AUTH IO-4
Progress Report

A1.1 Identification of potential participants (organizations and people)

Aim: To identify two targets groups:

a. NGOs' professionals working in the field (since also in Greece reception and refugee settlement were delegated to International and National Organizations and NGOs along with the appointment of Refugee Education Coordinators from the Ministry of Education)

b. Young refugees in the process of finding their way to the Greek Educational system, and specifically Higher Education (the first group of participants would liaise us to the second one)

An extensive list of national and international NGOs was compiled that could form a liaison to the refugee population

A1.2 Mobilization of participants and construction of focus groups

Aim: To disseminate information about the project and to explore the field and recruit focus group and interview participants

The team became involved in various activities:

1. Visit to Diavata camp to inform about the project and be informed about the problems children and teenagers who live there face, regarding their life and specifically education. A short visit to the camp's school was made.

A1.2 Mobilization of participants and construction of focus groups (continued)

2. The team <u>attended and/or actively participated in conferences and meetings</u> regarding refugee education, protection and integration issues organized by NGO's (mostly in collaboration with state or local authorities). To mention: "Protection of refugee children" (NGO ARSIS), "One year after the EU Turkey agreement on the refugee issue: Humanitarian challenges and how we react" (NGO Medicines Sans Frontiers), "Refugee children education: current issues and suggestions" (Hellenic Observatory for Intercultural Education)

3. In addition, we contacted the Ministry of Education's "**Refugee Education Coordinators**" with whom we shared the aims of the project and planned the access to young refugees.

A1.3 Community capabilities and psychosocial needs based on focus groups discussions

In order to address these issues:

a. A focus group interview guide for NGO workers and a semi-structured interview guide for refugees along with the respective consent forms were composed. (sent also to the Greek Council of Refugees)

b. Another guide for focus groups with refugee students along with the consent form was sent to our partners in Cologne and Amsterdam, so as to organize focus groups with refugee students already being enrolled in Higher Education

6 focus groups and 3 interviews with NGO professionals were conducted:

a. All of the participants of the 6 focus groups were working in the field (Thessaloniki and broader Central Macedonia area)

b. Participants were working for circa 10 different NGOs (not named for confidentiality reasons)

c. 2 more focus groups were conducted with Refugee Education Coordinators (REC), representing different refugee camps in Central Macedonia where problems and needs of refugees' education were discussed.

The total sample (including RECs) consisted of 31 participants, 25 women and 6 men. This can be partly attributed to the fact that it is mostly women who are involved in humanitarian professions (Humanitarian Indicators, 2017)

Preliminary analysis of the interviews and focus groups

The main themes of the interviews (both practitioners and refugees) comprised <u>how they understand the needs of the population</u>, the ways in which they seek to translate these ideas into their practice, and the role of practitioners in the NGOs in relation to the refugees' future aspirations.

We are now at the stage of conducting desk research on:

a) elaborating the theoretical points of departure (literature regarding border politics, integration vs settlement processes),

b) interpreting the policies and conflicting tasks of the professionals working in the field

Project activities and objectives progress
Activity A1: Communities'' engagement and mobilization

Final deliverables of the project

D7: "A digital/online educational module and monitoring/recommendations guidelines for trainers regarding the psychosocial support of refugees " (first version 01/2018)

D8: "A digital/online educational module and monitoring/recommendations guidelines of lessons on refugee integration and social cohesion" (first version 05/2018)

Difficulties encountered and how they were handled

1. Recruiting NGO potential participants

Difficulties derived from:

a. Most <u>NGOs have strict confidentiality rules</u> and many were hesitant to be recorded. The anonymity of the interviewees and the confidentiality of all their personal information had to be emphasized many times

b. <u>Participants did not show up</u> without giving any prior notice. Some notified for their absence last minute, due to work related reasons, whereas some others did not turn out, although there was an appointed meeting. For this reason, we decided to draw data by conducting some individual interviews (3)

Difficulties encountered and how they were handled

Conducting interviews with refugees

a. In total 11 men and three women were interviewed, within the age range of 18-30 years

b. During the specific time period, the majority of young refugees were looking for relocation and not asylum, so education was a matter put aside for the time being

c. Others were already under the relocation procedure and refused to participate. Covering their basic needs and starting a safe "new" life was stated as of high priority for them

d. Some interviewees were called for their **relocation** or asylum interviews **last minute** and had to leave the area

e. An important issue brought up by both practitioners working with refugees and refugees themselves was the arising frustration resulting from **repeated registrations** (the refugee population had been "over-interviewed" by NGOs, a process that created unrequited hopes, and resulted in avoiding further calls for engagement)

Difficulties encountered and how they were handled

f. Some participants showed <u>mistrust</u> in the purpose of their engagement in the research interview and did not participate. Some who did participate refused to share personal information in detail (the refugee population had already to undergo multiple systems of traditional border practices such as identification verification)

g. <u>Many refugees of higher educational level had already left Greece</u> for other countries

h. Another barrier was the fact that we were asked to <u>work with people on the move</u> and <u>the fluid and shifting reality of the</u> camps (e.g. eviction of many camps in the specific region and the resettlement of refugees to other placements such as safer camps, hostels, in other cities)

i. <u>The language barrier was apparent</u> in relation to the lack of available interpreters.

Project's impact

The quantitative indices of project as planned, are met, with the exception of the number of refugee young people (14 being interviewed, instead of 15)

The following challenges have been dealt with as resources for negotiating the themes of precariousness, invisibility and mobility, camp detention and temporality

1. One theme of the interviews has to do with the challenge of imagining a future and planning one's life trajectory in the present, under precarious situations (see Brun, 2015)

2. Refugees were often invisible and mobile and this prevented us from mobilizing adequately the specific target groups. According to our data, the limited opportunities for integration and employment, the lack of adequate reception conditions, along with the slow asylum procedures were clearly represented in the participants' interviews; the "economic crisis" (along with the migration "crisis") worked as the context and not as an exceptional condition for the refugee population (and many of the NGOs practitioners, as well)

Project's impact

3. There was a mutual recognition among the practitioners that they <u>could not plan activities potentially developed in a long term</u>, such as thinking of ways or finding refugee young people, who could potentially benefit from Higher Education. (For instance, many of the practitioners stated that they had to shift due to the sudden closure of camps, the resettlement of the refugee population in other settings or their short-term employment status)

4. In addition, the <u>participating practitioners</u> had to deal with the camp experience, <u>without being adequately trained and prepared</u>. it seems as if the emergency imagery/discourse along with the temporality of the refugees' trajectories de-contextualizes their aspirations. The participating practitioners would state their short-term relief work towards the refugee population, a fact that has unintended consequences, when "crisis" becomes the normal

5. Another crucial challenge had to do with issues of <u>temporality</u> and the question of how time is conceptualized within research programs like ours (Brun & Fábos 2015). One paradox represented in the practitioners' and refugees' interviews was the sense of the refugees "being stuck" in Greece whereas asked, obliged or forced to move on to create their future. As Turner (2015) notes, it appears as if on the one hand the refugees seem to be on the move, whereas, on the other hand, they are not actually going anywhere.

6. Finally, the issue of <u>mistrust</u> in relation to issues of relocation has been reported in both the practitioners' and refugees' interviews. There is substantial literature referring to the refugees being mistrusted by others and being accustomed to mistrust (Behnia, 2008. Ni Raghallaigh, 2013). In terms of the impact on participating groups, the relational aspects of the interaction were recognized, along with a credibility based approach (Behnia, 2008) in the given socio-cultural and political context.

Project's impact

- The challenges mentioned serve as the project impact outputs, since through the implementation of the project we achieved:

- 1) capacity building of local NGOs in mastering helping skills that will serve to strengthen the resources of refugee population;

- (2) disseminating information about coping with losses, taking into consideration the temporality, mobility and mistrust issues;

- (3) forming a network of NGO's practitioners to whom we provided expert knowledge

- (4) Empowering the participating groups for community actions that would potentially lead them to HE

- (5) Refugees' motivation to be involved in enhancing the process of the project (e.g. two refugees being engaged as cultural mediators)

- Some outputs are a precondition for activities at further levels (i.e. trained volunteers, good practices, interagency collaboration, collaboration with the University).

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