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Improving the competencies of NGO educators for social inclusion

Local workshop
of NGO educators on competencies for strengthening social inclusion in Greece

05/11/2022, Athens, Greece
Serafion Center of Athens Municipality

Partner organization: **Hellenic Antipoverty Network**

REPORT OF THE WORKSHOP

The workshop was implemented with the presence of 20 representatives of NGOs active in supporting vulnerable groups with the aim of social inclusion. Each organisation highlighted the difficulties they face but also conveyed to the participants positive experiences and methods which have been found to be more effective. Indicatively, the following were highlighted:

Médecins du Monde runs a hostel for women asylum seekers from different countries providing safe accommodation. The support is mainly aimed at finding work. With language support, computer training and by encouraging participation in educational programs and vocational trainings most women have been able to find legal employment. Mutual assistance between women played a major role, as did information about their rights and legal assistance in cases of gender-based violence.

SYNYPARXIS prioritizes legal support and psychological empowerment of refugees and asylum seekers along with finding safe work. The Social Service makes sure that they receive the small benefits they are entitled to.

The **Children's Rights Network** works with unaccompanied refugee minors and families living in deprived areas of the city. It noted the exclusion of refugee children from education, with 60 per cent not attending school. For this reason, they organise cultural and educational workshops for leisure and entertainment. For adolescents, activities include music, theatre, sports and language courses.

Through the '**CPU-Protection for all minors**' program and with the help of cultural mediators, they offer holistic support with housing, vocational guidance, sexual education and legal assistance to obtain legal status in the country (they often lack legal documents). Trainers who speak the same language are selected. Teenagers want to talk and share their personal stories and experiences in a protected context.

An interesting element is the trust that children and adolescents show towards those who help them and that they recommend their peers to participate.

Reference was made to unaccompanied refugee minors who are detained in poor conditions in prisons or police stations and almost always have serious health problems (such as tuberculosis) due to the conditions of detention. The lack of accommodation for unaccompanied minors living homeless outside the reception centres for asylum seekers was highlighted.

Action Aid Hellas' EPIKENTRON Centre has similar experience in supporting poor migrant or refugee families. The method is to provide support through a variety of intercultural and educational activities.

The NGO **FOTOESSA** highlighted how the anonymous exchange of testimonies inspires people who are excluded or discriminated against. Through the "Be my Voice" initiative and an open platform, people from all over the world are given the opportunity to talk about their sensitive stories and inspiring artists to raise awareness. The "Living Library" was also mentioned as an educational tool to fight racism.

Social and Educational Action reported on the exclusion of Roma children from education and the under- function in the three-year Covid-19 period of local services supporting in theory Roma populations. There is no monitoring and follow up on what is happening and public or municipal services do not keep records. They suggested that a network of organisations should operate to report rights violations and document malfunctions in public administration that lead to the marginalization of Roma people.

LESVOS SOLIDARITY presented the **MOSAİK** initiative for the integration of refugees on the island of Lesbos. Men and women can work legally in a social cooperative using as raw material the fabrics and plastics from life jackets and boats in which refugees arrive to Lesbos. They sew wallets - bags - everyday items, which are sold for financial support. They can also work in a cooperative restaurant or in employers approached by the organisation. The key to success is a permanent awareness campaign and constant interaction with the local community to contribute to integration (material assistance, language courses, house rentals, employment).

The suggestions of all participating organisations were recorded and will be used in the next workshops of the project.