulos 2005; Kasimis et al. 2010).

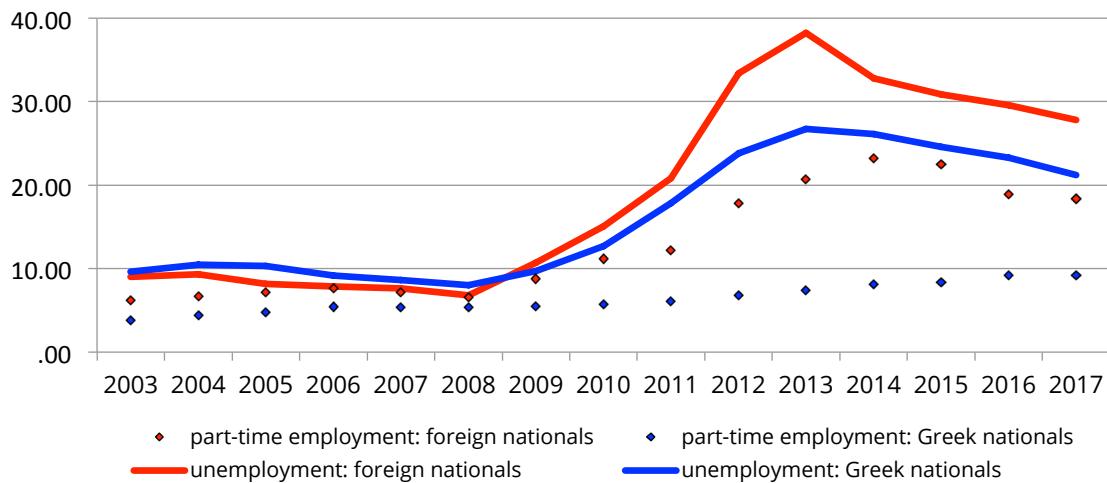
The "new cultural encounters" triggered by immigration during the 1990s deepened and broadened over the 2000s, as Greece was increasingly characterised by diversity and multiculturalism. This is reflected, for instance, on the challenges of bilingualism and multiculturalism to the Greek educational system (Gogonas 2010; Gropas and Triandafyllidou 2011), on the multiple dimensions of the coming of age of the so-called second generation (Tramountanis et al. 2014; Michail and Christou 2016), or even on the emergence of new religious cityscapes (Hatziprokopiou and Evergeti 2014) - to name but a few. Meanwhile more and more migrants were able to acquire Greek citizenship: Between 2011-2017, nearly 174,400 people were granted citizenship status: 48.3 percent were of ethnic Greek origins (primarily from Albania), yet about 31 percent were second generation migrants benefiting from the legal improvements of 2010 and 2015 mentioned in the previous section, and another 15.5 percent were naturalised foreign nationals and their underage children. Moreover, the gradual dissociation of legal residence from formal employment opened up the path for long-term residence and family unification: a total of 532,203 stay permits were valid in the end of June 2018: over 36 percent for family unification, nearly 35 percent for 10-years, long-term or permanent residence, and just about 10.5 percent for employment.

On the dark side, one should not ignore the rise of xenophobia and racism, which have taken a different turn in the context of the crisis, as the widespread "Albanophobia" of the 1990s (e.g. Triandafyllidou 2000) has given way to organised racist violence by neonazi groups since 2010 (Kandylis and Kavoulakos 2011; Petrou and Kandylis 2016). The deepening of the economic crisis, alongside the ways in which the state had dealt with the renewed growth of immigration since the second half of the 2000s, not only provided fertile ground for the electoral legitimisation of the far right, but also



contributed to the unfolding of a "humanitarian crisis" before the "waves" of 2015-16. This involved people "trapped" in Greece without documents and hence without rights, particularly evident in specific localities such as the western port of Patra (Lafazani 2013) or even more so in central districts of Athens (Koutrolikou 2015), where most newcomers concentrated in search of temporary shelter, ways to survive, or the means to leave the country. The "refugee crisis" came thus to intersect with those other "crises" predating it, with new challenges facing both migrants and local communities e.g. in ports of entry such as the eastern Aegean island of Lesvos (Trubeta 2015; Afouxenidis et al. 2017), or with the desperation of prolonged accommodation in often appalling conditions in refugee camps (e.g. Tsavdaroglou 2018).

Figure 2. Unemployment rate & part-time work, Greek & foreign nationals, 2003-2017



Source: EUROSTAT (ec.europa.eu/eurostat) Database, Population & Social Conditions, Labour Force Surveys.

Yet the employment prospects for migrants, whether long-settled or recently arrived, are severely undermined in a context of recession. Figure 3 compares the evolution of average annual unemployment rates for Greek and foreign nationals in the past 15 years. Clearly, not only total unemployment surged since the eruption of the crisis, but also the unemployment rates of migrants exceed those of "natives" for the first time since 2009 reaching an alarming 38 percent in 2013 (more than 40 percent among Albanians), compared to an already high rate (almost 27 percent) among Greeks. Additionally, as also shown on the Figure, immigrants are disproportionately affected by the growth of part-time employment – a sign of increasing "formal" work precarity. Unemployment alone, especially in respect to e.g. the collapse of the construction sector, is at the roots of many migrants' decision to take the reverse path of return, or attempt to migrate anew in some other country, even temporarily and in waiting for improvement of the situation in Greece. Needless to say that these are only indicative facets of the ways the crisis affected immigrants in Greece, since the recession and austerity policies also brought about decreases in earnings, as well as welfare provisions and allowances, while living standards deteriorated for Greece's population as a whole.



2. Volunteering and migrants in Greece

2.1 Civil society and volunteering in Greece

Civil society in Greece is generally considered to be weak and undeveloped. Until recently, all measurable civil society indicators, such as numbers of formal organisations, registered volunteers, or levels of civic participation and trust among the general population were considerably low for a “developed country”, and lagged behind most European member states (Huliaras 2014). Indicatively, according to Eurostat data, Greece featured among the countries with the lowest rates of people’s participation in voluntary activities: in 2015, just 11.7 percent of the population over 16 years of age was recorded to have taken part in formal voluntary activities, and 14.4 percent in informal ones (compared to 19.3 and 22.2 percent respectively in the EU-28 as a whole)⁹.

Even if this underdevelopment and weakness may be seen as a common feature across Southern Europe (Giner 1985), the Greek case is often noted as exceptional. Echoing Alexis de Tocqueville’s famous association of a strong civil society with a healthy democracy, and various relevant approaches thereafter, the contradiction between an hypertrophic state versus poor civil society institutions was understood as a side-effect, but also partly a cause, of Greece’s incomplete pathway to modernization. An influential explanation has interpreted the atrophy of Greek civil society as a result of structural-historical factors linked to the role of the state and its relation to capitalist development (Mouzelis 1987; Mouzelis and Pagoulatos 2003; Mouzelis 2007). Accordingly, the state apparatus has grown partly to provide employment in a context of commercialising agriculture, rapid urbanisation and limited capitalist industrialisation, which led to a peculiar relationship between state and citizenry. The latter was incorporated rather vertically in the political system, to a large extent through clientelist relations, especially in post-war times and in the aftermath of the civil war. This pattern went on after the restoration of democracy in 1974 and became even more embroiled with the party system, which came to dominate political life mobilising citizens and absorbing social and political claims, hence allowing little space for civil society to flourish (Mouzelis and Pagoulatos 2003; Mouzelis 2007; Sotiropoulos 2004; Huliaras 2014).

Alongside clientelism and partitocracy, additional explanations have also been offered to account for the historical weakness of civil society in Greece. Among these, some look as back as in the legacy of Ottoman rule, the history of political authoritarianism, or the role of religion and the Greek Orthodox Church, which has emerged as a national institution and remains peculiarly entangled with the state (Huliaras 2014). The importance of family relations and kinship networks in social reproduction have also

⁹ Data from the EU SILC ad-hoc 2015 Module on Social and cultural participation and Material deprivation:
http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Social_participation_and_integration_statistics#Formal_and_informal_voluntary_activities (accessed 30.07.2018).



been noted as factors hindering the development of a strong civil society (*ibid.*; Kavoulakos and Gritzas 2015). More recent interpretations also point to the lack of a specific legal framework regulating the establishment and operation of NGOs (Magliveras 2014)¹⁰, the resulting diversity of legal forms and the absence of a national register of formal civil society organisations (Simiti 2014), the lack of civic education in public schools and the poor tax incentives for charitable donations (Huliaras 2014).

Around the turn of millennium this picture started to change. Partly due to growing detachment from party politics, partly to the rise of new social concerns and movements, formal civil society organisations have been growing and expanding their scope and activities (*ibid.*; Sotiropoulos 2004). A study recorded 1200 NGOs in the mid-1990s; another estimated a total number of 2400 in 1999¹¹. Not only the number of formal organisations has grown, but also their modes of operation have moved towards increasing professionalization, while the concepts of civil society and volunteerism emerged in the public discourse with positive connotations, and became key subjects in academic debates and empirical studies (Rozakou 2016a). “NGOs” and “volunteers” became recognisable categories, increasingly visible in public life. When a deadly earthquake hit Athens in September 1999, about 700 organisations mobilized to provide food, clothes and healthcare (Frangonikolopoulos 2014), while an impressive number of volunteers were involved in the context of the 2004 Athens Olympic Games, with estimates ranging between 45,000 and 58,000 (Huliaras 2014: 12; Sotiropoulos and Bourikos 2014: 38). The last example is indicative of growing participation, but also of a strategy to promote volunteering top-down by the state, through official campaigns and public events, and to institutionalise it with relevant legislation¹² and with several Ministries establishing relevant departments (Afouxenidis 2008; Rozakou 2016a).

This took place in a period of generous state subsidies and EU funding (Sotiropoulos 2004; Huliaras 2014). The ample financial resources contributed to the growth of registered organisations and provided relative guarantees for their sustainability. Yet, at the same time, it resulted in fragmentation and competition, directed activities in specific areas of intervention and severely undermined their autonomy from the state and the political system (Afouxenidis 2006). Moreover, the expansion of activities especially in fields such as health and social care went hand in hand with the withdrawal

¹⁰ Broadly speaking, non governmental and other non-profit organisations are operating on the basis of the constitutional right to assembly and of the Civil Code (providing for the formation of civil nonprofit societies, persons associations, unions, foundations and fundraising committees), while most legislative initiatives have been concerned with the regulation of the framework for state funding (Afouxenidis 2006, footnote 7; Papadopoulos and Fratsea 2014: footnote 35).

¹¹ See Frangonikolopoulos (2014: 607), quoting studies (in Greek) by Stasinopoulou (*Greek Voluntary Organizations*, Athens: University of Panteion/ Volmed-Hellas, 1997) and Panagiotidou (“Where, when and how does civil society develop?”, *Civil Society* 8/2002: 17–22). Numbers should be treated with caution, as many NGOs may be inactive and not all voluntary organisations are necessarily NGOs (Rozakou 2016a).

¹² E.g. Law 2646 of 1998 created special registers for private non-profit bodies providing social care services including voluntary organisations; Law 2731 of 1999 regulates NGOs active in the field of development and humanitarian aid; Law 3013 of 2002 established a Civil Protection voluntary system; and many more.



of the welfare state in a context of advancing neoliberalism (Rozakou 2016a). Several instances of corruption that received negative publicity in the media, including associations being formed only to win bids, consultancies presenting themselves as NGOs, clientelist relations between NGOs and state agencies, and a series of scandals involving NGOs and politicians, blurred the distinction between profit and non-profit and generated suspicion towards NGOs at large (Huliaras 2014; Frangonikolopoulos 2014; Simiti 2014; Rozakou 2016a). Notwithstanding these controversies, there are many examples of healthy organisations doing valuable work on the ground.

Alongside organized civil society actors, the mushrooming of informal networks and collectivities has started being acknowledged in relevant scholarly debates (Sotiropoulos 2004). Informal civil society actors have been gaining pace particularly in the advent of Greece's debt crisis, austerity, the politics surrounding these and their devastating social and economic effects (Sotiropoulos 2014; Sotiropoulos and Bourikos 2014; Gritzas and Kavoulakos 2015). A host of solidarity initiatives have flourished as "alternative forms of resilience" (Kousis and Paschou 2017), some engaging with innovative and inventive projects, including exchange and distribution networks and time banks, social clinics and pharmacies providing basic healthcare for those excluded from the national health system, initiatives distributing food or preparing meals, collectives offering educational services or organising cultural activities and events, but also self-help groups, neighbourhood assemblies, projects reclaiming public spaces, squats and social centres (Petropoulou 2013; Sotiropoulos and Bourikos 2014; Gritzas and Kavoulakos 2015). Many were linked to social movements even before the crisis, or sprang up from critical protest moments such as the 2008 December youth uprising or the 2011 movement of the piazzas, in which traditional forms of protest were combined with creative resistances (Petropoulou 2010; Leontidou 2012; Gritzas and Kavoulakos 2015). Given their mistrust to NGOs and critical positioning towards the state, many such initiatives take distances from both, but also from the market and private business; often inspired by radical political projects, many strive for autonomy, participation, horizontal structures, direct democracy and self-management (Petropoulou 2013; Sotiropoulos and Bourikos 2014; Gritzas and Kavoulakos 2015; Kousis and Paschou 2017).

On the other hand, the crisis has impacted in various ways on existing organised civil society actors. NGOs struggle with substantially reduced financial resources, as private donations have decreased and public funding is not available anymore: tax exemptions to "public benefit institutions" were abolished in 2010, and private donations to NGOs are now taxed at a rate of 26 percent (Sotiropoulos 2014; Simiti 2014). So they turn to fund their activities through donations from abroad, domestic or international not-for-profit foundations, or EU-funded projects (*ibid.*; Sotiropoulos 2014; Sotiropoulos and Bourikos 2014). Despite increased competition for scarcer funds, they tend to collaborate with each other as well as with state agencies, the Church, or even informal actors, and rely more on wider networks of volunteers (Simiti 2014). Moreover, many NGOs that in the past provided social services to "vulnerable" groups (migrants,



minorities, homeless people, addicts, etc.) have expanded their activities to serve the increased needs deriving from the adverse effects of the crisis, assisting or complementing the welfare state (*ibid.*; Sotiropoulos 2014; Sotiropoulos and Bourikos 2014). Their shifting activities reflect changing social needs, yet in addressing those needs many tend to reproduce “traditional” features of philanthropy, e.g. by focusing on helping rather than empowering beneficiaries, by disconnecting individual needs from social relations, or by advertising their sponsors (Simiti 2014).

The crisis has thus been a catalyst revitalising and boosting civil society in Greece, especially in different aspects of social solidarity, involving both formal and informal actors (Sotiropoulos and Bourikos 2014). Some of the novel actors and forms are part of an emergent social/solidarity economy, which has recently become subject to a distinct legal framework¹³ (Adam et al. 2018). Even though a key feature of civil society actors is their non-profit character, hence social enterprises or cooperatives should be excluded (Afouzenidis and Gardiki 2014), the boundaries may sometimes be blurred in terms of both legal forms and types of activities, while the relevant legal framework includes specific provisions for volunteerism in social enterprises. The growth and spread of social movements, protest events, alternative economic and political spaces and solidarity initiatives may thus be seen as a “new civil society”, increasingly independent from both the state and the market (Gritzas and Kavoulakos 2015). They enrich and deepen existing civil society organisational structures and forms, repertoires of collective action and domains of intervention, in ways contributing to enhancing democracy and bringing questions of inequalities to the fore of the public sphere (*ibid.*).

The lack of a national register makes it difficult to survey formal organisations (Simiti 2014), whilst informal groups are largely hard to “measure”. Most studies are based on sample surveys or case studies, sometimes focusing on specific domains of activities or areas of intervention. A first attempt to comprehensively map the field (Afouzenidis and Gardiki 2014; Afouzenidis 2015) analysed 6217 organisations, of which only 263 are NGOs and just 201 were active in the two years preceding the study. Among these, 19 percent intervene in the field of environment and sustainability, 17 percent in health and social care, 15.5 percent in activities for children and youth, and another 15 percent in human rights and social solidarity. Their areas of intervention as well as their numbers have remained more or less stable over the past few years (Afouzenidis 2015). A different picture emerges through the analysis of the total number of organisations, where a diversity of activities is recorded yet with the majority concentrating around two broad themes: humanitarian/social solidarity (47 percent) and cultural/educational (39 percent)¹⁴. About one out of ten have been formed in the last few years, revealing the spread of social solidarity initiatives during the crisis. About half are located in the main

¹³ With Laws 4019 of 2011 and 4430 of 2016.

¹⁴ Indicatively, the former category includes 22 percent small associations, groups, communities and neighbourhood-based collectives, while the latter includes 20 percent cultural organisations in arts, theatre, cinema, museums (Afouzenidis and Gardiki 2014).



urban centres, especially Athens, pointing to both the urban character of civil society, and the more severe impact of the crisis on urban populations (Afouzenidis 2015).

The views of volunteers themselves are rarely taken into account. A recent exception is a study conducted for the General Secretariat of Youth (2012) in the context of the 2011 European Year of Volunteering. Accordingly, the volunteers' motives for participation and opinions on its benefits include creative occupation in leisure time, acquiring new knowledge and skills, networking and making new social contacts, professional and personal development. Their views on the broader impact of voluntarism link their own involvement to the concepts of solidarity and offering to fellow human beings, while covering the gaps of the state; they emphasise the sense of collectivity that volunteering nurtures, thus contributing to social cohesion and the enhancement of democracy. Other studies (Rozakou 2006; 2016a; 2016b) developed more critical perspectives unpacking the inherent tensions of volunteering and solidarity, for instance by reference to the power relations embedded in the act of giving. Overall, however, voluntary participation has expanded in various ways and forms during the years of crisis, and may potentially form an opportunity for a reconfiguration of the concept of solidarity as "fluid and open sociality" (Rozakou 2016a: 95), or of civil society at large.

2.2 Volunteering and the connection to migrants

The rise of migrant politics in the Greek public sphere involved the mobilisation of parts of civil society in issues and activities related to the challenges of migration and to immigrants' presence and needs. Not only has this taken place at a time when Greek civil society was expanding and strengthening, as we have seen, but it has also partly fed its development (Skleparis 2015) and reflects its main features and problems.

Since the early 1990s, several NGOs mobilised to defend migrants' rights and organise awareness-raising or anti-discrimination campaigns (*ibid.*; Gropas and Triandafyllidou 2005; Papadopoulos and Fratsea 2010; 2014; Veikou 2014). By the early 2000s, a diversity of organisations (community associations, NGOs, left-wing parties, anti-racist groups, trade unions, or the Church) were active supporting migrants in various ways: providing health and welfare services (medical treatment, psychological support, food and shelter), vocational training (language and other courses), legal assistance, or advocating for migrants' rights (Hatziprokopiou 2006: 132). The outcomes of such initiatives were judged to be limited in scope, in geographical scale and in the numbers of people they affected, even though they were growing and expanding their activities and numbers of beneficiaries. Yet they were found to play an important role, especially at the local level, in particular in terms of empowering migrants in various ways, including mobilizing individuals and assisting communities to form associations (*ibid.*). A grassroots social movement in solidarity with migrants has developed since the 1990s



alongside formal civil society mobilisation (*ibid.*; Gropas and Triandafyllidou 2005)¹⁵. This movement has grown, diversified and to an extent fragmented in the next decades, yet it crucially mobilised migrants, both individuals and associations (Hatziprokopiou 2006).

In the mid-2000s, a study by Afouxenidis (2006) compared “environmental” and “antiracist” NGOs in five Greek cities, the latter accounting for organisations active in various issues concerning migrants, which were the second largest category of NGOs active at the time. He observed little space for collaboration, even among NGOs with similar activities. The organisations’ financial resources appeared to depend on their size and specialised field of activity, yet most were struggling with limited funding opportunities, largely relying on members’ donations. The study noted that pro-migrant NGOs had limited potential to influence decision-making at a national level, but they did exercise some influence on the local level through informal networks of communication with local authorities. They only partially managed to mobilise public support and tended to have few members and supporters; volunteerism was hence limited and undeveloped and many would aspire for a more professional approach. Afouxenidis (2006) also distinguished between organisations inspired by political ideology, e.g. the fight against racism, and those who emphasised humanitarian assistance and their approach was of a more charitable nature.

Aspects of this latter distinction were critically analysed in the ethnographic research of Rozakou (2006; 2016a; 2016b), who approached voluntary offer from the anthropological perspective of the gift. She accordingly differentiated between the unidirectional gesture of giving, as in charity/philanthropy or the stereotypical concept of hospitality in Greece, in both of which it entails power relations and functions as a way of controlling the “other”; and the gesture that allows a gift in return, establishing a space for potentially equal relations. She explored the tensions between the two approaches in the practices of a solidarity group who, inspired by a left-wing activist notion of “militant volunteering”, struggled persistently (even if not always successfully) to empower and mobilise refugees squatting an abandoned hotel in Athens, rather than simply to help them (Rozakou 2006). She latter (2016a) comparatively juxtaposed the context, motives and perspectives of volunteers in a large humanitarian organization and those of participants in a small, local voluntary group. In the former, an apolitical humanitarian view appeared in accordance and compliance with the official production of volunteerism, against which the second case constituted a direct challenge.

On the eve of Greece’s economic crisis, a team at Harokopio University undertook the task to comprehensively map civil society actors in the field of migration, compiling a list

¹⁵ One of its most visible faces still operating today is the “Network for the Social Support of Refugees and Immigrants”, offering space for the coordination of migrant and anti-racist collectives, setting up public debates, campaigns, protests and demonstrations, but also providing a meeting place, Greek language classes, and more. Among these, it is worth mentioning the anti-racist festival organised annually in Athens and elsewhere since the late 1990s, which has turned from a marginal event to an “institutionalised” political/cultural gathering of migrant associations, left-wing parties, antiracist groups, NGOs, etc.



of 375 organisations active at the time, both formal and informal (Papadopoulos 2009; Papadopoulos and Fratsea 2010; 2014; Papadopoulos et al. 2013). Of these, 155 were NGOs, 87 percent formally registered, and more than half founded before the 2000s. Their main fields of activity were human rights (69.7 percent), social integration (67.7 percent), culture (42.6 percent), education and training (41.9 percent), and psychosocial support (41.3 percent). They were over-concentrated in Athens, reflecting Greek organizational and administrative structures, and benefiting strategically by being close to decision-making centres and public services. One out of three took part in wider migration-related networks and 28 percent in transnational ones through links or collaborations with NGOs e.g. in EU countries. They had ample financial resources (with a median revenue of 76.500 euros in 2008), yet with great variations reflecting their size and activities (minimum revenue 700 euros, maximum 39.2 millions): more than half (55 percent) have received state or EU funding and 43 percent took part in funded projects during 2005-09. Nearly 60 percent had permanent staff, with an average number of 16 paid employees in 2009, yet almost all relied extensively on volunteering.

Greece's economic crisis impacted on migrant/refugee serving NGOs in various ways. The vast majority are now struggling with limited financial resources, and some appear to rely especially on European Commission funding schemes, such as the (former) European Refugee Fund involving 20 percent co-funding by the bankrupt Greek state (with severe delays in the disbursement of money), which renders them "dependent on their donors' agendas" (Skleparis 2015: 149)¹⁶. Moreover, as earlier noted, several analysts have highlighted that many organisations that used to cater mostly for the needs of migrants in the recent past, now address segments of the wider population impoverished in the context of the crisis, such as the unemployed, uninsured, elderly, homeless, etc. (Simiti 2014; Sotiropoulos 2014; Sotiropoulos and Bourikos 2014). Both effects have led to a reconfiguration of the relationship between migrant/refugee-serving NGOs and the Greek state at times of crisis and austerity, which seems to be moving towards "a hybrid shadow-state" (Skleparis 2015). This "consists of the decreasing or absent state financial support to migrant-/refugee-serving NGOs, and the simultaneous increasing conformity of the latter to the Greek state's interests and agenda" at a time when many such organisations "have started taking on various social welfare services for vulnerable populations (*ibid.*: 150). In addition, the rise of the far right and organized racist violence in the context of the crisis (Kandylis and Kavoulakos 2012) has been described as an emergent "uncivil" society (Sotiropoulos 2014).

The 2015-16 "refugee crisis" marked a turning point in the booming and diversification of Greek civil society, in respect to addressing the complex situations facing the newcomers. It was a moment of spontaneous "explosion" of solidarity and voluntarism,

¹⁶ Reporting from Schaub, M. (2013) "Humanitarian problems relating to migration in the Turkish- Greek border region: The crucial role of civil society organisations", *Research Resources Paper for COMPAS*. Oxford: University of Oxford, available on https://www.compas.ox.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/RR-2013-Fringe_Migration_Turkish-Greek.pdf (accessed 25.07.2018).



involving a multiplicity of actors including especially “common people” - fishermen and villagers, local and international volunteers, solidarity activists - taking action alongside NGOs and humanitarian organisations¹⁷. From rescue at sea to first-aid and reception onshore, from donations in money or in kind (e.g. food, dry clothes, tents, medicines, baby diapers or sanitary towels) to a host of services like medical treatment, psychosocial support, legal aid, educational, creative or sport activities - and many more (Agelopoulos 2015; Trubeta 2015; Skleparis and Arnakolas 2016; Scientific Committee for the Support of Refugee Children 2017; Chtouris and Miller 2017; Cabot 2018). The actual content of activities, but also the forms of engagement have been shifting over time and across space, depending on the site, context and needs and reflecting changing conditions and policy developments at national and EU levels: from welcoming exhausted newcomers to the eastern Aegean islands (Papataxiarchis 2016a; 2016b; Rozakou 2016c; Serntedakis 2017; Knott 2018; Guribye and Mydland 2018) to supporting those gathering at the port of Piraeus (Mavromatis 2016), and from assisting migrants crossing the northern Greek borders (Anastasiadou et al 2017), to helping out those stranded within¹⁸ or outside camps in the mainland (Dicker 2017; Cantat 2018; Tsavdaroglou 2018; Kiddey 2019).

How are we to interpret that “excess” of solidarity to “others”? Agelopoulos (2015: 10) reviewed ethnographic studies providing a critical understanding of the solidarity movement as a form of gift giving, and sought explanations in e.g. historically established positive perceptions of refugees, resistance practices experienced since the December 2008 uprising, an activist know-how developed against austerity since 2010, as well as an encouraging left-leaning government. And how are we to evaluate its implications and outcomes? Certainly, the picture briefly sketched above was far from ideal on the ground. Recent studies have e.g. highlighted a variety of issues relating to volunteerism in the context of the “refugee crisis”: volunteer stress and “burnout” (Chatzea et al 2018); chaotic situations of many uncoordinated activities leading to mistrust between independent volunteers and large humanitarian actors or the authorities, as well as tensions with local communities (Guribye and Mydland 2018); or even how well-intended volunteer action may end up reinforcing rather than challenging divisions between “us” and “them”, thus legitimising EU border practices (Knott 2018). Still, however, there is undeniable value and potential in this experience, not least by offering valuable help to thousands of people in need. According to Rozakou (2016b), the surge of solidarity in the context of debt crisis, austerity, as well as the “refugee

¹⁷ According to an opinion poll conducted in early 2016 (DlaNEOsis 2016) 58 percent of the Greek population had actively expressed their solidarity to refugees, by offering food (39 percent), clothes (31 percent), money (10 percent) or voluntary work (4 percent). More than 10,000 volunteers and activists were estimated to have mobilised in solidarity with refugees between Autumn 2015 and Spring 2016, covering the gaps of the state (Scientific Committee for the Support of Refugee Children 2017: 71).

¹⁸ Indicatively, a report prepared for the Ministry of Education recorded 105 educational interventions for children and another 48 for adults across 40 refugee camps operating in May 2016, set up by 76 organisations, including 36 voluntary associations, unions and groups and 32 NGOs (14 of which relied on volunteers) (Scientific Committee for the Support of Refugee Children 2016: 18-19).



crisis", renegotiates or even breaks the "gift taboo" (referring to the ambivalence towards offerings) and allows for new "socialities of solidarity" to develop, pointing to "the formation of new social spaces in the relations between immigrants and refugees and residents of Greece who are trying not only to help them, but also to incorporate them in culturally significant forms of social interaction" (*ibid.*: 186). During the unfolding humanitarian emergency and in its aftermath, of crucial importance has been the involvement of migrants and refugees themselves.

2.3 Volunteering among migrants

Immigrants' participation in public, political and community life is not a new thing, and has been increasing since Greece's transformation into a migrant destination and "host society". It has however attracted relatively limited scholarly attention. One could distinguish between the rather "traditional" themes of immigrants' civic participation, e.g. through migrant associations (Petronoti 2001; Cañete 2001; Gropas and Triandafyllidou 2005; Papadopoulos 2009; Papadopoulos and Fratsea 2010; 2014; Papadopoulos et al 2013)¹⁹, and other modes of political or social involvement, including autonomous migrant struggles involving e.g. confrontational action and protest (Mantanika and Kouki 2011; Trimikliniotis *et al.* 2015; Skleparis 2016; Tsavdaroglou 2018). Yet the boundaries between these two sets of themes are not always clear and there may be overlaps, while there is little knowledge on how these interact with the wider civil society and social movements.

Alongside and in-between these broad themes, immigrants have increasingly mobilised around more specific fields, of which work and religion are worth mentioning as they have been the focus of several studies. With respect to the former, while trade unions generally supported the rights of migrant workers, union participation among migrants has been extremely low (Gropas and Triandafyllidou 2005; Hatziprokopiou 2006). Their low-status and low-paid work, the often flexible or casual yet exhaustive working days, and their generally precarious and exploitative employment conditions deter many from participation in either Greek trade unions or the ethnic-based migrant workers' associations that have been formed in meantime (Fouskas 2012; 2013; 2014). Instead, many develop rather individualistic behaviours and rely on friendly and kin networks for survival and support (*ibid.*; Fouskas 2012; 2013). This should be expected to remain so to date, however there have been specific instances of migrant workers

¹⁹ In addition, several qualitative studies usually focusing on case-studies of migrant associations and community organisations are quoted e.g. by Gropas and Triandafyllidou 2015; Papadopoulos and Fratsea 2010; 2014; Papadopoulos et al. 2013; Skleparis 2015. These include: Schumert, L. (2004) *Migrant organisations in Greece: Self-assistance or pressure groups?*, MA Dissertation, Athens: Department of Political Science and Public Administration, University of Athens; Kavoulakos, K.I. (2006) "Migrant organisations: Forms of vindicating rights", paper presented at *IMEPO Conference*, Athens: 23–24 November; Zachou, C. and Kalerante, E. (2009) "Albanian civil associations in Greece: Ethnic identification and cultural transformations", in M. Pavlou and A. Skouliki (eds) *Migrants and Minorities: Discourse and Politics*, Athens: Vivliorama, pp. 457–94.



engaging in particularly dynamic and confrontational protest and strike actions in the context of Greece's economic crisis²⁰. On the other hand, associational and community life, to a large extent self-organised, self-funded and relying on the voluntary participation of members and supporters, also includes religious organisations and communities, as a number of studies looking specifically at Muslim migrants suggest (Antoniou 2003, Kasimeris and Samouris 2012). In this case too, there have been instances of (some) Muslim organisations mobilising publicly in various ways, e.g. through public prayers or protest demonstrations, thus making overt or indirect political claims (Hatziprokopiou and Evergeti 2014; Hatziprokopiou forthcoming).

As far as migrants' associational life is concerned, a pioneering study by Petronoti (2001) focused on ethnic associations in Athens, where she counted about 50, varying greatly in terms of history, size, composition, or types of activities. The study compared Philippino and Sudanese associations, and took stock of the profile and role of community leaders, usually long-established people and with language fluency. Immigrant associations were found to cover both practical and symbolic needs and hence to facilitate migrants' adaptation at both individual and collective levels, acting also as mediators between migrant communities and the Greek society, though without much interaction with institutions and often through patronage relations. The study concluded that ethnic associations formed an important basis for migrants' political mobilisation and a crucial step to integration, especially in terms of civic participation, yet at the same time they sometimes functioned as a means of control by the authorities.

In general, however, early studies concluded that the extent of immigrants' political activism and participation in public life at large was generally limited in the mid-2000s, at least as far as mainstream organisations are concerned, including migrant associations (Gropas and Triandafyllidou 2005). Gropas and Triandafyllidou (2005) explained this by referring to the general weakness of the Greek civil society earlier described, yet also highlighted hindering factors specifically applying to migrants. These included the few opportunities offered by the legal framework on migration and migrants' integration, the resulting mistrust of immigrants towards the Greek state, and their overall disadvantaged position in Greek society, including their insecure legal status and "lack of time and resources to devote to activities other than paid work" (*ibid.*: 4). To these, one should also consider home-country influences (Gemi 2007) as well as local and transnational networks of the associations set up by specific migrant groups (e.g. see Cañete 2001 on the Filipino community). In studying Albanian migrants' associations, Gemi (2007) observed large numbers of registered members but few active participants, and attributed this to a variety of reasons, related both to an ambivalent collective identity and political culture as well as their marginal position in the host society and a

²⁰ It is worth mentioning two notorious strikes: the case of Egyptian fishermen in the Nea Michaniona area of Thessaloniki, who in 2010 took industrial action to resist substantial reductions in their wages and exploitative employment relations; and that of Pakistani agricultural workers in the Skala Lakonias area at the Peloponese, who in 2014 went on strike protesting against racist police violence and harassment.



strive for assimilation. Additionally, she pointed to a general sense of temporariness, insecure legal status, lack of organisational culture, problematic organisational structures, limited trust to collective representation, as well as an impression that some associations may serve personal aspirations of specific individuals.

Nevertheless, Gropas and Triandafyllidou (2005) observed that the overall numbers of migrant associations had grown since the early 2000s representing almost all immigrant nationalities, and compiled a list of over 90 associations active at the time including religious or professional ones (*ibid.*: 29-31). Recording their total number was then still hindered by a series of difficulties, including undocumented status, limited communication channels with the wider society, fears of being questioned, unwillingness to collaborate with each other (Gemi 2007), and sometimes their short-livedness. The survey by Harokopio University mentioned earlier (Papadopoulos 2009; Papadopoulos and Fratsea 2010; 2014; Papadopoulos et al. 2013) recorded a total of 220 migrant associations, most of which were founded in the 2000s (71 percent) and had a statute (74 percent). They were active in the fields of culture (87.7 percent, usually relating to maintaining ethnic identity or country of origin culture), members' support (86.3 percent), social integration (50 percent), and education/training (43.6 percent). Like the migrant serving NGOs, they were also over-concentrated in Athens, reflecting not only the centralized Greek administrative structure, but also the geography of Greece's migrant population. About one third took part in migration-related networks but few had transnational links apart from maintaining ties with same-origin organisations abroad. Their financial resources were limited (with median revenue 6000 euros in 2008), and only 9 percent had received state or EU funding. The vast majority (85 percent) operated without permanent staff, relying exclusively on volunteers.

The surge of solidarity and volunteering in the context of the 2015-16 "refugee crisis" appears to mark a shift from solidarity *to* or charity *for* migrants, towards activism and volunteering *with* and *by* migrants. This includes spontaneous self-organisation, often under conditions of extreme hardship and insecurity such as those in the Idomeni makeshift camp by the Macedonian border, involving what Karas and Bock (2018) call migrants' and refugees' "self-protection" capacities: sticking together in groups, sharing information, protesting for better conditions, and resort to fighting when all else fails. In the last three years or so, both settled and newcomer migrants have engaged in various forms of activism and volunteering: from various self-organised actions to improve conditions in camps²¹ to increasing refugees' involvement in the activities of humanitarian organisations and grassroots independent groups²², and from self-managed housing squats in Athens and elsewhere (Dicker 2017; Tsavdaroglou 2018;

²¹ E.g. among the 76 organisations running educational activities in camps in May 2016, seven were self-organized by groups of refugees (Scientific Committee for the Support of Refugee Children 2016: 18-19).

²² <https://www.newsdeeply.com/refugees/articles/2018/05/10/how-refugees-power-a-grassroots-aid-movement>.



Kiddey 2019) to formal volunteers' and citizens' initiatives active in long-term reception and integration²³.

However, the extent, context, modes, field and characteristics of voluntary engagement largely remain terra incognita. While there has been some documentation of migrants' volunteering in activities concerning their co-ethnics (e.g. through associations), or other migrants and refugees, little is known on how and under which circumstances migrants mobilise in relation to other groups or broader social issues. And yet, there are several examples of such instances of migrants' mobilisation. It is worth mentioning in that respect, the volunteering of migrants, whether formal or organised, in cases of emergency and natural disasters that have shaken Greek society in the last few years. For instance, when a group of Africans volunteered in villages of southern Lesvos hit by the summer 2017 earthquake²⁴; or, while the last few lines of this report are being written, when migrants and refugees are donating and volunteering in emergency relief operations in the aftermath of the deadly wildfires of 23 July 2018 in Attica²⁵. The VAI research findings that follow may thus be seen as a first attempt in this direction.

²³ A relevant European Website for Integration report lists 11 long-established initiatives and five newly-formed ones as good practices, of which four and two respectively were set up exclusively by people of migrant background (EWSI 2016).

²⁴ http://www.ert.gr/perifereiakoi-stathmoi/voreio_aigaio/lesvos-ethelontiki-ergasia-prosfygono-sto-sismoplikto-lisvori

²⁵ e.g. see reports on volunteer support by the Greek Forum for Refugees

(<https://www.lifo.gr/now/greece/202275/sto-pleyro-ton-pyroplikton-oi-koinotites-ton-metanaston-poy-zoyn-stin-ellada>), or the Pakistani Community in Greece (<https://www.lifo.gr/now/greece/201809/i-pakistaniki-koinotita-ksana-mprosta-sti-voitheia-ton-pyroplikton>).



PART B: NATIONAL AND LOCAL RESEARCH

Part B is dedicated to presenting preliminary findings of the national study on the case of Greece carried out by the VAI research team at the School of Spatial Planning and Development, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, in collaboration with the Volunteers' Supervision and Mobilization Department of the Hellenic Red Cross. The research was conducted during the same period in all four countries taking part in the project. Its overall aim was to understand the context and motives of volunteering - for, with and by migrants - and make sense of its relevance to immigrants' pathways to integration. For the purposes of the study, we define "volunteering" as any formal or informal unpaid activity in which time is given freely to benefit another person, group or organization, while we define "migrants" beyond institutional categories (e.g. economic immigrant, refugee, asylum seeker, etc.) as recently-arrived or longer-established foreign-born people whose parents were also foreign-born, or native-born people with foreign-born parents (the so-called second generation). Fieldwork in Greece was conducted between mid-May and late-July 2018 and, as mentioned, involved both quantitative and qualitative methods, the analysis of which structures this Part of the report.

3. National online survey: preliminary results

3.1 Methodology and sampling

The quantitative part of the study was based on an online survey addressed to voluntary organisations with the overall objective to map the context of volunteering at a national level. Specifically, the survey aimed at capturing structural and organizational facts about the work of organizations in the field of migration, the extent and patterns of (immigrants') volunteering and the respondents' views on its impact and outcomes. We have employed an online questionnaire on Google Forms, which was addressed to civil society organizations engaged in actions related to migrants. The survey was not limited solely to officially registered voluntary organisations, but to a range of collective actors belonging to the wider civil society, formal or informal, including large international or smaller local NGOs, other non-profit organisations, migrant and refugee associations, governance structures involving volunteers (e.g. in local authorities), voluntary-based initiatives and projects, activist groups, etc. We focused primarily on organisations, groups, projects and initiatives addressing their activities specifically to immigrants and refugees, but we have included those with activities targeting the wider population or specific groups within it, including migrants even if they are not deliberately targeted.

The questionnaire was originally drafted in Italian and translated to English; after the necessary amendments and corrections following discussions among partners and pilot testing, the English version was translated into Greek. The Greek survey was launched on 15 May 2018 and remained active until the end of September 2018. Initially, we sent out via email a call for participation to the survey to a list of more than 300 organisations. As a basis, we made use of the list of 297 registered NGOs and migrant



associations compiled by researchers at Harokopio University (Papadopoulos 2009). This was updated and extended by the 48 organisations listed in the "National Register of Greek and Foreign NGOs dealing with international protection, migration and social integration issues" of the Greek Ministry of Migration Policy²⁶. It was then further enriched through internet research, mobilising personal contacts of members of the research teams, or suggestions by our fieldwork participants, especially regarding informal and activist groups. In the end, and given about 80 invalid details, we circulated the questionnaire to a total of 306 organizations.

The feedback we received initially was poor. We therefore sent reminders, publicised in relevant social media, personally phone-called staff or volunteers from various organizations, and visited a number of them to conduct questionnaires face-to-face. We had reached 37 by late July, and finally managed to collect a total of 52 questionnaires by the end of September, which amounts to nearly 17 percent of the organisations in our final list²⁷. These were completed by persons in positions of responsibility on behalf of their organisation (directors, coordinators, project managers, volunteers' supervisors, administrators, social scientists, etc.).

The questionnaire was organized in three sections: the first aimed at collecting general information about the organisation, the second dealt with the extent and characteristics of immigrant volunteering within the organization (if present), and the third investigated the outcomes and impact of volunteering for the benefit of migrants. These sections also structure our presentation of results, focusing only on key findings at this stage, followed by some concluding remarks.

3.2 Voluntary organisations: description of the sample

We begin our analysis with an overview of participant organisations. Most of them have been recently founded, but some have been active for decades. Specifically, as shown in the following chart, over half (52 percent) of our sample organizations were established in the period 2010-2018, 23 percent during 2000-2009, 15 percent in the 1990s, and just one out of ten is active since even earlier. This is reasonable enough, considering that civil society organizations have developed fairly recently in Greece, especially in the context of the economic crisis and even more so in that of the "refugee crisis". Regarding their spatial distribution, the majority (above 44 percent) are located in the region of Attica (Athens and Piraeus); Thessaloniki is the second major location (38.5 percent), while only 17.3 percent are located in other areas (different parts of northern Greece, Karditsa in central Greece, and the eastern Aegean island of Lesvos). This distribution is reasonable, considering that the two largest cities concentrate the majority of the migrant population as well as of civil society organisations, but is also biased since the

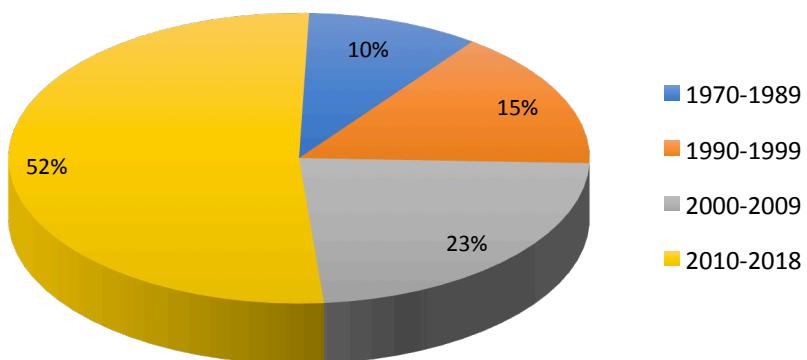
²⁶ https://mko.ypes.gr/home_in_mitroo_report

²⁷ The first draft of this report, prepared at the end of August 2018, was based on the 34 responses gathered by 11 July 2018. This chapter has thus been significantly altered.



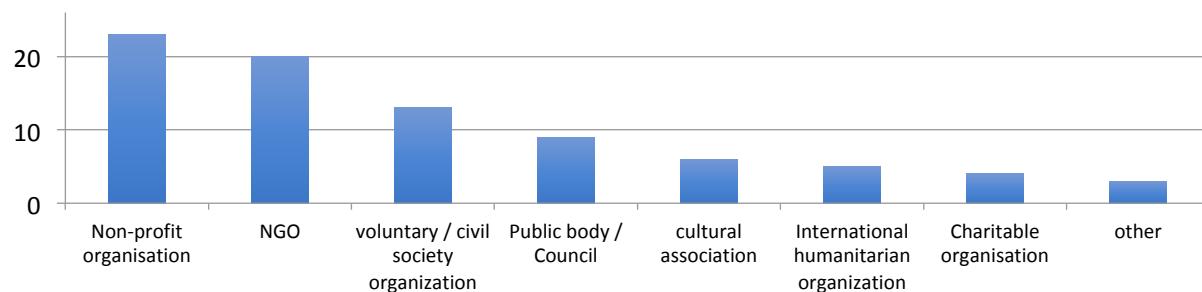
survey failed to map the reality evolving in the last few years, with a multitude of organisations active especially in eastern Aegean islands.

Figure 3. Organisations' year of establishment



All but three of our sample organizations are officially registered, reflecting the evolving legal framework, which e.g. requires registration as a prerequisite in order to receive any source of funding, but also the survey's failure to reach out to informal groups. In order to capture both the type and legal form of sample organizations, the questionnaire allowed for multiple responses and about one third of respondents did pick more than one options. Accordingly, 44.2 percent described themselves as non-profit organizations, another 38.5 percent as NGOs, and some 25 percent as voluntary associations or civil society organizations; nine respondents are public bodies (mostly at municipal level), six are cultural associations (mostly migrant organisations), and there were also five international humanitarian organisations, while the remainder comprises various types (charities, a foundation, a research-training institute, a political group).

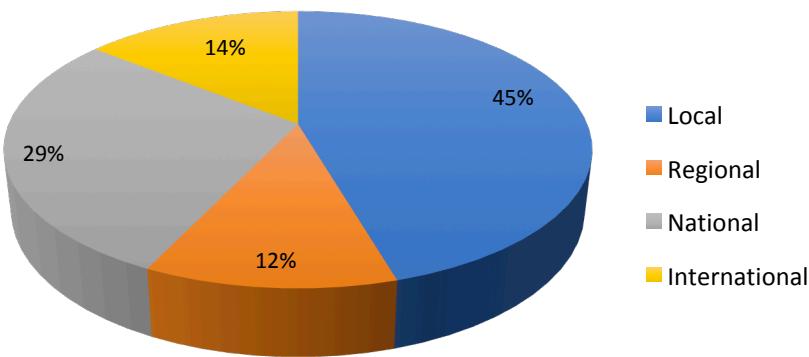
Figure 4. Type & form of organisations



In terms of their level/scale of intervention, as shown in Figure 6, the organizations of our sample engage in activities with a scope ranging from primarily local (45.5 percent) to regional (11.7 percent), national (28.6 percent) and international (14.3 percent). Clearly, migration issues are primarily a concern for local societies and communities, where members of civil society can liaise and meaningfully intervene.

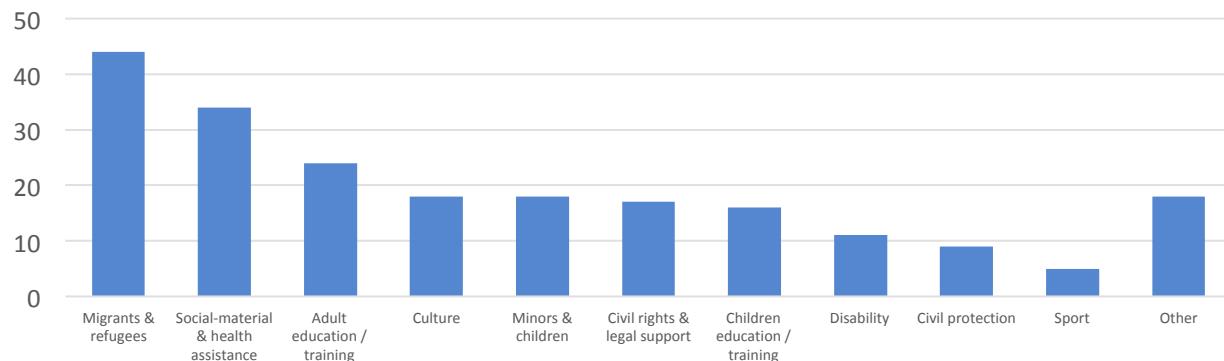


Figure 5. Organisations' level of intervention



The domains of intervention of sample organizations are variable, indicative of the multitude of activities and projects earlier described, yet the vast majority (85 percent) work with migrants and refugees, even if focusing on particular fields as presented on the Figure above. More specifically, a share of 65.4 percent provide social and health assistance also covering basic material needs. Many are involved in education, offering programmes to adults (46 percent, including language classes and vocational training) or children (31 percent). Nearly 33 percent provide legal support and promote civil rights, and important shares organise cultural (almost 35 percent) or sports (2.6 percent) activities. Significant sections of the sample care specifically for certain population groups, especially minors and children (35 percent), but also disabled people (21 percent), as well as women, the elderly, addicted persons, or homeless people (included in the category "other"). Some are active in the fields of civil protection (17.3 percent), heritage and the environment (also in the "other" category)

Figure 6. Organisations' areas of intervention



It is important to note that more than two thirds of responding organisations are active in more than two of the listed broad fields of intervention, while at least 38.5 percent are not addressing their activities exclusively to migrants (yet migrants are among their main beneficiaries). These results support the point that most migration-related



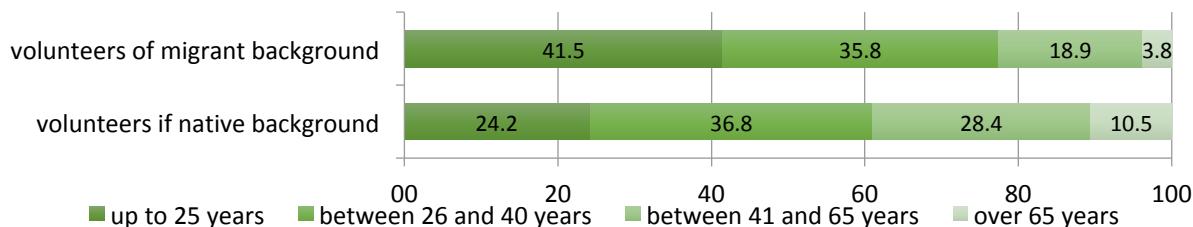
activities of Greek civil society organisations are centred on issues that have emerged with the outbreak of the “refugee crisis” and in its aftermath.

Now, in order to implement these activities, organisations rely on their human resources. The number of people they occupy in any way, either as paid staff or as volunteers, appears to depend on the size of the organisation, on the range and scope of their activities and on their financial capacity. In both categories there is equal representation of women, and some involvement of people of migrant background.

Apart from 14 organizations (27 percent) without any paid employee, the rest occupy paid staff with an average of 98 employees; leaving aside three national organisations (a public body with 1200 employees, and two large national NGOs with about 750 and 470 employees, respectively), the average number of paid employees among the remainder is 38, with one 27 percent employing up to 10 employees and 31 percent having 50 or more employees. Among those with personnel, the average share of women is 65 percent. Moreover, nearly 45 percent of organisations employ second-generation migrants, on average 4 employees of such background forming a mean share of 17.5 percent among paid staff, over half being women.

Most relevant to the project is the mobilisation of volunteers, and the organisations of our study sample rely to a large extent on volunteering. More specifically, apart from seven organisations not having any volunteer at the time of the survey, 55.6 percent of the rest occupy at least 20 volunteers, and about one out of five 50 or more. Excluding a large humanitarian organisation (with 1150 volunteers) and another two organisations occasionally mobilising volunteers by the hundreds (cumulatively, over time), the average number among the remaining 42 respondents is 25 volunteers per organisation. In most cases, women form a majority, with their average share exceeding 62 percent. About 55 percent of organisations occupy second-generation migrants as volunteers: on average four per organisation, over half of whom are women.

Figure 7. Age of volunteers



Lastly, the reported age range of the volunteers presents distinct differences between natives and immigrants, as illustrated in Figure 7 above. Most of the volunteers of migrant background in the organizations of our sample are less than 25 years old at a percentage of 41.5 percent, a significant share of 35.8 percent are between 26-40 years old, with less participation of age groups above 40 and very little of people over 65 years of age. On the contrary, the age variance of Greek volunteers is mainly orientated towards older age ranges. More specifically, just one fourth is less than 25 years old,



while a percentage of 36.8 percent is between 26-40 years old, some 28.4 percent are between 41- 65 years old, and there is more participation of older people (10.5 percent).

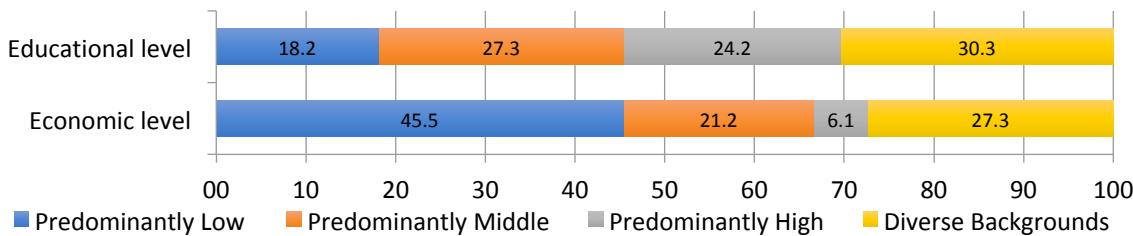
3.3 Volunteering of migrants: key features and outcomes

Moving on to the second section of the questionnaire, we now focus on the responses we have received from the organisations that involve volunteers of migrant background at the moment of the study. The section begins with an overview of the characteristics of migrant volunteers, as seen by the person filling up the questionnaire on behalf of the organisation, and his or hers broader views on the motives, context, and benefits of volunteering for the volunteers themselves as well as for the organisation and its activities. It also evaluates immigrants' volunteering within the participant organisations by highlighting "subjective" and "objective" problems and obstacles, and proposing ways through which these could be overcome. Initially, participants were asked to make a general comment regarding volunteerism among immigrants. Some respondents noted limited motivation to volunteer among recently arrived migrants and refugees, mostly attributed to limited language skills as well as to the pressing need of securing employment and thus income. Yet, a common belief among most respondents is that volunteering offers an opportunity for social inclusion, e.g. through language learning, socialisation, networking, or by cultivating useful professional skills. Many highlight that volunteering empowers migrants and boosts their confidence, and thus contributes to their integration in the local community. In addition, volunteering is seen as a form of sociality nurturing a sense of offering "to the community", not just to immigrant communities, but also to local communities at large. Interesting in this respect is the view that migrant volunteers act as "a bridge" not just between migrant communities and civil society organisations, but crucially also with local communities.

As far as the background of non-Greek volunteers is concerned, at least 34 different nationalities were mentioned by the 30 participant organisations who responded to this question. Among them, most work with migrant volunteers originating from Syria (nearly 60 percent), Afghanistan (30 percent), Iraq and Pakistan (23.5 percent each), and various other countries in the Middle East and North Africa (32.5 percent), as well as sub-Saharan Africa (23.5 percent). There is also significant presence of volunteers from the Balkans and eastern Europe, especially Albania (in almost 30 percent of responding organisations), while more than one third of organisations said their volunteers originate from various places as diverse as East Asia (China, the Philippines), Turkey, western European countries such as France or Spain, the USA or Oceania. Clearly, volunteerism among immigrants in Greece at present reflects recent migratory patterns and trends, with the so-called "refugee crisis" being at the forefront.



Figure 8. Socio-economic status of volunteers



A look at the (reported) socioeconomic status of immigrant volunteers, basically with respect to education and income level, as shown in the Figure above, raises an important contradiction. On the one hand, despite some 27.3 percent of organisations reporting that their migrant volunteers are of a diverse economic background, immigrant volunteers appear in their majority to be of a low to average income level. On the other hand, more than half have middle to high educational profile. Considering also the above finding implying that most migrants who participate in volunteer work have recently arrived, we may assume that most immigrant volunteers tend to have a certain education, yet their income status is rather precarious, possibly due to their conditions as migrants or refugees and perhaps also owing to their position in the labour market.

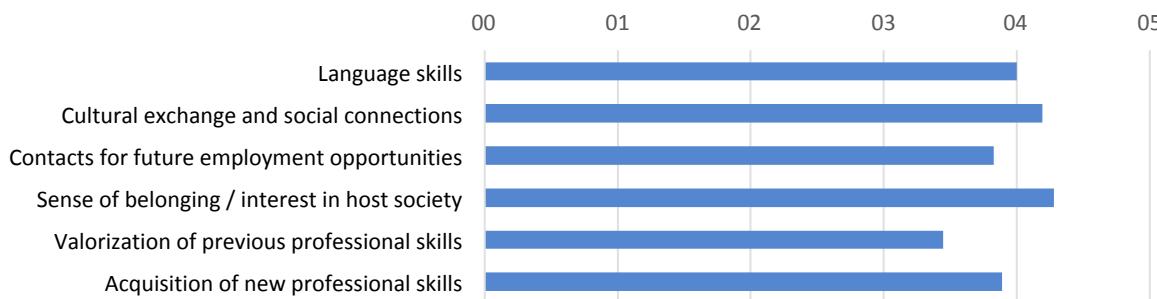
What then motivates immigrants to volunteer? According to respondents, the factors motivating migrant volunteers in their organisations can be variable (almost all ticked more than one of the listed motives). Among these, higher importance is given to the view that migrants are mobilised to support the communities they come from, and due to feelings of closeness to the conditions faced by people in need (about 25 percent respectively). Having been somehow involved in the organization's activities is also thought to motivate migrants' volunteering (15 percent). Fewer respondents emphasise the migrants' will to enhance their social role in the host country or within their community (about 13 percent each), while just a handful link volunteers' motives to conscious expectation of merely economic benefit (e.g. finding a job), or some sort of moral commitment (e.g. related to religious beliefs).

As will be later confirmed by the qualitative data, no clear pattern appears apart from a general will to help people in need, often of the same national or linguistic background, or –as alternatively articulated – to stand in solidarity with them, and quite often this is also determined by the circumstances and may depend on mere coincidental factors. However, when the participants were asked about the process that immigrant volunteers follow in order to participate, the answers provide a more clear insight. Specifically, informal interpersonal relationships appear to be the most common way through which immigrants come to volunteer for an organization: either through word of mouth (36.5 percent), or by directly coming into contact with the organisation (25 percent), while submitting a CV or filling up an application form come last at a rate of 21 percent. Volunteering on the basis of institutional arrangements is rather exceptional (four cases only), yet on the other hand some organisations stressed volunteer training and the signature of a volunteering agreement.



Having addressed the questions of "who", "why" and "how" in migrants volunteering, we now move on to the "what", i.e. the main activities to which immigrant volunteers tend to contribute and the roles they undertake. The most common ones tend to be those involving valuable skills that migrants posses: (intercultural) mediation services is the most frequently practiced with a share of 26.7 percent, and tutoring and/or mentoring is second at a percentage of 24 percent. Then come communication services and community work at 13.3 and 12 percent respectively, while various different activities (including project management, counselling, administrative support, and various manual tasks) make up the remaining 24 percent.

Figure 9. Benefits of migrants' volunteering

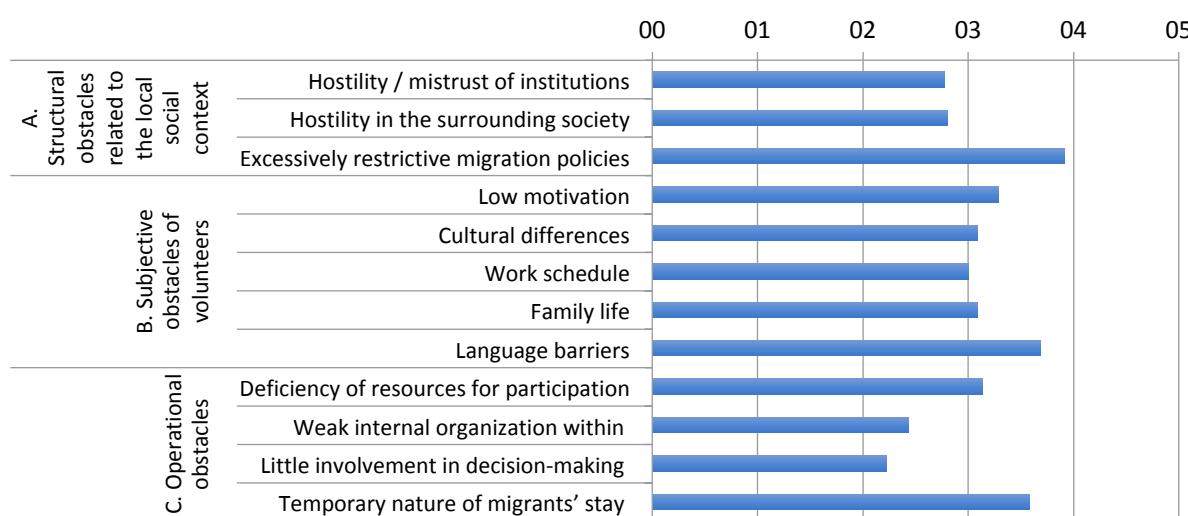


Moving on to an assessment of the experience of involving migrant volunteers, we begin with the perceived benefits of volunteering for the volunteers themselves with respect to their integration pathways. Responses here were on an 1-5 Likert scale, with 1 indicating a minimum score and 5 a maximum. The chart above presents mean scores for a list of such benefits, clearly illustrating the importance attributed to all, yet with the development of a sense of belonging as well as cultural exchange through social connections scoring higher than 4. On the other hand, respondents acknowledge that involving people of migrant background as volunteers also benefits their organizations. Most importantly, they highlight that migrant volunteers help organisations to better approach their beneficiaries (62.5 percent), while some (22 percent) stress improvements in their organisation's level of competence and professionalism, and only few (15.5 percent) value the diversification of issues addressed.

Similarly, we asked respondents to reflect on the obstacles to volunteering among migrants, by evaluating a series of factors that possibly hinder their voluntary participation. Of the broad categorisation of structural, subjective and operational obstacles, as shown in the Graph bellow, the former two pointing to institutional barriers and the personal circumstances of migrants are assessed as the most crucial, each with an overall mean score of about 3.2. Among the former, excessively restrictive immigration policies score higher at 3.9, while among the latter language barriers is thought to be a serious obstacle scoring 3.7. Operational obstacles concerning the organisations and the ways in which they involve migrant volunteers are not seen as important, with the exception of the temporariness of migrants' involvement (mean score 3.6), possibly reflecting their precarious status (thus relating to structural factors).

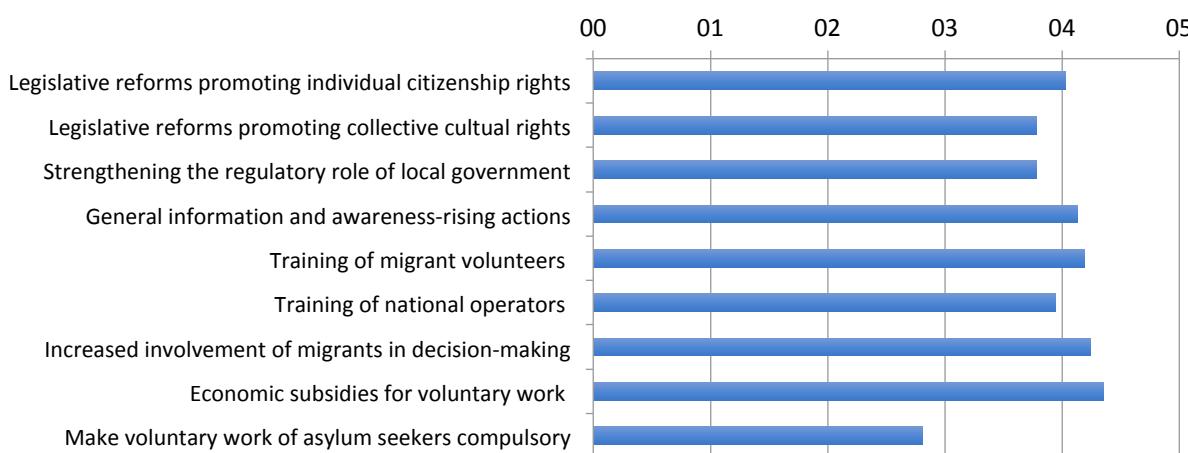


Figure 10. Factors hindering migrants' voluntary participation



By contrast, respondents valued highly many of the listed factors that can potentially facilitate the removal of the aforementioned obstacles, as shown on the Figure bellow. Above all, crucial appear to be the organisations' ability to provide stipends covering expenses, the increased involvement of (migrant) volunteers in decision-making, their training, organising information and awareness raising campaigns addressing the wider public, as well as legislative reforms promoting citizenship rights to migrants and refugees are also judged to be of great importance – all achieving a mean score of 4 or higher. The latter two issues, after all, resonate with the weight of structural obstacles noted above. Less importance is attributed to the last factor pointing to policy measures making "voluntary" work compulsory for asylum seekers until final decision on their application – which appears to be rejected as a contradiction in terms.

Figure 11. Factors that can facilitate volunteering among migrants

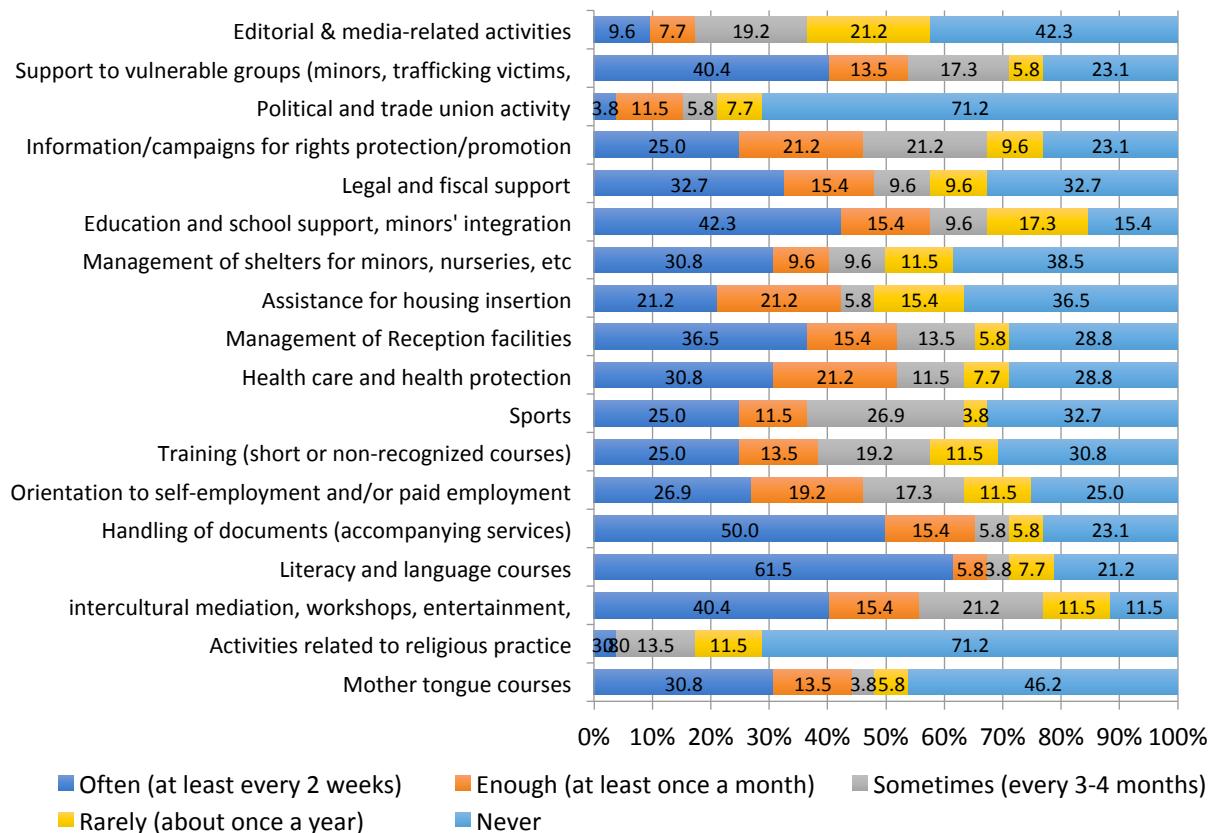


3.4 Volunteering for migrants: activities and impact

In the third section of the questionnaire, respondents were broadly asked about their whole range of voluntary activities addressing migrants, the outcomes of those activities e.g. in terms of their effectiveness and impact, as well as their collaborations with other organisations and overall experience of working with migrants.

The full range of voluntary activities implemented in the last two years for the benefit of different groups of migrants is listed, by frequency, on Figure 13. In most of the sample organisations, the activities taking place more often or frequently enough, i.e. at least on bi-weekly basis or at least once a month include: language and literacy classes (over 67 percent), legal support, i.e. the handling of documents (65.4 percent), education and school support for the integration of minors (nearly 58 percent), as well as activities such as intercultural workshops, awareness-rising, entertainment and intercultural mediation (about 56 percent). Just over half of the organisations (52-54 percent) are also implementing at least once a month activities related to the assistance and protection of vulnerable groups (including minors), the management of reception facilities, and health care. On the other hand, less common are activities related to religious practice or political and trade union activity, which the majority of organisations (about 83 and 79 percent respectively) have rarely or never implemented.

Figure 12. Frequency of voluntary activities addressed to migrants in the last 2 years



In developing and implementing those activities, cooperation between organizations appears to be crucial. More specifically, over 80 percent of participant organisations cooperate with other organizations or institutions. Among them, 83.3 percent cooperate with other non-profit organizations and NGOs and two thirds with local authorities or public services (the relevant question allowed for multiple responses). Just below half work with small local civil society groups but also with international organisations (e.g. UNHCR, IOM) and EU agencies (45.2 and 47.6 percent respectively), and about one out of four collaborate with migrant associations. Among the specific responses we received, 80 different collaborating organisations and institutions were named, mostly national (35.5 percent) and international (25.6 percent) NGOs (the latter including religious organisations), local authorities, public bodies or services (12.5 percent), international organisations such as the UNHCR or IOM (6.6 percent each), as well as small independent projects set up by transnational groups, local non-profit organisations, migrant associations or grassroots activist groups or initiatives (5 percent each).

In most cases (56 percent), these activities are addressed to migrants irrespective of age or gender, yet with women being the exclusive target of some 22 percent of organisations, while one out of ten cater respectively for minors/children and men. Similarly, 45 percent target all migrants irrespectively of legal status, yet more than one third of organisations address specifically refugees and asylum seekers, while 18.5 service only people with legal or citizenship status.

Figure 13. Evaluating the benefits of volunteering for/with migrants

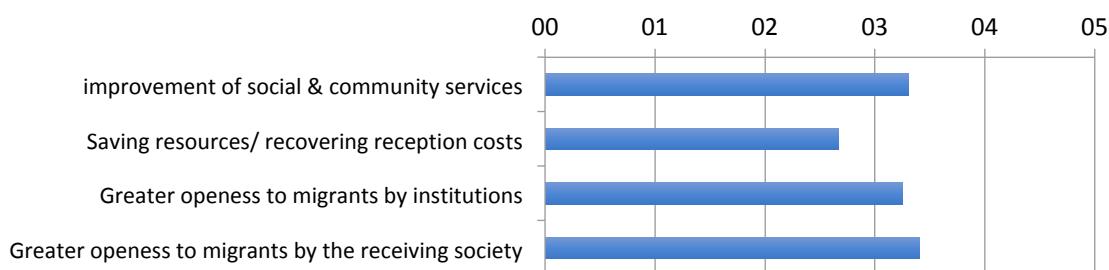


Turning now to how the respondents self-evaluate the outcomes of their voluntary activities in terms of their intended targets, we first asked respondents to assess a series of benefits of volunteering to migrant beneficiaries, as named in the above Graph, by giving a score from 1 to 5. Accordingly, voluntarism appears to be most beneficial (i.e. with the higher average scores) in that it crucially contributes to the alleviation of the beneficiaries' isolation and the widening of their social relations (mean score 4.25). Next



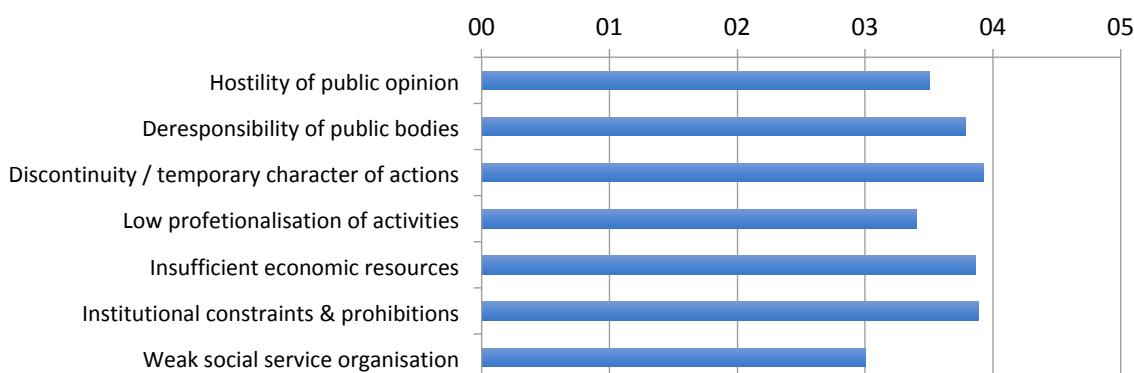
(close to 4) come their greater autonomy and self-mobilisation to respond to their needs, the development of a sense of belonging and of an interest in the host society context, their access to social services and opportunities in the local context, and the learning of the local language. However, responses also point to the limits of voluntary activities, which do not seem to be able to make a difference in the migrants' housing or health conditions or their labour market pathways and economic well being.

Figure 14. Evaluation of the benefits of voluntary activities on the local context



When asked, however, to evaluate the extent to which their organisations' activities are beneficial for the local societies in which they intervene, respondents were more sceptical. As shown in the above chart, the impact is marked as just above average in most cases, especially in saving resources locally and recovering the costs of reception costs, which is not really thought to be tangible.

Figure 15. Factors limiting the effectiveness of voluntary activities



Lastly, respondents were similarly asked to indicate the factors that hinder or limit the effectiveness of their voluntary activities. Most factors listed on the last Figure are thought to have some impact, yet respondents appear to emphasise more the institutional constraints and restrictions, the limited financial resources but also "discontinuity" of project-dependent activities which partly relates to the (un)availability of funding (mean scores 3.9), as well as the unwillingness of public bodies to assume responsibility reflecting chronic malfunctions of the Greek administration that form part of institutional constraints (score 3.8). This resonates with the factors earlier depicted to



hinder migrants' participation in volunteering work. After all, half of the general comments we received by 14 respondents in our final open-ended question point to problems with the administration, with the legal framework for volunteering or with migration and asylum policy at large. By contrast, respondents do not appear to think that a hostile public opinion significantly limits the effectiveness of their activities.

3.5 Concluding remarks

Based on the analysis of our survey results, we hereby draw some preliminary conclusions regarding certain dimensions of voluntarism and its relationship with the social integration of migrants in Greece. Despite the small sample size, the organisations that participated in our survey constitute, on a good level, a representing (even if not statistically representative) part of civil society organizations that are currently active in Greece running activities and projects concerning migrants, refugees and asylum seekers. There is representation from both large and smaller organizations, from public bodies and grassroots groups. So we believe we have been able to sketch an overall image, since the activities and modus operandi of civil society organizations may differ according to their size and institutional form. It is important to note that the conjuncture and aftermath of the so-called "refugee crisis" of 2015-16 has very much shaped the picture we have encountered on the field and captured through the survey.

In general, volunteering by and for immigrants appears to be inclusive, without limitations or discriminations, whether migrants are offering or receiving voluntary services. The same applies to voluntary activities, which are diverse and cover a wide spectrum of needs. The voluntary work of migrants appears to have multiple positive effects on both individuals and organisations. For the volunteers themselves, it facilitates empowerment and the development of a sense of belonging through specific forms of sociality, and sometimes it may also have more practical benefits (language learning, developing professional skills, finding a job). For organisations, it crucially bridges them with their "beneficiaries" e.g. in terms of language and culture.

On the other hand, voluntarism plays an important role in the activities implemented by various organisations to address the needs of migrants, refugees and asylum seekers, but also has its limitations. First, because a good part of these activities are implemented by paid employees, often on short contracts relating to project-based work and the availability of funding. Secondly, because there are limits to the level and scale such activities may help, whilst many of the actual problems facing especially recently arrived migrants derive from restrictive immigration and asylum policies at national or EU level, as well as from chronic malfunctions of the Greek administration and bureaucracy. Still, however, there are tangible signs of small-scale activities actually reaching their goals and making a difference for a good number of people.

With respect to the project VAI's central question, one could say that immigrants volunteering contributes in various ways to the social integration of immigrants in Greece, but rather indirectly. Essentially, volunteering contributes to the improvement



of some life aspects of immigrants and to the development of certain necessary skills that will help them to “stand better on their own feet”.

Nevertheless, the response rate was low resulting in a small sample size, especially during the scheduled phase of the study. The low response rate may be partly explained by the limited human resources of most organisations, placed on actual work on the ground at a time of increased needs and important shifts in migration flows, as well as in changing policies and politics. Yet some of the feedback we have received by research participants point to internal problems of the questionnaire itself. Such problems are reflected on its rather rigid structure and format, the phrasing of some questions and responses, issues of translation and an overall “academic” approach. Achieving a larger sample size by early Autumn 2018 may have helped us to an extent overcome problems of representativeness. However, in order to counterbalance the limitations of the online survey and be able to extent and deepen the scope of our research, we had already placed more efforts in the qualitative part of the study, by deliberately reaching out to more interviewees and focus group participants. A preliminary analysis of this much richer and detailed material is presented in the next chapter.



4. Qualitative research at the local level: preliminary analysis

4.1 Focus Group discussions with volunteers and beneficiaries

4.1.1 Access to the field, participants, methodology

We have organised six focus group discussions in Athens, Thessaloniki, Pireaus, Ritsona (central Greece) and Kilkis (northern Greece), which took place between 22 May and 4 July 2018. Four of them were arranged by the Hellenic Red Cross, the other two by Aristotle University team. Some key information is given in the Table bellow. Altogether, a total of 35 people took part in the discussions, 24 men and 11 women, most being recently arrived refugees and asylum seekers. In their majority, participants are volunteers themselves, or have been in the past.

Table 2. Focus groups sample & profile of participants

ID	FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION			PARTICIPANTS	
	date	place	venue	N	Group profile
1	22/05/18	Athens	HRC MFC, Athens	5	HRC-trained MFC volunteers: refugees (Burundi, Afghanistan, Pakistan) & Greek (student, pensioner)
2	30/05/18	Thes/niki	HRC MFC, Thessaloniki	6	HRC MFC volunteers: four recently-arrived migrants/refugees (Syria, Iran, two Pakistanis), an expat worker (Turkey) and an international student (Algeria)
3	06/06/18	Athens	HRC Social Welfare,	4	HRC volunteers: a Greek pensioner, an HRC Syrian translator with volunteer background, and two Syrian refugees residents of Ritsona camp
4	07/06/18	Pireaus	Migrants Integration Centre, Mun. of Pireaus	9	Beneficiaries (students of Greek language classes), some with informal volunteering experience (Syrians, Palestinians, Afghanis, Egyptian), including 5 women
5	15/06/18	Ritsona	Refugee Hospitality Structure (camp)	7	HRC-project former volunteers & beneficiaries (camp residents): all refugees of Syrian Kurdish background
6	04/07/18	Kilkis	OMNES housing & integration project	4	Volunteers/activists in a local organisation that evolved from grassroots volunteering in Idomeni: two men / two women, three locals and a former international aid-worker

All discussions began by informing participants on the aims and scope of the study and the purpose of the interviews, in order to establish a trusted relation. The languages used were Greek, English and Arabic (with the help of translators). Discussions were recorded upon the participants' consent, and detailed notes were taken in their course. These have been used in the analysis, alongside partial transcription of the discussions. The analysis gives a summary outline of each focus group, including a description of its venue and context, an overview of the organisation, a focus on emerging issues sometimes enriched with extracts from the discussions to highlight different views or experiences. Focus groups are numbered by sequential order according to the date they took place, as in the Table. We descriptively refer to specific participants without using their names, in order to safeguard their anonymity.



4.1.2 Key findings

Focus Group 1

The first focus group took place at the new (as of April 2017) premises of the Red Cross' Multi-Functional Centre (MFC) for Social Support and Integration of Refugees in Central Athens²⁸. The Athens MFC runs since 1997, initially co-funded by the European Refugee Fund and the Ministry of Labor, Social Security and Welfare. Since 2016, the programme is financed by DG ECHO with support from the Danish Red Cross and the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies. At the moment, the MFC provides basic information (e.g. on rights, legal procedures, health and social services to refugees) in various languages and operates a Hotline advising on these matters; it also offers legal support, psychological support, as well as Greek and English language classes; it also hosts a social meeting space for adults and a playground for kids and their parents.

Five participants took part in the discussion, all HRC-trained MFC volunteers: three recently arrived refugee men from Afghanistan, Burundi and Pakistan, and two Greek women, a student and a pensioner. The discussion lasted for about 3 hours, and took place in English, with some interruptions for Greek translation as required by one of the Greek participants. Also present were members of the AUTh and HRC teams.

Here are some of our interlocutors' reactions when asked about their own views on what they do: "I am doing the obvious: helping children in their right to learn"; "Helping people to find their own way..."; "Offering orientation to people who do not know where to seek help...". More specifically, the Greek student was encouraged to volunteer by a friend who already did so; she started by helping out at the Hotline, then moved to offer English language courses to a group of children. The retired lady has been an HRC volunteer for more than 10 years, with rich experience in different activities and various groups of beneficiaries; in the recent years she is involved in activities aiming at the labour market integration of migrants and refugees, including educational programmes, and in intercultural events. The Pakistani migrant is a nurse by training, in Greece since 2011 and with volunteer experience in the past; he joined the HRC in 2017 and provides interpretation in health related issues. The man from Afghanistan had crossed through Greece in 2008 and worked in Norway for 6 months, before re-migrating again in 2016; he was a volunteer translator for 3 months in Lesvos, and met volunteers of the Danish Red Cross at the "Olive Grove" outside the Moria "hotspot"; once in Athens he deliberately sought to volunteer for the Red Cross, and in the last 5 months he interprets for the Hotline information service. The participant from Burundi has arrived in 2016 in the island of Chios, where he volunteered with the UNHCR and international NGOs in various activities; he wanted to continue doing so in Athens and has been an HRC volunteer for about a year, helping out mostly in various administrative tasks.

²⁸ For more info on the Red Cross Multi-Functional Centres in Athens and Thessaloniki see:
<https://redcrossmfcwixsite.com/athens-thessaloniki>



They all regard very positively their voluntary experiences. Participants of migrant background in particular underlined the skills acquired and the things they have learned, as well as sociality and personal relationships. More generally, they see the activities they are involved in voluntarily as beneficial in immigrants' pathways to integration, especially at the level of socialisation, intercultural exchanges, etc.: apart from "getting to know" Greeks and the Greek culture, the various interethnic encounters were valued as important (e.g. the Burundian community met in joint activities with other migrant communities from Afghanistan, Cameroon, etc). Greek participants too, generally stressed the importance of volunteerism for migrants' integration.

There was some disagreement in response to our question on policies. Having all agreed on the importance of language learning and its role as major factor hindering migrants' civic participation and integration at large, some suggested that Greek language courses should be offered by the State. Most were positive at the idea of volunteers receiving a compensation for their basic expenses (transportation, meals, etc). Nevertheless, migrant participants thought positively about the current government e.g. with respect to more straightforward asylum procedures as compared to the recent past, a view that was countered by Greek participants arguing that some of the services now available have developed in the aftermath of the "refugee crisis" and are not exclusively state-run. One participant expressed the view that idleness should be fought by all means and on these grounds an institutionalised form of voluntarism could be acceptable (e.g. as a prerequisite for asylum); this opinion was debated as ironic, since voluntarism "comes from inside you" and cannot be imposed. Despite this difference, they agreed that the state has a role to play in promoting volunteerism.

Focus Group 2

The second focus group took place at the premises of the Red Cross' Multi-Functional Centre for Refugees and Immigrants in downtown Thessaloniki. The MFC opened in December 2017, with British Red Cross sponsorship and support from the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies. It currently provides casework and orientation services (e.g. on asylum, health care, housing, education, employment, etc), interpretation, and Greek and English language courses. It also runs a financial assistance programme and takes part in the Restoring Family Links programme.

The discussion, which lasted just over 1,5 hours, involved six participants and the entire AUTH research team: recently arrived refugees from Syria and Iran, two Pakistani migrants, a female expat worker from Turkey, and an international PhD researcher from Algeria. Half were amidst their volunteer training programme, while the others have been volunteering for some time. Their context of engagement and individual motives varied considerably. One of the Pakistani men, who sought "to see the world" after receiving his degree and came as an international worker, quit his job and is now on his third year of volunteering in various locations in Greece, at the moment full time for the HRC MFC and three other organisations. His co-national, by contrast, encountered



voluntarism as a beneficiary upon arrival in Thessaloniki in 2016, and got involved with the Medecins Du Monde where he received his training. Others had past voluntary experience, like the Turkish woman who had volunteered in the context of the 1999 Istanbul earthquake as a girl scout, and took seriously a friend's suggestion to volunteer. Encouraged by friends was also the Syrian participant, while the Iranian linked his decision to volunteer to his experience of minority rights activism in his country. Lastly, the Algerian researcher felt he could be useful with his knowledge of languages.

The MFC in Thessaloniki follows a rotation system with its volunteers, so they get the chance to be engaged in various posts and activities, all involving translation and cultural mediation. When asked about their views on what they do, some stressed the importance of self-organisation: "When no one helps us we have to help each other", said one of them, and another added that "volunteers fill the gap". Commenting on the difference that migrant volunteers can particularly make, a participant underlined that "an immigrant knows better about another immigrant", a view to which another discussant agreed and took further by saying: "We are the tongue, we are the ears for the migrants and other beneficiaries. We are a kind of bridge". Somebody else added that "The most important thing is to communicate, and communicate properly", pointing not only to language communication, but also cultural knowledge.

Reflecting on the outcomes and constraints of volunteering, they all emphasised the importance of having spare time as well as some degree of financial and other forms of security: "you first have to help yourself in order to be able to help others", said one. Yet most were ambivalent on the possibility to continue their engagement in the long run, e.g. when they may find a proper job – which they see as essential for integration. They underlined how important is for them the fact that they receive training and get a relevant certificate, and that they get a refund for expenses dependent on the time they devote as volunteers, while they suggested Greek language courses as a way to potentially motivate more migrants to volunteer.

Focus Group 3

The third focus group took place in Greek (with translation from/to Arabic), at one of the premises of the HRC Social Welfare Division in Central Athens, and lasted for nearly 2 hours. It involved four participants: a Greek lady, mother of two and a long-term volunteer after retiring, in the last two years with the HRC; a Syrian lawyer who returned to Greece in 2016 having studied and worked here in the past – he started volunteering at the port of Piraeus in 2016 where, after a few months of offering independently interpretation services, he liaised with the HRC and now combines voluntary and paid work; and two Syrian men, former residents at the refugee camp at Ritsona and recently moved to flats in Athens, who volunteered with members of their families in HRC projects on the site (see Focus Group 5). The extracts below are from the participants' responses to our questions about their motives and experiences of volunteering:



There was no motive in the beginning, just the motive to help as I have had been helped when I was in need. The training I have received was very helpful, I've learned new things, including my rights and people's needs... We were traumatised by the war, we have lived various adventures, seen very ugly things... When we came here and started getting involved... volunteering took us out of this chaos... and then our perspective started changing... We have learned to give, not just to receive. When you help someone in need you also take satisfaction (Syrian man, 47)

I had a good life in Syria... but then I have lost my home, my shop, I have lost everything... This is my way to react, in order to recover my strength... It is about humanism, this is the reason, when you give you feel good yourself... It is also an example (Syrian man, 50)

When you start you are motivated by the thought that you should do something for the other in need... When you see the outcome, that some people are now better, this is a great satisfaction. Voluntarism is a type of work that is not financially remunerated, but does have a kind of payback: a great sense of satisfaction, the feelings and looks of people are invaluable... You become a better human being... (Greek retired lady)

I personally like to discover things. If I come across a closed door I want to open it. I have opened this door and a whole new world has opened... Many things have changed in my perspective, I started valuing other things beyond money... Even when I started working as a paid employee... I had to be there at 9:00 but asked to start two hours earlier and used to return home at 19:00... (Syrian translator).

In assessing her experience of volunteering and collaborating with migrant volunteers at the camp, the Greek lady commented on the integration prospects of voluntarism, to which the Syrian translator disagreed based on his own "insider" view:

First and foremost is to be able to build a daily life... as soon as basic needs are satisfied... voluntarism is important for them to integrate... since they become valuable to other people... Beyond the moral compensation, a certificate of voluntary work adds on their CV, so on everything they may want to do in order to start their life again.

I don't think there are direct benefits really, apart from getting occupied and stop thinking what they've left behind...

Yet one of the former camp residents combined aspects of both views in assessing his own experience, saying that adapting specifically to his new situation was the most important benefit for him. On the other hand, language barriers and different cultural values especially regarding informal codes of conduct e.g. between men (camp residents) and women (volunteers), or between different age groups, were mentioned as problems in the beginning, which were later overcome with experience and with the organisation's support. The translator stressed his need to bypass several regulations in order to establish confidence with camp residents, e.g. by entering their tents or giving his personal phone number and responding to calls off his working hours or in weekends. When asked to offer their broader comments on policies, participants appeared to be critical of the slow response of the State in "doing its job", and of the high salaries of large international NGOs with little practical involvement on the field.



Focus Group 4

The fourth focus group was arranged with the kind help of our VAI partners at the Municipality of Piraeus Directorate for Public Health and took place at the premises of the Municipality's Immigrant Integration Centre. Local Immigrant Integration Centres have been created in the last 1,5 years or so across major Municipalities in Greece as annexes to the new municipal Community Centres financed through the European Social Fund and EU structural funds. They operate as front desks providing information, orientation and support to residents regarding the full range of social services available at the local level. They offer Greek language and vocational training classes to migrants, and organise intercultural activities for adults and children.

This discussion involved nine participants, including five women and three minors, all beneficiaries of various voluntary activities and services provided at the Centre, specifically gathered for their Greek language class. They are recent refugees from Syria, Palestine, Afghanistan and Egypt, now accommodated in flats in the wider Piraeus area. Also present was their Greek language tutor, who acted as our "gatekeeper", and a long-established Syrian migrant who voluntarily assisted with translation from/to Arabic (the researcher was able to directly communicate in English with only three participants). Most reacted negatively when asked about their experiences in volunteering, as none of them was really a volunteer at the moment. Yet, during the discussion and while hearing what others had to say, some stood out to talk about their own past involvement.

- A young Egyptian man was positively surprised after coming close to a voluntary organisation, and started getting involved by following first-aid courses, which though had to stop in order to keep up with school.
- A Syrian teacher was part of a self-organised citizens' initiative collecting food or money and taking care of the wounded during the ISIS siege of his hometown.
- A young woman from Palestine mentioned voluntary engagement involving fundraising and collecting food and clothing in Gaza and Jordan, as well as upon arrival in Athens, which she linked to her Muslim faith.
- Her sister, a teenager, has been a school traffic controller in her hometown, and was approached to volunteer at the Orange House NGO where she now takes English classes – but she is reluctant being still a pupil.
- During her stay in Lesvos, a young Syrian lady was befriending other women volunteering with international NGOs, through whom she started translating; she only occasionally now continues to do so but only for her relatives or friends.
- Her brother, a 17 years old, recalled his experience of sharing his phone with others on the boat from Turkey, and of helping people to come out of the sea.
- A young Afghan man had volunteered for months during his stay in Samos island, as an English-Farsi interpreter for a medical international NGO, and in sorting out donation clothing with the Samos Volunteers group.
- During the same period, his 63 years old mother and 27 years old sister took part in tutoring at a sewing workshop for ladies.



They all evaluated those experiences as positive and fulfilling:

Even in the worst of conditions, this is always something positive... we become humans again (Syrian teacher)

You come to sense such nice and sweet feelings, you can't imagine (Palestinian lady)

It is so nice to help people and see their smile, this is the most important thing from my offering, I made people happy... and think that some may remember me (Syrian lady)

There is an Afghan saying... "serving the people is a good worship"... it's about humanism... (Afghan man)

I felt amazed helping, but I also gained something too, I gave a bit of my culture and was handed over another culture... a beautiful experience (Afghan lady)

When asked why they do not continue volunteering, most of the participants stressed their situation as refugees, e.g. in respect to their asylum/relocation procedures and the related uncertainty, their isolation once moved into flats despite their improved living space, but most of all their language issues hindering communication. They did not comment on the policy or funding questions. Given the live translation, our discussion lasted for nearly 3 hours. Most participants were originally reluctant and suspicious, encouraged to trust us after their tutor's assurances. Yet in the end they acknowledged that some degree of confidence was established in the course of the discussion, and agreed that they were happy to talk about such experiences.

Focus Group 5

The fifth focus group took place at the "open refugee hospitality structure" of Ritsona, after submitting an official request to visit the camp upon initiative of the HRC. The camp is based near Chalkida, prefectoral capital of Evia, and at present hosts about 850 residents, 78 percent from Syria²⁹. It opened in Spring 2016 and initially conditions were very bad (there were instances of floods when refugees were still residing in tents). It was then reconstructed by the end of that year with small-prefabricated houses (containers) and various common spaces with financial support from the United Arab Emirates, and since then is regarded among the camps with relatively dignified conditions. The HRC was involved in the reconstruction and used to operate various projects until February 2018, in part of which it had managed to mobilise residents. Of crucial importance was the help of the aforementioned Syrian translator and former HRC intercultural mediator on the site, who acted as "gatekeeper" and provided interpretation on the spot. We have also benefited from the kind participation of a long-term HRC volunteer (a Greek retired lady) with knowledge of the site.

Together with the researcher, the three drove nearly 70 klms from Athens. Our visit coincided with the Eid-al-Fitr, the celebration at the end of Ramadan. We visited people

²⁹ See UNHCR Information Management Unit, Site Profiles in Greece for June 2018 (data from the Site Management Support): <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/download/64795>.



in their living spaces and were kindly offered the special sweets made for the day. We ended up in the improvised yard of one of the containers, nicely decorated with flowerpots and with valuable shade on a hot sunny day. People were coming and going, passing by to salute our translator and exchange wishes. Only those who stayed along the 70 minutes of the discussion were "counted" as participants: they are long-term camp residents and beneficiaries of voluntary activities who had volunteered themselves in HRC projects and received relevant training. The discussion continued for another 40 minutes at the home of one participant, now with three minors who took part in some of the activities. All are refugees of Syrian Kurdish background except for one who is a Kurd from Turkey, and most wait for their relocation to other EU countries.

Most were involved as volunteers with the HRC soon after their arrival, which they until then knew as providing medical services only. Apart from the Red Cross recognisable logo, they attribute a good deal of their mobilisation to our Syrian translator, who entered their tents to get to know them personally and ask about their needs – often bypassing the organisation's code of practice. One had informal voluntary experience from his time at the Chios "hotspot" just after crossing from Turkey. Most of the activities they were involved in had to do with everyday deeds to improve their conditions and life in the camp: cleaning and hygiene, food preparation, first-aid (after training), and various manual tasks including making furniture and other wood constructions, as well as gardening including fresh vegetable production, etc. Some were more active and took initiative to organise e.g. sports activities, woodwork or saz training classes, or occasional music and other cultural events (such as an art exhibition of refugee paintings).

The participants knew nothing of the source of funding for the activities they got involved in, and were largely unaware of any relevant policies, apart from their asylum and relocation procedures. They had all stopped volunteering after the Red Cross left the site, and some complained that voluntary organisations now active in the camp are doing activities of no interest to them (e.g. creative occupation for children) and are generally reluctant to directly involve them. They overall appeared quite satisfied from both the services they were receiving and their mobilisation as HRC volunteers until a few months ago, and often compared that experience with their daily routine at present. When asked about their motives for and benefits from volunteering, they all agreed on the "psychological problems" they were facing upon arrival, which getting mobilised helped them overcome: one of the participants faced severe depression that kept him almost constantly in his tent for a couple of months, before he started taking part in voluntary activities. The ways they overall articulated the benefits of their voluntary experience related to "taking their life in their hands", "changing behaviour and views of humanism", and creatively spending their days in the camp, as well as the kind of sociality born out of their voluntary work – something that they were now missing.



Focus Group 6

What was originally planned as an interview with a key member of OMNES took the form of a focus group between the AUTH researcher and four participants: two men and two women, three locals and a former international aid-worker from France now volunteering for the organisation. It took place at the OMNES' premises in the northern Greek town of Kilkis, about 50 klm from Thessaloniki, and lasted for about 2 hours.

OMNES is a voluntary association that evolved from a loose grassroots collective of local volunteers who originally met through various social movements. In the fall of 2014, they mobilised to assist migrants crossing the nearby Idomeni border, on their way to northern Europe along the "Balkan route", and were among the first to be there before the growth in border crossings in the course of 2015 and long before any action was taken by the UNHCR, big NGOs, or the state. After the border closed in early 2016, the group was called by local authorities to assist at the Mazaraki camp at Cherso, where migrants started being relocated from the makeshift camp of Idomeni³⁰. Being sceptical of the logic of camps and of the prospect of long stay under inhumane conditions, the group changed its tactics and started hosting temporarily camp residents in local people's homes. With 75 families hosted by summer that year, the "housing project" was born, based on the idea of a durable housing solution that can help refugees and also benefit local communities at times of recession and high unemployment.

In recognition of their limited experience, they produced a carefully designed feasibility study planning for the housing of 1200 migrants from the camp at a low cost per person. A pilot project put in practice the study's provisions for 16 families. It was presented to local authorities, the Ministry for Immigration Policy, the UNHCR, various NGOs, and the European Parliament (July 2016). This led to the formation of OMNES, a registered voluntary association since 2017 with dozens of volunteers but now also employing 57 paid staff, having received funding from several independent NGOs, including Help Refugees who also offer technical assistance. Building on the local history of settling Pontian refugees in the 1920s, the housing project has expanded to also include local people from vulnerable social groups (27 in a total of 521 beneficiaries). The range of activities has also widened with an explicit emphasis on integration, including legal support, language and vocational training courses, labour market integration, as well as a social space with a library, Wi-Fi access and a children's place.

Although they were locally rooted and original members knew each other for years, they were open to include both international and migrant volunteers. Participants have an overall positive opinion on the impact of voluntary participation on individuals pathway

³⁰ While migrants were gathering in large numbers by the border with N. Macedonia outside the village of Idomeni since the summer of 2015, the closure of borders in early 2016 led to the formation of a growing makeshift camp of about 9-10,000 residents, with estimates bringing its population up to nearly 15,000 in its peak. The camp was finally evacuated at the end of May 2016.



to integration: "from a person who just used to demand, now s/he comes to offer, and thus becomes a human being... and part of this society". The extract below refers to the trajectory of a specific person as an example:

There are people... who voluntarily stood out to support their fellow human beings... I will just indicatively refer to M. ... He could speak English and realised the people's inability to express themselves... so without any personal gain or benefit, in seeing us trying to help, he came out... got along well with us and took part in all our efforts. This led us to know him better, but also him to get to know us and our beliefs... So voluntarism brought closer and in a direct and true way local people and migrants or refugees, this was very important. This person... when we were running the pilot project, he came with us to help, he also came to help when we set up OMNES... he got out of the camp and stayed in a flat in Kilkis, then we worked for OMNES, we hired him, now he studies in Thessaloniki to become a professional interpreter in order to go on with his life...

Participants were well aware of several problems and limitations they have faced in these last four years or so. Some were related to state policies of which they were highly critical, especially to legal changes posing barriers to voluntarism, while at the same time the group acknowledged the limits of volunteerism to alone address certain issues:

There was a lack of synergy with official bodies ... At least at the outset, it was only the volunteer groups who knew how many people had arrived... the authorities did not know this. Another thing is the legal framework that constantly changes... (coordinator, male)

For instance with respect to protection related issues, the limitations of volunteer on rotation and turnover, you cannot be dealing as a volunteer with certain issues... (international volunteer, female)

For instance, we have volunteer interpreters in OMNES, young people who have followed training seminars and they are very happy about that, they support us, but they cannot intervene on the day-to-day [running of the organization]... and there also limitations relating to legislation, for instance the new addition on data protection brings some restrictions to voluntary action... (social worker, female)

Our interlocutors stressed the group's continuous yet constructive reflections on existing or emerging challenges, and their constant need to adapt and change their strategies. From institutional constraints to full-scale implementation of the housing project ("we were not a legal entity, we were just a group of friends..."), to their need to gain confidence and support among the local community at a time that growing concerns about large numbers of migrants in the area were leading to rising sympathy for the far right. Of major interest is the emphasis placed on the local community, with local spending of funds and job-creation, but also building an inclusive local identity with references to the refugee past of the natives while being welcoming to newcomers in an area long suffering from depopulation. Their planned next steps intend to go further on that route e.g. by setting up social enterprises and cooperatives to employ both migrants and natives and boost the local economy. All this led us to regard it as a major example of good practice, especially in local settings outside large metropolitan areas.



4.1.3 Concluding remarks

Some preliminary conclusions can be drawn from the focus groups analysis. The "refugee crisis" has decisively impacted on deepening and expanding civil society initiatives broadly addressed to migrants, and on augmenting the possibilities for and potential of volunteering. The pressing needs of thousands of people and the availability of funding in response to a situation defined as emergency have led organisations as established as the HRC, but also by individual volunteers and activists, to take action. The latter are driven by a variety of subjective motives, often inspired by a charitable approach yet sometimes by a political worldview. Rather than a unidirectional gesture of giving, volunteering pays back albeit on an emotional and social level, and sometimes also practically. Practical benefits are important for migrants in particular, whose contribution is a reality actively acknowledged by civil society actors, including large hierarchical organisations such as the HRC. The latter is widely recognisable and able to provide training, certificates or references that could help finding a job.

Few migrants had past experience, but those who entered Greece during the latest "waves" have encountered voluntarism as beneficiaries in the island ports of entry, refugee camps, urban centres, or border areas. How one comes to be involved is highly coincidental and may depend on first experiences or mere acquaintances, yet also reflects individual features: the ability to communicate, or a personal drive to help or simply stay active. Even if integration is a rather long and multifaceted process, empowerment and participation, but also socialisation and networking are crucial for the migrants' first steps in the host society. Nevertheless, there are many constraints for them to participate, especially for recent arrivals, relating to their status, circumstances and communication barriers, some of which reflect restrictive migration policies. Some of the limits of voluntarism have also been underlined.

4.2 Individual interviews with volunteers and key informants

4.2.1 Access to the field, participants, methodology

Individual interviews have taken place from 22 May 2018 to 17 July 2018, in the major urban centres of Greece: Athens, Piraeus and Thessaloniki. The main criterion for locating and contacting (potential) participants was their voluntary experience in at least one organisation, project or activity that includes migrants and/or refugees among its beneficiaries. However, we have also included key-informants who have a supervisory role in relevant activities involving volunteering. On these grounds, two separate sets of interviews have been conducted by the two Greek research teams, resulting in a total sample of 36 participants, with key details summed on Tables 7 and 8 below.

One set (Table 7) comprises of 20 interviews with 21 individuals (including a joint interview), 13 in Thessaloniki and seven in Athens and Piraeus, involving a wide-



spanning variety of backgrounds, activities and organisational structures. It comprises 13 men and eight women: 10 Greeks (mostly young people, including four students), six long-settled migrants (two Palestinians, a Jordanian of Palestinian roots, an Afghani, a Mexican), two recently arrived refugees (Congolese, Palestinian) and three international volunteers. Thirteen were active volunteers, five had voluntary experience in the recent past (all but one now combining volunteering with paid employment in the same field), and three are key-informants in a position of responsibility (a local authority, an international organisation, a national NGO). All but five are independent volunteers and half have been volunteering in several organisations, activities and projects. Interviews were arranged through contacts made by the Aristotle University team in approaching potential respondents to the online questionnaire, personal acquaintances, kind assistance of our VAI partner at the Municipality of Piraeus, and "snowballing".

The other set (Table 8) focuses on 16 Hellenic Red Cross volunteers of various backgrounds in Athens and Piraeus. it comprises interviews with 10 native Greek women (most of whom are pensioners), four recent refugees (two Syrian men, an Egyptian lady, a Senegalese) and two men of migrant background (both of Syrian origins). Two had started as independent volunteers and later joined the Red Cross, one had started as an intern and continued as volunteer, one has come to volunteer from Britain. They have all received the HRC volunteer training course, while some of the Greek interviewees have been long volunteering with the HRC. Five are attached specifically to the Red Cross Multifunctional Centre (MFC) in Athens, while the majority are involved in several different activities. Evidently, these interviews were arranged by the HRC researcher.

All interviews took place face-to-face, mostly in Greek but also in English and French. In order to establish trust, all participants were informed beforehand about the aims and scope of the study and the purpose and future use of the interviews. Those in the first set took the form of in-depth discussions lasting from about 40 min to nearly five hours (exceptionally), and were in their majority recorded with the participant's consent. A more structured approach was followed with interviews in the second set. In most cases notes were taken on the spot, which were later combined with partial transcriptions of the recorded narrative, with more detailed notes when no recording took place.

Topics/questions in the interview schedule were organised in four sections. The first entailed questions on the activities and organisational context of volunteering, the second on individual motives and experiences, the third on the outcomes and impact of voluntarism and the fourth on broader views and policy issues. Reorganising the latter two by distinguishing the limits of voluntarism and its positive impact, these sections structure the analysis of interviews, followed by some concluding remarks in the end. We focus on the content of the interview material, outlining key findings in each section and enriching these with extracts from the live speech of our interlocutors. Although some participants were fine with publicising their actual names, in order to safeguard anonymity to all we chose to refer to them using the itemised numbering of interviews (see Tables) and an m (=male) or f (=female) for gender.



4.2.2 Activities and forms of engagement

We have come across a rich and diverse range of examples of volunteering activities and areas of volunteer involvement directly experienced, recalled or observed by our 36 interviewees. These may vary depending on the context and circumstances: from welcoming people getting onshore in the islands to assisting them to cross the border until early 2016, and from providing different kinds of support for migrants in camps to various different projects in rural areas, small towns or cities. The last column in the Tables gives an idea of our interviewees' field of voluntary involvement, which we could possibly summarise in the following broad categories:

- administrative support
- advocacy, solidarity, activism and migrant/refugee mobilisation
- coordination and networking between organisations
- early child development, e.g. taking into perspective cultural issues, trauma, etc
- educational for adults and children, including language classes (Greek, English), and vocational training courses
- grant giving and technical support to small organisations and projects
- health care, mental health, first aid
- housing, temporary accommodation or shelter,
- infrastructure work in camps to improve conditions, create common spaces
- interpretation, translation, intercultural mediation
- kitchens, food collection and distribution
- legal assistance and support
- other in-kind aid collections and distribution
- recreational activities for adults and children, e.g. artistic workshops and events
- social and community centres (drop-in), libraries, safe spaces, playrooms, etc
- unaccompanied minors shelters
- women's shelters, e.g. focusing on pregnant women, single mothers, etc

As also deriving from the Tables, the organisational structures implementing those activities varied considerably. From big, long-established organisations, such as those in our interviews with HRC volunteers, to small independent organisations, grassroots groups (including of religious inspiration), activist collectives (often of certain political orientations, e.g. leftist, anarchist), or merely individual initiatives. Collaboration and coordination between organisations and activities, although not always effective, is an essential feature: we have encountered synergies even between organisations of different sizes, forms and types, sometimes oppositional to each other. Moreover, organisational structures essentially determine the financial resources of organisations. Indicatively, activities run by activist groups are often self-funded, independent organisations rely on private donations and quite extensively use tools such as crowd-funding, bigger organisations may apply for EU-funding, while the activities of large NGOs are often financed through the UNHCR or DG ECHO. Even so, there is no clear pattern and there can be overlaps.



Table 3. Aristotle University interviews sample: profile of participants

ID	CODE	INTERVIEW DATE	BACKGROUND	PLACE	FIELD OF VOLUNTARY ENGAGEMENT
A1	AS	24/05/18	Greek, female, social work student	Thes/niki	volunteer placement, administrative support Xyrokini "second chance" school
A2	KON	24/05/18	Greek, female, law student	Thes/niki	student in a volunteer placement with Praksis NGO, assisting to legal support
A3	OS	29/05/18	Mexican, male, artist, many years in Greece	Thes/niki	independent volunteer with various organisations/initiatives, including art workshops & courses with Arsis NGO, creative games for minors outside Vassilika refugee camp, furniture-making DIY workshops with NGO Communitaire
A4	MAM	30/05/18	Palestinian, male, humanitarian worker, in Greece since 2016	Thes/niki	voluntary experience in Gaza & W. Bank, independent volunteer involved in interpretation & other activities upon arrival, now helping with coordination & networking among voluntary organisations in northern Greece while working as an english language teacher
A5	FA	31/05/18	Afghani, male, plumper, in Greece since 2004	Thes/niki	solidarity activist, started preparing meals in Idomeni now does it for homeless people in NW Thes/niki, former member of Immigrants Integration Council (Mun. Thes/niki), founder of Afghani community, etc
A6	RIC	04/06/18	Congolese, male, artist, in Greece since 2016	Thes/niki	voluntary experience in Kinsasa, beneficiary of voluntary organisation in Samos, started volunteering as an art/painting teacher, now continues also with music activities
A7	NI	06/06/18	Palestinian, male, therapist, many years in Greece	Thes/niki	independent volunteer, psychological support to children & adults in camps or in his practice
A8	SIS	06/06/18	Jordanian-Greek, male, civil engineer (PhD) & former tutor, in Greece since 1976	Thes/niki	General secretary (volunteer), Caritas Thessaloniki, volunteering with migrants since 2015 Idomeni & in various activities thereafter
A9	CHG	17/06/18	Greek, female, relevant academic (PhD) & professional background	Athens	Activist & volunteer with relevant academic/professional background, offering legal & social counselling to independent projects and initiatives in the context of social movement
A10	JU-CA	17/06/18	Spanish, males, NGO founder & retiree film maker (in Greece since 2016, or short-visits)	Athens	founder/volunteer of independent Catalan-based humanitarian NGO Provocando La Paz, started with educational/artistic activities in Idomeni, now Humanity Project providing shelter and holistic support to pregnant and single women (refugees and asylum seekers)

(continued on next page)



(Table 7 continued)

ID	CODE	INTERVIEW DATE	BACKGROUND	PLACE	FIELD OF VOLUNTARY ENGAGEMENT
A11	ER	24/06/18	Greek, female, student	Thes/niki	Student volunteer with Caritas Thessaloniki
A12	NA	25/06/18	Greek-Jordanian of Palestinian origin, male, journalist, in Greece since 1983	Piraeus	Activist, volunteered as an interpreter, now combines volunteerism with work as intercultural mediator at the moment with an NGO in an Athens-based camp
A13	EL	25/06/18	Greek, female, social worker	Piraeus	independent volunteer, consultancy & psychosocial support to parents with school children
A14	CHPA	01/07/18	Greek, male, PhD	Thes/niki	Head of the Thessaloniki Office of NGO Antigone, among others supervising volunteers in recreational & educational activities
A15	SDA	02/07/18	Greek, female, DRC case worker in refugee camp	Athens	Activist/volunteer at the port of Piraeus, now a case worker for an NGO active in a refugee camp in Athens
A16	VIP	02/07/18	Greek, female,	Thes/niki	Head of Department of Welfare Dept, Thessaloniki Municipality, responsible for Municipal projects for refugees & asylum seekers
A17	TA	04/07/18	Syrian-Greek, ex taxi driver, in Greece since 1986	Piraeus	started helping out as translator, now combines volunteering with work as an intercultural mediator in various projects
A18	IN	10/07/18	Slovakia, female, in Greece since 2016	Thes/niki	started as independent volunteer in Idomeni, now combines volunteering & work with independent NGO Help Refugees
A19	FO	10/07/18	Greek, male, student	Thes/niki	Coordinator, IOM-supervised camps N. Greece, involved in beneficiaries' mobilisation
A20	PAN	17/07/18	Greek, male	Athens	started as independent volunteer in Lesvos & Athens, now combines volunteering & work with independent NGO Help Refugees



Table 4. Hellenic Red Cross interviews sample: profile of Participants

ID	CODE	INTERVIEW DATE	BACKGROUND	FIELD OF VOLUNTARY ENGAGEMENT
B1	EL	22/05/18	Greek, female, recent social work graduate	Started as an intern at the HRC MFC, then stayed as volunteer: creative activities & psychosocial support to children
B2	TR	22/05/18	Senegalese, male, construction worker, in Greece since 2017	An HRC MFC volunteers (1 year): cleaning, painting, making furniture
B3	MK	08/06/18	Greek, female	HRC volunteer, MFC school support classes & creative activities at unaccompanied minors shelter
B4	AAT	08/06/18	British Iraqi, migrated to Britain in 2002, temporarily in Greece since late 2017	International volunteer, came to Greece to provide interpretation services at the MFC
B5	FAN	08/06/18	Syrian, male, in Greece since June 2017	Volunteers at both the HRC & a small NGO: MFC Hotline service, data entry, interpretation, English classes, admin, food distribution
B6	AK	10/06/18	Greek, female	HRC volunteer, since 2016 involved in various activities in refugee camps & unaccompanied minors shelter
B7	AL	14/06/18	Greek, female	HRC volunteer, tutor at MFC vocational training programme
B8	CH	14/06/18	Greek, female	HRC volunteer, hygiene seminars, Greek language classes
B9	MAS	22/06/18	Syrian, male, in Greece since 2016	Volunteered as translator at Piraeus port in 2016, now combines HRC work & volunteering: interpretation, admin, food distribution, training classes, beneficiaries' mobilisation
B10	MR	25/06/18	Syrian, male, many years (?) in Greece	volunteered as an interpreter at Piraeus port in 2015-16, now an HRC volunteer teaching Greek language classes to children
B11	AG	27/06/18	Egyptian, female, came recently (?) in Greece	HRC volunteer since 2015, former beneficiary, interpretation services originally at Piraeus port
B12	AO	27/06/18	Greek, female	HRC volunteer, various activities assisting social workers
B13	KP	29/06/18	Greek, female	HRC volunteer, creative activities for children, goods distribution, vaccinations
B14	F	02/07/18	Greek, female	HRC volunteer since 2015, creative activities for children, food & goods distribution in various accommodation sites & camps
B15	AP	03/07/18	Greek, female	HRC volunteer since 2004, in 2015 provided creative activities for children & distributions (Piraeus port)



The beneficiaries of those activities are most often migrants and refugees of the recent wave. Sometimes activities would target specific categories: women, children, minors, families, people with health or mental health problems, etc, obviously reflecting common perceptions or official designations of vulnerability. Quite often, especially after the closure of borders and the policy shifts that followed, migrants who are deemed not eligible for asylum would be excluded, especially from funded activities of big organisations and formal structures. However, given the representation of independent volunteers or solidarity activists in our sample, nationality or migratory status were not necessarily criteria of exclusion; as phrased by a participant:

I have helped many people... Afghanis, but also Africans, Greeks, Georgians, Iranians... my own relationship to voluntarism does not distinguish refugees, it is for everyone (A5m).

Even more so, despite the overwhelming weight of the “refugee crisis”, in several cases our interlocutors volunteered in activities targeting the wider population, or segments of it: “vulnerable social groups”, the homeless or unemployed, women, children and young people - or simply anyone, obviously including migrants and refugees.

Quite often, our interlocutors expressed their criticism towards the EU or the government, but also towards large humanitarian actors such the UNHCR or big NGOs. Beyond the severity of the situation back in 2015-16 as such, the deficiencies of the State's response were underlined by some as an important factor that has created a space for all these activities to flourish. As put by one of our participants:

the Greek political system is in shock, since it has come across the refugee issue for the first time,... the Greek state, found itself in front of a huge problem it could not manage, and there were many gaps, many problems and many weaknesses. Just think that there are about 70,000 refugees in Greece, when in other countries there are millions... and this makes you think how these states with limited resources can manage such big numbers ... However... maybe this... opens the door for refugees to help fill the gaps... and gives the chance to NGOs to step in to fill those gaps... and play the role of the saviour... (A12m)

The ambivalence expressed above towards the necessary yet sometimes dubious role of NGOs was even more explicitly articulated by some other interlocutors. Some were particularly harsh in their criticism:

The problem with the NGOs is that they just suck up funds and as soon as the funding ends, their offering also ends... many times (they) operate fragmentarily (A7m)

Others used moderate language though they were equally strict in their criticism. One of the volunteers in Thessaloniki, a long-settled migrant of Jordanian origin (A8m), referred to rumours about a European NGO involved in an economic scandal. He further talked of the high administration and staff costs of big NGOs, which divert resources away from the ground and the wellbeing of beneficiaries, something that was also underlined by volunteers in independent organisations and solidarity activists. Another interviewee (A5m), an activist from Afghanistan established in Thessaloniki for more than 10 years, was even more specific: “you can't have in an organisation employees with a salary of



1500 euros and most of the work being done by volunteers". The same participant went on to name two national NGOs that receive money from the State and hence are controlled, in his opinion, and stressed his own unwillingness to volunteer for funded projects. Even so, he still volunteers for such a big NGO locally, out of sympathy to his acquaintances in that organisation: for him what counts is his personal relationships with people who are doing valuable job there, rather than the organisation itself.

Given that many of our interlocutors are independent volunteers, some with a strong political viewpoint, they often contrasted "the formal sector", meaning the big NGOs and humanitarian organisations, and the "informal" one referring to grassroots independent volunteerism. Being critical, however, does not always imply opposition or conflict:

this does not necessarily leads to conflictual relations, since small independent organisations are cautious to learn from the NGOs... since we understand our limitations... But we understand their limitations as well, we don't attack them... It is very important to keep reminding ourselves that we are here to fill the gaps... We don't accept any sort of negative talk or finger-pointing towards NGOs, the State, etc (A17f)

After all, as put by another participant, no particular actor can claim voluntarism:

Voluntarism in the humanitarian field... is not a monopoly. Many are involved... the government, the church, volunteers, NGOs... yet nobody owns it... (A5m)

Criticism to large organisations may also touch upon more practical issues of day-to-day conduct. As earlier underlined in the analysis of Focus Groups, here too we came across a contradiction between establishing trusted relationships with beneficiaries in order to be able to address their needs, on the one hand, and the regulations, procedures and codes of practice of organisations which may hinder this, on the other. As phrased by an interviewee who has been volunteering in camps and now works on similar roles:

Since I work with refugees, I believe that no limitations put by an NGO or other stakeholder should impact on my voluntary action... I always chose... not to be in some office... but close to the people... So I had to cross some red lines... I was going in their containers, I had lunch with the people, drunk tea with them... (A12m)

Especially with respect to the "refugee crisis" and its aftermath, one needs to take into account how the content and volume of activities, the locations of intervention, but also organisational forms, strategies and tactics may change over time, adapting to changing situations or shifting policies. What was earlier described in the case of OMNES is a common experience of many small groups who found themselves on the frontline as loose grassroots collectives, e.g. helping out by covering basic needs, and latter on became more formalised and sought funding to implement specific projects, e.g. related to integration. This fluidity and flexibility has also been emphasised by a questionnaire respondent who gave us written feedback in personal communication:

The vast majority of humanitarian aid actors who began in Idomeni, Piraeus, Lesvos, etc. were (and still are) independent volunteers or ... self-organized groups that have



developed projects in partnership or very often LED by refugees who see what is needed and simply need our support and facilitation to execute the work that must be done due to the limitations of their legal and/or financial status, etc. Many of our partnerships are formed in response to a specific need and then we disband and regroup in direct response to the changing situation on the ground. That flexibility to change our direction and roles to respond as needed is what makes us so effective as the first ones to provide relief and begin organizing aid, but is also what runs contrary to forming an organization.

The big NGOs and organizations for better or worse are slower to respond and have bureaucratic restrictions, but they have access to and do things that we cannot, and everyone has an important role to play. On the ground, we collaborate to achieve what is needed. Never has this been more apparent than in the current (renewed) crisis situation in Greece, where a huge gap has reappeared... Now the few remaining organizations and NGOs are struggling to respond. They are calling upon the independent actors again, because they know they are the only ones flexible enough and with the capacity to respond to some of the emergency gaps. This response can only happen and be effective with the assistance of refugees themselves.

Evidently, the involvement and mobilisation of refugees themselves has been a crucial aspect in this. As put by one of our interlocutors (A17f), it is "a very positive sign of the coin", as "most of the teams would have 1-3 refugee volunteers". Another interviewee, a refugee volunteer himself (A4m), made more explicit the distinction between big humanitarian actors and small organisations, by noting that the former were initially reluctant to involve refugee volunteers, yet soon they realised that they need to do so, especially for interpretation. On the other hand, people of migrant background already settled in the country for years have also been mobilised. For them, their motives often related to their own background and valuable linguistic and cultural skills that they felt could be put in the service of refugees; e.g. as a long-established Jordanian of Palestinian roots (A12m) told us: "I decided to share my experience and knowledge, so that refugees can get to know the tradition and values of this place".

4.2.3 Motives and experiences

As underlined by one of our interlocutors at the Hellenic Red Cross, the volunteers' motives are as many as the volunteers themselves. This is confirmed by the ways our participants articulated their original motives to take part, as well as the circumstances of their involvement. For some, this may depend on their life stage and personal circumstances or memories, like in the case of this young Greek law student:

I wanted to do something new, something different, get out from my safety zone... at the same time, something relevant to my field...My mother has been a volunteer too. (A2f)

The privilege of time however, is not exclusive to young students. One of our participants, a middle aged man of migrant background, has been working for years as a journalist but was left unemployed since his newspaper closed down:



Even if I found a job in journalism or some other field, back at the time I was unemployed, I still wanted to be involved with the refugees (A12m)

The very conjuncture of the “refugee crisis” and the pressing needs at the time have motivated many others, like this young Greek woman who had mobilised to assist the people who had gathered at the port of Piraeus in early 2016:

I have started getting involved at some point ... at the port of Piraeus.... I could see what was going on, I heard about it... Until then I did not have had any other sort of involvement... an important think was that I had quitted my job and had the time to do it... so with a friend of mine we started visiting the site to see what is going on and what are the needs... on the first day it was too crowded... There was nothing for us to do and we just waited, it was a bit awkward for some time, and then something happened, I think a boat arrived, and ... since I had a car, which was lacking, I was told to go there and see if there is any need... So I went there and gave people a lift with the car... Then I went again... and gradually got to know the people on the gate, who informed us on what shifts we could do, what needs to be done during nights... (A15f)

The news on the refugee crisis had also reached people outside Greece, hence the many international volunteers who took action - sometimes inspired by a charitable urge to help, yet in other cases by a political worldview, as in the examples below:

I don't want to be part of a Europe that closes borders, that forgets human rights... As a person I revolve... and I... got involved... Here I am, let's try to stop this madness (A10m2)

In London, where I permanently live, I am confortable financially. When I saw in the news what happens with the refugee crisis, I decided to come over to Greece to help the refugees, most of all to facilitate their communication with people in Greece, and secondly, as I have a degree in psychology, to make them feel better. I have a friend in Greece, A Syrian with Greek citizenship, who used to work in the NGO DRC. He told me that the HRC's Multi-Functional Centre for refugees needs volunteers and so I got in touch with the HRC... I went through a training... and right after I started getting involved. (B4m)

Similarly, others got first motivated through personal experiences in specific locations, where they came face-to-face with that huge wave of arrivals, and continued volunteering due to coincidental and social factors:

My involvement started in summer 2016, essentially in summer 2015, when I was on vacation in Lesvos, I found myself in front of the beach, and with my family we ended up helping people getting off the boats. This has brought me into a first contact with the field. In spring 2016, I was still studying abroad when I was contacted by an old acquaintance of mine who was about to start a social kitchen with a group of British volunteers. So we discussed ... basic details on how this could be set up, what legal form could it take, details on Athens' neighbourhoods, and so on. This put me on a path to want to get involved. By chance, when I came to Athens for the summer it happened that this group were my neighbours... immediately I joined to see a building they had found, and realised that their initial project to set up a social kitchen, due to successful funding, had in the meantime got bigger, and ... become a 8-story building in A. Str., which was to



be turned into a social centre... So ... I came to be involved with this group, helping out especially with translation and support this endeavour... (A20m)

For many, however, original motives may be mixed, combining conjuncture and coincidence, emotions and an activist background, politics and culture or religion, like in the case of an Afghan man who has been working in Thessaloniki since the mid-2000s. He mentioned the word "hairat" in Farsi, referring to the concept of giving, but also his Muslim background, according to which one "needs to save money and give something for the poor", as well as an interest on human rights issues, and further said:

I happened to watch on TV how the refugees came in 1922, at the time that Greece was in crisis and the "refugee crisis" burst out... Somebody was speaking of an initiative in Harilaou, when refugees with money thought of organising a soup kitchen to cook for the poor... This moved me very much... I was always (politically) active myself... I still am... and then I thought of what I could do... So I approached the (neighbourhood initiative) and suggested I could cook once a month, on my own expenses, so that everybody knows that a refugee coming here has solidarity inside him, he is able to help. (A5m)

In the case of recent refugees, volunteering was originally a way of staying active, "Otherwise I would be just sitting there doing nothing, being idle", as a Palestinian interviewee told us (A4m). Another example comes from a Congolese refugee, who had voluntary experience as an art student in his homeland:

to share with others whether in Kinshasa or Samos or Thessaloniki helps first of all myself, to be stay in shape both from a creative and from a psychological perspective... by teaching painting voluntarily, I seek the talent hidden in each of my students, and a I feel proud when I manage to get it out, to discover it... (A6m)

The diversity of motives is also reflected on the various ways in which the interviewees subjectively understood and/or defined what they do. For some, this appears to be pretty straightforward: for a student volunteering for Caritas, "Voluntary offer is to offer your time rather than your money, in a spirit of religion and solidarity" (A11f); a Red Cross volunteer considers herself "a soldier... at the organisation's services whenever and wherever it needs me" (B6f); a Palestinian psychotherapist who volunteers independently sees his involvement as "a personal stance, whatever I do I do it for me... it has to do with my political and social position" (A7m); an established Mexican migrant self-identifies as "a volunteer with a deep voluntary culture" (A3m). Quite often though, participants were self-reflective and ambivalent towards the concepts of philanthropy or humanitarianism, or the very notion of voluntarism itself; their narratives sometimes reveal tensions between their politics and their will to help, as in the following quotes:

I hate the term 'help people', I want people to be able to help themselves... You always have the choice to be an asshole... Voluntarism is the other side of the coin... being kind is voluntary, it's anything you can do by choice to better the life of other people... Yet it is rather different to offer for your family or a friend... Voluntarism is a separate entity... it doesn't have to include philanthropy in it... I'm not trying to be a good person, but I'm trying NOT to be a bad one... because I'm only human... we are not selfless people. (A4m)



I haven't thought about that... Look, I don't know how I would define it. I have some disagreement with [the concept of] volunteerism, and with the way segments of international volunteerism operate at this moment... yet on the other hand there are incredible actions taking place (A20m).

Whatever I do outside work and is self-funded, I wouldn't put it in the context of voluntarism, because I have several objections to the concept, mostly ideological. I would instead place in the context of... solidarity... people who are involved with social movements develop actions of solidarity. When I hear the word "volunteering", what comes in mind is Athens 2004 and the (slogan) "become a volunteer for the Athens Olympic Games". And the concept of volunteering for me reveals power relations... So I would mostly call it solidarity... but even in the context of solidarity it is very difficult to escape power relations... to keep the limits and have an exchange on equal terms... maybe... because of the disadvantageous positions these persons are in... (A9f)

Motives can thus be mixed or ambivalent, but also dynamic rather than fixed, and hence may change over time, at least for those with a long-term commitment:

In the beginning... I had a tendency to get involved in anything that was... beyond the usual... When I was looking for an internship I was the first in my university to want to do an internship on the topic... and was motivated by a professor of mine whom I admire... after 2006, I developed a more politicized view through the anti-authoritarian movement... My motives became more political, I was in a mood to position myself... Now this remains, yet with lots of contradictions and conflicts...

Some, who were ambivalent towards volunteerism in the past, may reconsider, as in the case of this young HRC volunteer of an activist background: "I wouldn't say I believe in voluntarism, I never thought I would do this myself..." (A2f). Others simply became more interested: "I was nervous in the beginning... then I wanted to get more involved, more than twice a week. Now I go more often when I can..." (A1f). For others, it is knowledge coming through experience that leads to a shift in their motives, as in the quote below:

In the beginning I was thinking of how we can do things differently... through this very interesting solidarity... and volunteer movement... A rather naïve conception deriving from the observation that a voluntary movement is able to offer a much more "humane help", more inclusive... more economic... In the course, a very important factor... concerns collaborations, how we can set up networks in order to better deal with problems (A20m)

Shifting original motives may reflect, among others, changing perspectives coming out of evolving experiences. In some participants' stories, we could possibly trace their volunteer *trajectories*. Indicative of this is the case of an educated Palestinian man, widowed and father of two (A4m), who happened to have both voluntary and employment experience in the humanitarian sector in Gaza and the West Bank, where "like here, voluntarism is not that popular". He came to Greece in 2016 with his brother and cousins, with the aim to go to Belgium. He crossed to Lesvos where he first came into contact with several organisations, and also determined his own involvement:



The first minute in Greece, volunteering started right then... Our boat carrying about 1000 people landed on Mytilini and my brother and I were the only ones speaking English with the Coast Guard... So I started translating for all the people....

After spending a few days in Athens, he was moved to Trikala where his group was welcomed by the mayor, the police and local volunteers offering help and orientation:

There were not so many to speak good English, so I ended up translating again. And to be frank, I really liked it... And this is when I decided that I want to help. And this, I owe it to the people of Trikala, they did not know us but yet they were doing something about us...

After 5-6 days he was transferred to the Nea Kavala camp, where "things started being a bit 'normal'". He kept on translating until he met a group of European volunteers, preparing sandwiches for the people in Idomeni. He liked the fact that they were putting humus in the sandwiches, and asked "if they wanted a pair of extra hands". When the group's project coordinator had to leave, he offered to take up the role. He then moved into a flat rented out for the volunteers, and thus began of his "career" in volunteering in various projects and organisations (among others, he mentioned various anarchist groups, the Swiss Cross, a Tea Tent project, OMNES, the InfoTeam group, Filoxenia, an education café). He also started taking part at the coordinating meetings of organisations active in northern Greece. Together with "a series of events" (people that he met, but also the death of his wife back in Palestine) came a change in his original plans, and took the decision to stay in Greece rather than follow his brother and cousins to Belgium. He got refugee status in April 2017, and in the last year or so he works as an English language teacher, while continuing his involvement in coordinating voluntary activities. He said he has found in Greece "a place I could call home".

4.2.4 Limits to volunteering

There was quite some discussion by many of our participants on the shortcomings of volunteering and the reasons why voluntary based activities cannot always meet their intended aims. For some, these relate to "internal" problems of voluntarism. The above Palestinian refugee (A4m), for instance, distinguished between different categories of obstacles, bringing together what many others had mentioned.

The first broad category concerns voluntary organisations. Many returned now and again to the points earlier made about the differences between the "formal" and "informal" sectors, tensions between paid workers and volunteers, or the often very high salaries of professionals working for big international organisations. Some of our interlocutors were critical towards the managerial approach that even smaller groups may end up with as they become formalised, resulting in hierarchical structures and a loss of their originally improvisational character. At the same time, organisations may mistrust and often antagonise with each other, local communities, or the government, and sometimes fail to adapt to changing situations or recognise difference and diversity.



The second broad category concerns the volunteers themselves. While there are some common issues, one could further distinguish between the different groups of volunteers, i.e. migrants, native, internationals. An important issue stressed by several participants reflecting on their own experiences is their exhaustion: as phrased by the Palestinian refugee "It is easy to chose to put a lot of effort into it, so there is burn-out... Yet it is a choice, not a must" (A4m). The same interviewee also highlighted the question of income, which "is an issue, how can one volunteer if you don't have an income to sustain yourself", and went further to note how this becomes even more complicated for those combining volunteering and paid employment:

It's becoming more and more difficult, how to combine this with the regular job. I haven't had a vacation over these years. I got eight days off last Christmas, and went to help over at Polykastro (A4m)

He also underlined this in the case of Greek volunteers, who struggle to survive in a context of economic crisis: "they start volunteering... and then they find a job, and the two become incompatible... You can't volunteer forever" (A4m).

The shortcomings of international volunteering relate to the implications of its temporary nature. One of our Greek interviewees (A20m) was rather critical to what he termed "holidarity" and "voluntourism", and the impact this may have on an organisation's human resources, a project's viability, or the beneficiaries' wellbeing:

international voluntary organisations... mostly rely on human resources coming and going, some may approach this as vacation, there is not enough contact with what happens on the ground, sometimes there is a rather a messianic view... Through all this... there is a difficulty with some projects... in the long run, and quite often these projects reach a point where they struggle to survive basically due to lacking especially people... Good intensions do not necessarily lead to positive results, and in some cases there can even be negative results. A good example is with legal support... Because they rely on lawyers coming from abroad for short spells of time, they are not knowledgeable of Greek Law and the immigration legal framework... maybe they are not able to give correct information, and in some cases even provide false information.... Or just give the impression to the beneficiary that s/he has legal support but in fact s/he has not, because the lawyer advising him/her will go back to Canada in a couple of weeks....

As far as volunteering among refugees is concerned, some of our participants saw a huge potential for more of them to get involved, given the material and psychological difficulties many are faced with, and their legal and economic uncertainty. They pointed to organisational and structural factors hindering their involvement:

I can tell you that there are many valued people among the refugees, who, maybe if the NGOs were not there to manage in a professional and experienced way the refugee issue, they would be able to self-manage the... camps... But in the lack of funds this would be impossible... so they try to get integrated through the organisations... in order to help their compatriots, to improve the conditions in the camp, and to become active citizens, active refugees in their communities (A12m)



(often) communities were excluded from activities. And this has led to passivity, but on the other hand it would have been difficult to do things differently (e.g. due to lack of resources, competence, etc.) (A17f)

For those among them who do engage in voluntary activities, there can be additional barriers apart from the frequently mentioned language and communication issues, stemming from both their interaction with other volunteers and their relationships to their own communities, as exemplified in the following quotes:

There are people who have volunteered but this exposed them to their communities and created problems... e.g. being used as "mediators... being asked favours (A17f)

People forgot, and I myself forgot that I am a refugee... Refugee volunteers are a very sensitive topic, they are at the same time, or were until recently, beneficiaries... You go back home, they stay in the camp... Do you get them out? If so, in which terms? (A4m)

The last point above raises an important issue relating to the organisations' approach to involving refugee volunteers, whether this really stems from the latters' own initiative or comes top-down, or what sort of relationships are developed. One participant narrated his experience from an organisation, which:

from the beginning did not differentiate between the refugee and the international volunteer... At the same time though, there was no acknowledgement of the different power dynamics, deriving from each person's passport, or from his/hers socio-economic situation, especially in relation to the binary of the middle class European volunteer and the fugitive who has come here with very little resources and capabilities... (A20m)

The non-acknowledgement of differences and power dynamics created a series of problems. One set of issues related to intimate relationships, usually between male refugee volunteers and female European volunteers:

(The organisation) was the place you would go to meet western female volunteers, and there were quite a few relationships between refugee volunteers and western volunteers which often resulted in crying or even in problems for specific people, due to a different perception... As in the case of a young 19 years old man who did not cross the borders in 2016 in order to stay with his (Swiss) girlfriend... who left after 6-7 months, and this crashed this person, it had huge impact on his mental health...

Another set of issues concerned the rather tactical approach to volunteerism by refugees in order to receive immediate practical benefits, with their involvement ending up resembling precarious informal work.

(The organisation) offered food and accommodation to the volunteers coming to help. There were refugees involved from the beginning... at the time, because the group was very small, it functioned like a family... we knew what it means to have a western passport... there was a very good balance... But this gradually starting to change: because this place offered food and shelter, several refugee volunteers started staying there... and some people started volunteering... hoping that they will be given a place in the flat... and this created a strange dynamic... The flat ended up being inhabited exclusively by refugee



volunteers... it is interesting that the people staying there described what they did... using the word "work"... In one of the (group's) meetings, an issue was raised about some of those staying in the flat who do not work the required hours, and it was decided that if someone does not work enough he will have to go... Through this example it became clear that there were people... who did not acknowledge this thin line between volunteering and precarious employment, and through this process they legitimised a policy... which essentially offered work to refugees giving them food and shelter in return.

This later point reveals further inherent limits and challenges to voluntarism, relating to the power relations entailed in any form of giving. As put by another interlocutor:

Every time volunteering takes place in terms that do not take into account the other side and does not accept retribution, this ends up intensifying inequalities that already exist in such a relationship... (and this leads to) people's victimization... a logic according to which people do not have agency, they are just passive recipients, they are vulnerable... (A9f)

Lastly, some of our interlocutors pointed to the limits of voluntary action itself, especially with respect to activities requiring more resources, e.g. as in the extract bellow:

There are limits to voluntarism that you have to be aware of... e.g. you can't have a housing project entirely based on volunteers... (A4m)

It is perhaps needless to note that, in most cases, the limits and shortcomings outlined above were expressed out of a sincere concern to expand the scope of volunteering and/or solidarity activism, and improve its efficiency and potential to make a difference.

4.2.5 Impact and the role of policies

Evidently, as suggested by the trajectory outlined in section 4.2.4 and in several other examples of migrant, Greek or international volunteers shifting from voluntarism to paid employment, the volunteers themselves have a lot to gain from what they do, even if they never deliberately capitalised on their voluntary experience. Especially in the case of migrant volunteers, we have heard stories similar to that trajectory i.e. experiences of volunteering leading to paid work or even self-employment and petit entrepreneurship, which is a crucial step towards integration. Yet, as implied in many other examples of subjective motives earlier outlined, volunteering compensates individuals for the time and effort they devoted in many different ways, often indirectly. By this we do not mean the direct compensation that some of our interlocutors occasionally receive for their participation, financial or otherwise (transportation, meals, sometimes accommodation), but rather to long-term benefits that stem from their often life-changing experience.

Such benefits can be of a practical nature, such as experience and knowledge acquired through voluntary involvement, or a social network leading to potential collaborations:

I get to know the field and the group of beneficiaries... There are also psychological benefits... I like the personal contact with other people, other cultures, I get to know new worlds... and my self-confidence is strengthened (A1f).



This one of the most important things, I have met people with whom I have collaborated or want to collaborate in the future... I am learning... about procedures, communication issues, coordination... apart from information on the field itself... I have learned the vocabulary of the formal sector, the formal humanitarian framework... I have learned that things should take place slowly, in many cases, since something should be appropriately planned before put in practice (A20m).

Contacts and acquaintances acquired through volunteering may sometimes lead to a circle of social relations, which is particularly important for newly arrived migrants who are lacking social networks. Sociality is an important feature more generally and can potentially lead to lasting friendships and a sense of belonging. But there also benefits of an emotional or psychological nature, as many referred to the satisfaction stemming from the act of giving and how this contributes to their own self-confidence:

The fact that I became an HRC volunteer made me feel more certain about myself. I have acquired self-confidence, which helped me communicate easier with people... I feel better than before and can say that this helps me everyday to get incorporated in society. (B2m)

I don't receive money or anything physical, but I receive something more important inside, for me, it's humanism... and I receive the same from people in the project, volunteers and refugees, people from all over the world (A10m1)

Feelings of joy and satisfaction. There is nothing more beautiful than children waiting for you with eagerness. You feel that you really help and that you are improving by the day at both social and personal levels ... (B7f)

This is especially evident when voluntary activities are efficient in meeting their aims and their outcomes are tangible enough. Among many such examples, one of our key-informants (A14m) recalled a 3-month photography workshop to a group of unaccompanied minors, which led to the creation of a short movie that managed to win a prize at a pupils short-movie festival, and contributed to long-lasting relationships with locals. Or as put by one of the HRC volunteers:

The outcomes of our activities in the various camps were impressive, with multiple benefits to recipients both material and practical (children's vaccinations, medical care, distributions of essentials, etc.), as well as psychologically supportive (positive human interaction, creating a sense of belonging, among others), which have contributed to significant improvement of their living conditions (B6f)

Nevertheless, some of our participants underlined that this is not always the case, but rather depends on the action and its context:

I could tell that in all the voluntary activities I have taken part, what we wanted did happen, to a lesser or greater extent (A3m)



There were actions that were successful and others that were unsuccessful... individual targeted actions tend to be more successful as they are small, concrete, readable... (A9f)

It depends on the action... sometimes... there can be a direct impact, e.g. to hand over enough blankets to somebody, or provide a service (A20m)

The local context of intervention is often the epicentre of effective voluntary activities, where personal engagement and direct contact allows for their impact to be accessible. Many interviewees mentioned positive outcomes broadly relating to responding to immediate needs, improving basic conditions, reinstalling dignity, creating opportunities for education or recreation, even managing to mobilise people and instil them a sense of belonging. After all, neither voluntarism alone nor the full range of activities for the benefit migrants by various actors cannot overcome the obstacles put by "high politics" at a national or EU level. Apart from the criticism most of our interlocutors expressed towards increasingly restrictive EU or State immigration and asylum policies, some also referred to the institutional framework for voluntarism itself, as in the quote below:

It's nearly impossible to create an NGO... There is no (specific) legal framework, you don't exist as an NGO, but as a Non Profit organisation... the latter have to pay taxes... the former should not... The Greek government doesn't want people to be legal, they are keeping the situation in a fringe... Yet many benefit from this situation: the government think they maintain control, the organisations have relative freedom to move... (A4m)

"The ways in which the state promotes voluntarism is wrong" has been also mentioned by another interviewee (A5m), with respect to where funding is directed. The question of funding, its distribution and use has been a recurring theme in some narratives:

In many cases, funding is provided for something specific, yet by the time it becomes available the need it intended to cover is no more. For instance, an organisation had budgeted resources for plumping work (bathrooms in camps), but when they were ready to implement this they realized that these works had already been done. Yet the resources could not be used to cover other real needs. (A3m)

Additionally, the large amounts of money pouring in the first few years are no more, as "the refugee problem became old, it went out of trend" (A4m), and this creates problems with funding and the continuation of some activities. The lack of funding has been mentioned among the present needs relating to migrants and refugees and the activities available for their benefit. Other needs that were also highlighted include integration, defined in various ways by our interlocutors, broadly or more specifically:

to make people feel at home, even in mundane daily matters such as food... (A9f)

Integration is the most basic problem... An important opportunity would be to invest on the knowledge and skills of the migrants themselves. (A3m)

Most of the refugees come from communities and cultures that are very different... Communication is a process, it doesn't happen like this – and so is integration... things



happen gradually... over a period of time... yet during this period, these two communities need to live together... We talk about integration and inclusion of the refugee and Greek communities... These two parts need to interact, not to merge... And when you have to interact you have to communicate... Greece will change, and so will the refugees. (A4m)

Yet while officially integration appears to concern migrants whose status will sooner or latter be sorted out, those deemed unwelcome, whether already here or newly arriving, are left out. In the words of one of our participants:

To fill in gaps that are not covered by the formal and institutional responses... (including) solidarity to people who because of their origin they cannot be beneficiaries of official help, e.g. young men from Pakistan, or from north Africa. (A20m)

The same interviewee, echoing others, also stressed the need for collaboration between organisations and institutional bodies, as well as coordination of activities across geographical regions, and expressed concerns about human right abuses by the authorities, or policies leading to the criminalisation of solidarity. This finally brings us to the question of policies, as many of those issues touch upon different levels and scales of official policy making. Responding to our relevant question policies, quite a few of our interlocutors expressed their scepticism. As put by an international volunteer, a retired film-maker from Spain who in the last year or so has been spending spells of his time to support a project in downtown Athens, policies could possibly help "but we are here because policies have not worked" (A10m2). On the other hand, for the Afghan activist in Thessaloniki, state policies are not a panacea, they also have their limits:

The state mechanism needs to support better refugees and migrants... But no matter how much the State will try, it cannot cover everyone. What is left out can be covered by us, through solidarity and volunteering... (A5m)

Yet others acknowledged the importance of policies at different levels, yet focused more on the principles where policies should be based upon, and the need to be informed by accumulated experience from the field. As put by the Palestinian refugee (A4m):

Policies are created by virtual entities, but apply to people... Policies should pay attention to all those problems, but also to all stakeholders and each stakeholder separately... If you don't have policies in the appropriate level, that's a problem... Not necessarily a top-down blanket policy... but horizontal and flexible, sensitive to nationality and culture... Not really policies, but rather best practices, rules and guidelines that should be adaptive... and be aware of power relations... You should have bullet-points, but go case-by-case... (A4m)

So if there is a role for policies at all in the field of volunteering for, with and by migrants and refugees, these would need to be humane rather than technocratic, open rather than closed, adaptive rather than rigid, supporting rather than hindering, inclusive rather than exclusionary, facilitating rather than making things harder, recognising diversity and power relations rather than being blind to differences and inequalities, empowering and engaging rather than addressing passive subjects.



4.2.6 Concluding remarks

The analysis of interviews has allowed us to dig deeper into our field of enquiry. It confirmed results deriving from both the survey and the focus groups, and enriched these with greater detail about voluntary activities and their context, but most importantly personal stories, experiences and subjective perspectives of volunteers. To sum up, we could group the most significant findings in three broad sets of issues highlighted through the interviews: contradictions, diversity, and dynamics.

First, the interview analysis further revealed a series of *contradictions* and tensions in the field of volunteering for, with and by migrants and refugees. Some of these relate to differences, opposition, antagonism, or conflicts between different civil society actors, yet at the same time there is also contact, dialogue, complementarity, and collaboration. The sources, distribution, and uses of funding play a crucial role, as do organisational structures, types and forms. Others relate to politics, above all the ambivalent relations, criticism or even antithetical positioning towards the State and official institutions. Then there are the problems inherent to volunteerism, as well as its limitations. The former relate to power relations and inequalities embedded in the act of giving, and to neglecting the agency of those addressed. The latter are a reminder that voluntarism is not a panacea for solving complex problems. Some of these issues decisively impact on the potential for and circumstances of migrants' voluntary mobilisation.

Secondly, the interviews highlighted the *diversity*, heterogeneity, multiplicity and mixture in relation to volunteering for and solidarity to migrants and refugees. These apply to the wide-spanning range of activities and projects developed by volunteers or relying on their contribution, by an archipelago of different collective actors. But it also relates to the individuals' circumstances and modes of engagement, some of which may be merely coincidental, as well as their subjective motives to, views towards and experiences of volunteering, ranging from emotions to culture and from charity to politics. Even more, it can be observed in the multitude of benefits stemming from those experiences. For migrants, as both bearers and beneficiaries of voluntary activities, there is a potential for empowerment, autonomy, communication, sociality, and sometimes for more material and substantive aspects of integration, such as housing, work, participation, belonging.

Nevertheless, "integration" not only rests dependent on far broader forces such as migration policies or the labour market, but is also subject to time. Lastly, then, the analysis of interviews brought to the fore the *dynamics* in the sphere of volunteering at all possible levels. On the one hand, these relate to the evolving organisational structures, locations, aims or content of projects or activities, following changing situations in the ground, or shifting policies. On the other, to the trajectories of individuals over time, the changes in their original motives and perspectives based on knowledge, relationships and experience on the ground, but also on shifting life circumstances.



CONCLUSIONS

Among the key aims of the project VAI is to explore how and to what extent immigrants are involved in voluntary activities, and to examine the possible ways in which migrants' civic participation and volunteering can contribute to social inclusion and integration. We sought to investigate the context and motives of volunteering for, with and by immigrants, the characteristics of voluntary activities involving migrants, their impact on individuals, organisations and communities, and the role of policies and politics. For this purpose, we have conducted primary research involving both qualitative and quantitative methods: an online survey to civil society organisations, and interviews and focus groups with volunteers, key-informants and beneficiaries. This report presented a preliminary analysis of key findings of the study, placing it within the broader context of migration and civil society development in Greece.

The combination of qualitative and quantitative methods has contributed complementarily to understand different dimensions and aspects of the context and motives of volunteering, as well as its outcomes. The quantitative part of the study sketched a fairly representing picture raising important findings, but was limited due to a low response rate that resulted in a small research sample. This may partly have been due to the organisations' limited human resources and efforts on actual work on the ground, but also to internal problems of the questionnaire itself. These include a rather rigid structure and format, the phrasing of some questions and responses, issues of translation and an overall "academic" approach, as mentioned in the feedback we received by some respondents. So the survey alone was useful in mapping the field and measuring important parameters, yet it was not the most appropriate tool to account for the complexity and dynamics of voluntary organisations and activities for and by migrants. To an extent, this complexity, fluidity, flexibility, as well as the ambivalence, contradictions and tensions, not just in what concerns voluntary organisations but crucially also volunteers themselves, has been revealed through the qualitative part of our study, which was expanded in scope and depth. This was an overall learning process for the researchers, which has led us to meet exceptional people and a whole range of possibilities even amidst particularly difficult circumstances.

The study confirmed some of the key features and shortcomings of civil society in Greece, as analysed in relevant academic debates in recent years, e.g. with respect to legal forms and organisational structures, operational modes, collaborations, questions of funding, or relations to the state. But it also unveiled novel dimensions. The research came across an archipelago of voluntary organisations, projects and activities addressed to migrants, refugees and asylum seekers, as well as to other social groups or segments of the general population. Many of these activities and projects were developed in the context of the migration/refugee "crisis" of 2015-16 and its aftermath, and some of the organisations were even formed in this frame. Yet, to an extent, they partly build on experiences of solidarity mobilisation accumulated in the shadow of Greece's economic



crisis over the past 10 years or so, but also in the legacy of antiracism and migrants' struggles since the 1990s. They thus appear to lie at the intersection between institutional forms of civil society and social movements, between charity and militant politics, between the formal and the informal, with a great deal of overlaps and shifts across these binaries. The same applies to the experiences and perspectives of volunteers themselves, both in respect to their motives and modes of engagement and to the evolution of their trajectories over time.

The study depicted interesting and impressive instances of migrant volunteering. Regarding the project's central question, we could say that volunteering can potentially contribute in various ways to the social integration of immigrants in Greece, but rather indirectly. However, findings tend to point towards a broader problematic around the concept of "integration", in terms of its actual scope, time, place, content and dimensions. In that respect, it has also opened up a series of questions, which would require further insights. Such questions relate, for example, to the importance of time in the integration process, the relevance of the local context, the role of policies, and how volunteering and civic participation fit in. Distinguishing between recipients of voluntary activities, on the one hand, and migrant volunteers, on the other, is an essential analytical step, even though these two categories may sometimes overlap.

As far as the former are concerned, especially newly arrived migrants and refugees whose journey may still be incomplete, whose status may remain undetermined and whose conditions are often far from dignified, voluntarism essentially contributes to the improvement of some life aspects, material or otherwise, and possibly to the development of necessary skills and social contacts that may help them to "stand on their feet". Yet at the same time, they may be approached as passive victims who are only subjects of care (and control), vulnerable people deprived of agency and the capacity of autonomous action, and thus remain dependent on the benevolence of others for prolonged periods of time. This is a danger that could reverse any positive outcomes of voluntarism and solidarity, which, even if integration in the long run is dependent on a complex set of "external" factors, can potentially provide an important embarkment station and stepping-stone.

With respect to the latter, the modes and context of migrants' engagement in voluntary activities needs to be taken into account, as well as the differences between recently arrived and longer-established or second-generation migrants, or the different institutional categories of migratory status. Given that integration refers to a multifaceted and dynamic process, the concept of "volunteer trajectories" that has emerged from our analysis may be useful in that respect. In studying these trajectories, though, one should be reminded of both shifting individual circumstances and the life course, and the broader factors that determine immigrants' pathways to settlement and integration, such as the role of policies, the labour market context, or the position of migrants within social stratification at large. Volunteering is not a substitute for employment, neither is it detached from a persons' life stage, nor can it go on forever.



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