



## **PEER LEARNING ACTIVITY IN GREECE**

**SIRIUS 2021**

**16-17 December 2021, Athens**

Prepared by the Bulgarian participants Bistra Ivanova from Multi Kulti Collective and Iva Partsaleva from UNHCR Bulgaria with the precious notes of Vlasis Manolias, PhD student from Hellenic Open University

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Prepared by the Norwegian participant, Associate Professor Fred Carlo Andersen from Østfold University College

Reviewed by the Dutch partners Afke Weltevrede and Laurinde Koster from Risbo

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## DISCLAIMER

Due to the COVID-19 global pandemic and the health measures taken by the Greek authorities, the Peer Learning Activity (PLA) had to be organized accordingly. In particular, the number of the participants had to be reduced to two Bulgarians, one Norwegian and one Dutch participant who were able to attend the event in person in Athens. In this regard, the programme was partly designed as a hybrid event which also allowed 7 dissemination partners to participate in part of the event online. There were 13 participants in person and 7 participants remotely (including Don Bosco International and Parents' Association in Greece).

The event was organized by the Hellenic Open University in collaboration with the Ministry of Education and Religion. The Greek organizers would like to thank everybody for their active participation and support. Acknowledgements to Ms Marieta Koumarianou, Refugee Education Coordinator, who collaborated, on behalf of the Central Directorate of Education in Athens Municipality, for the school visits.

## SIRIUS 2.0. ACTIVITY PEER LEARNING

The proposed action SIRIUS 2.0 – Policy Network on Migrant Education (EAC/S28/2016) aims to promote **cooperation between different stakeholders**, support **inclusive policy development** and implementation at different governance levels and **facilitate the integration of children and young people with migration background in school education**.

One of their activities entails Peer Learning Visits to promote **transnational learning** between various types of stakeholders, such as policymakers, practitioners, migrant-led education initiatives and organizations, e.g. in the process of identifying good practices and receiving multi-stakeholder international feedback, the Peer Learning Visits will consolidate good practice and **stimulate further innovation** both in the host and learning countries. The follow-up reports will include policy recommendations and descriptions of educational practices that will contribute to the content development of the EC's Toolkit for Schools and School Education Gateway. The results of the follow-up reports will also feed into the development of the annual SIRIUS Watch. Finally, the Peer Learning Visits will facilitate exchange and learning between partners and their policymakers and stakeholders. This process further consolidates the national partnerships within SIRIUS and its functioning as a sustainable and inclusive European network.

### *Objective of the PLA*

The Peer Learning Activities (PLAs) are SIRIUS' means to **consolidate good practice and promote knowledge transfer** within the network. PLAs are organized in such a way as to present good practice from diverse perspectives of practitioners, policymakers and researchers. The visits ensure that the visiting teams have access to the implementing practitioners and to the beneficiaries of the practice, including on-site visits to schools, interviews with teachers, students, school leaders. The visiting teams (peer reviewers) are also composed of mixed teams made up of practitioners, policymakers and researchers.



PLAs' objective is to inform host countries on how they might improve their practices further and provide recommendations to visiting countries on how to transfer the practice to their educational systems. The study visits thus ensure the increased knowledge within SIRIUS on what works and why and, as such, strengthen the network.



## INTRODUCTION

### *SIRIUS Project and Peer Learning Activities*

The last PLA event of the SIRIUS 2.0 project was organized in Greece by Hellenic Open University in collaboration with the Ministry of Education and Religion. It was focused on the topics of **refugee education, intercultural schools and ZEP reception classes**. The PLA had this topic in line with the COVID-19 pandemic, which influenced all education, especially vulnerable groups. In particular, migrant and refugee students were affected significantly. The difficulties for them to have access to education settings increased. Unfortunately, their access to devices and internet services that support distance learning, in praxis, raised the exclusion rate of their participation in education and training. In addition, the Greek Ministry of Education and Religion as well as the national association of teachers suggested this topic as a priority for the PLA event in Greece.

### *Common Sharing between Bulgaria and Greece*

There were two Bulgarian stakeholders who participated in the PLA. The first one was SIRIUS' long-standing member Multi Kulti Collective, a local not-for-profit organization working on migrant integration for 10 years (represented by **Bistra Ivanova**, co-founder and chairperson). The second one was UNHCR Bulgaria, an international organization that focuses on refugee protection and integration (represented by **Iva Partsaleva**, Senior Protection Assistant - Integration). The two organizations have a solid track record of successful cooperation in the previous years, including refugee integration through education such as co-organizing of the SIRIUS National Round Tables in Bulgaria, participating in the SIRIUS annual policy conferences, cooperation on the SIRIUS Watch, etc.

Bulgaria was interested to participate in this PLA because it shares a number of **common characteristics** with Greece. The first one is the profile of the country which can be described as a "transit" one, meaning that a significant number of migrants, especially asylum seekers and refugees, coming from the Middle East in the last years do not intend to stay in these countries and often prefer to move towards Western Europe. This can hamper the educational integration of children who are not motivated to study in the local schools because they know that they will soon leave. The second common characteristic between Bulgaria and Greece is that both countries were not prepared for such a high increase in migration, including children who enter their respective educational systems. In this regard, these countries' policymakers, schools and educational staff faced numerous challenges in welcoming such high numbers of new students and ensuring that they receive a high-quality education. The third common characteristic is that the migrant population in both countries has been generally increasing in the last years which requires more focus on inclusive policies at the national and school levels.

In particular, Bulgaria was interested in the topic because refugee students have received a lot of attention in the last years, including benefiting from new policies aimed at their inclusion on the school level. However, these policies have mostly been a success when it comes to younger children. There are **numerous challenges when it comes to teenagers, especially unaccompanied minors**. Issues such as the quality of refugee education remain a challenge in some cases. Therefore, the Bulgarian delegates were interested to see how Greece is addressing these issues and what are the best practices and approaches already in place.



## *Common Sharing between Norway and Greece*

Norway and Greece share many goals regarding equity education and inclusion of newly arrived students. Although the two countries have a common sharing, there may also be at least one crucial difference. Greece is in the frontline of certain migration waves, where peoples are fleeing as refugees from war or other extreme situations, and therefore to a certain extent mirrors a greater variety when it comes to experiences with immigration. Norway however, like several other countries in Europe, is not in any frontline but is still receiving migrant populations due to the relative wealth of the country and the possibilities for work. Moreover, Norway has populations mainly from new member states of the European Union, the Eastern European countries, and only a few refugees compared with Greece. Nevertheless, schools in Norway and Greece have established reception classes for refugees and have a great potential in exchanging experiences and knowledge.

The delegate from Norway, Associate Professor **Fred Carlo Andersen** at Østfold University College, has for nearly two decades cooperated with, and shared experiences and developed knowledge with Professor Nektaria Palaiologou at Hellenic Open University, since 2009. Hence, in addition to identifying good practices, international feedback, stimulation for innovation and peer learning, this meeting served to strengthen cooperation in the field of refugee education.



## DESCRIPTION OF THE PRACTICES: GOALS & ACTIVITIES

### *Description*

During the PLA the delegates had the opportunity to participate in several types of activities – a **hybrid round table** on the topic of refugee education, an **international discussion** and a series of **field visits in schools** located in Athens. The participants had the opportunity to hear different perspectives from various stakeholders (policymakers, grass-root professionals, researchers), immerse themselves in several field trips and explore how the schools' work was organized.

The activities aimed to answer the following questions:

- What are the needs of the refugee students located in Greece?
- Which policies did Greece use to address them?
- How is education organized in the Refugee Facility Centers?
- How is refugee education organized in school?
- What is the model of intercultural schools and how do they work?
- And what can other peers and countries learn from these practices?

The national and international participants had the opportunity to discuss these questions and reflect on their national contexts as well, thus adding a European dimension to the meeting.

### *Objectives of the PLA*

- Identifying good practices on policy and practice level
- Providing and receiving international feedback
- Stimulate further innovation
- Transfer of knowledge and peer learning
- Strengthening international cooperation in the field of refugee education

### *Programme of the PLA in Greece*

#### *Day 1 – 16<sup>th</sup> December 2021*

<i>Time</i>	<i>Content</i>	<i>Type of activity</i>
10:00 – 10:10	<b>Welcoming the international delegates</b>  Mr Alexandros Koptsis, Secretary of General of Primary, Secondary and Special Education, Ministry of Education and Religion in Greece  Dr Lemonia Boutskou, Head of the Department of Coordination and Monitoring of Refugee Education at the Ministry of Education and Religion in Greece	Hybrid



	<p>Prof. Estathios Efstathopoulos, Vice-President of Academic Affairs at Hellenic Open University</p> <p>Prof. Manolis Koutouzis, Dean of School of Humanities at Hellenic Open University</p>	
10:10 – 10:30	<p><b>Strength through Diversity: Education for Inclusive Policies</b> Dr Lucie Cerna, OECD</p>	Hybrid
10:30 – 12:00	<p><b>A Holistic Model for Refugee Education</b></p> <p>Assoc. Prof. Nektaria Palaiologou, School of Humanities, Hellenic Open University, Assistant Professor, Director of Language Education for Refugees and Migrants (L.R.M.) Programme</p> <p><b>Practitioners' glance</b> <b>Department of Refugee Education, Greek Ministry of Education and Religion</b></p> <p>Marieta Koumarianou, Refugee Education Coordinator at Athens Central Municipality</p> <p>Dr Golfo Kaliantzi, Refugee Educator Coordinator at Malakasa Refugee Facility Center</p> <p>Eleni Karagianni, Refugee Educator Coordinator At Shisto Refugee Facility Center</p> <p>Discussion</p>	Hybrid
12:00 – 12:30	Coffee Break	
16:30 – 20:00	Visiting the field Vocational Training Center for Refugee Students	Field visit

### *Day 2 – 17<sup>th</sup> December 2021*

<i>Time</i>	<i>Content</i>	<i>Type of activity</i>
9:00 – 11:30	Visiting an Intercultural school in Athens	Field visit
12:00 – 14:00	Wrapping up, group discussion, closure	Discussion on site



## FINDINGS OF THE PLA

### *International round table (hybrid event)*



The participants were **welcomed** by the Vice President of Hellenic Open University, **Prof. Estathopoulos** whose greetings were announced by **Nektaria Palaiologou**, Chair and scientific organizer for the PLA at Hellenic Open University, Assoc. Prof. of Migration, Multilingualism and Intercultural Education. In addition, the Dean of the School of Humanities, **Prof. Manolis Koutouzis**, attended the PLA event.

The roundtable started with an introductory official speech about Refugee Education in Greece from **Dr Boutskou Lemonia**, Head of the Department of Coordination and Monitoring of Refugee Education and her collaborator **Ms Lina Pantazi**, at the Ministry of Education and Religion in Greece. Dr Boutskou's speech highlighted the commitment of the Ministry to provide each refugee child with a high-quality education. Dr. Nektaria Palaiologou moderated the programme.

The session continued by providing a **broader framework** related to inclusive policies in education.

**Dr Lucie Cerna** presented an insightful study conducted by OECD. It aimed at making an **analysis** and providing **policy recommendations** to governments and schools that **address diversity to achieve more equitable and inclusive education systems**. In particular, the study tried to answer two overarching policy questions:

- How can education systems support the learning and well-being outcomes of diverse populations and be more inclusive?



- How can education systems support all individuals so that they are able to engage with others in increasingly diverse and complex societies?

The study highlighted six dimensions of diversity - gender, special educational needs, giftedness, gender identity and sexual orientation, ethnic groups, national minorities as well as migration. In addition, 2 overarching factors - socio-economic status and geographic location - were distinguished.

There were five key policy areas to address diversity, equality and inclusion in education, the study found. These were related to governance, resourcing, promoting school-level interventions, capacity development and monitoring and evaluation. Therefore, these were the areas where an emphasis should be put.

Dr Lucie Cerna also examined the **impact of the COVID-19 pandemic**. Data showed that school closures and intermittent school re-openings had major impacts on diverse and marginalized students. It also exacerbated existing vulnerabilities and created new vulnerabilities for refugee and immigrant students. The pandemic also highlighted the need for holistic education addressing refugee and immigrant students' academic, social and emotional needs.

Some of the **policy recommendations** for the holistic education of refugee students of Dr Lucie Cerna were related to:

- Providing access to all levels of education
- Introducing early assessment and individualized plans
- Offering flexible learning, pathways and transitions
- Supporting language learning - both of mother tongues and host country language
- Promoting social interactions, whole-school and whole-community approaches
- Capacity building for inclusive teaching and increase diversity in the teaching workforce (i.e. attracting more teachers with an immigrant background)

Then the session focused more on the **Greek realities** and discussed current achievements and challenges in regards to refugee students.

**Dr Nektaria Palaiologou** from the Hellenic Open University presented the Greek school system and the specific case of refugee students.

The Greek school system was divided into mandatory and optional education.

The **mandatory education** consisted of:

- Kindergarten: 2 years (4-6 years old)
- Primary School 6 years (6-12 years old)
- Lower secondary education-Γυμνάσιο 3 years (12-15 years old)

**Further or optional education** consisted of:

- Upper secondary education- Λύκειο (15-18 years old)
- Higher education lasting usually 4 years - Universities, 5 years - Polytechnic Schools<sup>1</sup>
- Continuing Education
- Second Chance Schools, Lifelong learning centers, Institutes of Professional Learning, Colleges

According to data from the Ministry of Education, over 70 % of an estimated 20,000 refugee and asylum-seeking children aged 4 to 17 years old were enrolled in schools in Greece in 2020. However, based on a report by the Ombudsman for Children's Rights, due to multiple challenges including the pandemic, just over 14 % of refugee children (estimated children population by Human Rights Watch: 10,400) living in mainland and island camps were actually attending classes by the middle of the 2020/2021 school year.

Refugee and migrant students were included in the Greek educational system through **a number of policies**:

- The legislation gave access to all refugee students to mainstream Greek public schools - their inclusion was mandatory and facilitated
- Focused and specialized materials were designed, assessed and collected by the Institute of Educational Policy
- Teacher training for increasing teachers' capacity in working with refugee students
- Reception Facilities for Refugee Education (RFRE), including Receiving Classes and Reception School Facilities as well as Educational Priority Zones
- Psychologists and social workers offered their services in all general and vocational education schools to students in need, including migrant and refugee students

The **Educational Priority Zones** aimed at enhancing active participation as well as effective learning for primary and secondary education students of low level of attainment in Greek (Roma, migrants, repatriate, refugees, vulnerable groups) in order to integrate them into the Greek educational system.

**Receiving Classes** was a two-cycle programme within the mainstream class schedule:

- ZEP reception classes I (TY) - for students with a minimum or zero level of competence in the Greek language
- ZEP reception classes II (TY) - for students with an average level of competence in the Greek language. When needed, it could include parallel complementary tuition. It aimed at the attendance of most of the teaching hours in a mainstream class which can lead to faster integration. Usually, these classes entailed 2-3 years of attendance.

**Reception School Facilities for Refugee Education (DYEP)** were afternoon classes in public schools near refugee camps, separated from the regular school. They aimed to provide integration opportunities into the

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<sup>1</sup> Clarification about the prior Technological Educational Institutions (i.e. T.E.I. acronym, in Greek), all prior Technical Departments in Greece since 2016 are Universities. According to the law for Tertiary Education all the relevant Technical Departments were upgraded; as a result, since then internal processes are followed in order to adjust the curriculum of the studies for the prior T.E.I. in a programme of four-year studies, equal with the Universities. In the same line, a lot of prior T.E.I. are merged with Universities in one single University.



Greek educational system and creative interaction with all other students but with limited options (not morning attendance). They addressed refugee students' special needs through differentiation learning and promoted educational activities between the reception centers and the neighboring school units.

In addition, there were **Intercultural schools**, or Minority schools, which aimed to maintain and promote the language and cultural background of the minority students. In Thrace, such schools were for the resident Muslim minority, defined by Greek law - they were bilingual (equal hours and material in Greek and Turkish language). When it comes to refugee students, they aimed at providing educational and social inclusion of these students, by respecting their cultural identity and avoiding negative discrimination. They had the same curricula used in public schools, however, it was adjusted.

Some of the **main challenges** related to refugee integration in the Greek educational system included:

- Managing the incomplete documentation of refugees was facilitated but not guaranteed
- Difficult access to schools for children in the Greek islands
- Transportation issues
- Lack of fragmented special training on teaching Greek as a foreign language
- Greek teachers ignored bilingualism's importance
- Teaching material was not appropriate
- Management and document authentication issues
- Morning schools were not always willing to support the DEEP structures
- Early school leaving as a consequence due to hardships, rejection, difficulties in adjusting to present conditions and to communities' reaction
- Home-schooling due to COVID-19 brought up an issue of inequality in terms of resources, infrastructure, facilities and means, despite the efforts
- Various organizational problems (unclear guidelines, complex processes without adequate state support and orientation, etc.)

Some of the **major challenges of integration** among the refugees included:

- Lack of interest in Greek language learning because of intention to stay only temporarily
- Need to respond to more important problems than education
- Lack of interest in part of the parents - lack of supportive environment for the children
- Uneducated/Illiterate parents
- Different perspectives on children education (strictness, violence, loose attendance)
- Xenophobic behaviours
- Change of student population because of families' reunification and other programs of refugees' move to other countries

**Dr Boutskou**, Head of Refugee Education at the Ministry of Education, discussed adolescent refugees in Greece. Several problems related to their education were highlighted, such as mobility and transition to adulthood and the labor market. Data showed that in 2020, 15,000 refugee students were enrolled in Greek schools, however, often they did not attend school regularly. There were several factors for this - a long





distance between students' place of residence and the school, transportation problems, difficulties in coordination and the mentality of public services. In conclusion, she noted that teaching should be adapted to every single student.

Then three refugee education coordinators - **Ms Marieta Koumarianou, Dr Golfo Kaliantzi and Ms Eleni Karagianni** shed light at the Athens level and Refugee Facilities Center's level. In this way, they brought practical perspectives from the capital and the refugee camps.

**Ms Marieta Koumarianou** informed that about 175 schools in Athens were able to welcome refugee students - both in the mandatory and optional education levels. She highlighted that many refugee students were enrolled but did not attend school for various reasons. Some of them included refugees' motivation to move further away to Western Europe or illiterate parents who were not supportive enough. In other cases, bigger students were more interested in entering the labor market instead of studying due to their difficult financial situation. However, there were also some structural issues that could hamper the students' attendance. For example, there was a legal requirement that a reception class can be only formed if there are 9 students. Therefore, in the cases where a reception class cannot be formed, students were forced to directly attend the regular school which increased their chances to drop out.

Some of the **recommendations** suggested included:

- Encouraging attendance in preparatory language courses and technical skill courses, especially for older people
- Creating an intercultural High School or Technical High School in the center of Athens
- Creating a link between schooling and work perspectives
- Providing free access to public transport to go to schools in a neighboring municipality
- Providing access to EPAS (Professional Schools under the auspices of the Ministry of Work)

**Dr Golfo Kaliantzi** shared her experience at Malakasa Camp (about 40 km north of Athens). She shared her experience establishing the Voluntary School in Malakasa Camp which was attended by children from 6 years old to adults. Currently, there are 4 kindergartens in the camp. In general, the students from primary education were well integrated into school, however, the ones from secondary education faced more challenges, they were still not well accepted from the local schools, educational bureaus and communities. Young adults did not have access to education or professional training except the Voluntary School.

During the years they have faced a lot of **barriers** such as:

- Transportation barriers - big delays to transfer the students to schools around
- Communication barriers - the lack of interpreters was crucial because teachers had difficulties teaching and communicating with the children
- Space barriers - the administrator of the camp often used the educational containers for medical examinations or COVID-19 quarantine space
- Distance learning barriers - during the COVID-19 pandemic, most students were excluded from school due to a lack of wi-fi



Then extra questions and a deepening discussion followed.

## *Study visits in Athens*

### *Visiting a vocational high school*



In the afternoon of 16 December 2021, the international delegation visited a **vocational high school - the 5th Evening Vocational High school of Athens in Exarcheia**. The school aimed at providing specialization degrees which could lead to the employment of graduates in the fields of economy, computers and health. Students were aged between 20 and 70. Unlike the Greek students who were enrolled only in September, refugee students could join the classes at any time during the school year. This was adopted as a measure to facilitate their access to education. Currently, there are about 500 students and 220 of them are refugees or migrants. The dropout rate of refugee students was about 50 % which was higher than the one of the Greek students, however, precise data was not provided. During its visit, the international delegates had the chance to speak with the school principal, a Greek language teacher as well as a refugee student whose identities will remain anonymous.

**The reception classes for refugee students** followed a differentiated language program of Greek language learning. Due to the initial language barrier, teaching methods included drawing, using online tools such as Google translate, speaking and writing in English or in the mother tongues of refugees, whenever possible.



The number of classmates was quite limited (3 to 15 students per class) and the language teacher expressed her satisfaction with the progress the students were making.

The school principal shared some of their issues and innovative actions they took to overcome them. Some **good practices** that he highlighted included finding a solution for refugee mothers who had challenges attending school as they needed to take care of their children. The school cooperated with Erasmus students from the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens (NKUA), who helped with organizing activities for the children while their mothers were in class. In addition, at the end of the school year, there was a celebration where students prepared some traditional snacks and sweets from their homelands and they shared them with each other while there was a live music band. However, the school principal highlighted that **these initiatives were not supported or financed by the Ministry of Education or by the Municipality of Athens**. Instead, it was the educational community at the local level that supported the students and showed solidarity with them. At the same time, the schools did not feel heard by the Ministry of Education and did not participate in regular meetings, workshops, or exchanges organized by the Ministry. More often, they exchanged information, good practices and supported each other informally.

The school principal's **recommendations** included:

- The Ministry of Education to organize better and in a timely manner the arrival of language teachers for the refugee students - currently the teaching staff only comes to school in the middle of the school year due to organizational delays and bureaucracy
- Appropriate learning materials for refugee students to be developed
- Offer scholarships to the refugee students who attend school to increase their motivation
- Enhance teachers' skills and competences to work with refugee and migrant students

The **discussion with the refugee student** revealed that he was very motivated to study as he felt that Greece was now his new homeland where he planned to live and work as a nursing professional. He knew that it would be very challenging for him to get to University because he needed to compete for the limited spots with the native Greeks through the national exams. He very much appreciated the school, the teacher, and the inclusive and helping school climate.



## Visiting an intercultural junior high school



On the morning of 17 December 2021, the international delegation visited an **Intercultural Junior High School**. It was established in 2002 in a building which used to be a summer cinema. Intercultural schools were developed back in the 80s welcoming the children of Greek immigrants (who lived abroad and returned to Greece, called “repatriated” groups). The Greek school system allowed such schools to be formed if 40% of the students had a non-Greek background. There are 20 such schools in the country. Today, when we use the term “intercultural school” we refer to all common schools which have a high representation of immigrant and refugee students. The schooling was more flexible as the systems allowed them to adapt the school materials to their students’ needs. The school was focused not only on education and school integration but also on general integration in Greek society. Currently, the school has about 200 students from various countries such as Albania, Afghanistan, Bangladesh, China, Egypt, Georgia, India, Iran, Iraq, Kosovo, Poland, Syria, Turkey, etc. as well as Greece.

In addition, the school was also an **experimental school**. For example, the teachers used different tools such as multimedia materials, walking outside, visiting various factories, museums, sports facilities, etc. In addition, they also tried regularly to take part in volunteer activities which were already compulsory according to the school curriculum of the Greek Ministry of Education. Also, the school managed to build **strong partnerships with Greek NGOs and their volunteers** who came to support the students with their homework.

The international delegation was able to visit different parts of the school and to speak with the school principal, school deputy principal, several teachers as well several migrant and refugee students from the 3rd grade of junior high school.



The school activities observed were various - language classes, math classes, art classes, etc. It was noticeable that the classrooms welcomed smaller groups of students which allowed a better quality of teacher-student relationships. The **school climate seemed to be very welcoming** and all cultural identities of children were celebrated and included in the school environment.

The teachers **valued multilingualism** and were keen to support the students not to forget their mother tongues. As teachers, however, could not speak all migrants' languages, they developed a **good practice** - the students had to write down 10 new words every day and translate them into Greek, English and their mother tongues. During the first year, when students were still learning the Greek language, they could take their exams only orally. Only then they would take part in regular exams.

**Parents' engagement** was a challenge because many parents did not speak Greek and their children had to serve as a "bridge" to school and the local community and translate for them whenever needed.

Thanks to an integration program of the University of Thessaly "Accelerated Learning Program", there were **school textbooks** that were adjusted to the linguistic needs of refugee and migrant students who attended school in Greece. They seemed to help the students in a variety of school subjects to attend the classes in a comprehensive way.

Some of the biggest challenges came when the students were **illiterate in their mother tongues/first languages**. In such cases, the teachers did not expect too much from the schooling and allowed enough time for these students to learn the alphabet or even how to hold a pencil first. In any case, teachers always tried to find a way to engage them in the teaching process and allowed their participation in class.

**When graduating from the Intercultural school**, most students went to Vocational schools because they were easier to get in. Going to University was very hard because all students compete for limited places, however, some refugee students were successful and their teachers were proud of them!

Some of the **recommendations** shared by the school team were:

- Keep schools small so that teachers could know the students well and could offer adequate support
- Get rid of the old-fashioned way of thinking about education, instead keep teachers motivated and allow them to innovate and try new approaches
- Always encourage the students, even for the smallest progress they made
- Acknowledge that some migrant and refugee students were vulnerable or had been traumatized, however, treat them as all students, assign them homework, punish them if they did not do well, etc. and do not create additional unnecessary differences in class
- The Ministry of Education had to organize better - often there were big delays and teaching staff started work only in November or later (schools in Greece start early in September)
- Develop a space for professional dialogue between schools that welcome migrant and refugee students and policy makers, together they could find better solutions



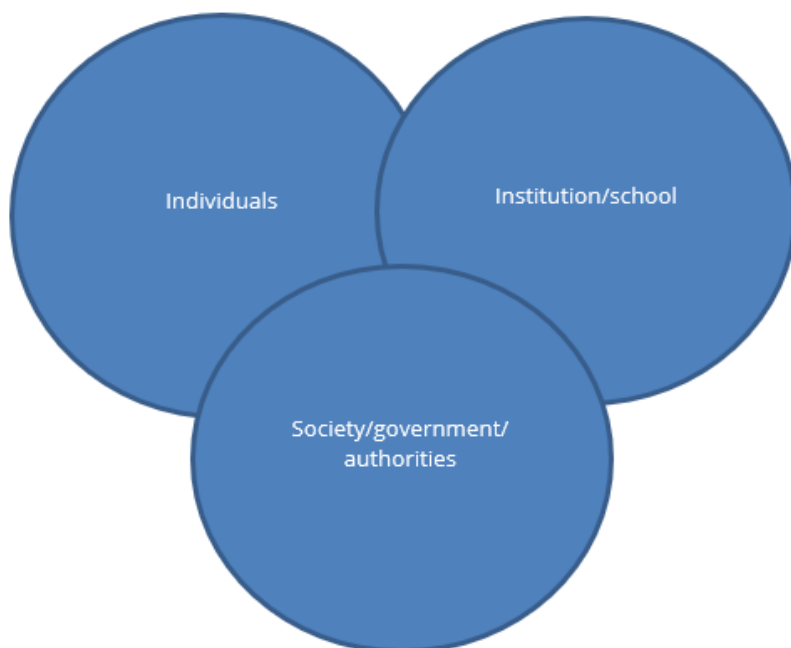
- Attract more funds for excursions after the classes to increase the students' motivation
- Support schools with more psychologists and social workers
- Motivate students to learn more about the local culture, especially through out-of-school activities such as Christmas charity bazaars, etc.
- Regardless of the wide diversity of cultures in school, keep your focus - the ultimate target of the school was the Greek and European culture and way of life, not of every culture. For instance, in Greece, religion played an important role in everyday life so students had to learn to accept it

The **informal discussion with 15 migrant and refugee students** revealed that they have been to Greece for more than 9 months. On their first day of school, some felt nervous as they did not know what to expect. With the help of their classmates, with time they started to feel welcome and liked going to school. Especially being able to speak in their mother tongue and sharing their identity was positive for them and made them feel relaxed. The students shared their dreams for their future professions - dentist, policeman, kick-boxer, doctor, teacher, football coach, basketball player, etc. They also shared that they took part in many outdoor activities and school trips and they took part in afternoon activities outside the school curriculum, such as kick-boxing or football.

## CONCLUSIONS, REMARKS & RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT

This chapter is organized around the three levels from the figure below (figure 1). Individuals refer to students, teachers/school leaders and parents. Institution/school refers to schools and the institutions cooperating with schools, including higher education. Society/government/authorities refer to the global, national and local society, the central and local government, the two latter as granting authorities. The various elements may be seen as interplaying factors in education. From a sociological point of departure they may refer to micro-, meso-, and macro level, respectively.

**Figure 1. Interplaying factors in education**



The two questions addressed by Dr Lucie Cerna both revolve around all three levels. However, the questions emphasize some main actors, more precisely, the education systems:

1. How can education systems support the learning and well-being outcomes of diverse populations and be more inclusive?
2. How can education systems support all individuals so that they are able to engage with others in increasingly diverse and complex societies?

Education systems may refer to the interplay between the meso and macro levels, which in turn set conditions for the micro level, representing students, parents and stakeholders in schools. Question 2 also reflects how the complex societies from a macro level even sets conditions for all levels, including actors within its own level.



Dr Lucie Cerna concluded with some policy recommendations for holistic education for refugee and immigrant students, and she includes the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic situation. Having in mind that macro level sets conditions for the two other levels, one initiative can serve as an example for the policy recommendations, i.e. promoting social interactions, whole-school and whole-community approaches. This requires most probably close cooperation and initiatives between both schools and cooperative local institutions and teachers, students and parents.

Likewise, Dr Nektaria Palaiologou presented the Greek school system. She emphasized, on the one hand, that refugee and migrant students are included in the Greek educational system through a number of policies. For example, the legislation gives access to all refugee students to mainstream Greek public schools - their inclusion is mandatory and facilitated. However, on the other hand, she emphasized several challenges, and these can be relatively specifically linked to each of the three levels respectively. For example, Greek teachers ignoring bilingualism's importance can be linked to individuals in the first place. However, it may also be connected to the central government, which is responsible for issuing binding laws, emphasizing the refugee students' right to teach in their mother tongue language in order to obtain an equity and inclusive education. A specific challenge for Greece is the lack of access to schools for refugee children in the Greek islands. This is related to a global crisis in combination with access to teachers and building facilities, i.e. a combination of all three levels. Likewise, Dr Palaiologou drew attention to some of the major challenges of integration among the refugees, such as change of student population because of families' reunification and other programs of refugees' move to other countries. This can be seen as a challenge reflecting the interplay between a global refugee crisis regarding economic pull factors in countries in other parts of Europe and individual or family preferences.

Dr Boutskou, Head of Refugee Education at the Ministry of Education, pointed at several problems related to adult education, referring to several explanations. For example, on an individual level, the mentality of public services. On an institution level, transportation problems, and place of residence at a government level. were highlighted, such as mobility and transition to adulthood and the labor market. Dr Boutskou concluded with the need to individually adapt teaching.

The three refugee education coordinators - Ms Marieta Koumariou's, Dr Golfo Kaliantzi's and Ms Eleni Karagianni' recommendations can be organized within all three levels. For example, providing free access to public transport to go to schools in a neighboring municipality, may be linked to the government level. Creating a link between schooling and work perspectives may be linked to the school level, and the potential for cooperation with institutions outside school. Encouraging attendance in preparatory language courses and technical skill courses, especially for older people may be related to both the school level and the individual level, such as the school leaders and teachers' potential to attract students.

The visit to the vocational high school, the 5th Evening Vocational High school of Athens gave insights about opportunities and challenges regarding the great variety and diversity in the students group. We had the opportunity to talk with the principal. The principal and school leaders alike have a profound influence on school culture and also on shaping how teachers create a safe and inclusive environment, equity and adaptive education for newly arrived students. This last point may be a stepping stone for considering how to look forward. Likewise, the themes discussed and the experiences from the visit to Athens bring several ideas regarding the transnational aspect.

The visit to the intercultural junior high school provided the opportunity to reflect on the school's "double mandate", i.e. both the mandate to teach subjects and the mandate of upbringing and socialization, the latter



with a focus on their lives outside school and the students' ability to be participative members of society in general. During the visit in various groups, the delegation was exposed to flexible pedagogical and didactic approaches in order to provide the students with inclusive education. Moreover, the visit gave useful insight about the school's vision regarding meeting the students' individual needs through cultivating creativity and experimentation, hence also taking into account the collective learning among the teachers and the whole school as an organization.

## TRANSNATIONAL ASPECT



### *Bulgarian partner*

The PLA's hybrid round table, expert discussions and especially study visits gave a lot of insights to the Bulgarian participants and motivated them to **continue their common high-level advocacy work** on the national level. Seeing the Greek experience, made the team think of some new innovative solutions which were not present in Bulgaria but could be developed in the future.

The most impressive good practice was the model of intercultural schools because, with this statute, some schools in Bulgaria could also have the opportunity to focus on their diversity and offer more solutions to their students, taking their individual needs into account.

Some of the other ideas include:



- The Ministry of Education could hire educational mediators to work with different schools particularly with migrant and refugee students
- Value multilingualism and support children to develop their mother tongues too
- Develop specialized textbooks for refugee children
- Keep schools smaller when possible to allow better teacher-student relationship
- Offer individualized support as much as possible
- Engage more NGOs and volunteers as a regular part of the refugee/migrant student support
- Use different tools and methods to increase students' motivation, especially out-of-school activities and excursions to museums, galleries, cultural and sport events
- Engage students' parents through specialized activities which acknowledge their different cultural identities
- Celebrate the common success on school level with intercultural events which cherish diversity
- Continue the regular dialogue between the policy makers, international organizations, schools, NGOs, researchers, migrant and refugee community leaders and other stakeholders
- Invest in research activities for better informed policy making process

Many of these points could be developed as pilot NGO projects and, if successful, be presented to the policy makers as policy development recommendations, while others could be implemented immediately by the national and local authorities.

One of the Bulgarian participants, Ms Iva Partsaleva from UNHCR, [published an article](#) on the PLA in the Bulgarian Academic Bulletin "Refugees: Today and Tomorrow" published by the Bulgarian Council on Refugees and Migrants in December 2021. It has more than 500 subscribers from various academic and other institutions in Bulgaria and therefore, it will inform the Bulgarian stakeholders for the lessons learned from the PLA.

## *Norwegian partner*

The discussions and visit provide an intake to throw light on some comparative dimensions between Greece and Norway. One obvious point of departure in a comparative perspective is the school's official mandate, manifested in the formal school curriculum. In short, a crucial mandate is to ensure an inclusive and safe learning environment in order to develop students' knowledge, skills and general competence. The common aims both within a Greek and Norwegian school context regarding inclusion, are to ensure

- Social inclusion (participation and learning in the social unity)
- School subject inclusion (participation in teaching and learning)
- Psychological inclusion (personally experienced inclusion)

An inclusive and safe learning environment depends upon some common dimensions disregarding school contexts:

- Friendship and relations to peers
- Relations between students and teachers.
- The teachers' and school leaders' capacity to lead groups and school classes.
- Norms and rules
- The teachers' and school leaders' student perspective and expectations of learning.
- The physical environment.
- Cooperation between school and home (parents).



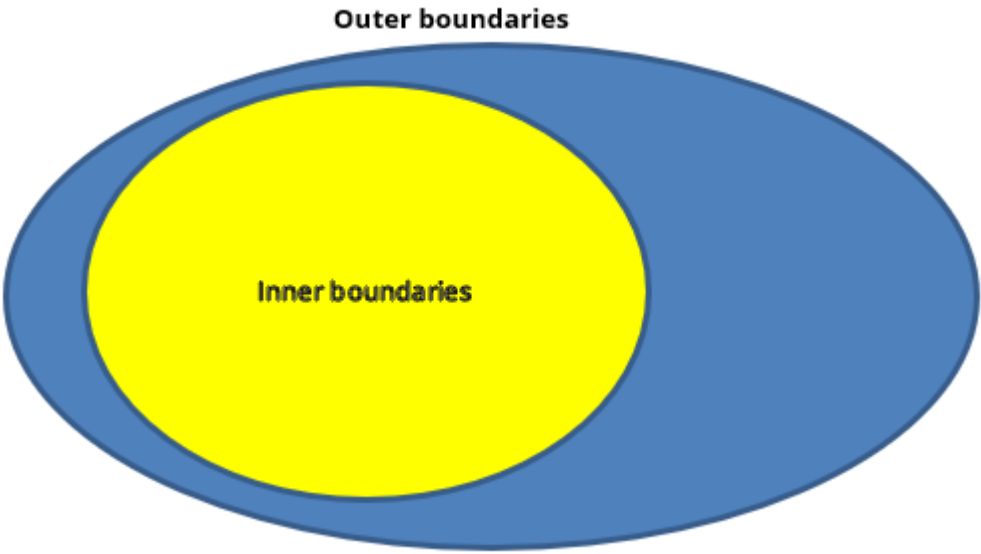


Although there is great variation between schools' and countries' capacity to deal with these aims and dimensions regarding inclusion, students have some commonalities that disregard school contexts:

The school must emphasize and develop the common human, in order to give space to everyone in the community. Another implication may be that we should be more concerned with what we have in common, and less concerned with differences, difficulties and diagnoses. What all students have in common is the need for recognition, friendship, mastery and participation in the community.

What would be interesting to propose, within the framework of SIRIUS, to further develop the elements elaborated in this PLA. This is illustrated in the model below (Model 2). It illustrates how schools may identify and take action between the inner and outer boundaries of the schools' activities. Inner boundaries refer to the tasks and work of schools whilst the outer boundaries refer to the given mandate and activities needed to perform. Given that there is a huge potential for all three levels (Model 1) that have been elaborated above, a fruitful point of departure would be to continue working with developing knowledge, skills and consciousness with regard to inclusive learning for newly arrived students across countries.

**Model 2. The unused space for activities**





## ANNEXES

- Bulgarian academic bulletin “Regugees: Today and Tomorrow” - <https://academia.bcrm-bg.org/%d0%bc%d0%b5%d1%81%d0%b5%d1%87%d0%bd%d0%b8-%d0%b1%d1%8e%d0%bb%d0%b5%d1%82%d0%b8%d0%bd%d0%b8/>
- Bulgarian partner - Multi Kulti Collective - <http://multikulti.bg/>
- Bulgarian stakeholder visiting - UNHCR Bulgaria - <https://www.unhcr.org/bg/>
- Dutch partner - RISBO - <https://www.risbo.nl/uk/>
- Greek partner and local organizer - Hellenic Open University - [www.eap.gr](http://www.eap.gr)
- Greek local organizer - Ministry of Education and Religion - [www.minedu.gov.gr](http://www.minedu.gov.gr)
- Norwegian partner - Østfold University College - <https://www.hiof.no/english/>
- OECD - [www.oecd.org](http://www.oecd.org)
- SIRIUS – Policy Network on Migrant Education - <https://www.sirius-migrationeducation.org/>