

“The Psychosocial support of refugees /migrants in Athens, Aegean Islands and Idomeni, northern Hellenic Borders”

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According to UNHCR refugee agency, the number of sea arrivals in Greece hits **half million mark** 502,500 people and more than 100 people have died attempting via the sea the crossing from Turkey to Aegean islands. The majority of refugees are coming from Syria but there are also migrants / refugees coming from Afghanistan, Iraq, Somalia All these people on the Aegean Islands are either awaiting registration or onward transport to the mainland. Many of them are desperate to move quickly onwards to Western Europe, fearing that borders ahead of them will close. Many of them have traumatic experiences in their homeland and often during their journey to reach Europe.

In Greece the Ministry of Interior , the Ministry of Migration Policy , the Ministry of Health and an important number of State or Local Authorities are involved in the reception, hosting and registration of refugees and migrants.

1. Athens

In Athens they live temporally in protected areas , at Elaionas area and at the Indoor Galatsi Olympic Hall. Many different Local Authorities or Medical Services such Municipality of Athens , “Center for Disease Control and Prevention”, Hospitals, UNHCR refugee agency or different NGOs such as the Red Cross, the Church, “Apostoli” Charity Organization of the Archdiocese of Athens, “we care ” Refugee Child Medical Assistance Program of Marianna’s Vardinoyannis Foundation , Nestle Hellas A.E., General Mills Hellas A.E., , Medicines without Borders, provide food , clothes, medical support, vaccination for children, psychosocial support etc

The Association of Greek Psychologists – AGP is in close cooperation with the Ministry of Health in order to map the situation and to organize the psychosocial support service for 1.000 adults and 350 children of refugees and immigrants, aged 1-16 years, hosted for medical assistance at the Indoor Galatsi Olympic Hall.

2. Island of Lesbos (Mytilen) - East Aegean island

Lesvos is an island very close to Turkey Coast and for this reason a lot of refugees prefer to reach the island by boat in spite the dangers of the sea journey. The situation is dramatic on the island because of the huge number of arrivals. In Lesbos the Greek authorities , UNHCR refugee agency and many different NGO's provides basic and necessary humanitarian aid . There are 2-3 Psychologists and translators , who provide psychosocial support, and they are mainly a part of the team of Medicines without Borders.



Three greek grandmothers are taking care of a baby migrant near to Skala Sikamias in Lesbos island

3. Island of Chios – East Aegean island

(Photos and video in attached file from Chios island is realized by our colleague Mr Pantelis Proios, Community Psychologist B.A., M.A., who, on behalf of AGP, works as psychologist on volunteer basis for several months at the island)

In Chios island also there is a very important number of refugees / migrants.

On behalf of the Association of Greek Psychologists – AGP , our colleague Mr Pantelis Proios, Community Psychologist B.A., M.A. , who is also the coordinator of the APA project in Greece , ACT - Adults and Children Together Against Violence, is participating with other specialists, as music and movement therapists, etc in engaging the refugees children with activities such as, music, singing and various other games in an African simple, easy to pronounce language! The kids although they are from different countries and languages, they finally join together singing, playing and having fun, forgetting the horrible war and travel experience, where often people get drowned as the smugglers shove them in small unsafe dingy boats holding 3 and 4 times the allowed people.

These activities "*paidotopos*" as is named, is done twice a week for the refugee children by a group of volunteers in the Central Park-garden of the island of Chios, where we have almost every day from 600 to 1.000 arrivals. These people, as you may see are mostly young families with a lot of children. They stay in tents and they are fed by the Greek Church, people's and business' voluntary contribution.

4. Idomeni, northern Hellenic Borders ,

As far it is reported by the Hellenic Red Cross , at Idomeni the northern Hellenic borders the Hellenic Red Cross provides psychosocial support in close collaboration with Norwegian Red Cross. There are are two medical units that operate as gynecological and general clinical respectively and one Psychological Service where work two psychologists .

I am going to close with our colleague, Pantelis Proios , who works in Chios, thought reflections

Few days ago they were bombed, horrified and left home with nothing but there clothes they could carry. Now they are homeless, but peaceful, not scared, and hoping for a better day tomorrow ! Can we help? And how many of them? The numbers are inconceivable, incessant and the only solution is to stop the wars. Can we? Or what?