



**Christina Katsampouka and Lizeta Ziakou:
Report on our support of refugees
including volunteers
at Network for Children's Rights
Athens, September 2019**

At the end of May 2019 Respect for Greece started a cooperation with the non-profit organization “**Network for Children's Rights**” (**Δίκτυο για τα δικαιώματα του παιδιού /diktuo network**), Alkamenous Street 11b in 10439 Athens, Greece. The aim of the NGO is to safeguard the rights and interests of the children. Staff members and affiliated member are teachers, social workers, lawyers, psychologists, journalists, artists or authors. Several of the Greek professionals work as part-time volunteers. They all want to improve the quality of children's life by an Intercultural Library with bilingual books / a Mobile Library that is set up in squares or refugee centers / educational courses and sport activities / artistic workshops like theater, dancing or music. The program also includes preparation for school attendance, career advice and psychosocial support from the Child Protections Unit. The Network furthermore conceived the newspaper Migratory Birds and the web radio Dandelion for which teenagers and young adults are producing spots and articles.

Volunteers Fields:

Volunteers will be able to implement activities and interactions with children and teenagers in the different projects of the Network described below:

Culture LAB & Centre for Creative Activities, called “Traiber” (Lizeta's working field)

The cultural lab of Network of Children's Rights is located in one of the most unprivileged area in the center of Athens (Culture Lab: Alkamenous 11B & Traiber: Plateia Traiber 8). The NGO reaches out to all children in the neighborhood regardless of ethnic origin, race, gender, religion or language. It is a safe place where parents can leave their kids while they get psychosocial support, legal advice and help for the asylum procedure or for job opportunities. Activities are specially designed for children between the age of 6 to 12: They can take part in art and crafts, board games, theatrical games, book reading, dance, music lessons, animation,

making soft puppets and bring them into life in combination with fairy tales, exhibitions with photographs, paintings, etc. The Network also provides language course in Greek, Arabic, English, Albanian and offers preparation to refugee kids for Greek school. Those courses intend to combine formal and informal learning like teaching English through role games.

In a daily base about 25 children attend the activities in Culture Lab and 20 kids the Traiber project. The children are divided in different units (morning and afternoon shifts).

Planned activity for the near future: Christmas Bazar with handmade crafts by children and a Christmas show for the parents.

Lizeta as a pedagogue is responsible for the implementation of the weekly program in cooperation with the second pedagogue of the Network. That means: collaborations with other organizations, partners and artist / leading and realizing the provided activities / guiding the volunteers / registration of the kids. Children with special needs will be referred by Lizeta to the social services of the Network (Child Protection Unit with social workers, psychologists, lawyers) for example if they don't meet the hygiene rules, if they are hungry, have no clothes, are unprotected, etc.

As the children spend many hours in the project, the Network provides some snacks to the kids. To offer healthy, nutritious and well balanced food to them demands a steady search for financial resources.

YOUTH Center (Christina's working field):

The Youth Center is located in one of the most underprivileged areas of Athens (10 min by walking from the Culture LAB) close to schools, kindergarten and culture centers. The project is addressing to mixed groups of young people namely refugees, immigrants and Greek kids, teenagers and young adults from 13 to 20 years of age (some are also older). It is a safe place where young people can come together, socialize and form their own community. Around 250 youngsters are registered and about 30 attend the daily activities. Most of them have bad living conditions or suffer from psychosocial stress (for example: struggle with the slow asylum procedure, lack of housing, financial support, etc.). The Youth Center focusses on the positive resources of the young people by encouraging their creativity, skills, education and self-confidence. The Center runs a lending library, artistic workshops, and educational activities such as: a theater group (a cooperation with the French Theater Institute), photography workshop, dancing lessons (with students from a local dancing Institute), outdoor activities (skateboard, cricket), a ping pong group, classic music lessons (in

cooperation with ElSistema Orchestra), and many more. The goal is to promote their talents as a method for integration and rehabilitation. An outstanding activity is the Young Journalists Group that brings out in a regular base the newspaper *Migratory Birds* distributed around Athens, Islands as Lesbos and other locations around Greece. Young immigrants, refugees and Greeks write the articles and produce the newspaper with the support of the Network. The aim of the project is to facilitate the assimilation of refugee and immigrant youngsters whilst simultaneously fighting xenophobia in society, by promoting cross-cultural dialogues. The project helps teenagers and young adults to exercise their basic rights such as the freedom of opinion and expression.

Our volunteers can join and give support.

Christina's responsibility at the Youth Center is to coordinate the running programs, to implement own activities (for instance an intercultural workshop "Speak up") and to guide the volunteers. When needed she brings teenagers and young adults, who attend the Youth Center, into contact with other services (hospital, psychologist, asylum- and social services or with the Child Protection Unit of the Network).

Further working areas:

Child Protection UNIT / CPU (Christina's working field):

The program is located next to the Culture LAB. It is specialized on case management mainly for unaccompanied refugee minors. A lawyer, social worker and psychologist of the Network of Children's Rights supervise every case. The program is co-funded by the UNHCR and offers legal, social and psychological support in different social centers of Athens. The purpose of the CPU Team is to enhance the protection, care and well-being of vulnerable refugee children, to support their access to social services (accommodation, health insurance, food, etc.), and to find durable solutions even in this miserable situation for refugees in Greece right now. Around 1.000 refugee kids are unprotected and homeless, the most of the refugee camps have no safe zones for minors, and the asylum procedure and family reunification can last months or years...

Christina is attending the weekly meeting of the CPU and acts as an interlink between the Youth Center and CPU, gathering and exchanging information. Since July 2019 she additionally cares for family reunification between Germany and Greece, being in contact with different German organization such as Initiative Sprungbrett Zukunft Berlin e.V. or legal guardians of refugee minors. She supports asylum procedures or helps family members stuck

in Greece without having access to social services or housing and other basic needs. Concerning unaccompanied minors Christina wants to build up direct cooperations between Greek and German NGOs.

Because of the complexity of the cases and the protection of data privacy volunteers cannot participate in the Child Protection Unit.

Mobile Library

This is a temporary library, which can be set up in few minutes in squares, schools, parks, refugee camps or other accommodations. The team of the Mobile Library moves every day to another spot in and around Athens, giving children the opportunity to world of books, playing creative games and take part in educational activities. The Mobile Library also encourages the parents to read with their children. The purpose is not only to entertain and educate but also to raise awareness of various issues connected with safeguarding the Rights of the Child. Another aim is to identify children and families, who need support, by going out to them and not waiting for them to come.

Volunteers may participate after consultation with the team of Mobile Library.

Centers for the CHILDREN

There are others Centers, with which Network for Childrens` Rights is cooperating. They offer creative and educational activities (like a kindergarten free of charge) together with other NGOs like SolidarityNow. Here the parents can leave their kids in a safe places while getting legal and psychosocial support.

Our Volunteers have not yet worked in any of those Centers but they principally could.

Existing cooperation including volunteers:

MOSAICO House and JAFFRA Foundation

Together with Lizeta and Christina our volunteers support the accommodation for refugees “Mosaico House”, a shelter for single mothers and their children. Here they are implementing creative activities for mothers and kids according to the well established program of Mosaico House. Furthermore our volunteers are well accepted in the Palestinian Institution “Jaffra Foundation”. At present one of our volunteers (Giulia) gives lessons here twice a week in English and German. Specially for German classes there is a big lack in Athens. We plan to continue these existing collaborations with regard to the current demands of the two organizations.

Further task of Christina and Lizeta:

VOLUNTEER- PROGRAM

Lizeta and Christina are in charge of the volunteer-program in Athens. They are mentors for the volunteers in their specific working field. They fulfill the following tasks:

- Preparation of the volunteers before coming to Athens. Training them, once they arrive, introducing them to the safeguarding guide and to their working areas as well as to educational methodologies, materials. Information about the refugee situation in Greece.
- Organization of weekly meetings between Lizeta, Christina and the volunteers to discuss the current program, the timetable of the week, to solve problems, to develop ideas for improvements, to plan intercultural events and workshops (for instance a presentation of the asylum procedure in Greece)
- Weekly evaluation and reflection based on written reports by the volunteers on their implemented activities. Feedback to the work-motivation. Games to strengthen the teambuilding.
- Organization of workshops on refugee issues together with other organizations
- Guidance, advice and support of all activities of the volunteers during their stay in Athens. This includes management of finances, housing-problems, health issues and much more - as Christina und Lizeta are the first persons, to whom the volunteers should address.
- Writing of certifications or reference letters for the volunteers work

Future Plans/Ideas

- Temporary accommodation/shelter for homeless refugee minors during transit period
- SOS food packages for vulnerable cases including: toothpaste, brushes, pampers, napkins, milk, rice, etc. in cooperation with the team of CPU
- Further ideas will follow after consultation with members of Respect for Greece

The funding of Network for Children`s Rights has been reduced the last year, there are not enough resources for materials, food and other goods. Also the number of employees had to be reduced with critical effects on the provided services.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=72&v=qFNeld5C3

Some Impressions

Bild 1: Music brings people together - Volunteers at Youth Center



Bild 2: Educational trips with the kids of the culture LAB



Bild 3: Eine Freiwillige bei der Arbeit



Bild 4: Lizeta Ziakou, Anne Brulez (Pädagogische Leiterin von RfG) und Christina Katsampouka

