

REFUGEE EDUCATION IN GREECE: A CASE STUDY IN PRIMARY SCHOOL

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Abstract

The large number of children amongst refugees who have arrived in Greece since 2014, a wave that peaked in 2015, created the need of educating them as a first step of integration and normalcy to the child life. Refugee education had already been recognized as a priority in Europe, so Greece had to react, as soon as possible, to educate the large number of children who arrived in Greek territory with or without their parents. To facilitate their access to Greek schools, the educational programme “Reception Centres for Refugee Education”, known as DYEP, was established in selected by the Ministry of Education Primary and Secondary Schools during the school years 2016-17 and 2018-19. The right to education for refugees and the access to the educational system of the country was supported by the International Organization for Migration and the local government as well.

This research paper aims at focusing on a case study of a Primary school in Piraeus area in Attica, Greece, and the difficulties that emerged from the initial oppositional reaction illustrating how they affected the collaborative potential and the school climate as a whole. Finally, it is presented how this problematic situation was overcome and how the initial reactions changed. Teachers, pupils and parents were summoned to accept a new school reality under time pressure. Special attention is also paid to how teachers became aware of and got involved in the programme and how the local community were prepared to accept and support such an ambitious plan.

The educational system was hardly prepared for the challenging reality of refugees and their introduction to education and society in general. It seemed that sometimes social resistance prevented the acceptance and solidarity within the school community. In some cases, the lack of preparatory programmes caused distrust and denial; as a result, much more time was needed to deal with the difficulties. The multicultural school environments, eventually, comprise a reality with their positive dynamic to open societies.

Keywords: Refugee education, case study, Greek schools

1 INTRODUCTION: REFUGEE ARRIVALS IN EUROPE

The recent increasing numbers of refugees and their living conditions are a top priority for the European governments as well as for those worldwide. The year 2015 was characterised by “the peak of migrant crisis”

in Greece and in Europe in general (Papataxiarchis, 2016a, 2016b) because of 1,032,408 arrivals, including sea arrivals in Italy, Cyprus and Malta and both sea and land arrivals in Greece and Spain. An estimated number of 387.739 refugees and migrants risked their lives crossing in Europe in 2016 while 5,096 people perished or went missing; 181,436 people arrived in Italy, 176,906 in Greece and 29.397 in total arrived in other European countries. Similarly, in 2017 185,139 refugees and migrants entered Europe (<https://data2.unhcr.org/en/situations/mediterranean?id=83>). Since the beginning of 2017, over 2,700 people are believed to have died or gone missing while crossing the Mediterranean Sea to reach Europe, while there have been reports of many others perishing en route. According to information taken from the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), 53,761 refugees and immigrants have risked their lives reaching Europe by sea or land in 2019 (updated in August 2019, <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/situations/mediterranean?id=83>). Despite some progress in increasing the number of safe pathways to Europe, these opportunities are far too few to offer a feasible alternative to risky irregular journeys for people in need of protection. Persecution, conflicts and human rights violations continue to force people to flee their homes and seek safety in Europe. Many risk their lives and face a treacherous journey. Those arriving in Europe need adequate reception and assistance, particularly those with specific needs, including unaccompanied and separated children and survivors of sexual or gender based violence; they also need access to fair and efficient asylum procedures. More solidarity is needed within the EU to ensure protection through efficient and speedy family reunion and relocation programmes (<https://www.unhcr.org/europe-emergency.html>). Based on information taken from the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), over 50% of the children refugees worldwide have no access to education. The increasing number of minor refugees in Greece necessitated immediate state intervention and their integration in the country's educational system. It has been considered important that not only the welfare of underage refugees but also their education must be promoted so as to achieve their smooth integration in Greek society

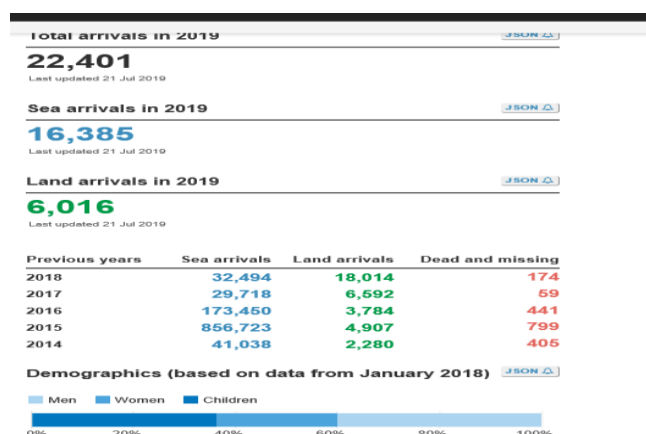
1.1 Refugee flow to Greece

The migration flow of refugees from Asia to Greece started in 2014 and it reached its highest point in 2015..The majority of the arrivals was by sea (856,723 people) compared to land arrivals (4,907 people). At that time Greece was a temporary destination for the refugees on their way to northern European countries and Germany in particular. However, a considerable number of refugees, among them families with children at school age, remained in Greece thus necessitating the creation of educational structures for teaching the Greek language and helping them integrate into the society. In 2016 there was a noticeable decrease in migration flow (173,450 sea arrivals and 3,784 land arrivals) due to the EU-Turkey refugee agreement .

Yet, in June 2019 there were still 3,835 unaccompanied refugee minors, according to the data taken from the UNHCR. This number has continuously been changing and as a result suitable accommodation for these children is inadequate. For the time being there are 1,165 suitable accommodation facilities which are not enough to house unaccompanied and separated children exposed to various dangers (data taken from EKKA-National Centre for Social Solidarity concerning the time period up to May 2019). It is estimated that in June 2019 there were about 354 unaccompanied children at the reception centre in Moria, Lesvos, waiting to be moved inland. (<https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/69915>).

Table 1. The number of refugees in Greece between 2014 and 2019

https://data2.unhcr.org/en/situations/mediterranean/location/5179#_ga=2.114210180.2050311286.1563971573-62509255.1506873629



2 THE LEGAL FRAMEWORK PROTECTING REFUGEES

According to the first article of 1951 Geneva Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, a refugee is someone “who is outside the country of their nationality or their former habitual residence owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail themselves of the protection of that country, or return to it”. (<https://www.unhcr.org/gr/wp-content/uploads/sites/10/2018/01/04-symvasiprotokollo.pdf>)

The 1951 Geneva Convention for the Status of Refugees along with the 1967 Protocol are the centrepieces of the international legal framework for the protection of refugees. The 1951 Convention was established after momentous events and it was designated to defend the human rights, to protect refugees from their persecution and safeguard the principle of non-refoulement when they are at risk of harm, laying down the minimum standards for the refugees’ fair treatment. In 2006 (2013 update) the UNHCR developed the 10-point Plan of Action on Refugee Protection and Mixed Migration to encourage states in developing comprehensive and “protection-sensitive” asylum and migration strategies and policies so as to safeguard refugees fair treatment, taking into consideration the fact that the patterns of human mobility have become increasingly complex in recent years and people’s motives are not always clear. (https://www.unhcr.org/gr/wp-content/uploads/sites/10/2019/07/en_6_prosfyges.pdf).

Between 2008 and 2011 the UNHCR headed a series of local consultations so as to raise awareness of the various aspects of mixed migration flows. However, the refugees in urban areas have not got unrestricted access to education yet; thus many refugee children do not receive primary education. In some countries there is no regulatory framework for the registration of refugee children at state schools. It is a priority for the UNHCR to direct refugee children living in urban areas towards the national educational system emphasizing on the fundamental right to primary education. Since 2009 the UNHCR has invested a great deal of effort in ensuring the access of refugee children to local education institutions by expanding the school places available, wherever this is possible. Though there has been an increased UNHCR budget to support education activities in urban areas, funding for secondary and tertiary education is still limited.

The 1951 Geneva Convention for the Status of Refugees and its 1967 New York Protocol have been ratified by the Greek State, so the national asylum system has been developed on that basis in accordance with European and Greek legislation. The Asylum Service, established by Law 3907/2011, started operating in June 2013. It has been the first autonomous service in Greece, responsible for the examination of applications for international protection. The Appeals Authority, established with the same Act, examines at second instance administrative appeals lodged against decisions issued by the Asylum Service (first instance). There is also the Reception and Identification Service whose mission is the effective management of third country nationals who cross the Hellenic borders without legal documents and/or procedures, under conditions that respect their dignity, by placing them in first reception procedures. The organization and operation of the three services is according to the Law 4375/2016. Greek authorities are responsible for granting asylum in accordance with international conventions and the European and national legislation after thorough examination of each case. (<https://www.unhcr.org/gr>).

Until June 2019 there have been 80,600 refugees and immigrants in Greece; 63,450 people staying on the mainland and 17,150 staying on the islands. Since November 2015, 58,900 people have participated in the UNHCR housing programme (<https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/download/70480>). A crucial issue arising after the refugees’ safe settlement in Greece, since 2015, has been the increasing number of school-age refugee children and their education. The Scientific Committee of the Ministry of Education responsible for the education of refugee children devised an action plan and initiated the establishment of Reception Centres for Refugee Education (DYEP, acronym of the greek term, *Domes Ypostirixis Ekpaideusis Prosfygon*). This project launched during the school year 2016-17 in co-operation with the Ministry for Migration Policy, the Ministry of Health – responsible for the vaccination of the pupils who would attend classes at DYEP – as well as the support of Regional Directorates of Education and Local Authorities that staffed DYEP, and the participation of international organizations like the International Organization of Migration, UNHCR and UNICEF.

It is worth mentioning that since September 2015 the New York based General Assembly of the United Nations has been promoting 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which address the contemporary global challenges, in an effort to activate all countries in a global partnership. The Sustainable Development Goals are of global character and they play a key role in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. They commit all countries, developed and developing, taking into account the different national realities, the development levels, the national policies and priorities. The Sustainable Development Goal 4 relates to the

quality in education. It aims at ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education at all levels, as well as vocational education, for vulnerable groups within society, including disabled people and children. (https://www.unric.org/el/index.php?option=com_content&view=category&layout=blog&id=36&Itemid=71).

The aim of this paper is to illustrate a case study in Attica, Greece, where Reception Facilities for Refugee Education operated during 2016-17, 2017-18, and the experience gained, emphasizing on the strengths but also the weaknesses of such programmes which have been created because of the pressing need for educating a large number of refugees within a safe and effective school framework for all the students.

3. RECEPTION CENTRES FOR REFUGEE EDUCATION (DYEP)

There has been the experience of the education programme “Diapolis” (2010-2014) aiming at the education of students of immigrant background and repatriates along with their families, in primary and secondary education. The programme, operated by the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki and supported by the European Committee, has been a primary source of educational and training material for teaching Greek to refugee students. Apart from enhancing language skills, this programme aimed at helping foreign students to integrate into school and the society in general. Counseling in groups or individually was offered to immigrant parents in order to familiarize them with Greece. Additionally, a psychological support and intervention handbook was edited, for use at schools participating in the initiative. The “Diapolis” programme also introduced the “foster parent” and “cross-cultural mediator” profile. These leading roles were entrusted to Greek parents and bilingual individuals in order to function in auxiliary basis, trying to reinforce relationships among immigrant parents and local societies and schools. 80,000 people approximately participated in the program, in 4 years. (<http://www.diapolis.auth.gr/index.php/tautotita-praksis#synoptikh>)

Later on, after 2014, there were Reception Classes for the immigrant and refugee children who did not speak Greek. In the school year 2016-17, Reception Centres for Refugee Education (DYEP for short) operated in Greece for the first time. They aimed at pupils between 6 and 12 years old, studying at primary school, and students between 12 and 15, studying at high school. The creation of DYEP has been an innovative education reality with various particular characteristics concerning the students and the schools since there were DYEP which operated in tandem with the regular morning classes, DYEP operating in the afternoon – after the regular morning classes, and DYEP operating within the Refugee Camps (Philoxenia Centers) . The timetable for the latter ones was from 8.30-12.30, while for the DYEP operating away from the Refugee Camps but within schools their timetable was from 14.00-18.00 (FEK 3502/2016).

The first year, 2016-17, was considered as a preparatory one so the refugees were able to integrate smoothly into the Greek educational system and attend the basic structures of Primary and Secondary education, according to the guidelines of the Ministry of Education (Law 4415/2016). The first DYEP operated in 2017 covering 24 Refugee Camps (Philoxenia Centers) of mainland Greece. The subjects taught to Primary School pupils were: Greek language, Maths, English language, Physical Education, New Technologies and Aesthetic Education (Arts and Music). Similarly, the high school students were taught Greek language, English language, Maths, Physical Education, Informatics, Culture and Cultural activities. In tandem, according to the Law 3879/2010, there have been Reception Classes, included in Educational Priority Zones within the school units of Primary and Secondary Education, in areas presenting low Education Index, high school dropout rates and low socioeconomic indexes. Educational Priority Zones aim at offering equal opportunities for integration to all students through supporting actions so as to better student performance. Such actions are Reception Classes, Remedial Teaching classes, summer courses and special classes for refugee children’s learning their native language. FEK-3727 B/23-10-17 (article 3) sets the conditions for the establishment of Reception Classes/Educational Priority Zones in order to educate students who have limited knowledge of the Greek language (Roma, immigrants, repatriates, refugees, vulnerable social groups etc). Also, within the framework of intercultural education, a flexible structure of institutional and teaching intervention has been formed, allowing each school unit, after weighing the real educational needs of their students and its strengths, to choose that pattern which can best support the teaching of Greek language so as to help students fully integrate into regular classes. These students attend all the subjects, with the exception of Greek language, along with the rest students of their regular class. Learning the language of the host country is considered to be of critical importance since it facilitates the refugees’ access to goods and services and the job market thus ensuring a better quality of life (Tikly, 2011, 2016). The approach to the whole project was based on educational flexibility, discretion and creation of opportunities for communication and interaction between the students of DYEP and the students of the regular school units through their participation in mutual activities. According to Rutter (2006), linguistic needs along with the psycho-social needs and the importance of a welcoming, free of racism environment have been identified the three discourses that dominate the “good practice” literature for supporting and promoting refugee children’s education.

During 2017-18 DYEP operated for a second time having an increased number of students. In the area of

Attica there were 18 DYEP for primary school pupils and 4 DYEP for high school students (FEK 3974/2017). In the same year Reception Facilities for Refugee toddlers operated in the Refugee Camps (Philoxenia Centers) as annexes of the neighbouring nursery schools; 7 in Attica and 34 nationally. In 2018-19, a new Ministerial Decision (no 2215/CD4/16.1.2019) defined the national school units where DYEP operated. However, a large number of students attended Reception Classes at schools of Primary and Secondary Education focusing on the intensive learning of Greek, in special classes, and attending the rest subjects along with the regular students. A research conducted within the framework of Project Press by the Hellenic Open University indicated that schooling is important for refugee families in Lesbos, Athens and Thessaloniki. Going to school gives the family a feeling of “normality” and makes them believe that their children do not waste their time away from the basic mechanism of socialization and integration in society (Reception Facilities for Refugee Education, Daskalaki, Tsoli, Androulakis, 2017, p. 8). The school unit of Primary Education chosen for this particular case study is a Primary School which hosted refugee children and operated as DYEP.

4. METHODOLOGY

4.1 A Case Study in Primary School

Case study as a scientific approach allows focusing on a particular incident or issue, and try to understand its various characteristics and the way they interact and affect system implementation and organization operation (Bell, 1997). This study concerns the refugee education program through Reception Centres for Refugee Education (DYEP) in Piraeus area, south Attica. The pupils come from the Refugee Camp at Schistos. The research, part of which is presented in this paper, was conducted from January 2016 to June 2018 and collected the data through diaries recording successive events, the interaction and dialogue between teachers and parents involved in meetings as well as the study of relevant legislation. The school that functioned as DYEP and selected as case study constituted the research basis for the data collection and the record of strengths and weaknesses of the initiative emerging throughout the research period.

Three DYEP concerning Primary Education operated in Piraeus area. Their operation started on 2-2-2017; each structure was staffed with Greek language and Maths teachers and teachers of various disciplines and specialties teaching at all centres on different days. The lessons took place daily in the afternoon, from 14.00-18.00. Pupils were transported to the school units with buses paid by the International Organisation for Migration (IOM). 34 students, mainly of Afghan origin, registered in the aforementioned DYEP at Perama, Piraeus, for the school year 2016-17. Those students stayed at Schistos Refugee Camp. There were 11 girls and 23 boys divided in two groups according to their age. In the first group there were students between 6-8 years old, while the students between 9-12 were at the second group. By the end of the school year (15-06-2017) the number of pupils had slightly decreased because some refugee families left Greece for other host countries. There were problems in the beginning of the operation of DYEP and also during the preparation time for the reception of the pupils. The opening of the facility was not welcomed by some of the local people – among them there were few parents, who reacted and resisted change. The initial weaknesses, which became obvious during the first year of implementation of the project of refugee education, caused not only reactions but also a heated rhetoric against refugees (Katsigianni & Kaila, 2018). Utterances, such as: “Send them to an other school, away from ours” or “They are not vaccinated; we don’t know how healthy they are” do not agree with the wider philosophy of integration into the school community. Angry protesters gathered outside the school premises to express their disagreement on the first day of refugee pupils arrival. On the other hand, there were not such heated reactions at the other two DYEP, which operated normally. The Ministry of Education responded by saying that “such reactions come from phobic groups of citizens, and the Ministry would like to inform them on the issue”. The support given by the cooperation of International Organisations, like the International Organisation for Migration, UNHCR and UNICEF, with the Ministry of Education was of paramount importance. The school subjects taught were Greek language, Maths, English, Physical Education, Informatics and Aesthetic Education (Arts and Music). Responsible for the curriculum were the School Counselor of the school district and the school director (according to the Ministerial Decision no139654 /CD4/30-8-2017, Establishment, organization, operation, coordination and training program of Reception Centres for Refugee Education (DYEP), criteria and staffing process for these structures). In order to fight back negativity before and in the beginning of DYEP operation there were meetings with teachers, parents and local authorities who were responsible for the Reception Centres for Refugee Education. In some cases parents refused to participate in the process; they kept asking for extra auxiliary staff at school units, increased health and cleanliness measures and they expressed their skepticism about the possibility of peaceful coexistence of students from different cultures. The positive attitude of local authorities and their efforts to promote refugee integration, in cooperation with teachers and local communities, helped to

decrease such reactions. A characteristic example is that of the Municipality of Athens, according to a research from ELIAMEP (2017). Especially in the first year of operation, during the meetings of teachers from both morning and afternoon shifts, and parents' associations there was apprehension that affected the cooperation among pupils, especially those of the all-day school who had classes at the same time with the refugee pupils. The teachers asked immediate crisis management so as to overcome the difficulties arisen by the cooperation of the morning and the afternoon classes. They were hesitant at first to promote pupil cooperation due to what had happened before. Parents' representatives also expressed their disappointment because they thought they were ignored; "we were ignored", "nobody asked our opinion", "we weren't informed" were some of the comments dominating the meetings (Katsigianni & Kaila, 2019). The two-year operation of DYEP showed that the effective implementation of a program and the readiness of human resources are essential for the success of the project.

The negative reactions were fewer during the second year of the operation of DYEP at Perama. For the school year 2017-18 DYEP started operating in early December 2017; the classes finished on 15/6/2018. Initially, 32 pupils, coming from Iraq, Iran, Afghanistan and Syria, registered for the classes. The children were divided in groups according their age and their native language, aiming at achieving effective communication and peaceful cooperation. After the peak of the so-called "migrant crisis" in Greece, in 2015, (Papataxiarchis, 2016a, Papataxiarchis, 2016b) international organisations such as the European Union, the Greek state, international and national NGO, local societies, "solidarians", "volunteers" and the refugees themselves aided the prevalence of "dominant" languages in transit conditions. Languages such as English, Greek, Arabic, Farsi/Dari facilitate every-day communication between refugees and representatives of institutions and volunteers, as well as communication within the framework of educational processes that the refugees participate. It has become clear, after on-site investigation (Matosian, 2017), that refugees from different ethnic backgrounds prefer using primarily the English and then the Greek language in their daily interaction with institution representatives, local communities and other refugees. It is also important to mention fluctuating attendance rates since refugee pupils had to move because of pending relocation requests. It was widely believed that Greece was not a permanent destination so there was no need for the refugee children to participate in educational processes or learn Greek. Similar findings were also highlighted with Sarikoudi & Chatzigianni research (2017). It is worth mentioning at this point the positive attitude of refugee children towards schooling, their participation in school activities, celebrations and field trips. The research conducted by Yilmaz, Leivaditi & Kallintzi (2017) illustrates likewise the need of some refugees to get away from Refugee Camps (Philoxenia Centers) and "open" themselves to the local society through their participation in typical and non-typical educational activities. Much attention was given to the creation of conditions conducive to free communication which encourages debating of different views, and leads to overcoming initial difficulties and the formation of a supportive and tolerant society.

4.1.1 Results

Open and interactive communication dispelled the fears of some members of the school community who were skeptical about the success of the whole project. The negative attitude of some of the participants encouraged tension, fear and disbelief, all characteristics of xenophobia (Katsigianni & Kaila, 2018); as a result there was apprehension at the school unit, a thing which affected pupil cooperation. It also prevented the involvement of refugee parents in the educational process, at least during the initial stages. Because of the negative environment there was also lack of interpreters at schools, a point made at Anagnostou & Nikolava research (2017). The situation changed due to the participation of Refugee Education Coordinators in each Refugee Centre, who acted as mediators between parents and teachers, educators and interpreters, facilitating the exchange of ideas, reporting on student progress and planning in general. A strong relationship between schools and parents of refugee children is a mutual benefit (DFE, 2010, Christie and Szorenyi, 2015), which influences positively parent-school relationship, allowing quality in communication, and devising of mechanisms for helping parents to support their children's learning, through parent encouragement to attend meetings in schools. Zembylas & Bekerman (2013) have mentioned the term "cultural therapy" meaning that different cultures allow social interaction and encourage teachers and students to appreciate and take advantage of classroom diversity, searching ways to get over the problems. From an educational point of view, the expected interaction between the refugee pupils of this particular DYEP and those of the regular school, especially the pupils of the all-day school, was not successful. Probably the pupils had been influenced by their parents' negative behavior and the initial negative environment; though their teachers tried really hard to "bridge the gap" and emphasize on every child's right to education and the importance of diversity and its unprejudiced acceptance. Fortunately, this did not happen at the other two school units where there had not been initial negative reactions. It is also worth mentioning the importance of leadership at system level and in a school, which is supportive to the staff and

encourages them to take on challenges and initiatives (Taylor & Sindhu, 2012). Sometimes the school seems unable to deal with overwhelming distrust, but the state intervention offers solutions by setting priorities and approaches in accordance with the human rights and social justice (Tikly & Barrett, 2011).

Tikly (2011,2016) claims that quality education arises from the interaction of three overlapping environments, namely the wider education context, the school and the home-community environments. Besides, he argues that the host language enables refugees to access goods, services and the job market in the host country. All these are included in three key principles: inclusivity, relevance and democracy. When there is no interaction within the society or the school community, there is prejudice and negative stereotypes that bear no relation to the reality and do an injustice to those people who fought for better living conditions and safety. The acceptance of refugee students and the support of their families from the community, a fact in many cases in Greece and in other countries, gives the feeling of security and normalcy. According to Madziva & Thondhlana (2017) the school's ability to promote inclusivity, meet psychological needs, provide training for teachers, and support reciprocal home-school interaction is of paramount importance. The first year of implementation of the project concerning the integration of minor refugees in schools highlighted the difficulties and the lack of state preparation. It also revealed the necessity for distribution and integration of the refugee student population in regular classes, as it was stated in the report of the Hellenic League for Human Rights. According to Tsiakalo (2011:48) there is fear and distrust of the "foreigners" because of the negative information which warns us that the foreigners threaten to take away from us goods we enjoy and consider important. The refugee crisis, in the middle of an unprecedented economic crisis followed by a social and political crisis, had triggered xenophobia and open racist responses in all European societies. Also the social media spread rapidly and massively such reactions so the European governments had to contain such communication of intolerance (Takis, 2017).

As Walker (2006) argues, capabilities relating to a good quality education vary depending on context. This highlights the importance of localized research to identify the kinds of capabilities that are critical within particular socioeconomic and political context and the barriers that can hinder development in those contexts (Fraser, 2008). The issue of personal hygiene and vaccination of refugee pupils stopped being an excuse for

denial and hesitation since the different reality, which became obvious when DYEP started operating, and the effective dealing with these issues weakened such arguments. Most of the children seemed to be happy with their schooling and participated in DYEP actions. Their participation in regular classes and their integration with the rest student population was their parents' desire; parents who showed that they wanted limits and rules at schools. "Normalcy" for those children meant their everyday attendance at a regular class and their participation in activities in and away from school (Daskalaki, Tsioli & Androulakis, 2017). The intervention of local authorities, who hired auxiliary staff for the school unit, was also important. Moreover, the cooperation of Refugee Education Coordinators in Refugee Centres and the School Counselors who communicated with the school unit on a daily basis and participated in meetings with the pupils' parents, were also determining factors.

In 2018-19, 4,577 students enrolled in Reception Centres for Refugee Education for both education levels (primary and secondary) while 4,050 students attended Reception Classes (at primary and high school). These numbers show the importance of the work done by the Greek state as far as refugee education is concerned. (<https://www.minedu.gov.gr/news/41864-20-06-19-to-yppeth-gia-tin-pagkosmia-imera-prosfygon>).

5. CONCLUSION

The Reception Centres for Refugee Education have been an action plan for the integration of refugee students in the educational system. Along with the housing of their families in Refugee Camps (Philoxenia Centers), DYEP have been a way for these children to return to a normal everyday life. Every child has the right to education according to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UN, 1989, ratified by Greece with Law 2101/1992). Within this framework social integration through education and the provision of education to refugee children is an obligation for every state. The UNHCR, the International Organisation for Migration and local authorities take care of refugee decent living conditions and their support. Refugee integration and education is a challenge but also a chance to learn through diversity and contrast. It is a way to create a culture that respects human dignity and people's continuous struggle for survival. Long-term projects of intervention aim at further empower the school unit and the teachers so as to be able to face incidents of hate speech that affect them directly or indirectly. These projects along with the cooperation between family, school and local community, have positive effects and drastically contribute to facing bullying and victimization incidents. Training teachers in crisis management in the school environment helps them to react in a positive way and avoid strict punishment which leads to aggressiveness (Andreadakis, Xanthakou, Katsigianni & Kaila, 2007).

Independent authorities, like “The Greek Ombudsman”, institutions that protect people’s rights by monitoring and promoting the implementation of the principle of equal treatment, play an other role, different than the one described by law. They support and promote an argument that can contradict and weaken intolerant behaviours. “Without education, a generation of children in Greece will be lost, without the necessary skills to contribute to their countries and economies, and at greater risk of exclusion. Getting children, whose lives have been on hold back into school, will help them communicate and socialise with Greek children and help them rebuild their futures,” says Laurent Chapuis, the country coordinator for UNICEF’s Refugee and Migrant Response in Greece. “It is not only crucial for the mental health and psychosocial wellbeing of refugee and migrant children, it will reactivate their development and bring back a sense of stability in their unsettled lives.”

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