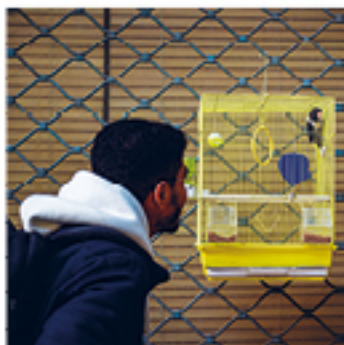




Social Cohesion and the Impact of Welfare Policies on Migrants

A STUDY BY

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Maria Paraskeva
Maro Verli



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IMPACT OF WELFARE POLICIES
ON MIGRANTS

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Preamble

In recent years, economic, social and political developments in Europe have challenged European welfare governance. Many countries, including Greece, launched austerity programmes that have negatively affected welfare systems and impoverished disadvantaged populations. At the same time, the global situation (political, social, military conflicts, human rights abuses, violence, weather, etc.) has resulted in the increased movement of third-country nationals (TCN) and has triggered debates on the relationship between migration and the welfare state. In conjunction with Europe's failure to integrate a comprehensive and long-term migration strategy in European societies, the latter has proved fertile ground for anti-migration narratives that are based on how much welfare migrants deserve in the host state. The discussion on fair and effective welfare governance has shifted from the principle of equal treatment in the view of protecting all people from poverty, vulnerability and social exclusion, regardless of their legal status, to "emergency" and "exceptional" responses which cannot safeguard adequate protection for all those who need it. The exclusion of TCNs from welfare services has been used as a deterrent to keep displaced persons away from their final destination.

Introduction

This report provides an overview of Greece's policies and practices relating to access by third-country nationals (TCNs) to the social protection system in conjunction with the risks and vulnerabilities faced by different migrant groups in availing of social protection. Social protection can include different types of protection, mainly:

- (a) Social assistance: non-contributory transfers in cash, vouchers, or in-kind to the most vulnerable, public works programmes, etc.
- (b) Social insurance: contributory programmes, which provide compensatory support in the event of illness, injury, unemployment, parental leave, old age, etc.
- (c) labour market interventions: a variety of programmes that promote labour market participation and ensure minimum employment standards.

The study finds that, in general, third-country nationals are “socially excluded” through the social protection system, and their needs are addressed by specific, fragmented measures integrated into EU programmes without any guarantee of their long-term continuation.

According to the Social Protection Inter-agency Cooperation Board, social protection is a set of policies and programmes aimed at preventing poverty and protecting all people from vulnerability and social exclusion throughout their life cycle, with a particular emphasis on vulnerable groups. This means ensuring adequate protection for all who need it, including children; people of work-

ing age in case of maternity, sickness, work injury or for those without jobs; persons with disability and older persons. This protection can be provided through social insurance, tax-funded social benefits, social assistance services, public work programmes and other schemes guaranteeing basic income security and access to essential services. In Greece, though, refugees and asylum seekers often face insurmountable barriers and unequal treatment in accessing social protection as a right. The fact that migrants and refugees are viewed as having short-term needs who can temporarily address their needs in terms of “exceptional” or “emergency” responses ensures they remain “external” and do not become “part of society”. The complexity of the reasons that result in large-scale movements of people within and between countries remains. Thus, the need to safeguard their social rights and ensure equal treatment of all persons under the law is the only way forward.

Welfare social benefits and migration

Despite migrants' vulnerabilities and the EU's obligations, legal coverage of social protection to migrants, refugees and asylum seekers is based on unconditional dependence on the state and results in a lower probability of receiving welfare benefits. Legal provisions referring to legal status (migrants, refugees, asylum seekers, undocumented population) and employment status often prevent TCNs, especially the most vulnerable, from receiving welfare benefits. The challenge of accessing proper employment is linked, among others, to the complete lack of skill assessment of professional and language skills/qualifications and further upskilling needs. Unemployment rates remain extremely high (85%), resulting in dependence on non-contributory benefits and hindering access to contributory ones. In recent years, legal provisions in view of the principle of equal treatment have been adopted in Greek law. In a number of cases, though, these provisions impose disproportionate burdens or have restrictive effects with regard to the principal objective pursued, thus neglecting to protect rights that cannot be accessed explicitly.

Moreover, legal frameworks regarding social protection differ depending on the status of the TCN. Recognised refugees have access to more welfare benefits, although various barriers, including the minimum period of residence requirements to access them, in practice exclude them from availing of them. In most cases, asylum seekers are not included in national welfare programmes but fall under specialised and fragmented EU-funded programmes to cover their needs "temporarily". The undocumented population, although it is the most vulnerable, is excluded from the social

protection system, leaving them at risk of exploitation and jeopardising social cohesion. These parallel pathways for a migration population with different legal status produce discriminatory approaches.

This section provides an overview of the basic welfare benefits provided under Greek legislation in conjunction with the vulnerabilities faced by different migrant groups and the disproportionately strict requirements on receiving benefits that result in unequal treatment and discrimination. It also highlights the need for rights-based social protection instead of “emergency” and “temporary” responses. To better navigate the complicated and vague social scheme TCNs need be familiarised with, we will divide the welfare benefits into two categories:

1. National welfare benefits
2. EU funding support for the country's compliance with the EU Reception Conditions Directive.

1. National welfare benefits

- (a) A housing allowance¹ for persons who live in rented dwellings and comply with legal requirements is provided to beneficiaries of international protection and beneficiaries of residence permits on humanitarian grounds that can demonstrate five years of permanent and legal residence in Greece. TCNs, except in the above cases, are required to demonstrate twelve years of permanent and legal residence in Greece. This legal provision is disproportionate with regard to the principal objective pursued, the support of the most vulnerable households, as it excludes the majority of beneficiaries of international protection from this benefit and makes their access to it dependent on their legal status.
- (b) A child allowance² is provided to families that comply with legal requirements and can demonstrate five years of permanent and legal residence in Greece. TCNs, except in the above cases, are required to demonstrate twelve years of permanent and legal

1. Art. 3, par. 6, sec. 2, Law 4472/2017, as in force.

2. Art. 214, par. 11, Law 4512/2018, as in force.

residence in Greece. This legal provision is disproportionate with regard to the principal objective pursued, the support of the most vulnerable households, as it excludes the majority of beneficiaries of international protection from this benefit and makes their access to it dependent on their legal status.

- (c) A birth allowance³ of €2,000 is granted for every child born in Greece. TCNs are entitled to receive this allowance if they can demonstrate twelve years of legal and permanent residing in Greece. Exceptionally for births that take place from 2020 to 2023, the allowance will be granted to any mother, including third-country nationals, who has been permanently residing in Greece since 2012. This legal provision is disproportionate with regard to the principal objective pursued, the support of the most vulnerable households, as it excludes the majority of beneficiaries of international protection from this benefit and makes their access to it dependent on their legal status.
- (d) Disability benefits:⁴ Beneficiaries of international protection with disabilities have to be examined by a disability accreditation centre (KEPA) to assess whether their disability is above 67% to be eligible for the Severe Disability Allowance. As of 16 September 2022, the application for the examination and certification of disability by the KEPA is submitted electronically, regardless of the intention of use. The certification beneficiaries will receive will be uniform and will certify them in terms of the medical criteria for any possible benefit (insurance, welfare, social, etc.). The new information system, in which all digital procedures relating to disability benefits are gathered, in conjunction with the lack of adequate information and efficient interpretation in practice excludes this population from the benefits.
- (e) The guaranteed minimum income⁵ was introduced in 2017 as a new welfare programme addressed to households living in

3. Art. 1, 7, Law 4659/2020, as in force.

4. Decision 83779/12.09.2022, *Official Gazette* (FEK) 4830/B/13.09.2022, as in force.

5. Art. 235, Law 4389/2016, as in force.

conditions of extreme poverty.⁶ Indicatively, the corresponding amounts per category are a minimum income every six months of €1,200 for each household, €1,800 for a household consisting of two adult members or a single-parent family with a minor member, €2,100 for each household consisting of two adults and a minor member or single-parent family with two minor members. The single parent's allowance, which falls under the provisions of the guaranteed minimum income, is provided to those who can provide proof of their family situation, e.g. divorce, death certificate, or birth certificate. With no access to the authorities of their country, many single parents are excluded because they cannot provide the necessary documents.

- (f) Uninsured retiree benefit:⁷ Retired beneficiaries of international protection in principle have the right to the Social Solidarity Benefit of Uninsured Retirees. The requirement of years of permanent residence in Greece in practice excludes from this benefit seniors who are newly recognised beneficiaries. The period spent in Greece as an asylum seeker is not calculated towards the 15-year period, since legally the application for international protection is not considered as a residence permit. At the same time, beneficiaries of the Social Solidarity Benefit of Uninsured Retirees are eligible for participation in the social tourism programme, which would enhance this population and support its integration process.
- ▶ TCNs are excluded from the social allowance granted to students which is provided only to Greek citizens.
 - ▶ TCNs are excluded from the income support for families living in mountainous and less-favoured regions which is only provided to Greek/EU/European Economic Area/Swiss Confederation citizens.⁸

6. <https://opeka.gr/elachisto-engyimeno-eisodima-kea/plirofories/>.

7. Art. 27, par. 2, Law 3016/2002, as in force.

8. Art. 27, par. 2, Law 3016/2002, as in force.

EU funding support and the country's compliance with the EU Reception Conditions Directive

- (a) ESTIA programme: In 2015, UNHCR, with financial support from the EU, first implemented the ESTIA accommodation scheme to temporarily host asylum seekers scheduled for relocation to other European countries under the 2016–2017 scheme. However, as the need for housing persisted, the ESTIA accommodation scheme moved to host vulnerable asylum seekers and provide services such as psychosocial and mental health support, interpretation, and referral to medical actors. In September 2020, the Greek government took over from UNHCR the EU-funded ESTIA II programme with the intention of increasing its capacity from 25,500 to 40,000 places by the end of 2021. In February 2022, the Ministry of Migration and Asylum announced it would restrict the capacity of ESTIA II to 10,000 places by April 2022, aiming to fully conclude it by the end of 2022. No provision was made for the vulnerable asylum seekers accommodated under the scheme, leaving them without humane and adequate accommodation and proper care.
- (b) Cash programme: The second pillar of the ESTIA programme – ESTIA Cash – was implemented by UNHCR and the Greek government, with financial support from the EU to ensure that all asylum seekers could meet their basic daily needs. The cash programme supported not only those in ESTIA apartments but also the tens of thousands of persons living in camps or on their own in urban areas. Since spring 2017, cash assistance, as the EU funds it, has been provided by UNHCR to asylum seekers in Greece. The cash assistance programme was handed over to the Ministry of Migration and Asylum in 2021 in order to provide cash assistance to adult applicants of international protection and their family members (asylum seekers), who are accommodated in open reception facilities on the mainland, Reception and Identification Centres (RICs) on the islands, ESTIA accommodation, and shelters cooperating with the Ministry of Migration and Asylum, with the exception of applicants that are in custody.

After it was handed over from UNHCR to the Greek government in October 2021, the programme for the distribution of cash assistance to asylum seekers in Greece was abruptly stopped. The months-long suspension of cash assistance for asylum seekers caused significant hardship across Greece. In March 2022, the programme's resumed, although many individuals still remain without assistance. Cash assistance varies according to family size and is distinguished by the full amount of cash assistance and the partial amount of cash assistance.

- ▶ The cash assistance programme is not available to self-accommodated asylum seekers, imposing another barrier to their integration process.
- (c) HELIOS programme: Funded by the EU and implemented by the International Organisation for Migration (IOM), in collaboration with the Ministry of Migration and Asylum, in order to support refugees recognised after 1 January 2018, is set to expire at the end of September 2023, with the possibility that it may continue. It includes the holding of integration courses within integration learning centres across Greece, accommodation support for beneficiaries towards independent accommodation in apartments rented in their name, including contributions to rental and move-in costs and networking with apartment owners, provision of individual employability and job-readiness support, including job counselling, access to job-related certifications and networking with private employers, regular assessment of the integration progress of the beneficiaries, organisation of workshops, activities and events and a nationwide media campaign to create exchange opportunities between the hosting and the hosted communities, highlighting the value of the integration of migrants into Greek society.
- ▶ HELIOS programme refers only to beneficiaries of international protection recognised after 1 January 2018, excluding a number of recognised persons in the previous period.

- (d) The Supported Independent Living for Unaccompanied Minors programme offers an alternative initiative regarding care provision for unaccompanied minors aged 16 to 18, identified refugees or asylum seekers, irrelevant of nationality, in collaboration with various institutional entities and multinational organisations to develop a groundbreaking housing initiative for unaccompanied minors. From 1 February 2022 to 1 January 2023, 241 minors were residing in Semi-Independent Living (SIL) apartments. The placement of minors is coordinated by the National Centre for Social Solidarity (EKKA).

Research methodology

Photovoice is a qualitative research methodology in which a mixed group of expert researchers (experts by knowledge and experts by experience) collaborate to explore the research topic. Wand and Burris (1997), the founders of this methodology, describe it as “a process by which people can identify, represent, and enhance their community through a specific photographic technique”. As a practice based on the production of knowledge, photovoice has three main goals:

- ▶ to enable people to record and reflect on their community's strengths and concerns
- ▶ to promote critical dialogue on and knowledge about important issues through large and small group discussions of photographs
- ▶ to reach policymakers.

Photovoice has been used with marginalised populations who are excluded from political dialogues and unable to share their concerns and opinions about the social and political context's impact on their lives (Sutton-Brown, 2014; Mertens, 2010).

Participation in participatory social research projects empowers the critical consciousness of participants through the combination of photography and critical dialogue through which they reflect on their community's concerns, representing their culture, exposing social problems and igniting social change (Delgado, 2015; Carlson et al., 2016).

The refugee population has been at the centre of political dialogue in Greece since 2015 with the so-called “refugee crisis” (referring to the vast influx of incoming people in the European con-

text), and their participation in service provision has been limited to project-based approaches by civil society organisations. Even this small-scale level of participation has been limited to the context of an emergency through direct service provision. The long-term inclusion/integration of refugees in Greece (equitable participation regardless of cultural differences) has been arranged for the last 6 years through the creation of generic unimplemented national plans from which refugees have been excluded by the shaping process (as far as the authors are aware). Photovoice depicts reality, following a pragmatic ontological research paradigm (Barklin & Sjoberg, 2019) in which participants investigate the current context as a subjective experience of the world as it is formulated by the adjective implementation of social policies, regulations and procedures.

Visual ethnography, as the epistemological approach of this research, enables readers to understand how the reality of refugees has been shaped through the implementation of welfare policies (Mitchell, 2011). Pictures give the opportunity to research participants to be involved in a multilayered and nuanced process that gives voice to persons that have not previously experienced research participation (Bridges & McGee, 2011). Images are transformed into a vehicle for generating information and discussion. Specific images are selected because they lend themselves for use in various venues and exhibitions that can attract large crowds and thus convey to the broader community important themes and messages (Fleming et al., 2009; Downey et al., 2009).

Rabinowitz (n.d.) identified seven reasons why photovoice is such a successful research method: (1) there is an immediacy to the rewards of taking pictures; (2) photography can be fun and an outlet for creativity; (3) photographs of familiar scenes and people can alter perceptions of the social and physical context; (4) photography is relatively easy to learn and lends itself to use by a wide range of people; (5) "a picture is worth a thousand words"; (6) photographic images can be understood regardless of language, culture, literacy levels, or other factors; and (7) "policymakers can't deny reality when it's staring them in the face"

(Zenkov et al., 2013). The implication of this methodology in this research has resulted in lifting language barriers, empowering accessibility in communication channels and offering opportunities for refugees to be represented in broader society.

Ethical considerations: All participants have signed a consent form to participate in the project and have agreed to the use of their photos for the purposes of the study.

Transcript fidelity: The written format of the interview transcripts used in the study has been slightly adjusted to make them understandable to the reader.

The authors believe the information in this publication is accurate as of June 2023.

Research design

Five case studies from different migrant groups are documented through the photovoice research methodology in which migrants create their photos to depict their statements, and the researcher records their narrations. Each participant was supported in producing a series of images and captions to express their feelings and a personal statement regarding their current situation due to the benefit they receive or do not receive. Participants received guidelines on how to use their mobiles to take pictures more efficiently and ideas to inspire them. They also received instructions on how to share their images accompanied with the appropriate caption to highlight the message that these images will be shared beyond the “safe space” of the bilateral communication with the facilitators. Participants shared their selected images and captions they chose via email, increasing their sense of ownership over the images. Then, a reflection interview was set, to create a space for participants to share their thoughts, beliefs and personal stories based on their own pictures. Afterwards, the photographer arranged a meeting with the participant in a location recommended by the participant. During the two-hour meeting, the participant discussed the topic, providing details and info on the images to the facilitator and photographer. The meeting was a combination of a workshop and interview and allowed the participants to learn a new way to express themselves and tell a story. This methodology is used to develop their skills, share their experiences and ensure their voices and message are heard.

The work created on the project represents participants' thoughts, feelings and experiences through photography and text. This process has enabled them to contextualise their experiences and daily challenges and share their perspectives on the

issue. Furthermore, they developed a basic understanding of visual literacy, photography and storytelling techniques. This process has enabled them to understand and address issues relating to the project theme via the photovoice participatory methodology to develop their skills, share their experiences and ensure their voices and message are heard. Moreover, valuable insights and vital testimonies for campaigning work with policymakers and legislators on developing inclusive policies promoting social cohesion have emerged.

Photographer's brief

PROJECT (GREECE, 2022)

The impact of welfare policies on (non-) beneficiaries with a refugee background

OVERALL PROJECT THEME

Showcase the impact of the subsidies policy on the refugees' daily life and mental health state, including the benefits and risks of exclusion.

PARTICIPANTS

Five case studies from different migrant groups are documented through the photovoice research methodology in which migrants create their photos to depict their statements, and the researcher records their narrations.

GOAL

Understand and address issues relating to the project theme via the photovoice participatory methodology to develop their skills, share their experiences and ensure their voices and message are heard. The project also aims to provide valuable insights and vital testimonies for campaigning work with policymakers and legislators on developing inclusive policies that promote social cohesion.

Process

- PHASE 1** Each participant was supported in producing a series of images and captions to express their feelings and a personal statement regarding their current situation due to the benefit/lack of the subsidiary they (do not) receive. Participants received guidelines on how to use their mobiles more to take pictures more efficiently and ideas to inspire them. They also received instructions on how to share their images, accompanied with the appropriate caption, to highlight the message that these images will be shared beyond the “safe space” of the bilateral communication with the facilitators.
- PHASE 2** Participants shared their selected images and captions they chose via email, increasing their sense of ownership over the images. Participants joined a reflection interview, based on their pictures, sharing their reflections, stories and beliefs on the current situation that they and their community face.
- PHASE 3** The photographer arranged a meeting with the participant in the location that the participant recommended. During the two-hour meeting, the participant discussed the topic, providing details and info on the images to the facilitator and photographer. The meeting was a combination of a workshop and interview and allowed the participants to learn a new way to express themselves and tell a story.

Photographer's visuals brief

Subject elements

Individual and community action in a natural environment, allowing the viewer to gain a reliable understanding of their behaviour, values, and beliefs. Family/single facial expression shots in locations that include street markets, home facilities, transportation, etc.

Participants

Five (5) case studies from different migrant groups are documented through the photovoice research methodology in which migrants create their photos to depict their statements, and the researcher records their narrations.

Format

Landscape, portrait

Colours

Dark, rich, warm tones

Creative photo directions

Up-low (high) angles, Dutch angle | Contrast lighting | Close-up, medium shot.

Emotional tone

Low-key (dark tones) to promote fear of the unknown.

Statements

I feel angry, confused, scared, vulnerable, disappointed

Case studies

reflecting migrants' access to the welfare system and their interactions with services at different levels of the system

In the Greek context, the de jure and de facto access to social protection systems are rather divergent. Although the legal framework has enabled minimum access to the social protection system, legal access, however, does not guarantee effective, de facto access to social protection.

- ▶ Case study 1: **A cry for medical help**
- ▶ Case study 2: **Make or break**
- ▶ Case study 3: **"The time I was suffering, look at the picture"**
- ▶ Case study 4: **A storm in peace**
- ▶ Case study 5: **Hell**

All titles were decided by research participants.

CASE STUDY 1

A cry for medical help



M. is 42 years old. “I arrived in Greece in 2016, I started having [medical] issues, and I had a medical operation back in Iraq in 2007–2008 ... In Iraq, a car with a bomb in it exploded while I was in the market ... and it affected my legs and my hands ... Parts of the roof fell on me.” M. has been dealing with medical health issues for many years: “While I was in the camp, there were insects that looked like flees, and I started getting ... the flees affected my legs as they started biting my legs. Ever since there were some kind of bacteria inserted into my legs and I had water and small tumours inside, and my legs started peeling.”

As an unemployed person without medical insurance, his case can only be treated in emergencies without further aftercare: “Then they sent me to Thessaloniki hospital ... I was admitted to the hospital and hospitalised for 9 days, and when I returned to the camp, I had no treatment, antibiotics or aftercare. The doctor gave me two types of pill, one made me swallow a lot, and the other made me feel sleepy. When I entered Greece, I had recovered from the surgery. I was healthy and fit. But every time I visited the hospital, doctors gave me the same pills.”

His health requires constant medical attention and he has been struggling to find the necessary treatment: “When I arrived in Athens, all my efforts going to the hospital were very exhaustive. I kept seeking medical care, and then I found the [organisation name] that I was meeting two times per week outside at the flea market ... they had doctors volunteering with them, and I went to an American doctor, and she told me to run some blood tests and visit a hospital. I visited three different hospitals ... My health deteriorated again, and I started visiting doctors again, and one doctor sent me to another, and they told me that I needed a surgeon ... I need a neurosurgeon. And the [organisation name] helped me go to the hospitals and with the appointments.” What has been the financial support, and how has it been used: M. has been a beneficiary of the welfare system, trying to find support upon the completion of his residence permit.

The Minimum Guaranteed Income has been limited, with difficulties in the continuance of the support:

I started taking a social benefit, 150 euros per month in 2017 and an accommodation in Kypseli (i.e. asylum seeking cash programme, residence through the ESTIA programme). After one year, they kicked me out because I got my residence permit and I was homeless for three years, and I was dependent on the municipality, and I was taking money as well [i.e. minimum guaranteed income] and from organisations that helped me with food and stuff ... and after three years I officially registered as a homeless person at the municipality, and I received help for one year [i.e. cash assistance programme]. I have been receiving the benefit but on and off [i.e. the benefit was stopped occasionally due to renewal procedures]. Right now, I have been receiving the benefit for two years, but sometimes for two months, I would not receive the benefit.

Lack of accommodation, limited access to information and limited medical support have kept M. in a status where he is unable to improve his health and do a step further towards integration:

Ever since I came to Greece, I haven't been receiving medical care ... When I asked the hospital, they told me that I'm not eligible, [I can receive] only emergencies and what I have been provided from [name of the homeless shelter] is not enough, I have to go through so much trouble for a pill [paracetamol], I don't have adequate medical attention, for anything else I have to spend from my own personal money, the pills, whatever ... I need different types of beta-dine and creams. I need a lot of medicine, each medicine will cost around 13 euros if not more ... The money helps me to my health by only 5%, and it's just not enough. It hasn't been very impactful on my health. I can only afford 5% of what I need for my health.

A need to share his situation: M. is feeling puzzled between his dreams and his current condition; he feels unable to control and find joy through meaningful, healthy activities:

What I'm trying to express, my aim, why I chose these pictures, is because I wanted to showcase the very silent pain, like the pain I've been living for the past five years and how I have been enduring for five years in silence, and it's something that affects me a lot, I'm experiencing a lot of body weight, I'm around 150-170 kg at the moment, I'm like when I was 5 years old. I was very athletic, which has changed since I came to Greece. I'm enduring this pain, and it is unbearable for me, and that is why I chose to share these pictures. I was playing in a basketball league, and I was playing professional ping-pong ... I need healthcare. This is what is most important for me at the moment because I continue to gain weight, and my health continues to deteriorate and is getting worse. My body ... [has been like a] balloon ... I'm willing to work ...because of my health. I'm in constant pain, my legs heat up a lot, I was in a car motor ... I'm incapable because of my health [since] I'm not receiving enough medical services, my health is deteriorating.

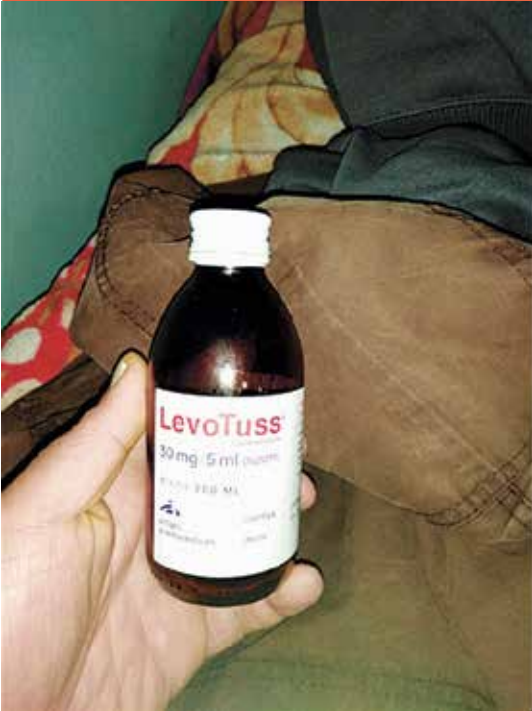
What I'm trying to express, my aim, why I chose these pictures is because I wanted to showcase the pain that is very silent, like the pain I've been leaving for the past five years and how I have been enduring for five years in silence and it's something that affects me a lot...

M.'s photo exhibition

© Photos by M. - November 2022







Limitations on M.'s de facto and uninterrupted access to welfare benefits

- ▶ The prerequisite for inclusion in the social protection system depends on M.'s legal status. A lack of knowledge of the legal framework/lengthy procedures related to his legal status.
- ▶ Lengthy bureaucratic procedures and vague interpretative circulars on the reception process and the requirements complicate and delay the process.
- ▶ Dependence on temporary EU funding without developing personal skills to become self-reliant. Minimum guaranteed income has been his only limited support that cannot cover the very basic needs for food, accommodation and healthcare. While the benefit complements the welfare services, they seem to fail on a holistic approach that will empower M. to break the vicious circle of poverty and unemployment; rather, he is considered a dependent lifetime user.
- ▶ Longer-term recovery responses exclude M. given his reliance on short-term permits. A lack of awareness of existing social protection schemes and/or how to access these.
- ▶ A lack of interpretation and/or cultural mediators to facilitate the process.
- ▶ The lack of a concrete referral pathway, including accompanying services, to help people navigate public services, in conjunction with the lack of follow-ups by case managers, jeopardizes M.'s inclusionary process and cultivates discriminatory attitudes among communities and/or local authorities.

M.'s photo walk



M. arrived at our meeting for the photo walk earlier on foot. That day it was raining in Athens, and we met close to the train station.

As M. and I (the photographer) walked through the streets of Athens, he took me to the places he calls home when he lives on the streets. The rain was coming down hard, but M. didn't seem to mind. He was used to the harsh conditions and was happy to have someone to share his story.

Despite the language barrier, we could communicate using a phone translator, and M. told me about his life back in Iraq. He had left behind his sisters and other loved ones and missed them dearly. He also shared how he was now living on the streets and how difficult it was to find shelter on cold and rainy nights. He often waits in long queues at homeless shelters, hoping for a bed to sleep in. Despite all of these challenges that M. faces and his health issues, his smile never wavered as we walked.

- ▶ In the end, I realised that M. had arrived at our meeting holding two things: a small bag with all his belongings and a big smile on his face. I believe this was a way to express his happiness that someone had given him a chance to walk next to him and show interest in his story and the challenges he faced.







CASE STUDY 2

Make or break



L., 65 years old, has been recently recognised as eligible for international protection. L. is suffering from illnesses that need regular medical attention as he needs to be operated on. "I need three surgeries, so when I came to this hospital [name], because there was a volunteer intern ... hospital and all of a sudden I went to some other hospital for different tests and different things."

L., as an asylum seeker, has been placed in refugee camps and later on moved to the urban net to have better access to medical services: "So I'm a sick person. I came for an emergency to hospital and some ladies, like me they were bleeding, they were having babies, and they had the same problem, so there was not a big facility close by to go, like it was like hospital. So I got back there taking the train to Malakasa [the camp] and it goes every two hours. If you're late for 5 minutes we have to wait four hours to get another. The cost is almost too much, so every time going to Athens and coming back costs me 10 euros with a little bit not only for me, everybody there, little allowance ... for the individual, it's not enough for these things ... So they have to come to town to see the lawyer, attorneys, they have to come to see their doctors. These are two important things that everybody needed ... there was only one pharmacy, and that was open from 2:00 to 5:00 or 7:00 o'clock, that's it. So for the pharmacy, you had to go to Athens, me and people like me. There were a lot of people living with heart problems, and there were quite a lot of people, especially from Syria and Iraq, they had really serious diseases, diabetes and this and that, stomach ulcers and liver problems and allergy problems ... When the doctor writes me a prescription I tell them please write the generic because the cost of non-generic is high. The cost of the generic is a little cheaper so I get the generic, and I'm probably sure that the effect is a little bit different, especially the medication I'm taking, but what can I do? It is a matter of surviving. We have to survive.

As a recognised refugee [international protection status holder], he needs to leave the house where he lives: "Look at the condi-

tion, rule 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 people living in that room [which] is about 12 square meters approximately.”

As a highly independent person that held several managerial positions, L., despite his age, is looking for alternatives for his housing:

I have a lot of education and that education is not only in medicine, you know, I studied law, I studied management and I studied a lot of computers ... My computers are getting old [though] ... I was working for the management at the university, managing hospitals and clinics...

Did they give you an alternative for the HELIOS project?

I applied, and I don't know when it would be out.

You applied, and you are waiting for a decision?

As far as I know ... there is a registration and then they will start giving you money as soon as you give a contract. But I only did this, they gave me another number to call ... and that lady sent me a message that you send these and these documents, then we would set up an interview to make a decision to take you to the programme or not.

As far as I know, you have been recognised for about two weeks now...

Two or three weeks.

The plan is very difficult. There is only one place for my age with my sicknesses; I cannot really live on the street, so I have to find somewhere. They call it a shelter, right? I contacted a [homeless] shelter. They said well we will help you if you get in a jam [there is no other alternative] ... I'm aware of it because a long time ago I had a project like you, we studied that, I was involved with that, so I know.

L. is aware of the situation about the benefits but he is eager to find a job position, regardless of his health issues and disabilities (hearing problems):

I'm a person that believes in one thing: "you should ask, you shall receive." On the job I'm looking for, anything that I'm capable to do, except I'm not a labourer, I cannot really, neither have I have experience of any labour work, never I have done it, nor I have the energy to do it because I'm old, I'm not strong, and I'm really weak because of my age. But there's a lot of job injury involved, and I know, I'm afraid of it ... when we are young, we are young and restless; we don't think that we get injured and if we get injured, we don't care. But now, if I have a little wound, it will take six months to heal ... I had interviews, 2-3 interviews ... the second, I think, my age, the third that interviewed me two of them told me that you are really overqualified for this job; I said, I don't care I want to do it, forget about my qualifications; they laughed, they said you're overqualified, so, therefore, chances of this very slim to none. Then in another interview I had, I sent my qualifications to the United Nations for recognition as a doctor. They wanted a doctor for Europe and every country for five years, and they needed a visa. And I'm very well qualified at that but unfortunately when they saw my age and one of them said do you think that you're really getting close to retirement still you wanna work? I said, yes, when I could work, why not? If I'm not capable, then that's an excuse anyway.

In the summer employers keep sending me new jobs [posts from job sites]. Another interview I had was telemarketing and said come on, my hearing is not that good for telemarketing, you can really laugh at me, and they said – "no, come on!" – come on, don't joke with me ... I don't care if it's temporary or permanent. They are asking this thing I always sign in on several applications I have done. I want both temporary and permanent because temporaries become permanent or even as temporary if you think about it. You know, I have pride. If I was asking some

family to send me some money, if I could make it myself even temporarily, it would be great.

Despite his age, L. has been using his skills as a volunteer throughout his journey, but administrative difficulties have been hindering his employment:

I was also focusing immediately on the clinic in ... which I got involved with them, so they're providing basic medical help for everybody ... I've been a teacher all my life, I taught in medical school, so I'm a good teacher, I think. And I can teach English; I didn't know many times for many years until I came here [L. is supporting English-language classes as an assistant]. I can teach any management courses, all medical courses or nursing courses, or dentistry courses, on all of these, even if I'm not practising. If they had taken my exam [for a medical license] in English, I would pass it, and I would practice medicine. But they don't. They said at [organisation name], they gave the promise to me that as soon as you work for us, especially in the time of that firewood, you know the fire that all forest burnt for three weeks [bushfires in the Attica and Evia regions], as soon as you will take your recognition, we will start paying you. But then they said the director called me. I went to an interview with him and to talk to him and he said, "my hand is tight because they say that if you become a doctor that not all people that come to you will speak English. You have to get the Greek."

L's photo exhibition

© Photos by L. - November 2022







Limitations on L.'s de facto and uninterrupted access to welfare benefits

- ▶ The prerequisite for inclusion in the social protection system depends on L.'s legal status. Lack of knowledge of the legal framework/lengthy procedures related to his legal status.
- ▶ Lengthy bureaucratic procedures and vague interpretative circulars on the reception process and the requirements complicate and delay the process.
- ▶ Dependence on temporary EU funding on housing; lengthy procedures on providing the relevant allowance.
- ▶ Additional obstacles include lack of access to required documentation (e.g. lack of formal residence contracts for persons living in informal settlements/shared flats, etc.), a lack of proof of residence, restricted access to bank accounts which are often required to register for and receive social assistance and the rent subsidy, e.g. under the HELIOS II integration programme exclude L. from the temporary EU housing allowance.
- ▶ Delays without the fault or neglect of L.'s on receiving the benefit before Greece's competent authorities.
- ▶ Access to healthcare and the labour market is even more difficult due to the severe delays in acquiring a temporary insurance number (PAAYPA), hindering even more access to the labour market and healthcare.
- ▶ Social support for vulnerable cases such as victims of torture is based on the "temporary" EU funding without secured continuation of the programmes.
- ▶ Lack of awareness of existing social protection schemes and/or how to access these. Lack of interpretation and/or cultural mediators to facilitate the process.
- ▶ The lack of a concrete referral pathway, including accompanying services, to help people navigate public services, in conjunction with the lack of follow-ups by case man-

agers, jeopardizes L.'s inclusionary process and cultivates discriminatory attitudes among communities and/or local authorities.

- ▶ Personal achievements that will advance L.'s skills are hindered by the exclusion from the benefits policy (such as access and support to education), and his personal profile (such as elderly age and consequently in threat of being excluded from employment) is neglected.
- ▶ Limited access to digital ID systems/lack of internet connections and/or devices.
- ▶ Age-related discrimination on access to the labour market exclude L. both from his financial independence and the retiree benefit.

L.'s Photo Walk



L. and I met in the neighbourhood of Kypseli, in Athens, on a chilly day before Christmas. The streets were adorned with lights, and shops were decorated in the Christmas spirit. L., a middle-aged man from Syria, told me that his family was currently living in the USA, and he desperately longed to see them soon. He would love to celebrate the holiday season with his wife and two daughters.

As we walked around the neighbourhood, L. couldn't help but stop and stare at the shop windows. "Look!" he said, pointing to a window display. "This would be perfect for my wife. This is exactly her style." He smiled as he imagined his wife's reaction to the gift.

L. is a man who loved learning, and during our walk he told me about his studies. He explained that while working in a hospital back in Syria, he realised that to develop his career further, he needed to know more about how to run a hospital. So, L. decided to start studying administration. When he arrived in Greece as a refugee, he was one of the few people in the camp with this knowledge, and he often wondered why so many resources were wasted due to poor management.

As we walked, L.'s thoughts were often with his family, far away in the USA. He talked about how much he missed them and how much he wished to be able to celebrate Christmas with them. He also spoke about his aspirations and how he wanted to find a job that would make him feel useful again and allow him to use his knowledge.

It was a bittersweet walk for L., filled with hope for his situation and a sense of longing for the life he had before. Despite the difficult circumstances he found himself in, he was determined to keep moving forward, continue learning, and be reunited with his loved ones.





CASE STUDY 3

“The time I was suffering.
Look at the picture”



N., 29 years old, is a single mother, and she has never accessed education (she doesn't know how to read and write in English, which is her mother tongue). She had fled from the island to protect herself, and at the time she gave birth to her child, she didn't have legal documents:

P. [baby], because I gave birth in [hospital name], I gave birth in Athens, not on the island. The first time was not easy, you know, the time that I came to [organisation name] was not easy for me. I didn't have a card, and I came from the camp to Athens, it is not easy for me, it is very difficult because I'm a single mother. I don't even have an asylum card. I suffered a lot. Because I don't have someone to support me and my baby, no money, nothing, not even food – [only] from organisation to organisation. Until the last day of [humanitarian worker's name], she gave me when I came to [organisation's name], helped me with coupons to buy food in the supermarket. In another organisation, they helped me and gave me a basket with food, so the situation is very difficult for me. So, the asylum service gave me this card, the red card, and they gave me an interview in July.

During the child's first year, N. didn't have any governmental support: "I had P. good for one year. I suffered with P., I had nothing unless organisations, organisations, organisations because I didn't work, I had no money from the government."

During the child's second year, N. managed to get legal documents, and she found seasonal work, and she started the procedures for getting the seasonal unemployment benefit:

The work they found for me is a hotel job, I do a hotel job.

Ok, for how long did you work at the hotel?

Five months, from May till September. Summer season this year.

Have they informed you about if you can take a benefit for persons who work for the season? For the hotels? Have they told you about the OAED [unemployment] benefit?

Yes, I have applied.

In times of being undocumented and unemployed, N. has managed to temporarily earn an income:

Everybody has different problems. Because, like me, I like work, every time I don't have work, I have my job, like, I do hairdressing, I don't even sit, I have been off the system since I became pregnant, since I came from the island when I ran away, I have no support, I support myself. Even I gave birth, and I had no support. I supported myself.

As a recognised refugee, she needed to leave the apartment she lived in, after one week's notice, and the solution that was offered was a transfer to an island until she receives her residence permit card:

I told them I won't go. Because if I go to the island now, you won't give me money. They have stopped giving me money, ... I have nothing to eat, so unless I stay in Athens, I have my small-small job, you know I do hairdressing, so when I go to the island, I won't have anything to do. Then how I will take care of P.? So I told them I wouldn't go, so they only give me one week now to stay in the house, after that, I have to find another house for myself ... Now I need a house because even this Friday, they called me to leave the house now because they try to hand over the house, so the social worker called me [to say] unless I'm waiting for my paper, they have to send me in one island now.

As for her inclusion in the HELIOS Project, N. said:

They have to come to the house, so I will ask them to give me, because usually they give paper to go to HELIOS, so I have to ask...

So ... they take you out of the ESTIA house, giving you one more week, without giving you the necessary paper.

Yes.

And in one week, they expect from you to find the house, and pay the rent, the extra rent too.

Or go to the island.

N. has created a network with people that support the raising of her child: "I pay a babysitter, every time I start work, I pay a babysitter to look after P."

N. is aware that she will need enough money to cover the house expenses and to nurture her child. She has been informed that she doesn't have access to the nursery schools, but she needs to wait until P. becomes 3 years old: "Is there something that you want to offer [to your child]? - It is the school because they told me that I have to wait until three years."

As for her advice to other single mothers, she mentions: "If you start a job, you will have money, and if you have money, you will live your life. Is good to have money because you don't suffer from many things, if you want to do something, if you have money, you will be able to do."

What she would like to offer to her child: "I want her for next year to go to school, because now that she stayed with the babysitter she talks really well, every word she says, understand, because before ... I want her to go to school and have friends. I want to go out and play together, to socialise."

N.'s photo exhibition



NOT AVAILABLE DUE
TO TERMINATION
OF ACCOMMODATION
SUPPORT

Three days after the interview, N. was transferred to a camp, one hour away from Athens. As she struggles with technology, she could not share her pictures.

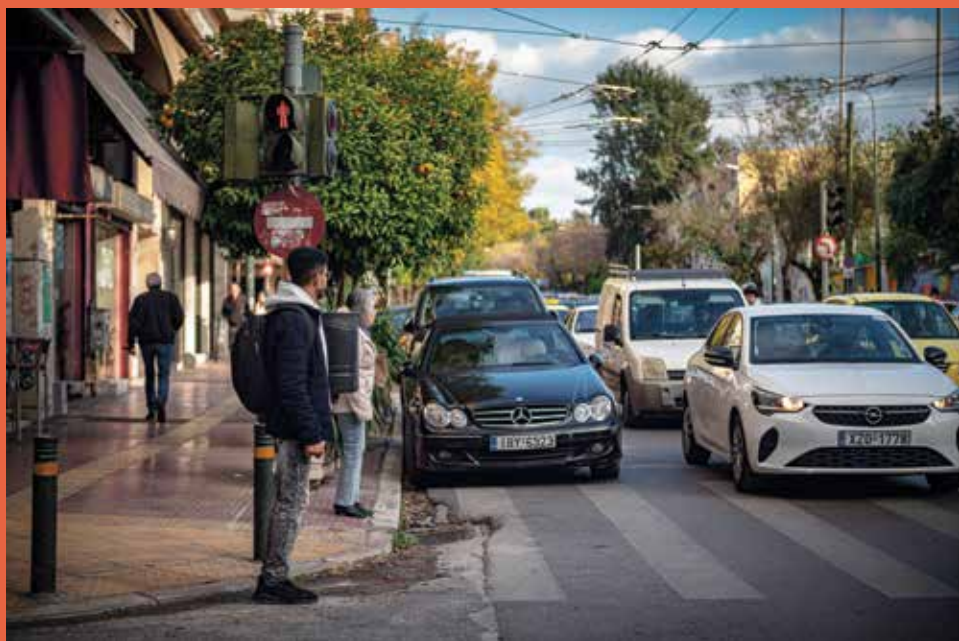
Through my pictures, I would like to show my friends the time I was suffering. I remember my phone was stolen while living in the camp. I felt that everything was falling down ... then I had to go to another house ... I have many pictures from that time when I had nothing! No home, no container ... nothing! I had photos from that time on my phone, but they stole them in the market.

Limitations on N.'s de facto and uninterrupted access to welfare benefits

- ▶ The prerequisite for inclusion in the social protection system depends on N.'s legal status.
- ▶ Dependence on temporary EU funding on housing; lengthy procedures on providing the relevant allowance.
- ▶ The lack of transitional and direct measures from the ES-TIA to HELIOS projects resulted in excluding N. from access to housing and isolating her from her social cycle (she was transferred to a camp one hour away from Athens).
- ▶ The disproportionate requirement of specific and long periods (reaching up to 15 years as described above) of permanent and legal residence in Greece without calculating the period spent as an asylum seeker results in the exclusion from the housing allowance provided by the state of N., who is a newly recognised beneficiary; permanent residence, for all benefits provided, needs to be proved with the submission of tax declarations, which excludes N., who is not familiar with the procedures; tax officers often advise this population to skip the submission of tax declarations as they have zero income in a tax year.
- ▶ Delays in accessing employment and further limitation of N.'s social rights (access to the labour market is granted to asylum seekers within six months if no first-instance decision has been taken by the Asylum Service).
- ▶ Lack of awareness of existing social protection schemes and/or how to access these; N. is a single mother without access to the single parent's allowance, which falls under the provisions of the guaranteed minimum income, and it is provided to those who can provide proof of their family situation, e.g. divorce, death certificate, or birth.
- ▶ The lack of birth certificates and ID cards from the authorities of her country from which she fled in fear for her life limits the access to the single mother social benefit.

CASE STUDY 4

A storm in peace



An. is 29 years old, married and an ambitious person eager to study:

I'm, now, I'm a student at the university. I start studying almost two years before, there was one private university which is called [name] in Athens ...

What did you study?
Computer science.

His financial status doesn't permit him to continue his studies as he has received a scholarship, covering half of his fees, despite his efforts to reduce his daily costs:

But for this year, because my contract is finished, I couldn't take a course for the fall term and for the spring term. They asked me if I was interested in taking any course, but I actually told them no, maybe it would fall for spring second [i.e., he would take a course in spring], but I'm not sure because I'm on hold, I'm unemployed now, and I should see what would happen ... the problem is I have only a 50% scholarship and the rest, also the 50%, and I must pay 420 for each class and with this salary, I take 600, and if I must pay for each course 400 it's very hard... I'm receiving some free food from [organisation's name] ... and from [organisation's name]. There is a free shop, some stuff like this, like liquid for soap, I mean some stuff I'm receiving from them. This is stuff I'm just doing to keep some saving, to spend less at least.

His aim of studying is directly linked with a better job position and when it was the time to learn a language, he decided to move on with English.

I don't want to be in one economic job and find like a two-month or three-month contract. I want to educate myself and get my first degree or something to be like an educated person and go to a different life but I cannot achieve that condition ...

people told me “you should learn a language at least, not use interpreters all the time”. I started learning English from beginners and after like one year or something, I could speak a little bit.

He sometimes finds it difficult to take job opportunities and combine work with studies:

I should choose one: studying or working, and this is really, really hard right now. And many times, I faced difficulty. I could not focus ... I lost many job opportunities because of this, on an island, I could go and work, but there was a class, and my university was here; it's quite really hard, of course, a full-time job and full-time studies ... the problem is they are not going to accept me because I don't know the language, that's why I'm taking a course here at [community centre's name] today and the language and asked many factories like working in the factory ... warehouse here and the most, they asked me “do you know Greek” and when I said no, they said we will call you back, and they never did... I don't know Greek, it's quite hard, don't know now. I'm struggling to begin to learn the language, but it's not something I can make in one day ... I really put myself in pressure to learn English at least to be able to find any job.

He has tried to take out a bank loan, but due to the fact that he holds a residence permit, he is not allowed:

I asked even the bank to give me the student loan, but after I opened some applications, they actually rejected [them], and they told me because you're a refugee, you don't have the right to get any credit or loan because your residency expires and you're not a citizen here.

He hasn't been supported by any subsidies or benefits. Without a job, he manages to keep his house by reducing his costs:

from the government, because I worked about almost three years with a contract, I applied for the social benefit for unemployed, but the amount they are paying is the 400 ... 430 something like that, but my payment [tuition fees] is more than this and I cannot do anything else ... I can say I don't think at least about that far, but when you're a refugee, somehow, they're telling you "you have a full right like a citizen", but this is not really true because you don't have that. For example, for a student loan, I couldn't receive anything and even for whatever I want to do, even for a document or whatever is like always we are in, you know, the second level, and this is not equal, and always I'm facing the difficulty.

Exploring other opportunities, he is struggling to relocate to his wife's country of origin (Argentina), but this seems impossible for the moment because he is a refugee without meeting the entry criteria for migrants.

Argentina also [is] not allowing me to go there. Why? They are asking I should have a minimum of 3,000 euros, I should have a permanent job in Greece and there, in order to migrate to Argentina you should have a job.

He hasn't received adequate information about job opportunities or services that can support him.

It would be good for us to at least continue our study – would you like a full scholarship? – this can be really, really helpful. Scholarship or student loan ... I don't know if it's possible some benefits the government can give us so no worry ... or some organisation at least to explain to you what the process is for the things you have to do, because many organisations exist in Greece, but they are not going to guide you [the] correct way on how you should do that, where you should go. And any place you go, they said, OK this, and this is how can I, for example, study, where I should go there. They don't have the correct answer for you

and mostly they send you, they're passing you to different places and places, and you finally feel disappointed, you know.

Umm, if there is another person responsible for you and putting you in the correct direction and you achieve actually something to be able to continue your life as like an independent person ... I don't want to be all the time back in the organisation of government or somebody to help me, I don't want that, I want to do my things.

An's photo exhibition

© Photos by An. - November 2022



Limitations on An.'s de facto and uninterrupted access to welfare benefits

- ▶ The prerequisite for inclusion in the social protection system depends on An.'s legal status.
- ▶ An. is excluded from the social allowance granted to students, which is provided only to Greek citizens.
- ▶ An. is excluded from a student loan because he is a recognised refugee.
- ▶ An. has no access to alternative forms of education and his only option is to work temporarily on a one-, two- or three-month contract.
- ▶ The reluctance of civil servants and private employers to grant An. the benefits provided by law demonstrates the discriminatory attitude towards migrants.
- ▶ Lack of access to any support the state provides on work-related social insurance and labour rights could result in forced labour and human trafficking.

An's photo walk







I met An. during the interview, and from the beginning, I noticed his desire to study and his love for learning. This was also prominent during our photo walk as we discussed his studies and what he loved most.

As we walked through the streets, we saw a bird in a cage.

"My mother used to have one for years. It was a green and yellow parrot." He approached the cage, and it was like he and the bird had a small conversation.

I believe that we must make birds free and not keep them in cages. This is what I have been saying to my mother for years. At first, she didn't understand that, but now sometimes, when she wants to show her religion [i.e. faith], she lets a bird free. I also do that. Sometimes I buy birds and let them free to the National Park, and I know they may not live for long in the wild. I feel that at least they have the opportunity to live freely for a few days.

I expressed my concern about the birds dying alone in the wild, to which An. replied, "Yes, like me, like you ... but don't you want to be free until then?"

His words struck a chord in me. I couldn't help but reflect on the parallels between the bird in the cage and the situation of refugees like An., who have to leave their homes and families behind in search of freedom.



CASE STUDY 5

Hell



Y. is 18 years old and has been in child protection since he was 10. He arrived to Greece as a prolonged unaccompanied minor:

[I] was in Greece 17 years old, at 2021 ... My father and my mother broke up when I was 10 years old and my father will leave me ... no one needs me.

He lived in the unaccompanied minors shelter for about 5 months, which had to leave on his birthday:

This one year and first I go to a camp after I go to home [for] children. I stayed in this room for like 5 months ... After I became 18 years old, the social worker in the house told me "OK just you have already taken your bag, your clothes, off" [i.e. leave the shelter and get out] ... I stayed a little bit of time in the street and ... and I work, I work, I work, I take some money and after that, I rented a house and now I'm in my house. It's not a perfect house, it's shared, but it's good.

So the day of your birthday?

I understand it takes me out.

They took me out at 6 o'clock in the morning, happy birthday, get out. I said thank you, OK, very hard situation.

Y. managed to find a job without a contract, so his homeless situation ended very soon:

I stayed in the street for one week. After one week I found my job ... black market, right, I have paper but I want but ... because the boss who wanted to work black market ... I found a house, it was very, very, very ... very cheaper, 100, but it was 13 people and one after the other. Every day, we fight, we fight for shower.

His job at the construction site is not stable, and occasionally he has been exploited:

Now I have two bosses and pay because my work was not very strong. So yeah and right now the winter is coming because my work is bad and they don't get phone good job.

You had troubles with your boss?

Yeah.

What kind?

Of the kind of trouble like about pay, not all the time; he paid me the correct, but he let me work for a long time; not just one person, many bosses. Just the other, when you're working with him like I was working with him from 7 o'clock in the morning to 3-4 o'clock, even 5 o'clock, while the work finishes at 3:00, he lets me work until 5:00. It's two hours you need to be paid; about these two hours, sometimes I work in the night and just 45 euros.

In regards to education he sets work as a priority and a lack of trust in his skills:

I didn't see it in this case [continuing studies] but if it's open to me again and ... yeah see for myself I can do it again. But first I need to trust myself after I will do OK because now I don't trust myself from the school that [I] will [I] will be responsible [i.e. be able to handle the homework and tasks]... and the new language – this would kill me – OK English is better but Greek language.

As for taking financial support, Y. has been receiving a daily compensation from the unaccompanied shelter:

I don't take one euro from the government, just from children, yes. After all, children nothing so while you were in

the whole children you were taking some money 15 days 15 [euros] ... 30 days 30 euros.

His aim is to become independent and soon create his own customer network in the construction industry. A benefit that will help him with rent or living expenses will help him achieve his dream:

I need to keep the money for doing, maybe something for myself. But first, if someone would like to help me for one year first. Now I can't have my money to myself keep it. First, when I have the money, I would pay for drivers [a slang term for professional tools], I have after I will buy ergaleia [tools in Greek]. After I will like to work on one home alone, this person here will see my work, he will say "wow", it's he would say for another person, that another person he would take another person, he will take another person and they will open my way in my work ... when I do my work alone, I don't need to care about who is the boss, I can work anytime, I will be working alone, I can tell [myself] "take two persons". I know it working with me and they will be good with him and they will working actually ... this is the thing, it will be fun to do it.

Y's photo exhibition

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SOCIAL COHESION AND THE IMPACT OF WELFARE POLICIES ON MIGRANTS





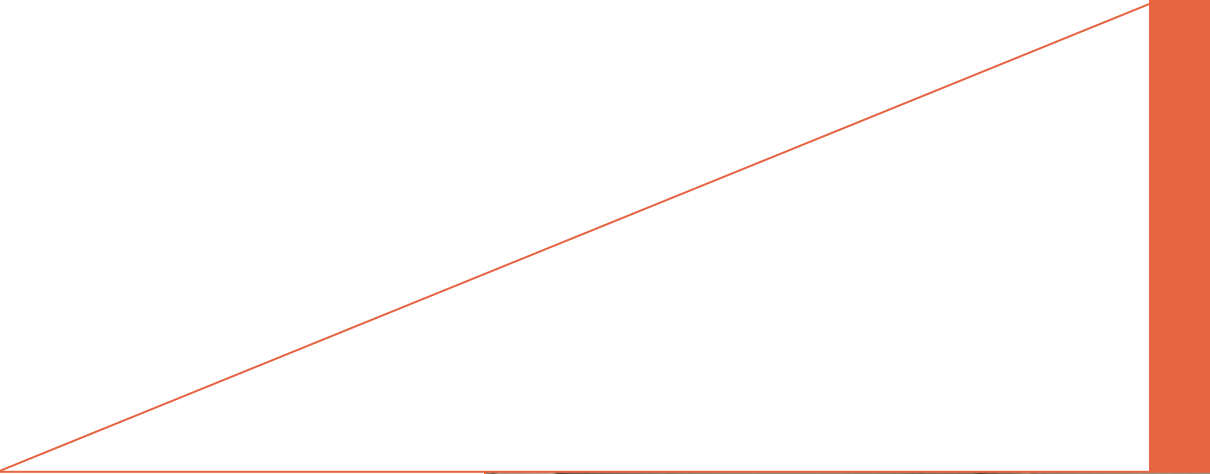
Limitations on Y's de facto and uninterrupted access to welfare benefits

- ▶ The prerequisite for inclusion in the social protection system depends on Y's legal status.
- ▶ Lack of a transitional measure from a shelter for unaccompanied minors to independent housing.
- ▶ Lack of awareness of existing social protection schemes and/or how to access these.
- ▶ Personal achievements that will advance Y's skills are hindered by the exclusion from the benefits policy (such as access and support to education).
- ▶ Lack of accompanying referrals and monitoring inclusion, ensuring that Y. understands how social protection programmes work while mitigating protection risks, as well as discrimination by communities and/or local authorities.
- ▶ Y. is excluded from the social allowance granted to students, which is provided only to Greek citizens.
- ▶ Lack of access to any support the state provides on work-related social insurance and labour rights could result in forced labour and human trafficking.

Y's photo Walk







Y. arrived at our meeting point in the neighbourhood of Kypseli, Athens. We had no plans beforehand, so we decided to walk around the area and let Y. show me around.

“Let’s go towards the church close to the main square. We will also pass from the street that my current home is now,” Y. said, as we set out on our walk.

As we walked, Y. shared how comfortable he feels with his current roommates. “The girl is my best friend now, we go out together, and in the house, we get along together,” he said with a smile. He also mentioned that sometimes, she offers him food if he doesn’t have enough money to eat.

I asked Y. if he often goes to church, and he replied, “Oh, yes, every Sunday at least.” He then showed me a tattoo of a cross on his hand. “You see, in my country, this was not safe. I was not safe because I was Christian. But here I’m free to express my faith.”

I realised that for Y., his religion was a way to keep his faith and hope alive despite the challenges and obstacles he faced and to find a sense of safety and belonging in his new home.

Is the migrant population a “financial burden” on the social welfare system?

Following the so-called “migration crisis” in 2015, in which the migration population was welcomed in Europe, the rhetoric has changed rapidly in the last three years with the establishment of an anti-migrant narrative based on the concept of the “hybrid threat” for Europe. During this period, two things have remained constant: the lack of an inclusive migration policy and the distribution of EU funding across fragmented programmes with no connection between them, aiming to address the constant but “exceptional” migration flows. Consequently, migrants’ access to the social welfare system remains quite limited, with minimum resources being spent by the state. The state social welfare system continues to consider migrants as “externals”, limiting its obligation to distributing EU funds without any fair and effective integration strategy. Although these emergency measures, to an extent, temporarily supported the population in need, they also highlighted weaknesses and gaps in existing social protection and inclusion policies and their limited transformative potential for Greece’s social protection systems. Moreover, advancing TCNs’ self-reliance so they can exit the non-contributory benefits and move on to stable informal and formal labour opportunities in national social protection policies is not an EU priority.

Eurostat, the EU statistics arm, highlights that non-EU citizens were at a higher risk of poverty or social exclusion than citi-

zens of other EU member states or national citizens in 2019. Across the EU, 45% of non-EU citizens were assessed to be at risk of poverty or social exclusion, compared with 26% of citizens of other EU member states and 20% of national citizens. In 2019, among EU member states, the risk of poverty or social exclusion recorded for non-EU citizens was the highest in Sweden and Greece (both 57%), followed by France and Spain (both 54%). For citizens of other EU member states, the rate was the highest in Spain (44%), Greece (36%) and Sweden (32%). For national citizens, the highest risk of poverty or social exclusion was observed in Greece (31%), followed by Romania (28%), Bulgaria (27%) and Italy (26%). According to statistics on the social protection system published by the Hellenic Statistical Authority (ELSTAT) for the year 2020, migrants are included in the wider definition of social exclusion, which refers to “socially excluded” or to those who face the risk of social exclusion and includes actions that are not covered by any other function. Target groups are mainly the homeless, immigrants, refugees, people with drug or alcohol addiction, victims of criminal acts, etc. The latter would not allow us to calculate sufficiently the percentage of the distribution of expenditures on migrants while the extremely low percentage on the distribution of expenditures for social protection benefits by the function that refers to social exclusion (1.6%) may lead to the conclusion that the relevant percentage for migrants is even lower. In addition, taking into consideration ELSTAT’s survey on income and living conditions for the years 2011–2021, the population at risk of poverty or social exclusion in a broad group of citizens remained high in 2021 for both the 18–64 (56.4%) and 18+ (56.2%) groups.

On the other hand, a very large amount of money has been distributed for migrants’ participation in EU-funded temporary schemes to address their needs through an emergency mechanism that creates disincentives for the employability process and runs counter to their integration. In particular, the ESTIA programme, as of 30 September 2021, had established 27,930 accommodation places, of which 97% were apartments and 3% were buildings, and had hosted 21,616 persons, while the cumulative

number of cash assistance beneficiaries from April 2017 to May 2020 reached 188,858. Since it began, the HELIOS programme has enrolled 40,338 persons, of which 7,668 households and 18,880 individuals benefited from rental subsidies, and 772 unique houses were provided.

Under ESTIA's II management by the relevant ministry, the number of accommodation places was reduced at the end of 2022, leaving a vulnerable population, among whom are many people with severe health cases, in a limbo situation and terminating their integration process. Social support for vulnerable cases such as victims of torture is based on "temporary" EU funding, with no guarantee that the programmes will continue. Vulnerable persons are excluded from the labour market due to misconceptions of ableism and disableism or just because they do not meet the standards of the market (such as in terms of language, skills etc.). So, they remain unemployed, and their (even more vulnerable) children faced with such difficulties cannot access sufficient services with the result that they are engaged in the same vicious circle of deprivation and exclusion, just like their parents' intergenerational poverty (Dye, 2021). There is a general acknowledgement that children with developmental disorders need both prevention but also rehabilitation services. By contracting private agencies, the Greek state recognises their inability to offer the necessary quality services, either inside public schools or in outpatient clinics. Vulnerable persons who face chronic health issues need long-term treatment plans that cannot work due to their health condition and cannot access long-term health treatment. These persons cannot fall under the disability recognition regulation, and if they do, the percentage is not enough to ensure a short-term benefit that will empower them to cover their health costs and be in a position to work. Access to healthcare and the labour market is even more difficult due to the severe delays in acquiring a temporary insurance number (PAAYPA), hindering even more access to the labour market and healthcare.

Another crucial aspect is the discontinuation of the best practices developed all these years in the integration field. Many re-

sources, not only financial, were invested in these programmes, and many good practices and achievements were accomplished in protecting the most vulnerable population. All these efforts have been terminated without any prospect of integrating these practices into the state body to facilitate the integration process. The disproportionate requirement of specific and long periods (reaching 15 years, as described above) of permanent and legal residence in Greece without calculating the period spent as an asylum seeker results in the exclusion from social benefits provided by the state of potential beneficiaries who are newly recognised. As a result, the historical challenge that turned into an opportunity for Greece's integration policy to grant refugees farmland and livestock, new homes and schools, and citizenship will remain a challenge. The best interest of a society is to cover its needs and ensure all people enjoy a meaningful life and wellbeing. From an economic perspective, although preventative health policies seem to be cost-effective, there are limited findings, as prevention has always been badly financed and never been set as a priority in Greece (Dye, 2021, Vartiainen et al., 2022, Anopa et al., 2015).

Is there de jure or de facto inclusion in the welfare system?

Through the implementation of a social policy, the state recognises that there are several vulnerable groups of people who need support, not only for the improvement of their own lives but for the general societal wellbeing and safety. The debate is not limited to migrants' participation in the welfare social systems but on the necessity of inclusive policies promoting social cohesion. Inclusive policies for migrants – such as the right to work, freedom of movement and access to social services – helping migrants provide for themselves and their communities with dignity. The enhancement of measures to help migrants to work and provide for their families and become productive members of society is more essential than the fragmented distribution of funds, imposing controls through limits or conditions and bringing them under the grip of social benefits in order to survive. TCNs do not need charity but more inclusive policies related to labour markets and residence. Exclusionary policies are more likely to lead to anti-migrant attitudes and to disrupt social cohesion. At the same time, welfare states should recognise that the key welfare needs of the country will be met by the state through the provision of income transfers and key public services for all persons in need without discrimination. Moreover, although this study is focused on the national welfare benefits, an exclusionary approach is implemented regarding the health benefits provided by the National Organisation for the Provision of Health Services (EOPYY) as well as regarding public transport in Athens for those who hold a temporary insurance number (PAAYPA) and are unemployed. Indicatively, services for chronic diseases and therapies for persons with

diseases are not offered to those unable to secure a permanent job placement.

To conclude, the state should consider implementing social policies without discrimination and also shifting towards a more preventative strategy that will result in individuals' empowerment and financial efficiency.

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OF WELFARE POLICIES ON MIGRANTS**

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In recent years, economic, social and political developments in Europe have challenged European welfare governance. Many countries, including Greece, launched austerity programmes that have negatively affected welfare systems and impoverished disadvantaged populations. At the same time, the global situation (political, social, military conflicts, human rights abuses, violence, weather, etc.) has resulted in the increased movement of third-country nationals (TCN) and has triggered debates on the relationship between migration and the welfare state.

This study aims to highlight the benefits and risks of the subsidies policy in Greece to the lives of the refugees who receive them and those people who are excluded from them but who should receive them.