

Inclusive approach for Refugees in Greece

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The story of Majd

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Majd, 24 years old from Syria. Is currently studying English at the American College in Greece;

he is one of the 78 refugees who won a scholarship through the “Education Unites” programme, an initiative of the US Embassy in Athens. He is working as an interpreter at SolidarityNow.

“The path to social integration is not as difficult as we believe. If you are open and willing, you will make it.

All together we will”.



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About SolidarityNow

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- SolidarityNow is a non-profit, humanitarian organisation founded in **2013**, on the initiative of the Open Society Foundations
- Our vision **is to improve peoples' lives and to empower them to create a just and inclusive society**
- We aim to respond to the needs of the most **vulnerable and marginalised groups**, irrespective of race, religion or ethnicity

Background: The Refugee Crisis

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1M people passed through Greece in 2015-2016, until the closing of the “Balkan route” and the signing of the EU-Turkey Statement in March 2016.

The relocation program transferred **22,000 people from Greece** and 12,690 from Italy. Main recipient countries: Germany (31%), France (14%), Sweden (8%) and the Netherlands (7%).

There are currently an estimated **64,000 refugees in Greece**: 35% living in apartments, 44% in camps and the rest in squats and informal structures.

The refugees in Greece mainly come from Syria, Afghanistan and Iraq. Around 68% are men, 30% children and 4% unaccompanied minors.

Greece has now changed from a transit country to a final destination.

First Step: Providing Shelter

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SN's first accommodation initiative: **Home for Hope program**, which was accompanied by a media campaign

In 2016, we became partners of the **#ESTIA** program (in collaboration with UNHCR and funding from the European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations) and have provided accommodation in independent apartments to approximately **7.000 people**.

We now have **2.100 places** in Athens, Thessaloniki and Ioannina.



A Changing Landscape



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Before crisis: weak civil society, dominated by party patronage and selective state funding – no volunteerism. Low-trust society, fragile and cachectic civil society

Financial crisis: sharp decline in revenues and more pressing needs.

Refugee crisis: massive waves of vulnerable people and funding availability

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Moving Forward



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Transitioning form a Lose – Lose situation (where both the Greek society and the new coming population are losing out) **to**
Win – Win

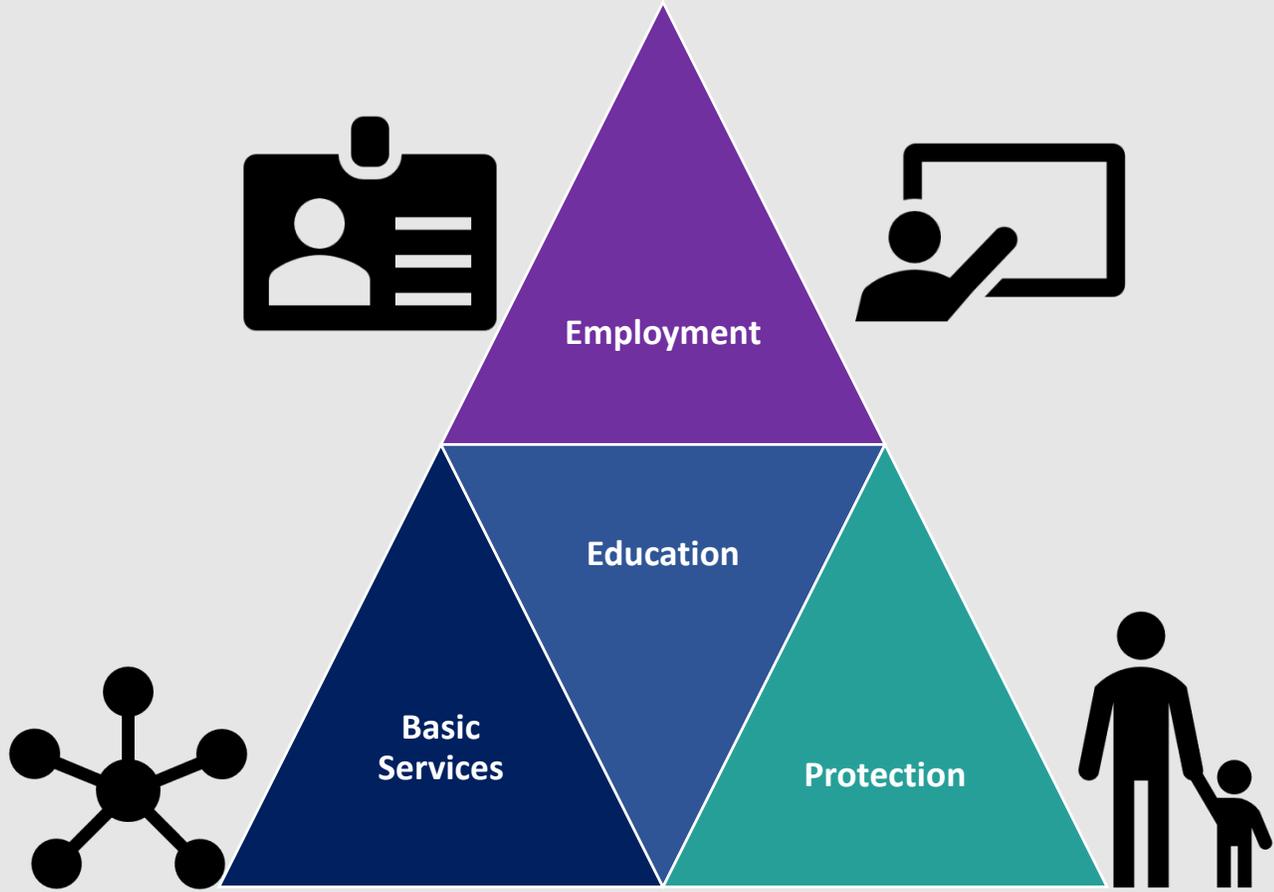
Transitioning from a passive, reactive and basic response **to a**
proactive, dynamic and “next level” response

Holistic Programs

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Solidarity Centers

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Solidarity Centres at the heart of our programmes – service-provision hub **bringing together** service providers to best respond to the needs of the most vulnerable.

Reaching more than **100.000 beneficiaries** to date

Array of **services** including:

- Psychosocial support
- Legal aid
- Employment support
- Cultural Mediation
- Children and family support

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Key Principles of Success

- Open – The Centres are open to all and provision is based on individual needs
- Holistic – A complementary set of services is provided under one roof, allowing us to address all needs and bringing about synergies
- Dynamic – The services are evaluated on an annual basis to ensure that they are responding to most pressing needs
- Consistent– The Centres have been running continuously and have thus become a reference point in the city
- Collaborative – The Centres are linked up with other SN programmes and seek close partnerships with other NGOs, the public and private sectors



Education Matters

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SN has supported **4.000 children** to get enrolled to schools.

We have offered more than **10.000 activities** in non-formal education to children all over Greece (in urban areas and camps).

These activities include languages (Greek, English, French and mother-tongue), IT skills, painting, plastic recycling, films etc.



“I like it here because all the teachers are very kind. My best classes are physics and ancient Greek, but when I grow up I shall become an IT specialist. You see, I love computers...”

Ali, 15 years old from Afghanistan, (attending support classes at the Blue Refugee Centre in Thessaloniki).



"My dream is to live in Greece and work as a playwright"

**Zainab Annan, 17,
from Lebanon
"I find myself through writing.
When I write, I feel that I can say some things that I couldn't say in real life".**

New Programming Priorities

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INTEGRATION – focusing on good practices and positive examples → incentives for empowerment and pursuance of goals

Specifically:

- **Employment and Entrepreneurship** – job preparedness, information sessions, vocational training, entrepreneurship training and start-up grants
- **Education** – Language and IT classes, supportive classes for children in schools, vocational trainings and targeted education
- **Neighbourhood** – Activities to “re-awaken” the neighbourhood around the Athens Solidarity Centre

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**Looking back:
achievements and
food for
thought...**

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The good news: more than **300.000 people** assisted in a variety of ways (accommodation, legal aid, psychosocial support, employability services and jobs, education formal and informal, community/neighbourhood projects...).

350 people in the payroll and hundreds of volunteers.

Strong Advocacy work: Petition to the European Union regarding the mismanagement of EU funds for the refugees (1,5 billion euros not aligned with reception conditions in the islands).

Also: capacity building, cooperation with smaller and other large NGOs.

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Thank you!



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