



## Qualitative Services at local level for Emigrants and Refugees

[Erasmus + Project reference number: 2017-1-EL01-KA204-036335]

Deliverable IO1

# National Report Greece: Results from needs analysis survey

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Version 3.0  
Date February 28<sup>th</sup>, 2020  
Type Report Public



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This project has been funded with support from the European Commission. The European Commission support for the production of this publication does not constitute an endorsement of the contents which reflects the views only of the authors, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.

Project reference number: 2017-1-EL01-KA204-036335.

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## Q-SER Consortium

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The Q-SER Consortium consists of:

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IOM Mezinárodní organizace pro migraci v Praze	Czech Republic
INTRACOM GMBH	Germany
MEDIA CREATIVA 2020, S.L.	Spain
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## Version History

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Rev. N	Description	Author	Date
1.0	D.IO1 - Peer review	MoE, Drosostalida	31/01/2018
2.0	D.IO1 – Official release	MoE, Drosostalida	31/03/2018
3.0	D.IO1 – Minor modifications	MoE, Drosostalida	28/02/2020

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# 1. SECTION A: SURVEY'S RESULTS

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## 1.1. Research methodology

In Greece, the main methodology followed to attract the users was through 6 workshops organized within the Municipality of Egaleo by MoE and 2 workshops organized in the Regional Asylum Office (RAO) of Piraeus. The workshops in the Municipality were been realized from December to January, where the directors of the various departments were invited one by one in order to present the project and discuss the employees' needs within the various departments. The workshops in RAO have been realized within February with the CEO from Drosostalida and the Head of the Department.

The two partners prepared the questionnaires with the precious aid of the CEO of Drosostalida Dr. Stella Papamichail who is a specialized Criminologist in the field of vulnerable groups. The questionnaires have been sent to the partners for review and the final version has been prepared and sent to the partners for distribution to the target group.

The questionnaires are available in two types: online through the Google Survey form (<https://goo.gl/forms/FLdkg8jlr56glxrt1>) and hard copy. Dr Dimitris Tzempelikos from MoE was responsible to distribute the questionnaires to the employees describing to the appropriate head of each department what the project is about, expectations, benefits etc. Finally, all the answers form the Municipality are in hard copies. From the Regional Asylum Office, only 1 questionnaire was completed online and all the others in hard copies as well.

## 1.2. Research barriers or difficulties

Actually, the main difficulty faced within the Municipality employees was the fact that each head of department had to be informed about the aim of these questionnaires, the purpose of the project. Thus, the employees of the respective department were present in order to hear about the project. Despite this fact, all the procedure went well. A difficulty faced by the staff of RAO was the fact that their network in their work did not allow them to have access to specific links. Thus, they had to complete the questionnaires in hard copies.

## 1.3. Sample description

MoE and Drosostalida managed to collect 106 answers from the questionnaires distributed to the users (86 & 26 respectively). The main responders are women (75) out of 106 and the majority of them (48) aged between 35-35 years old. The following age category is between 45-55 years old where 11 responses were collected from the category between 55-65 years old and only 9 from the last category of 25-35 years old. Most of the employees have a University degree background (46) and the same amount of employees is graduated the School or a technical school and/or vocational training centre (18 each). Surprisingly, 13 have graduated High School while only 11 are post graduate students.

All of the responders are Greek and all of them work in the public sector. Most of them work for more than 20 years in the public sector (34) and only 9 have 1-5 years of experience. 30



employees have 11-15 years of experience while almost the same amount has 16-20 years of experience or 6-10 (17 & 16 respectively). The biggest amount of employees work in the administration and support department, which includes demographics (4), financial services (13), stores' licenses (3), sports (4), civilization & library (6), municipality police (3), IT (1), public procurement (2), technical project (7). The majority of the employees work in this department for 1-5 years (38), while almost same amount of them work in the same department for more than 15 years (26) or 11-15 years (24). Only 18 of the responders work in the same department 6-10 years.

## 1.4. Results

The main services provide to the immigrants are administrative support services (27%) and stores' licenses (10,8%). Other services provided are Library (2,7%), Sports (8,1%), Allowances (10,8), Nurseries (5,4%), Hosting/Training/Social Integration (2,7%), medical services (5,4%), Payroll/exchanges (5,4%), Supplies (2,7%), Cultural (8,1), Electromechanical support (2,7), Social Work (8,1%). The public servants find the current level of services provided to be satisfying (63,9%) and only 9,7% of them find it moderate. Surprisingly, only the percentage of 9,7% finds the level of services in their department to be incomplete, as there is no foreign language material for immigrants (13,2%), there must be equal treatment to all the citizens (9,4%), excellent services and guidance (17%), there is no e-prescriptions, nor doctors enough (18,9%) and there is the appropriate structures (18,9%).

Regarding the need for any kind of help in the related services provided to the immigrants, it is worth mentioning that there was not such deviation among the answers. Most of the employees believe that no additional help is needed (52,3%) and only 47,4% believes that they need additional help in their services.

More specifically, the participants declare that they need faster services (1), mediator (2), sports' teachers & more space – sports' places available (2), expertise (1), Support with legislative information (1), appropriate staff & means (2), Intercultural communication / training (5), clarifications (1), Purchase of Foreign books + PCs to be used by the immigrants (2), Translators / Network of services for immigrants (5), More medicines/doctors for immigrants' needs/e-prescriptions (1), More medicines/doctors for immigrants' needs/e-prescriptions (1), the Ministry has to inform in advance the Citizens service centres for any changes in the legislative (3).

Most of the participants in the survey have participated in a training program for employees (53,3%) related to the management, IT & public health, Services' needs, Incomes & Disciplinary law, Databases/Officials' code , Training to immigration law, data protection, Cultural actions, Scientific consideration to different topics, Social topics, Digitalisation registry office, Community centres and Working team spirit. 46,7% have not participated in any training program for employees. In the question related to the participants' involvement on a training program about intercultural education, almost most of the replies were no (90,6%), while we had only 9,4% of positive replies.

For those who have participated in such a program, the topics were Knowledge of foreign languages, Easy integration of children's immigrants to the workplace, repatriated from former USSR and Intercultural training for staff dealing with third-country nationals. A large number of (81,1%) have never followed an online course in their work and only 18,9 of them have done so. 51 employees seem to be positive to participate in such an online course, 14 are not sure

and only 1 declares that he/she is not willing to participate. Most of devices preferred to be used by the employees are PC/laptops (77,4%), tables (14,2%) and smart phones (8,5%). It has to be mentioned that all the employees who participated in the Greek survey had PCs in their office. The time that they would allocate regularly for online training is mainly 30-45 minutes (45,3%), 1 hour (31,1%), 5-15 minutes (14,2%) and 2 hours only 9,4%.

The evaluation of their participation in an intercultural education program was useful for most of the employees (62,3%), while 16% found it necessary and 12,3% of the employees did not specify. Minimum useful and not at all useful was both 4,7%. The answers in the personal motivation for participating in a program of intercultural education were multiple and better services for citizens was the main reply (41,2%), personal interest (23,5%), upgrading qualifications (20,3%) and improving professional status (15%).

The main competence the employees would like to improve the most is the equal treatment and respect for diversity (49 ticks), intercultural communication abilities (47), understanding the concept of knowledge (40), organization skills (37), relationship-building skills (31), personal & professional commitment (23). In the final question related to which activities they enjoy the most, video seems to be the most popular activity (45), non-formal educational games (31) and written exercises (28).

## 1.5. Key findings

It has to be mentioned that most of the responders are women aged between 35-45 years old, University graduate with an experience of more than 20 years in the public sector. They are all Greek, holding the positions in the administration and services department and social services, with an experience of 1-5 years in the specific department.

They seem to be satisfied with the services provided in their department with a few changes that have to be made in order to provide even more satisfying services even though most of them do not believe that they need any changes. More than half of the participants have participated in a training program but only a very small percentage has participated in an intercultural program in the past.

Almost most of the employees have not followed an online course in their work and if they do so, they would like to use PCs and / or laptop for their online learning not spending more than 30-45 minutes. Most of the employees evaluate their participation in an intercultural education program useful and they would participate in order to provide better services to the citizens, such as equal treatment and respect for diversity and Intercultural communication abilities using video in preference.

## 1.6. Proposals for the organization and configuration of educational material of intercultural training of municipal employees

The employees do not seem to be able to follow a long intercultural learning program through the PC or laptop and the main motivation for them would be to provide better services to the citizens, improving mostly the services provided for equal treatment and respect for diversity, Intercultural communication abilities, Understanding of the concept of culture and organizational skills and all the above-mentioned have to be developed in a video form.

## 2. SECTION B: NATIONAL CONTEXT

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### 2.1. The national framework for integration and treatment of migrants / refugees

Greece is the main entry point on the Eastern Mediterranean route and the number of asylum applicants peaked in 2016 when Greece became the first EU country for number of asylum applicants compared to population (with almost 5 applicants for every 1000 inhabitants compared to 2.5 in the EU28 average). The share of women and children below 18 is very high (almost 40 %), reflecting the large number of family arrivals from Syria and Iraq. Unaccompanied minors represent instead a smaller share (12 %) among minors compared to the EU28 average. In order to face the refugee crisis, Greece had to rapidly set up a reception and integration system from scratch, as none of them had previous experience in dealing with large numbers of asylum seekers and refugees.

Being transit country rather than destination country, its main policy investments focused on reception rather than integration measures. Notwithstanding these common issues, the ways Greece has faced the refugee crisis have been highly diversified, in part due to the different geographical position and cultural/political contexts. Greece is struggling with the management of huge numbers of arrivals in their harbors without closing their frontiers, and trying to improve their reception and integration systems. Greece has implemented measures to improve the reception and labour market, and social integration of asylum seekers. Although living conditions remain poor in many reception centres and the registration and assessment of applications takes a long time, both countries have expanded their reception capacity and moved towards a simplification of the recognition procedures in order to reduce the time needed for a decision to be taken.

They also adopted measures to support the early access to the labour market of asylum seekers, as well as integration measures to support their labour market and social integration. Greece also improved its legal framework and invested in reception capacity, although with problems in the practical implementation of reception and integration measures due to its more difficult socio-economic conditions and reduced administrative capacity. The refugee crisis was largely tackled with the help of international institutions and NGOs; in addition, the EU–Turkey Statement drastically reduced arrivals on the Greek islands from March 2016. While in Greece, recognised refugees and beneficiaries of international protection are entitled to labour market and social support under the same terms as natives, Greece has also implemented measures to improve the integration of asylum seekers from the early stages of the reception process. Besides language courses, recognised refugees and beneficiaries of international protection may access employment services, language and professional training, The integration of Refugees in Greece traineeships and unemployment benefits on the same grounds as natives.

Apart from some pilot projects, there are no targeted measures (e.g. mentoring and/or hiring subsidies for employers), and the implemented interventions reflect the overall weaknesses of employment policies and labour market conditions in these countries. For asylum seekers, while early language and integration courses are provided in reception centres, eligibility for

labour market measures is different in the three countries. In Greece, they can look for a job as soon as they are registered for application. There are however a number of drawbacks in the implementation of labour market integration measures in the three countries that hinder asylum seekers' and refugees' access to the labour market. One is shortage of concrete integration programmes, so that in practice labour market integration measures are often not available. A second issue is the lack of coordination among employment services and institutions in charge of integration policies.

Delays in the registration procedure is a further problem. The gravity of the crisis is another factor reducing employment opportunities for asylum seekers and refugees. The same pattern emerges in social integration strategies. In Italy social integration measures are increasingly based on small-scale projects managed by local authorities; in Greece and in Hungary implementation is mainly left to NGOs, often with the support of EU funding, with problems related to the long-term sustainability of projects and their limited coverage of asylum seekers and refugees. All countries adopted new legislative/policy measures in recent years to safeguard the rights and welfare of unaccompanied minors. However, their application is still at a very initial stage and the number of UAMs disappearing from reception centres is subject to growing concerns. Italy and Greece also introduced specific measures to support access of refugee children to the educational system with integration and/or language courses.

In Italy, measures have also been taken to facilitate the participation of refugees in tertiary education, through the activation of protocols with universities and the provision of scholarships and tax/tuition exemptions. Italy and Greece took steps to improve access to free primary health care, especially for vulnerable groups, regardless of their legal status. In Hungary, instead, access to free primary health care is only available for a period of 6 months after granting the refugee status. The provision of accommodation and housing facilities to asylum seekers and refugees are among the main challenges in all the three countries. Asylum seekers are accommodated in reception centres for the time needed to complete their application procedures and are limited in their mobility.

Recognised refugees usually have instead the right to be supported in the search of affordable accommodation and free to move across the countries. Accommodation services, provided by municipalities and/or NGOs, are largely insufficient due to housing shortages. Notwithstanding the improvement in the legal framework and integration measures, the effective implementation of reception and integration measures is still inadequate in the considered countries, and particularly in Greece and Italy, due to their weak administrative capacity and little experience in the management of large inflows of asylum seekers and refugees.

## 2.2. Main challenges and policy implications

Among the main challenges faced by the three countries are: the lack of experience and capacity in the integration of asylum seekers and refugees; the lack of funding. ensuring the long-term sustainability of programmes and extended coverage; the shortage of housing and accommodation facilities; the increasing negative attitudes towards asylum seekers and refugees. Existing research and evaluations suggest that effective integration policies benefit not only immigrants, but also the receiving society.

Countries with inclusive integration policies tend to be more developed, competitive and better places for everyone to live in. Inclusive policies may also help public opinion to see the benefits

of immigration to receiving countries, while restrictive policies harden distrust and xenophobic attitudes among public opinion. However, the capacity to manage effective integration policies depends very much on the possibility to govern migration flows and to avoid massive increases over a short time span concentrated in few territorial areas.

The main policy implications thus relate to: how to share the reception burden and to promote a fairer distribution of asylum seekers across MSs; how to improve the countries intervention capacity, supporting MSs and local actors in the actual implementation and monitoring of reception and integration measures; how to provide continuous funding for reception and integration programmes. To address these issues, a greater coordination and cooperation between European institutions and MSs is crucial.

This implies a greater EU role in supporting a fairer distribution of asylum seekers across Member States, and more effective reception and integration measures through: a stronger focus on integration in the European Agenda for Migration; an effective multi-level governance and support to upgrade administrative and institutional capacity at national and local level, also through the exchange of experiences and good practices; sharing the costs of integration across and within MSs, eventually creating an ad hoc EU Integration Fund; improving data collection and establishing an EU coordinated information system, also for the monitoring and evaluation of reception and integration measures; supporting community building and awareness-raising on the benefits of immigration.

### 2.3. Educational programs aimed at civil servants dealing with the treatment and service of migrants / refugees and in line with the integration policies

There no systematic mentorship schemes in place for (a) asylum seekers and (b) refugees integrating into the labour market. Social integration is left to the NGOs, while various relevant measures are foreseen by the Greek Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF) National Programme (2014 to 2020)<sup>16</sup>. Regarding NGOs, perhaps the most notable efforts are those by Praksis and the Ecumenical Refugee Programme (ERP). Praksis provides to socially vulnerable groups in need, regardless of colour, race, religion, age, nationality, ideology, sexual orientation or political beliefs through an array of programs.

One of these initiatives is 'syn sto plin', a programme that intends to provide relief to vulnerable social groups who are on a daily basis severely affected by the consequences of the crisis. It focuses on intervention through Day Centres in Athens and Piraeus that offer relief and assistance to homeless people in need of support. Recorded visits in both centres range from 150 to 200 on a daily basis, and on Prevention by offering support to Greek families with children in Athens and in Thessaloniki that due to the crisis are facing poverty and the immediate risk of homelessness. Each month 550 families are supported (EMN, 2015).

The Ecumenical Refugee Programme (ERP) is a special service for refugees within the Integration Centre for Working Migrants, an NGO of the Church of Greece. They primarily provide legal assistance and representation to asylum seekers and refugees as well as social support and are one of the main Organizations in this field in Athens. With respect to the AMIF National Programme (2014 to 2020), the main pillars are to: a) Ensure the sustainability and integrity of the new asylum system, including inter alia, full clearance of the pending cases under the previous

asylum system; and b) Strengthen reception capacity, improve living conditions/establish a sustainable reception system.

The main targets set by the Programme are to: a) Increase reception capacity at minimum 2 500 places and improve living conditions in all reception facilities; b) Improve access to the asylum procedure by increasing, inter alia, the number of the regional asylum offices and improve the quality of procedures and the decision making process of asylum claims and maintain its speed; c) Clear all cases pending under the previous asylum system; and d) Provide special treatment and support to vulnerable groups. Unaccompanied Minors (UAMs) will be able to benefit from proper reception and care. Expected results include: a) Sustainability of the new asylum system and finalization of the cases pending under the previous system; and b) Better reception conditions, provision of services to the asylum seekers and asylum procedures, including the access to the asylum procedure. The AMIF Programme contains a priority axis devoted to National Strategy on Integration. T

he main pillars of this strategy relate to: a) Promotion of regular migration with Country of Origin (CoO) pre-departure measures; b/ Enhancement of third-country nationals (TCNs) language skills, improvement of the attainment in the education system, assistance of TCNs integration in labour market, promotion of access to social security, healthcare, participation in TCNs organizations/local authorities, promotion of interculturalism and combating racism and xenophobia; c) Promotion of the integration of specific vulnerable groups; d; Provision of accommodation to vulnerable groups of legally residing TCNs(with a wide range of services); e) Protection of UAMs; and f) Establishment of integration structures with a wide range of services.

On social integration, the Greek AMIF Programme has set the following goals: a) Predeparture preparation with a view to facilitate their integration; b) Sensitization of local society through awareness raising campaigns, intercultural training of civil servants, creation of intercultural dialogue platforms, etc; c) Provision of accommodation in Rented Apartments to vulnerable groups of legally residing TCNs for integration into society in mixed communities and regions; d) Strengthening intercultural mediation services, increasing of cultural awareness; e) Smooth integration of TCNs in Greek society, equal participation in the economic, social, cultural life of the country; f) Establishment of a sustainable and efficient reception and guardianship system for unaccompanied minors(UAMs); g) Establishment of infrastructure (Migrant Support Center) aiming at the creation of a sustainable and coherent framework.

Expected impacts include the following: a) Preparation of potential migrants through introductory programs in countries with which Greece has signed mobility partnerships-bilateral agreements; b) Increase in tolerance of the local society, fight against racism and xenophobia, strengthening of the mutual understanding/interaction between migrants and locals; c) Empowerment of migrants, in order to facilitate their integration through language programmes, intercultural mediation, counseling; and d) Promotion of legal employment, education/training, support family reunification etc. by providing accommodation in rented apartments with support services.

According to the Greek AMIF Programme: 'Greece intends to use the National Strategic Reference Framework through the ERDF and ESF in order to address partially the needs of integration. Investments in the field of Health Care and Social capacity building at regional level will take place within the above-mentioned framework including and covering the target group of legal migrants. As regards ESF, national goals are: a) Active integration process, such as the

promotion of equal opportunities and the improvement of accessing to the employability, b) Combating all forms of discrimination, c) The improvement of the procedures to achieve the effective access to most economical, sustainable and high quality Services, and d) The promotion of social entrepreneurship and actions to facilitate the access to employability.

To what extent is the labour market integration of refugees well-coordinated within the country? Do employment agencies and asylum authorities coordinate? On the whole, the policy framework for refugee integration in Greece is underdeveloped. Greece was a latecomer in putting integration in the policy agenda and has done so mostly prompted by EU norms and Directives. Although legislation has gradually granted more rights to legally residing TCNs, the measures and policies adopted to actively facilitate the integration of migrants have mostly remained on paper (ELIAMEP 2015).

The integration measures that have been implemented are generally fragmented and ad hoc. There is a lack of a coherent approach to refugee integration, and, in part, this is linked to the limited influence, or even absence, of a technocratic approach and culture in Greek public administration and among political parties and elites. It is also linked to an endemic and generalized lack of inter-ministerial coordination in sectors and issue areas where multiple institutional actors have to be involved, as required in the field of immigration and social integration. While vulnerable groups are usually referred to in integration policy documents, their integration experiences are not evaluated.

No specific requirements or indicators for monitoring integration have been developed nationally and existing data are not formally used to measure and report on integration. To the extent that any monitoring takes place, it is project-based and implemented by independent entities mostly through EU funds. The current economic crisis and the austerity measures applied have of course, exacerbated problems, and through for example cuts in the provision of public services, which are of the utmost importance to the most vulnerable population groups.

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